Monarchs and the Many-Headed Multitude:

Political Relationships in Early Modern English and Scottish Literature

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty of the University of Virginia
in candidacy for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

University of Virginia
April 2021

ABSTRACT

What political relationship did early modern English and Scottish people intuit between themselves and their monarch? And how did they imagine that their government, and other governments, should respond to those who were governed? This dissertation explores these questions through a study of the literature of two influential writers: the first king of England and Scotland, James VI and I; and William Shakespeare. In the former's poetry and the latter's drama, I track the expectations and tensions that worked on inter-hierarchical bonds at the end of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century. I turn to literature and not the historical records of material life because I am after the senses of possibility—the theory—that my two thinkers had for these interactions.

Questions of popular power and civic participation have recently animated the field of Shakespeare studies as related corollaries to new investigations into early modern republicanism. While this dissertation considers republican thought, particularly in the third chapter, I come to my questions through a study of absolutist theory, which I argue had its own important way of conceiving of the relationship between a king and his subjects. Often caricatured as a stringent belief in arbitrary power, James VI/I's absolutism invested deeply in the concepts of duty, obligation and mutual privileges shared between monarch and people. In my first chapter, I read James's early poems a medium through which he reached readers/subjects, and I suggest that James used poetry to help himself better articulate the obligations inherent in his role as a Scottish king. In my second chapter, I consider how medieval and early modern acclamation, which names a theory of populist support for kings and a component of the English coronation ceremony prominent in James's own Whitehall

crowning, posited a diachronic relationship between the monarch and subjects that is a direct precursor to early ideas about political representation. I trace this link through Shakespeare's history plays and *Coriolanus*. In my final chapter, I show that at the height of Shakespeare's career, when he wrote *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, he was invested in the ontological-political problem of defining "who counts as the people" in a realm struggling with whether and how to enfranchise certain populations.

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Acknowledgments

I first wish to acknowledge the contributions and support of my committee: Katharine Maus (director), Clare Kinney, and Rebecca Rush. Thanks especially to Rebecca for signing on to this project in the last few months before its completion, just in time to help me make sense of its larger themes and put them into the right words for the introduction. And thank you to Paul Halliday, my "outside reader", whose lengthy comments in the defense both confirmed that I had done responsible interdisciplinary work and will guide me in rewriting and expanding parts of this for various afterlives as articles and perhaps a book.

A PhD is not just the dissertation project, and in the years before and while I worked on this, other professors and colleagues impacted me in ways I am honoured to acknowledge. Sebastiaan Verweij at Somerville College guided me through my first graduate research project and introduced me to the world of early modern Scottish literary studies. His feedback on my masters thesis, and his approach to mentoring, resonated with and guided me across my tenure at UVa. Two opportunities at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington D.C., left definitive marks on my project and my pedagogy: a conference on crisis, and a course on politics and marriage led by Sharon Achinstein. I was working from the notes from the latter right up until the day of my defense. Here at UVa, courses and interactions with Alan Megill, David Vander Meulen, Bruce Holsinger, Jim Seitz, and John Parker all contributed to the scholar I am now. Cindy Wall and Paul Hunter (together with William and Elspeth Wall-Hunter) made me feel at home in Charlottesville. Grace Vasington, Caleb Agnew, and Kelli Shermeyer read, commented on, and lamented with me over various chapter drafts. DeVan Ard read everything. Lara Musser, Jeannie Sellick, Sam Lemley, and others were (and are) an invaluable intellectual community.

Thanks to my parents, Bob and Denise Keyser, for all of their support, and to my sister and brothers—Hank, Ben, and Sam—for occasionally feigning interest in the early modern period and for never doubting that I could finish this. My dad, especially, ensured that that would happen.

Finally, I must acknowledge Imogen Carole Ard-Keyser, who did not so much help as impede the culmination of the degree for about ten months; and whose arrival into my and DeVan's life paradoxically dwarfed this achievement and underscored its magnitude.

Dedications:

To Arthur Maddaloni

A few months after my grandfather died in the global pandemic, my grandmother called to say how happy she was that he had lived long enough to see me married. I'm glad he made it to my wedding too, but what I love and know about my grandfather is that it would have meant more to him to celebrate this milestone in my life. An enthusiastic life-long learner, his own attempt to get a PhD under much more difficult circumstances inspired me throughout this process, and any academic success I achieve is dedicated to his memory.

And to Dr. DeVan D. Ard, III (De)

Because if we hadn't gotten married, I never would have finished this.

To-night we'll wander through the streets and note

The qualities of people. Come, my queen!

— Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, I.i.54-55.

INTRODUCTION

In the second act of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Stephano and Trinculo come across Caliban on the island where they find themselves shipwrecked. The "strange fish" has been cursing his master, Prospero; but when the two men give him alcohol, he vows to serve them:

> I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
>
> I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough.
>
> A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I prithee, let me bring thee where the crabs grow,
>
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts… (II.ii.158-160, 165-167).[1]

The list of promised chores continues. Stephano and Trinculo agree to this exploitative arrangement and Caliban experiences elation! He skips off, singing,

> No more dams I'll make for fish
>
> Nor fetch in firing at requiring,
>
> Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish.
>
> 'Ban, 'Ban, Ca-caliban,
>
> Has a new master: get a new man.
>
> *Freedom, high-day; high-day freedom; freedom high-day,*

[1] Citations from Shakespeare's plays will be given in-line. Unless otherwise noted, they are from *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works,* ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, 3rd edition (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2011).

freedom (II.ii.177-182).[2]

Caliban imagines that he has escaped Prospero, the "tyrant" he has served since childhood, and gained "freedom". But that freedom has a curiously familiar shape. Caliban rejoices that he'll have no more fishing or fire-wood-fetching "at requiring", but he has just promised to "fish for [Stephano and Trinculo]", and to "get [them] wood enough". He wants no more to do with "scrape[ing]" dishes, but he tells the men that he will dig with his fingernails to find them nuts (a similar action, albeit in a different setting). If Caliban's new masters offer what he terms freedom, then freedom seems identical to the state of bondage that has hitherto burdened him.

The germ of this project originated here, in Caliban's song of freedom and an observation I made in Bruce Holsinger's 2014 seminar about the creative potential of absolute monarchy, rules, limits, and laws. Caliban's song recalls for me the title of James VI and I's 1598 treatise on ruling Scotland: *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies.* If, in the twenty-first century, "Free Monarchies" verges on oxymoronic, the idea of liberty now being synonymous with self-governance, this was not the case in the early modern period.[3] When Caliban trades a "tyrant" for "masters", he perceives himself to be more free than he had been, though this freedom doesn't seem likely to manifest as free time or increased autonomy. In what ways, then, can we describe how Caliban's subject/master relationship has changed? And how does that change produce in him the impetus to make art, in the form of an original song composition to celebrate his new state?

This dissertation considers the ways in which absolutist theory conceived of the relationship between the monarch and his or her subjects; and it explores how its tenets proved

[2] I've italicized the final line to emphasize that the text suggests he is singing.
[3] Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See especially pp 1-16.

generative for early modern Scottish and English writers.[4] In doing so, it goes against the general grain of scholarship and particularly of Shakespeare studies, which in the past twenty years has been especially committed to exploring how civic humanism and early republicanism animated London playwrights.[5] The latter exploded as a term in Shakespeare studies with the publication of Andrew Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* which argues that republicanism "is one of the key problems that defined [Shakespeare's] working career".[6] Hadfield's characterization of republicanism as a "problem" is crucial because, before the 1640s, it comprises a number of traditions only loosely connected by a commitment to civic participation in government, rule by law, and resisting tyranny.[7] And because republics in England existed only in the classical texts that had lately flooded intellectual circles, republicanism was limited to a seductive set of "what ifs" and possibilities that could be played out in literature.[8] In contrast, royal absolutism—the undiluted theory behind the English and Scottish monarchies' powers that positioned the monarch above and outside of the law, as its

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[4] Scholarship on literature's engagement with monarchism is still dominated by Ernst Kantorowitcz and especially his *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). I have also drawn my methodology for reading Shakespeare alongside political theory from Braden Cormack, particularly his article "Shakespeare's Other Sovereignty: On Particularity and Violence in *The Winter's Tale* and the Sonnets", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 62, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 485-513.

[5] Among these works are Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theatre and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Jeffrey Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017); *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners,* ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); and David Norbrook's essay "Rehearsing the Plebeians: *Coriolanus* and the Reading of Roman History", in Fitter, *Politics of the Commons*.

[6] Hadfield, 1.

[7] Ibid., 52-3. Concisely and clearly summarized by Anthony DeMatteo in his discussion of Andrew Hadfield's research. See DeMatteo "Was Shakespeare a Republican? A Review Essay", *College Literature* 34.1 (Winter 2007): 201, 203-204.

[8] I say this despite the influence of Patrick Collinson's seminal article on this dissertation. See Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" in *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 31-57. On republicanism as a realistic "what if" in English politics, see Hadfield's discussion of republicanism at moments of succession crises in Elizabeth's long tenure on the throne, when there was the potential for Parliament to rule the realm, pp. 17 and 205.

fount and its only exception—maintains a more static reputation in scholarship.[9] Whereas republicanism drew upon a documented past, monarchy derived from God and the extemporal natural order and drew authority from its perpetuity.[10] Witness how James describes himself in an early poem by mythologizing the line of Scottish kings said to begin with Fergus I: "happie Monarch sprung of Ferguse race / That talks with wise Minerve [Queen Anne] when pleaseth the".[11] Perhaps for this reason, most literary scholarship on absolutism does not ground its definition of the theory in a specific year or historical context within the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century as republican scholarship does, but rather presumes that all of the contentious tenets expounded by articulate Civil War pamphleteers apply to James VI's early Scottish reign.[12] Relatedly, scholarship also tends towards a simplification of absolutism as the belief that the king wields complete and isolated authority.[13] I have yet to find a literature study

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[9] On the king and the law, see Bradin Cormack, *Power to do Justice: Jurisdiction, English Literature, and the Rise of Common Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 35-37, 254. And in James's speech to Parliament on 21 March 1610, he assures the members of the legislative branch that he has decided to "limit myself within those bounds" of English law. Printed in *King James VI and I: Political Writings,* ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 180.

[10] On this point, see Sir Edward Coke's discussion of the monarch and natural law in *Calvin's Case*: "the ligeance or faith of the Subject is due unto the King by the Law of Nature: Secondly, That the Law of Nature is part of the Law of England: Thirdly, That the law of Nature was before any Judicial or Municipal Law: Fourthly, That the Law of Nature is Immutable. The Law of Nature is that which God at the time of creation of the nature of man infused into his heart…" Printed in *The reports of Sir Edward Coke, Knt. In English, in thirteen parts complete,* vol. IV (Dublin, 1973): **Page no.** For the scholarly discussion, see Rebecca Bushnell, 'George Buchanan, James VI and Neo-classicism" in *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603,* ed. Roger A Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 91-111.

[11] James VI/I, "Sonnet IV: To the Queene, Anonimos", printed in *New Poems by James I of England, from a hitherto unpublished manuscript (Add. 24195) in the British Museum,* ed. Allan F. Westcott (New York: AMS Press, 1966): 2.

[12] Noted and analysed by Glenn Burgess in *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996): chapter two. His focus on James's understanding of the limits of kingship, and the contrast with later monarchists' views, are discussed at length in the first chapter of this dissertation.

[13] For example, Jonathan Goldberg characterises James VI/I as believing "that all that was belonged to him" in *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983): 141. This book is the most frequently cited in literary studies that treat James's politics. For example, Hadfield uses it, and consequently slightly mischaracterizes James's absolutism as an argument that a monarch's powers should not be limited, in *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* 47.

that takes seriously late sixteenth century monarchism's commitments to its subjects, or that treats absolutist thought's emphasis on duty and obligation as more than lip service.[14] This dissertation, accordingly, tries to do both.

As I did my own "dig[ging]" for the nuts and kernels with which to build an argument, I became aware of another message underscored by the parallels between Caliban's litany of abuses and his song of freedom in *The Tempest.* For Caliban, linguistic expressions to describe life under a tyrant are nearly identical to those with which life under a monarch or kinder "master" can be articulated. Put differently, the quotidian *sounds* as if it would be the same whether Prospero or Trinculo and Stephano reign—even if Caliban is sure that it will not be. The message for me is this: early modern vocabularies to describe political experiences were fluid and often imprecisely demarcated.

Milton warned, in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* that "who in particular is a tyrant cannot be determined in a general discourse".[15] The inexpressible qualitative difference between tyranny and monarchy (the difference which Caliban elides) comes up again and again in early modern political theory and in Shakespeare's plays,[16] and my dissertation touches on the ontological issue at the heart of distinguishing between the two.[17] But consider another text

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[14] One place we see this emphasis is in the chapter titles to James VI/I's *Basilikon Doron*: "Of a Kings Christian Duetie Towards God" and "Of a Kings Duetie In His Office". Printed in Sommerville, ed., *Political Writings.*

[15] Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, printed in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Modern Library, 2007): 1027.

[16]For example the Duke of York, a character marked by moderation and moral aspirations, is little happier with Henry Bolingbroke's form of justice at the end of *Richard II* than he was with Richard's arbitrary seizure of his cousin's movables at the start; compare York in II.i with V.iii. Additionally, Robert Miola writes of the difficulty in determining whether Julius Caesar might have proved tyrannical or kingly in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in "*Julius Caesar* and the Tyrannicide Debate", in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 271-289.

[17] See particularly chapter two, below.

that creates a tension very similar to the one that I note in Caliban's speeches when it tries to describe political change. The 1649 "Act for abolishing the kingly office in England and Ireland, and all the dominions thereunto belonging" decreed that subjects were henceforth "discharged of all fealty, homage, and allegiance which is or shall be pretended to be due unto any of the issue and posterity of the said late King [Charles I]", but it followed that radical statement with a staid announcement:

> And it is hearby further enacted and declared, notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, no person or persons of what condition and quality soever […] shall be discharged from the *obedience* and *subjection* which he and they owe to the government of this nation, as it is now declared…[18]

The parliamentarian forces prevailed in their war against the king, whom they executed six weeks before issuing this act. But the language with which they chose to inaugurate a new era in English politics is haunted by the ghost of absolutist monarchs past. It has been lifted from Charles I's coronation ceremony, some twenty-four years earlier, in which the people were made to swear "all Subjection and Loyalty to king Charles, our Dread Sovereign";[19] and it admits of none of the republican initiatives that distinguished the state of being subjected to government (or a subject under rule) as distinct from being a national citizen.

Scholars have long noted that the Cromwell regime deployed the symbols, trappings, and the language of monarchy to legitimise its power.[20] Less common, however, are studies in

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[18] "An Act for abolishing the kingly office in England and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging, 17 March 1649", printed J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966): 339-341 (my emphases).
[19] *The Ceremonies, Forms of Prayer, and Services used in Westminster-Abby* (London: printed by Randal Taylor, 1685) 19.
[20] For example, Roy Sherwood, *Oliver Cromwell: King In All But Name, 1653-1658* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).

the discipline of literature that grapple with the intertwined evolutions of the political ideologies championed by the opposing forces of the English and Scottish Civil Wars. George Buchanan, whose radical republican texts suggest than any person can kill they tyrant they live beneath and whose ideas were so ubiquitous amongst anti-monarchists by 1639 that the poet William Drummond remarked that the Scottish Parliament might well advocate for "the Books of the Apocrypha being taken away from the Bible, his book *De Jure Regni* be in the place thereof insert",[21] enjoins "[l]et the king constantly bear in mind, therefore, that he stands on the world's stage".[22] His pupil James VI/I, the foundational thinker for absolutism in England and Scotland,[23] sounds very similar when he writes that "a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold" in *Basilikon Doron*—though this line has occasioned much attention for its place within James's theory of monarchy.[24]

The concepts that most interest me in this dissertation, duty, obligation, and the mutual privileges conferred by monarchs upon subjects *and* by subjects upon monarchs, cannot fully be understood without attending to the ways in monarchist and republican (and proto-republican humanists and monarchomach) writers contributed to their development. Accordingly, I examine the narrative of the development of political theory in the decades

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[21] Qtd in John Coffey, "George Buchanan and the Scottish Covenanters", in *George Buchanan: Political Thought in Early Modern Britain and Europe*, ed. Caroline Erskine and Roger A. Mason (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012): 191. Also, the historian Martin Dzelzainis has traced the continuity of thought from Buchanan through to Milton's writings. See his "The Ciceronian Theory of Tyrannicide from Buchanan to Milton" in *George Buchanan: Political Thought,* 173-188; or "Milton, Macbeth and Buchanan", *Seventeenth Century,* Vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 55-66.

[22] George Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots*, trans. and ed. Roger Mason and Martin S. Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 73.

[23] One illustration of this: Filmer's use of *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* to support his argument against allowing "the multitude to choose their governors, or to govern or to partake in the government" in his *Patriarcha*, printed in *Patriarcha and other Writings,* ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 32.

[24] James VI/I, *Basilkon Doron*, 49. On this quote see, for example, the discussion in Goldberg, 118.

leading to up to the wars by focusing on the values and vocabularies shared by writers across the political spectrum. One final example of this cross-fertilisation of political ideas will serve to express the value of this approach. James VI/I's poetry and prose triangulates the relationship between himself (as king), God, and his people. In *The Trew Law of Free Monarchie*, we can track James working explicitly across traditions. He begins his discussion of a king's obligation to his people by "deny[ing] any such contract to bee made" between the monarch and his subjects. Yet he "confesse[s], that a king at his coronation, or at the entry to his kingdome, willingly promiseth to his people, to discharge honourably and trewly the office giuen him by God ouer them".[25] By framing the conversation thus, James makes clear that he is responding to earlier arguments in favour of a stricter sense of obligation on the part of the king and his people. Such is found in Buchanan, his childhood tutor;[26] though James's position can be better explicated in light of the two covenants in the French Huguenot pamphlet *Vinidiciae Contra Tyrannos*, anonymously authored by "Junius Brutus", because here a distinction is made between a king contracting to the people and a king covenanting with God about his pastoral role over the people.[27] James "den[ies]" this first commitment, but the second reads very similarly in the *Trew Law* as it does in *Vindiciae*. James amends this language to alleviate some of the burden that the people may place upon their king, but in no way does his discussion of obligation express any avenue for the king to exert arbitrary power of the kind feared and expected by Buchanan and later by Milton.[28]

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[25] James VI/I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, in *Political Writings,* 81.
[26] This is a general theme across all of Buchanan, *De Jure Regni*.
[27] *A Defence of Liberty against Tyrants: A translation of* Vindiciae contra tyrannos *by Junius Brutus*, ed. Harold J. Laski (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924; reprinted 1972): 71-2.
[28] See Buchanan, *De Jure Regni,* 33. Milton is much clearer about this fear in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, when he describes how early in man's history kings were created. "These for a while governed well, and with much equity decided all things at their own arbitrement, till the temptation of such a power left absolute in their hands, perverted them at length to injustice and partiality. Then did

I thus begin, in chapter one, with James VI/I's earliest poetry in order to reconsider the ways in which he positioned himself relative to his subjects, and articulated a sense of duty and mutual obligation. James has been a victim of anachronistic readings that move backwards from the monarchists' political positions during the reign of his son and the Civil Wars, and is often cast as a political extremist in a way that is hard to square with his scholarly pursuits and a reign that spanned decades of peace in Scotland and England. I cannot recuperate James's full reputation in one chapter; that was begun by the life-long scholarship of the late historian Jenny Wormald.[29] But I do endeavor to survey the recent work done in the field of history on James's early modern absolutism in its sixteenth-century Scottish context—which, I argue, must be taken into consideration when assessing his absolutist ideas. I combine that with my own readings of some of James's treatises and speeches to produce a more accurate encapsulation of James's pre-1604 political beliefs. Then, in order to show the pay-off of such a project for English literary studies, I re-read a set of James's sonnets that are clearly connected to his political agenda and that have been misunderstood due to oversimplifications about his style of kingship. I am particularly interested in how James conceived of his book of poems and poetic theory as a medium through which he reached reader/subjects; and in what he considered to be his obligation towards his subjects. And I suggest that James used poetry to help himself better articulate his role as king.

Chapter one arms me with a better understanding of sixteenth-century absolutism particularly as it construes the relationship between the king and his people. In chapter two I

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they, who now by trial had found the danger and inconveniences of committing arbitrary power to any, invent laws…", 1028-9.

[29] In 1983, Wormald asked, viscerally, "Why is it, for example, that James I is remembered not as the patron of Ben Jonson, John Donne, Inigo Jones and Shakespeare, but as the slobbering drunkard who presided over a debauched court?" and began to provide a fairer account of James's English career. See her "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" in *History,* Vol. 68, no. 223 (1983): 188.

use this to reappraise the history of representative politics, which has been well served in recent years by Mark Kishlansky and Oliver Arnold.[30] Both of these scholars argue that the concept underwent a crucial period of development at the turn of the seventeenth century. Arnold, in particular, looks at the evolution of ideas and expectations connected to the English parliament from a literary perspective in order to identify and describe what he sees as "a new kind of subjectivity" in Shakespeare's plays.[31] To these and other studies, I add is a consideration of how concerns and practices that we associate with political representation had a proto-life in monarchist and absolutist theory in the late medieval period and the sixteenth century. I draw into the conversation legal scholars, such as Thomas Smith and John Fortescue, who considered the role of subjects in the acclamation of a new monarch and the diachronic obligations assumed by a monarch towards his obliging people. In Shakespeare's plays I find parallels between the histories and the Roman tragedies--especially *Coriolanus*--that enable me to make connections between early modern discourse on kingship and early modern discussions of republican city-state organization. Two conclusions arise from this: the first is that not just the limits or expanses of kingly power or the two-body problem, but the mutual relationship between kings and subjects, is a central concern of Shakespeare's when he came to depict monarchy. The second is that what *Coriolanus* can help us to understand about the history of political representation and republicanism is wider than that which even Arnold allows for when we put the play into conversation with monarchical elements of the history tetralogies.

[30] Arnold, *Third Citizen*; Mark Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, CUP: 1986).
[31] Arnold, *Third Citizen*, 4. The full quotation about this phrase is below, page 12.

Why Shakespeare? I might have written chapters on another dramatist from the same decades.[32] The answer is partly because Shakespeare's plays have been the sites in recent years of some of best scholarship on early modern republicanism and popular politics in the field of English literature, such as Arnold's and Hadfield's.[33] Shakespeare also had a preternaturally large appetite for the literature available during his lifetime: he read Buchanan and a number of generically diverse works by James VI/I.[34] He had the republican classics at hand (or passages memorized!),[35] and he may have seen Bodin's *Six livres*, a touchstone for sixteenth-century absolutist thought.[36] Finally, Shakespeare was prolific, and across his plays we can trace how he reworked and rethought themes and issues that arose in public life. Tyranny is treated over and over again; but so too are popular uprisings, wise councillors, evil councillors, state justice, and state injustices.

Thus the first chapter reconsiders how James VI/I construed the monarch in the subject/monarch relationship; the second finds in Shakespeare's plays clues about the evolution of that relationship; in chapter three, accordingly, I investigate those benefactors of kingly obligation—the other party in the political equation. I borrow from Sir Robert Filmer a question he puts to later parliamentarian republicans and constitutional monarchists during the

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[32] Why drama? In Hadfield's words, drama was the literary mode in the late sixteenth century for engaging in political debate. *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* 7.

[33] See above, footnote 5. Other notable works include Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989)*;* and *To Be Unfree: Republicanism and Unfreedom in History, Literature, and Philosophy,* ed. Christian Dahl and Tue Anderson Nexø (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013).

[34] David Norbrook, "*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography", in *Politics of Discourse: the Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England,* ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press): 78-116. Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (London : Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001).

[35] Anne Barton, "Livy, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*", in *Shakespeare and Politics*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

[36] Cormack reads Shakespeare alongside Bodin; see "Shakespeare's Other Sovereignty".

Civil Wars: who, exactly, counts as the people in early modern political discourse?[37] I argue that Shakespeare anticipates this question in *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet,* both of which feature electoral politics and unruly mobs; and I endeavour to show that these plays draw attention to sixteenth and early seventeenth century theorists' inability to describe—and insufficiency in delimiting—political participation and enfranchisement. The conclusion to this chapter brings me forward in political history to the writings of Hannah Arendt, who continued to struggle with issues of "human plurality" in the twentieth century.[38]

It is my hope that this dissertation distinguishes itself from the innumerable studies on early modern literature and political theory in two ways. The first, which also informs the timespan covered within these pages, is that I re-examine the narrative for political theory—and particularly absolutist theory—that leads from James VI and George Buchanan's disagreement on the prerogatives of kings to the Civil War parliamentarians and monarchists who found themselves facing each other on the battlefield. I have already said something of this above. It is, admittedly, hard not to read all of literature and political theory from the first half of the seventeenth century in light of the English and Scottish Civil Wars and the republican experiment that ensued from their uneasy and untenable conclusion. But while late sixteenth century theory that was produced against the backdrop of Europe's religious conflict became newly relevant during the Civil Wars to polemicists, it is incorrect to say that it was brandished in the same way. Political thinkers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries did not reduce their disagreements to the simple choice between king or Parliament, a monarchy or a republic, that the Civil Wars forced.

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[37] Sir Robert Filmer, *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy,* in *Patriarchia and Other Writing*, 131-171.

[38] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 175.

In producing this rereading of the first half of the seventeenth century, I hope to contribute to important work begun by Mary Nyquist, Oliver Arnold, and Victoria Kahn. In Nyquist's words, it is now generally "assumed [by scholars] that royal absolutism, which generates analogies between kings and fathers, has roots reaching into an archaic past"—here, she specifically means the Biblical past— "while contractualism and resistance theory look resolutely ahead, having sprung full-grown from early modernism's mercantilist head".[39] Nyquist wants to complicate the Hegelian, or teleological, history of progress that has been presumed for seventeenth-century political theory, in which absolutist monarchism, already stale by the middle of the seventeenth century, yielded to the progressive, liberal forces that shape political consciousness even to this day. Following Victoria Kahn's interrogation of anti-feminist rhetoric of John Locke and his fellow contract theorists,[40] Nyquist traces the uses of the metaphor of slavery in so-called progressive writings and points to its complicity in the expansion of the flesh-and-blood slave trade at the end of the seventeenth century. In the field of Shakespeare studies, Oliver Arnold has produced similar work: his study of representational politics in Shakespeare's plays argues that

> The new practices and theories of parliamentary representation that emerged during Elizabeth's and James's reigns shattered the unity of human agency […]. Shakespeare believed that political representation produced (and required for its reproduction) a new kind of subject and a new kind of subjectivity, and he fashioned a new kind of tragedy to represent the loss of power.[41]

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[39] Mary Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny, and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 162.
[40] Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004): chapter 7.
[41] Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theatre and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007): 4.

In other words, Arnold writes that we cannot assume that the expansion of representative politics and a liberal agenda constituted in every sense of the word progress. Arnold goes on to show the way in which the infrastructure of representation, particularly in England, may have acted to disempower people by restricting their direct access to centres of control.[42] It is my intention, in this dissertation, to follow these scholars' lead in complicating teleological readings of political theory by considering plays and poems that found tenets of monarchism generative and that themselves generated new capacities for progressive *and* conservative political theory. Far from the one smoothly superseding the other, or republicanism and absolutism collided within a number of works of literature at the turn of the seventeenth century.[43] As Kahn, Arnold and especially Nyquist have shown, such a study produces a more responsible evaluation of both our own governing political theories' antecedents and contemporary imbalances in access to power.

The second, larger mission for this dissertation is to interrogate what literature has done for political theory, rather than how political theory inflects literature. Although this is the implicit agenda of a number of excellent works of scholarship on poetry, drama, and politics, I take explicit inspiration from Kahn's recent Clarendon lectures, in which she offered a reply to studies that credit the Reformation with the explosion of high quality literature in England in the late sixteenth century by arguing that literature had its own important effect on the Reformation, helping to taper its influence in certain ways. In other words, Kahn argues that literature affects society; it is not solely a palimpsest marked by cultural trends.[44] Similarly, this

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[42] Arnold, *Third Citizen*, chapter 2.
[43] They also collided in the 1640s movement called constitutional monarchism; see David Smith, *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c. 1640-1649* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).
[44] In her own words: "Instead of looking at the effects of the Reformation on English literature, I want to look at the effects of literature on the long-term legacy of the Reformation. Instead of arguing that the

dissertation argues that literature helped to shape political discourse at the turn of the seventeenth century—in Peter Lake's words, that early modern literature "participate[d] in the constitution of [its] context: it define[d] the shape of Elizabethans' preoccupations for them, in a sense supplying the very language they needed to articulate fears and desire".[45] My work further explores the ways in which drama, poetry, and history-writing could enter into dialogue with political theory. Specifically, I show that the special concerns of literature—human life in the smallest degree, social interactions, diachronic relationships—placed certain pressures on political tenets that shaped Anglo-Scottish discourse on government at a crucial moment in history.

Reformation fostered English literature, I will argue that literature helped undo the Reformation". Victoria Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 2.

[45] Peter Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017): 12.

CHAPTER ONE

Poetical to be Political: James VI's *Essayes of a Prentise* and Sixteenth-Century Sovereignty

James VI and I's first publication was a slim quarto of poetry that included twelve sonnets, translations of Du Bartas' *Vrania* and several psalms, a long ballad, and an original work of literary criticism. Modestly entitled *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie*, and issued anonymously,[1] it seems hardly to deserve the honor of being the first printed work by a monarch of Scotland, and the first printed book in the vernacular by a monarch of the British isles.[2] It appeared in 1584 (coinciding exactly with the end of James's minority) and was reissued the next year; among those who read it we can count Gabriel Harvey, who received his copy right off the press and adorned it with characteristically copious marginalia.[3]

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[1] James may have left off his name, but an acrostic at the start of the volume spells out the identity of the royal author. I mention the anonimoty because, despite its functioning as an open secret, it seems to have been a particular design feature of the volume. The acrostic itself presents a mystery: of the eight poems contributed by other poets to the opening of the volume (including Alexander Montgomerie and William Fowler), it is one of only three that are themselves functionally anonymous; I cannot find anyone who has been able to decipher the signature "Pa. Ad. Ep. Sanct.".

[2] There is a long history in Scotland and England of monarchs composing verse in manuscripts—for example, *The Kingis Quair* by James I of Scotland. Within the short history of printing technology, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I had utilized the press for broadsides but not for literature.

[3] Jennifer Richards, "Gabriel Harvey, James VI, and the Politics of Reading Early Modern Poetry", in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71.2 (June 2008): 303-321. More evidence of *Essayes* read by prominent and literary men include: in another extant copy, an anonymous poet penned verses responding to the its author's divine rank, creating an acrostic poem to show that he or she know the author, and following that with two more sonnets on the grace of kings and the poetic skills of James. See Sebastiaan Verweij, "'Booke, go thy ways': The Publication, Reading, and Reception of James VI/I/s Early Poetic Works", in *The Huntington Library Quarterly,* 77.2 (June 2014): 111-131. Verweij also writes that Harvey was particularly impressed by *Reulis and Cautelis,* James's poetry-writing manual included in the volume, p. 38. Ben Jonson and John Donne probably saw copies, and Curtis Perry and Jane Rickard have argued for how seriously these and other writers took the Scottish king's status as a poet. See, for example, Curtis

But *Essayes* was quickly overshadowed by the rest of James's oeuvre. By the end of the next decade, the king of Scotland had published a larger book of poetry, two treatises on kingship, a tract on witchcraft, and biblical commentaries; and when he ascended to the throne of England in 1603 many of these later works were so hastily republished in Scotland and England that London copies preceded James's own entry into the capital (though he arrived well within two months of Elizabeth's death). Evidence suggests that there was a voracious market for them: Shakespeare drew on *Daemonologie* for *Macbeth*, for example. *Basilikon Doron* quickly became the site of a dispute over pirated printing licenses, and soon after one of the primary witnesses for absolutist monarchical rule in the ideological battle that consumed Britain in the seventeenth century. Never printed in England, there is no evidence to suggest that James's little *Essayes* was read much after 1603.

It has certainly remained a diminutive presence in modern analyses of James's reign, writing, and political resolutions.[4] There has been some attention paid to particular components of the text: *Reulis and Cautelis to be Observit and Eschewit in Scottis Poesie*, for example, has been fruitfully explored for its part in James's socio-political arts and culture program at his court in Scotland.[5] Overall, however, criticism of *Essayes* as a complete volume, and readings

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Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 1; or Jane Rickard, *Writing the Monarch in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). However, neither book spends more than a page on *Essayes* particularly.

[4] This chapter uses the facsimile printed as no. 209 in the series, "The English Experience" (Da Capo Press, Amsterdam and New York, 1969). I have occasionally referenced the edition that was "carefully edited" by Edward Arber for the "English Reprints" series (London, Dec. 1869). Finally, the sonnet sequence has been modernized and annotated for the appendix in *Reading Monarch's Writing: The Poetry of Henry VIII, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I, and James VI/I,* ed. Peter Herman (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

[5] See R. D. S. Jack and P. A. T. Rozendaal, "Introduction" in *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature 1375-1707*, ed. R. D. S. Jack and P. A. T. Rozendaal (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997), xvi-xvii; or Rebecca Bushnell, "George Buchanan, James VI and neo-classicism" in *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thoguht and the Union of 1603,* ed. Roger A Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 91-111.

of its shorter poetry, suffer because the whole and many of its parts maintain an ambivalent relationship with politics. Critics, myself included, are primarily interested in the little book because of its intimate connection to the mind of one of the formative political actors *and* thinkers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: James was not only the first king of both England and Scotland, he was extremely learned and the primary proponent of absolutist thought between Jean Bodin and Robert Filmer. But there is not a consensus among scholars about the place of *Essayes* in James's political program; and those who set about to read it for its connection with James's later theories often don't sufficiently acknowledge that they are reading retrospectively, through the prism created by James's later political tracts and his long career in England. This chapter aims to re-place *Essayes* at the start of James's Scottish reign, and to re-evaluate its connection to his socio-political program by first considering the recent history of scholarship on the text and then by attending particularly to a much-neglected set of poems that open the little book.

Many years after the publication of *Essayes*, Ben Jonson praised James as both the "best of kings" and "best of poets" in one of his epigrams printed in his 1616 *Works*: "For such a *Poet,* while thy dayes were greene, / Thou wert,as chief of them are said t'have been. / And such a Prince thou art, wee daily see".[6] There is little more commentary on James's poetry of note until Jonathan Goldberg's landmark 1983 study, *James I and the Politics of Literature*. The book is a brilliant contribution to English studies for its literary treatment of James's works and its new historicist analyses of early modern royal discourse and power, but it dismisses much of James's early poetry by emphasizing a divide that Goldberg erroneously maps from Jonson's epigram onto James's career. The epigram writes to James, "thou *wert*" a poet and

[6] *Epigramme* 4, lines 5-7. Quoted in Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 17.

"thou *art*" a king; and Goldberg editorializes: "[i]t is probably fair to say as Jonson does that James replaced one role with another, that once he had the English crown, he could abandon the poet's laurels, at least before the public eye".[7] True, James did not publish poetry once he ascended to the English throne, but he did continue to write poems.[8] The troubling implications Goldberg makes here are that the Scottish crown was a lesser, or unfulfilling, task—that once James ruled a proper country he did not need or hadn't time for a creative outlet—*and* that James's early poetry stands apart from or even in opposition to his political aspirations.[9] It is one thing for Ben Jonson to conveniently forget about James's years in Scotland, because Jonson seeks a role for himself as the primary court poet.[10] But it is another to uphold that in modern scholarship.[11] And what of Jonson's primary accolade in the epigram—that James was "chief" of all the poets in Scotland? Is that not in itself a reason to reasses the poetry?

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[7] Goldberg, 18.

[8] He wrote through to the end of his life. See Jane Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007): last chapter.

[9] In his preface to the reader that opens *Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Hours,* James wrote that he had not the time to revise some of his earlier poetry that he printed in the volume: "being of riper yeares, my burden is so great and continuall, without anie intermission, that when my ingyne and age could, my affaires and fasherie will not permit mee, to re-mark the wrong orthography committed by the copiars of my vnlegible and ragged hand". Kingship occasionally interfered with poetic pursuits. But this preface is dated to 1591, while James was still king of Scotland alone. And despite the shortage of time he was able to spend perfecting his verse, James still wrote and published it. My point is (first) that James was quite busy with statescraft before he moved to London and that (secondly) he strove for some years to balance his consuming duties as king with his career as a poet. I used the edition of *Poeticall Exercises* printed in *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, ed. James Craigie, Vol. I (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, Ltd., printed for the Scottish Text Society, 1955): 98.

[10] See Curtis Perry's discussion of this epigram, which draws on Goldberg's, 35-6. Perry's book is second major study of James's literary work in the English discipline. Like Goldberg's, Perry's book limits its discussion of James to his career in England.

[11] Goldberg notes that since all "discourse is power" and "power is discourse", there are "parallels" between the "powers of poet and king", but he over-emphasizes a line from the *Reulis and Cautelis* where James enjoins Scottish poets not to mire their verse in political themes (which I reread below as disingenuous) as justification for devoting only few pages in the whole of his study to James's earliest poetry. Goldberg, 19. Sandra Bell also discusses this line, emphasizing that James *does* say poetry can treat matters of the commonwealth "metaphorically". See Bell, "James VI's Cultural Policy", in *Reading Monarch's Writing,* 166.

In the decades since Goldberg's book, scholarship has revised his division between the poetical and the political in James's writing and more seriously considered James's early poetry. Although he does not provide readings of the poems in *Essayes,* Peter Herman explores the king's "penchant for using verse to further his political goals" in a study of two of James's epistolary sonnets from the 1580s: one that he sent (twice) to Elizabeth I amidst their back-and-forth about whether she would soon declare him heir, and one that he contributed belatedly to a volume on the occasion of Sir Philip Sidney's death—an odd move, considering what Herman describes as Sidney's sympathy for French resistance theorists, but one that Herman decodes as savvy for James's recuperation in the eyes of English Protestants after the series of failed coups against Elizabeth's life in the name of his Catholic mother.[12] Herman, and later Sandra Bell, have produced short studies of James's 1585 epic poem *Lepanto*, which encodes a theo-political agenda.[13] Leeds Barroll takes up James's commitment to patronizing drama for its relationship to his political program in England. It has generally been assumed that James moved with unusual speed to secure the Chamberlain's Men as his personal acting troupe (only ten days after he arrived in London) because he had heard of Shakespeare's talent and wished to bring him under royal patronage. However, Barroll's careful parsing of the evidence suggests that pursuing the patent for the King's Men sent a swift and deliberate signal to the Puritans in the Scottish capital and in the localities around the north of England who abhorred theatre and who posed a challenge to James's authority, especially because the first member of the King's Men listed on the patent may have been the same Lawrence Fletcher who was once sentenced to death by the Scottish Kirk during James's early rule.[14]

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[12] Peter Herman, "Authorship and the Royal 'I': James VI/I and the Politics of Monarchic Verse", in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol 54, no. 4 (Winter, 2001): pp. 1498-1500 and 1505-7.
[13] Ibid., 1510-1523; and Bell, 193–208.
[14] Leeds Barroll, "Shakespeare, His Fellows, and the New English King", in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol.

But what of *Essayes* as a whole? Recent work has uncovered a history for specific copies as political artefacts. In a careful study of Harvey's copy, mentioned above, Jennifer Richards argues that the reader's marginalia transform the text into a site where Harvey imagines "a way of supporting a citizen-king".[15] Sebastiaan Verweij's bibliographic research has shown that in December of 1584, James Stewart, Earl of Arran, sent a copy specially bound in orange-stained vellum to William Cecil while in the process of negotiating an alliance with England. A second, identical copy was delivered to Henry Carey (who became England's Lord Chancellor in 1585), possibly by Arran again, who had met with Carey on state business earlier that year.[16] Verweij carefully interprets these actions: "it remains unclear if Arran acted independently or on royal command. Whatever the truth of this matter, only months after printing, these two specially bound *Essayes* had taken on a great deal of significance, […] as objects instrumental in cross-border diplomacy".[17]

Studies of the content of the work has not reached such definitive conclusions. Peter Herman finds it significant that "poesie" is the smallest word on *Essayes'* title page, "being nearly unnoticeable".[18] Sandra Bell rightly insists on the significance of the year in which James chose to publish his little book: on the advent of his political majority, just two years after he had been kidnapped and held for ten months by a particularly egregious Scottish faction known as the Ruthven Raiders, and in the same year that he publically condemned the major works of his republican tutor, George Buchanan, in parliament. Understood in this context, Bell argues, *Essayes* becomes a central piece of James's program to assert his world

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68, no. 2 (Summer 2017):115-138.
[15] Richards, "Gabriel Harvey", 314. See also p. 308.
[16] Verweij, 115.
[17] Ibid., 116.
[18] Herman, 1518. This is a strange observation, since the word is clearly part of the title and centered on the page.

view via a Scottish cultural rebirth.[19] But within James's poetry itself, Bell finds no sophisticated treatment of politics; of the sonnet sequence that introduces the volume, for example, she writes that they are "political in their very omission of topical politics. […] James shows how to avoid the Reformers' brand of oppositional politics with its emphasis on civil turmoil, and how to embrace a more benign political poetry, which reveals Scotland as a peaceable, European nation."[20] Laden with allusions to Roman deities and monsters, the sonnets demonstrate, in her words, an apolitical and classically-influenced intervention into the Scottish poetic scene otherwise dominated by court flytings. And Jane Rickard reads all of James's early poetry as imperfect expressions of James's particularly stringent brand of monarchism, "demonstration[s] of authority" that fall short of his ultimate goal to extend his absolutist authority because they invite interpretation.[21] She, too, holds up *Essaye's* sonnet sequence as her primary witness to this youthful incompetence, finding in them an obvious "Machiavellian" slant, which she defines as a model of rule "needing to emply cunning and fraud" and a "desire to control his subjects".[22] Thus, although Rickard notes that "any attempt to define James's writings as either straightforwardly literary or non-literary simplifies the complex relation between the literary and the political that informs these writings"[23], her agreement with Goldberg is implicit: James's early poetry is at best an imperfect medium for his political ideas, and at worst antithetical to his political agenda.[24]

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[19] Bell, especially 159-162.
[20] Ibid., 167.
[21] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority.* The quotation is from Anna Groundwater's succinct review in *The English Historical Review,* vol. 127, no. 524 (Feb. 2012): 174.
[22] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 53. Rickard is cautious about whether we can say definitively that James read Machiavelli's *Il Principe,* though he may well have. See no 69 on the same page of her book.
[23] Ibid., 36.
[24] In her second book-length study on leading poets' relationships to James's poetry, Rickard acknowledges that *Essayes of a Prentise* was an important moment in the renaissance of Scottish poetics, both above and below the Scotch-English border. But there is no further analysis of the content. See

These assessments exhibit the second problem that I noted in appraisals of James' early poetry. By and large, the method for reading his poems has been to apply the central tenets of early modern absolutism to his verses in order to assess whether they fit into his political program or obfuscate it. In other words, his verses are treated tautologically, as ciphers for a presumed code. This is in part due to its quality: much of the poetry is amateur, and thus scholars consider James's literary intentions to be negligible.[25] But this method reorders James's intellectual growth, mapping ideas that appear fully formed in later works onto his early poetry.[26] Furthermore, labelling James's poetry "Machiavellian" reproduces a pervasive anachronistic understanding of James's "absolutist" views of monarchy that belongs more firmly in the Civil War era.[27]

It is my contention that more a rich and nuanced reading of James's early poetry, however unskilled some of the lines are, is possible and, furthermore, is desirable for its insight into his political program and his public views on poetry. This chapter takes up *Essayes* because it is his earliest and his most neglected publication—and because it has those clear material ties to politics that indicate to me probably thematic involvement in James's political program. I argue that critics' dismissal of the short poems in *Essayes* is a symptom of the larger

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Writing the Monarch, 23-24 and 59-60.

[25] One commentator has even written that James simply began writing poetry too early in his life. David Harris Wilson, "James I and his Literary Assistants", in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol 8, no. 1 (Nov., 1944): 36. Perhaps he was looking at the verse in "The Phoenix" where James rhymes "reflex" with the letter "X".

[26] Generally, the key witnesses for James's absolutism are his 1598 and 1599 treatises, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchie* and *Basilikon Doron* respectively, and his speeches to the English Parliament between 1604 and 1616. These are the most widely available texts, printed in *King James VI and I: Political Writings,* ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[27] Below, I benefit from the following studies in particular: Glenn Burgess *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); and J. H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early-Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

issue with assessments of James's political theory: namely that his absolutism is not closely studied in its own contexts. Broadly, I am interested in the relationship that poetry has to James's particular beliefs about kingship, the role of poetry in the construction of early modern theories of sovereignty, and the connection that literature could broker between a king and his subjects. In particular, I show that the sonnets that open *Essayes,* and which have received the least amount of critical attention of all of James's writings, do not attempt to "lay claim to a sort of dictatorial power over the reader" that forecloses on interpretation;[28] rather, they map a certain posture on the part of the poet (James) towards his readership that is indicative of and illuminates his early character as king.

An Excursus on James and Sixteenth-Century Absolutism

Before I proceed to the poetry, a clarification about the term "absolute monarch" in James's historical moment is in order. The phrase is sometimes equated with a king who rules in an arbitrary manner, or even used as a synonym for "tyrant", denoting one who believes his position to be extra-legal, divinely appointed, and unimpeachable. These connotations developed in the period after which James ruled, in the lead up to the Scottish and English Civil Wars; and James's own brand of 'absolutism' needs to be carefully disentangled from those later royalists who borrowed from and expanded upon his theory of kingship to fit a different context.[29] Understanding precisely what James meant the handful of times that he employed the

[28] Perry, 19. On James's wish for an "obedient" audience for his poetry, see also Goldberg, 18-19.
[29] James never uses this term, though he does talk of 'absolute monarchy'.

phrase "absolute monarch"—and how sixteenth and early seventeenth century readers and listeners understood him—is central to my reading of James's early poetry.

Divinely appointed and unimpeachable: James famously describes kings as "the supremest thing vpon earth […] GODS Lieutenants".[30] Certainly, according to James, kings were chosen by God. Certainly, too, they were *irresistible*: James believed, counter to the proto-republican tradition beginning to ferment in Scotland, that the position of a king was not contingent upon an election or a council, and further that kings could not be removed from power no matter how they abused their position.[31] "[R]ebellion be euer vnlawful", he wrote to his son in his book of advice for kings called *Basilikon Doron*—though, he points out in the next line, it can and does happen.[32] James likely took this tenet of absolutism from the most famous and well-cited absolutist thinker of the sixteenth century, Jean Bodin, whose *Six livres de la republique* he owned.[33] For Bodin, the quality of being irresistible is intrinsic to absolutism: as Quentin Skinner succinctly describes, Bodin "makes it clear that in characterizing the sovereign as 'absolute', what he has in mind is that […] [t]he sovereign is in short immune by definition from lawful resistance".[34] But the necessity of James's argument for his own context does not come from unprompted ideological affiliation, but likely from his infant experiences. James had been crowned at just thirteen months old because his mother had been forced to abdicate rule of Scotland and flee to England. Referring obliquely to Mary's

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[30] Speech to Parliament 21 March 1610. Printed in *Political Writings*, p. 181.
[31] Glenn Burgess uses this term, *irresistible*, and separates it from the concept of a *limitless* king. See *Absolute Monarchy,* chapter 2, especially pp. 19-25. Also instrumental to my understanding of James's absolutism is Burns, *The True Law of Kingship,* chapter 7.
[32] James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron*, printed in *Political Writings*, p. 21.
[33] Johann P. Sommerille, "Introduction" in *King James VI and I: Political Writing*, p. xxviii.
[34] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. II (Cambridge: CUP, 1978): 287. The passages that Skinner reads in Jean Bodin can be found in *On Sovereignty*, ed. Jean Franklin (Cambridge: CUP, 1992): Book I, chapter 8, especially pp. 6-8. *On Sovereignty* is a modern edition of excerpts from *Six livres.*

dethronement and the factional fighting that ensued, James laments that at the start of *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) that "[n]o Commonwealth, that euer hath bene since the beginning, hath had greater need of the trew knowledge of this ground, then this our so long disordered, and distracted Common-wealth hath".[35] His treatise is intended to firm up his power and display his sophisticated understanding of political history—and to deploy that knowledge for the sake of his own security.

When you take away a population's check on executive power, that power seems endowed with a limitless potential for arbitrary action. Ahead of the Scottish and English Civil Wars, republican polemicists came to fear precisely that.[36] But Glenn Burgess has charted the way in which this inflection—limitlessness, or the potential to act arbitrarily—is only part of the rhetoric of absolute monarchy in and after the 1630s. Burgess shows that it is *not* there in Jean Bodin; and it is not there in James's writings.[37] This is an important distinction, without which we risk reading James anachronistically. Sir Robert Filmer, who derived much of his own theory from James, wrote and seemed fervently to believe at the time of the Civil Wars that a king is "unbound by law".[38] It is true that James had confidently penned in *Trew* that "a good king will frame all his actions to be according to the Law; yet is hee not bound thereto but

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[35] In addition, the chaos of the Marian years in Scotland had recently been exacerbated by new continental ideas: "Faced with the horrors of Buchanan and Huguenot resistance theory, James needed to demonstrate [in *Trew Law*], not that kings were unlimited, but rather that their being limited did not imply that there was on earth any power superior to them." Burgess, 41. For more analysis of the historical context in which Scottish absolutism arose, see Burns, *True Law,* especially 'Introduction' and pp. 222-223.

[36] See, for example, the anonymous pamphlet titled *England's Miserie and Remedie in a Judicious Letter from an Utter-Barrister to a Special Friend […] Sept. 14 1645,* printed in *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003): 276-7; or John Lilburne's *The Just Defence of John Lilburn, against Such as Charge Him with Turbulency of Spirit*, first printed in 1653 and also included in *Divine Right and Democracy,* 146.

[37] Burgess, ch. 2.

[38] This is Glenn Burgess's phrase for Filmer in *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* p. 37. On the way that absolute theory comes to embody a more "absolute" version of itself, see also David Wootton's "Introduction" to *Divine Right and Democracy*, 34-35.

of his good will".[39] Filmer emphasized the phrase "not bound theretoo", but more important for James was that a king assume the correct posture (or "fram[ing]") and good will befitting a king. Though he is not compelled to, for example, a good king always keeps his promises to his subjects—contra the Machiavellian magistrate.[40] James emphasizes the first clause on a king's duty often through the treatise, noting that "[t]he Princes duetie to his Subiects is so clearely set downe in many places of the Scriptures, and so openly confessed by all the good Princes, according to their oath at their Coronation".[41] Filmer and others would have done well to attend, too, to James's immediate context: at its publication, *Trew Law* was intended to be read by the powerful factions at odds in the Scottish kingdom who had been flexing their muscles during the Marian years and throughout their king's infancy. For the stability of the kingdom, James insists that the king is the font of jurisprudence: he makes the laws and while this therefore naturally puts him above them,[42] a good king remains ever lawful and effectively bound by the law *of their own volition.* They do not act arbitrarily or tyrannically; for example, "a iust Prince will not take the life of any of his subjects without a cleare lawe; yet the same lawes whereby he taketh them, are made by himselfe, or his predecessours; and so we see the power flowes alwaies from him selfe".[43] Such action is important not least because it works to inspire lawfulness is a king's subjects, who "are naturally inclined to counterfaite (like apes) their Princes maners".[44] Years later and in a much more stable kingdom, James delivered a speech in which he considers the king's different and complicated relationships with Civil and

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[39] James VI/I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, in *Political Writings,* 75.
[40] Noted by Johann Sommerville in his "Introduction" to *Political Works*, xix.
[41] *Trew Law*, 64.
[42] *Trew Law* 73.
[43] *Trew Law,* p. 75. On the same page James further insists, "a good king, although hee be aboue the Law, will subject and rame his actions thereto […] of his owne free-will".
[44] *Basilikon Doron*, 20.

English Common law to his English Parliament, and he assured listeners that he understood how "God neuer leaue Kings vnpunished when they transgress these limits [set down by Common Law]".[45]

In *Trew Law* James uses "absolute monarch" for the first time in print. Like all of his subsequent deployments of the term, its precise meaning depends upon its context on the page and in history. Appearing at the end of the introductory paragraph, James writes that he has "chosen then onely to set downe in this short Treatise, the trew grounds of the *mutuall duetie* [my emphasis] and allegiance betwixt a free and absolute *Monarche,* and his people".[46] Again, absolute has a meaning closer to our modern words of "certain", "complete", or "unimpeachable".[47] Were it to mean "limitless" or "omnipotent", as it is often taken for, it would not make sense for James to speak of duties towards or an allegiance with subjects. But here, and in his poetry, James is interested in the obligations and traditions that bind him to his subjects and that structure his position. In Kevin Sharpe's words, "[t]oo much that has been written about the King's theory of divine right has failed to grasp that James saw his position as God's lieutenant not as a power but as a duty—and as an awesome duty".[48] Indeed, James's texts evince a sustained interest in obligation, and in borders and limitations. Kings recognize that laws are "craued" by subjects, and therefore kings must create them.[49] Kingship for James is always inscribed: in dedicating *Basilikon Doron* to his son, for example, he calls the book as

[45] James VI/I, "Speech to Parliament of 21 March 1610", in *Political Writings,* 183.
[46] *Trew Law,* 63-64.
[47] See Burgess, 31.
[48] Kevin Sharpe, "Private Conscience and Public Duty in the Writings of James VI and I" in *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 85.
[49] *Trew Law*, 74.

a "patterne" for the boy's tenure.[50] A limitless king is not one who thinks as carefully as James does about the history and the moral obligations that confine the position and its power.

Jonathan Goldberg takes as axiomatic of James's political theory a line from one of the poems that opens *Basilikon Doron*: "James proclaimed himself a king by Divine Right, ruling in 'the stile of *Gods*': it is that style that I seek to identify".[51] I too see a microcosm of James's political philosophy in the sonnet:

> GOD giues not Kings the stile of Gods in vaine,
> For on his Throne his Scepter doe they swey:
> And as their subiects ought them to obey,
> So Kings should feare and serue their God againe:[52]

James compares himself to God, and enjoins his subjects to obey him on the grounds that he is god-like—the man is not and never could have been democratic. But whereas Goldberg understands the 'stile of God' to be a mandate for James's limitless earthly power, a Tamburlaine-like boast, I read it as a specific prescription for the boundaries that James incurs in his position, and my reading is supported by the three lines that follow the phrase, which place James in a specific and relative position bounded on either side of the hierarchy by God and his subjects.[53] And, here and elsewhere, James draws the stronger parallel between himself and his subjects rather than between himself and divinity. In *Trew Law,* James wrote that 'the

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[50] *Basilikon Doron*, 1.
[51] Goldberg, xi.
[52] *Basilikon Doron*, 1.
[53] Goldberg's project, as an early example of applying Foucault's theories to literature, understands power to derive its strength from ambiguity, p. 12. Although I disagree with much of her first book, I am indebted to the approach that Rickard takes in her second, *Writing The Monarch in Jacobean England.* There, she writes in her introduction that she is rejecting a New Historicist "regicentric mode" of understanding power, and she argues against "treating all cultural production as an allegory of power" because it "flattens and simplifies that culture". See pp 9-10. *Writing the Monarch* is excellent for its study of how others responded to James's poetry but does not interrogate the king's early verse itself.

further a king is preferred by God aboue all other ranks & degrees of men, and the higher that his seat is aboue theirs: the greater is his obligation to his maker'.[54] Any distance James may perceive between himself and his subjects only redoubles his burden to oblige God. He therefore may have the 'stile' of God, but he shares the human experience of subservience and obligation with his own subjects. This triangulation of James, his subjects, and his deity appears often in James's political writings and is the focus of the last sonnet in the sequence with which *Essayes of a Prentise* begins. It is at these poems I now direct my inquiry.

I. "O for a Muse of Fire!"

We are now in a position to apply a more historically specific definition of James's "absolute monarche" to his poetry, though I keep in mind that James's two political treatises, *Trew Law* and *Basilikon Doron*, were written over a decade after *Essayes*. I take up the case of the twelve sonnets that comprise the unnamed sequence at the start of *Essayes* because the scant criticism they have received has universally concluded that they express James's desire for omnipotent power over his readers. Whether that be the case or not, as we shall see, we cannot connect that desire to a simplified version of his political theory any more.

The sonnets' content is somewhat repetitive: each one turns on the desire of its speaker for particular sets of descriptive powers associated with particular gods of classical antiquity. The first in the series is a representative example:

> First Ioue, as greatest God aboue the rest,

[54] James VI, *Political Writings,* 83.

Graunt thou to me a pairt of my desyre:
That when in verse of thee I wryte my best,
This onely thing I earnestly requyre,
That thou my veine Poetique so inspyre,
As they may suirlie think, all that it reid,
When I descryue thy might and thundring fyre,
That they do see thy self in verie deid
From heauen the greatest Thunders for to leid,
And syne vpon the Gyants heads to fall:
Or cumming to thy Semele with speid
In Thunders least, at her request and call:
Or throwing Phaethon downe from heauen to eard,
With threatning thunders, making monstrous reard.[55]

In each poem, the speaker invokes a classical god to aid him in his art. Here, he asks 'Ioue' to intervene in and intensify the poem's descriptions of traditional iconography associated with the king of the gods ("thundring fyre", for example, in line 7).[56] The poet claims that he is writing as "best" he can (3); but that in order for his imagined audience to "see" what he relates, he needs divine help. In further poems, James asks that his muses "Let then the *Harvest* so viue to them [the Readers] appeare, / As if they saw bot cornes and clusters neare"; and later

[55] James VI/I, *Essayes of a Prentise* (Edinburgh, 1584). I used the facsimile edition, no. 209 in The English Experience series (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969): A iii recto.
[56] I use the male pronoun because I agree generally with William Oram in "prefer[ing] to work from the obvious, if unprovable, assumption that every writer invests some of himself in his characters". Oram is specifically discussing poetry that meditates on the poetic process, where the "I" is a poet, and this is the case here. See William Oram, "Lyric Address and Spenser's Reinvention of the Proem", in *Studies in Philology*, vol. 116, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 260. I further argue below that our sonnets' speaker can and should be closely identified with poet, i.e. James VI/I, or at least with a poet-king.

"Let Reidars think, when combats manyfold / I do descriue, they see two champions braue / With armies huge approaching […]".[57] The poems culminate in a final, twelfth sonnet that promise glory to the gods if they help the poet to succeed in his endeavors.

In Sonnet 4, James frames his goals for his poetry in terms of deception: "And shortly, all their [Readers'] senses so bereaued, / As eyes and earis, and all may be *deceaued*" (11-12, my emphasis). The verb is an odd choice, and it has led to the interpretation that James wants to manipulate his audiences—to exert authoritarian control over what others perceive to be the truth—by Goldberg, Perry, Bell, and Rickard.[58] Writing this chapter under the regime of America's forty-fifth president, I am more than tempted to concur and to trace a history of political power that consciously and openly trades in mistruths in order to prop itself up back to James's little book; but such a reading (firstly) misunderstands James's absolutism and (secondly) considers James *only* as a political speaker and not as a poetical one, eliding the most obvious context of the phrase as part of one verse in a poem. 'Deceau[ing]" readers with imagery, or—as James far more frequently articulates his intentions—making readers "think" they "see" physical spaces and experiences that exist only as language in print, has more neutral connotations in the literary world and falls within the purview of intended readerly responses to the mimetic device of *enargia* or *hypotyposis* (now often subsumed under the broadest definition of ekphrasis).[59]. The second term is the most useful for considering James's

[57] Sonnet 5, lines 11-12; and Sonnet 10, 3-6.
[58] Rickard also uses the word "trick" to describe James's intended result. See Rickard, *Authorship and Authority,* 53
[59] Ekphrasis can be any "detailed description of an image" but it is "in specialized form, limited to the description of a work of visual art". See G. G. Starr, "Ekphrasis", in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics,* 4th ed., ed. Roland Grene (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 393. I am indebted to Sandra Logan, who used *hypotyposis* to name what I was calling *ekphrasis* at the NeMLA conference in 2019. I subsequently sought out her book for help. See Sandra Logan, *Text/Events in Early Modern England: Poetics of History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): introduction.

poetic program. According to George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesy*, *hypotyposis* is "counterfeit representation […] set[ting] forth many things in such sort as it should appear they were truly before our eyes, though they were not present".[60] Such representation takes real skill and "cunning" on the part of the poet, writes Puttenham, especially if the "things we covet to describe be not natural or not veritable", like Roman gods and sea monsters (Sonnet 8).[61] The super-natural or supra-natural elements that James wishes to include in his poetry have the potential to highlight his poet's skill set. And, as we will see below, working above or beyond elements in nature becomes important to James's cultural program for poetry in Scotland.

This repeated desire to "deceaue" is, first and foremost, evidence of the poet's attempts for them to excel *as* poems on the page, and not to control readers beyond it. Even as they address the panoply of pagan deities in Roman heavens—linking James, Goldberg might insist, to the "stile of gods"—so too do they connect James to classical literature (as Bell notes). They also place Scotland's king in conversation with more contemporary literary traditions. Voicing one's aspirations for the merit of a literary endeavor at the start of the text is a common enough occurrence, but James's sonnets recall Chaucer's proems that head each of his books of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and which also invoke a different muse or classical God and meditate on the role of the poet.[62] Then there is the much stronger resonance, which modern day readers will no

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[60] George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie* (1589). Printed in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism,* ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): 275.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Oram discusses Chaucer's (and Spenser's) proems, and it was in reading his article that I noticed the similarities between Chaucer's proems and James's sonnets. See Oram, 257. In defense of the following discussion, I want to note that I know that it was a widespread convention to invoke a Muse at the start of a long poetic work, but that Jonathan Culler has made a case for interrogating conventions. See his "Apostrophe", in *Diacritics,* vol. 7, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 60. Below, I will argue for a way to read James's particular appropriation of and twist on invocation. On the importance of Chaucer's work, and specifically his *Trolius and Criseyde*, for Scottish poets at the court of James VI, see Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson, "'The Fountain and Very Being of Truth': James VI, Poetic Invention, and National Identity", in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writing of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark

doubt have noted: the conceit that James repeatedly draws upon is very similar to later invocations written by Shakespeare for his Chorus in *Henry V* (ca. 1599-1600), and Thomas Dekker for *Old Fortunatus* (ca. 1599). Here is an excerpt from the former work:

> O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
>
> The brightest heaven of invention,
>
> […]
>
> Suppose within the girdle of these walls
>
> Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
>
> Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
>
> The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
>
> Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts.
>
> Into a thousand parts divide on man
>
> And make imaginary puissance.
>
> Think when we talk of horses, that you see them
>
> Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth.[63]

Shakespeare's Chorus plays on the traditional invocation, sighing that he longs for a muse. In the absence of any deity, however, he turns to the audience's "imaginary puissance" for help. With only circumstantial evidence, I suggest that these lines are, specifically, a riff on and reply to James's invocation in his sonnet sequence. It may be more than coincidence that James's first poem calls upon the god of "thundring fyre" as his poetic muse; and Shakespeare's Chorus specifically laments the lack of a "Muse of fire"—indeed, it seems a bit of a joke on James's

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Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002): 106-110. Ives and Parkinson do not discuss the sonnets by James VI.

[63] William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act 1, scene I, lines 1-2, 19-27. I used *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works,* ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, 3rd edition (2011).

poetic abilities that Shakespeare insinuates that no muse did appear for the young king! I have not been able to locate a "muse of fire" in other pre-1600 texts; nor has the editor of the Oxford edition of *Henry V,* who suggests that Shakespeare might have borrowed from Chapman's "God of fire" in *Achilles Shield* (1598).[64] This is not as compelling of a source as the *Essayes* sonnet since James's poetic muse is complicit in the same conceit that Shakespeare appropriates and inverts for his Chorus.[65]

If the conceit of exploding *hypotyposis* by signposting it explicitly (when I say or write this, you will see that) soon after 1600 became somewhat commonplace, I have found no poems before James that do such; and, indeed, it is this lack of a precedent for Shakespeare's overt deployment of the device that has partially fueled a recent debate over who first used the conceit on the stage: Thomas Dekker for his prologue to *Old Fortunatus* or Shakespeare in *Henry V*.[66] They share the synechdochical wish of allowing a stage to stand for a monarchy; compare the above quotation with the following:

> And for this small circumference must stand,
>
> For the imagined surface of much land,
>
> Of many kingdoms, and since many a mile
>
> Should here be measured out, our Muse entreats
>
> Your thoughts to help poor art, and to allow

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[64] See Gary Taylor's note on page 91 of Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor (Oxford: OUP, 2008).
[65] There is not strong evidence that Shakespeare read Chapman. See Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources* (New Brunswick, NJ: the Athlone Press, 2001): 87.
[66] Though the Chorus's lines are missing from the 1600 quarto of *Henry V*, scholars now assume that this speech was composed with the rest of the play because that would put their existence as prior to the Stationer's entry for *Old Fortunatus.* See James P. Bednarz, "When Did Shakespeare Write the Chorus of *Henry V*?" in *Notes and Querries*, Vol. 53, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 486-489; and James P. Bednarz, "Dekker's Response to the Chorus of *Henry V*" in *Notes and Querries,* Vol. 59, no. 1 (Mar. 2012): 63-68.

That I may serve as Chorus to her senses.[67]

Dekker's play appears in the Stationer's record after the first known staging of Shakespeare's, but the first printing of *Henry V* lacked the Chorus passages. My suggestion that Shakespeare is responding to James's plea for a "muse of fire" weighs in on this issue and clearly supports a chronology that places Shakespeare first, since there are no particular images in Dekker's lines that double in James' poetry. Shakespeare borrowed from James; Dekker from Shakespeare.

It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Shakespeare saw the *Essayes*, since there were known copies in the greater London area in the possession of William Cecil and Gabriel Harvey, among others. And it is probable that Shakespeare would take some interest in James's writing around the turn of the seventeenth century, as Elizabeth aged and it looked increasingly likely that the Scottish king would ascend to the English throne sooner rather than later.[68] In 1598 and 1599 (the year that Shakespeare wrote *Henry V*), James published his two treatises on kingship, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilikon Doron*, respectively—though neither were widely available in England until after Elizabeth's death. It's tempting to think that rumors of their dissemination in Scotland prompted Shakespeare to seek out any texts by James available below the Scottish border. In the first few years of James's English reign, Shakespeare wrote at least three plays that show familiarity with the new king's politics, religious policies, and poetry;[69] but in the years preceding 1603-4, which were thick with anxiety about the

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[67] Thomas Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, in *Thomas Dekker*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, 1904): 291.

[68] Lord Burghley died at the end of the summer of 1598, the last of Elizabeth's great councilors.

[69] I refer to *Macbeth*, *King Lear,* and *Othello.* See Kenneth Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (Abington, Oxon: Routledge, 1977. Reprinted 2005): 216-217; or Emrys Jones, who argues specifically for *Essayes* as context for *Othello* in "*Othello, Lepanto* and the Cyprus Wars" in *Shakespeare Survey*, Vol. 21 (1968): 47-52.

throne's succession, might the playwright have taken an interest James's writings, especially for a play concerned with legitimating kingship such as *Henry V* is?

Regardless of whether Shakespeare knew of *Essayes* at the time that he wrote *Henry V*, the comparison between James's poems and the play's Chorus is useful for unpacking the sonnets: through the artfulness of Shakespeare's lines, we can better see the mechanisms of James's. The Chorus's reference to the powers of a 'Muse' opens his speech; thereafter, he forms a contract with the audience about how they will view the ensuing play and does not mention the supernatural again.[70] He speaks directly—facing—the audiences; in every line we are reminded not of the might of the gods but of the "imperfections" of humans, the limitations of theatres, and the potential for artistic imagination. Because the Globe cannot hold a thousand men to people an army, the audience is entreated to "make imaginary puissance". In contrast, James's incessant triangulation of you / I / they, corresponding to the Greek gods and muses / the speaker / and the audience, interrupts every couplet.[71] Over and over across the twelve poems James's lines run up against repetitive invocations and appeals to various gods to "Let Readers think", "Or let them think", "BVT let them think", "Yea let them think". Shakespeare's Chorus succeeds in a kind of inverse paralipsis: even as he draws attention to the walls of the theatre, they dissipate in the face of the 'mighty monarchies' described at length. (It's analogous to if you were able to make your audience forget about pink elephants even as you mentioned them.) But James everywhere reminds his audiences of the status of his poems as

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[70] On the speech as a contract, see Pamela Mason "*Henry V:* 'the quick forge and working house of thought'", in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 177-192.

[71] Some of James's most generous critics have admitted that his poetry lacks a sublime quality. James Craigie writes that James's greatest literary weakness "was that his conception of poetry tended to be purely mechanical and external. Though he recognized that more than a slavish observance of the rules was needed to make a poet, he seems never to have understood the true nature of that something else". See James Craigie, "Introduction", *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, xliii.

words on the page even as he insists that they will become something greater beneath his pen. The artifice, rather than the argument, seems the crucial feature.

How much of this is poor taste or youthful inability? Puttenham describes a need for "great discretion" for successful hypotyposis; Quintilian wrote that rhetorical strategies make the strongest impression on an audience when they are inserted covertly into writing, without calling attention to themselves.[72] These observation contour Shakespeare's particular success. The audience's attention is directed toward imaginary scenery, away from the Chorus's rhetoric and the muse assisting him. It may be that James lacks poetic skill and 'cunning'; in his own treatise on poetry, he devotes one of his eight chapters to emphasizing "the figure of Repetitioun", even writing that it may be "cumly" to use a single word "aucht or nyne times […] for the better decoratioun of the verse".[73] Later, to the English Parliament, he excuses himself for any repetition with a maxim: "some of you that are here, haue not at one time or other, heard me say the like already: Yet as corporall food nourisheth and mainteineth the body, so doeth *Reminiscentia* nourish and maintain memory".[74] In the *nth* re-articulation of Jame's desire to conjure the perfect mimetic experience in his readers, perhaps all we are seeing is an unsuccessful aesthetic at work.

On the other hand, James was well trained in classical rhetorical texts such as Cicero's *Rhetoric* (though he may not have known Quintilian).[75] And after all, no one ever deceived

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[72] Puttenham, *Arte*, 275. Quintilian, *Quinctilian's Institutes of eloquence: or, The art of speaking in public, in every character and capacity,* trans. W. Guthrie, 2 vols. (London: Printed for R. Dutton, 1805): 2.167-172.

[73] James VI/I, *Reulis and Cautelis,* in *Essayes*, M. ij. verso. James also councils against translations, but includes two in *Essayes*. This is discussed by Craigie, xxvi-xxvii.

[74] James VI/I, "A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament*,* March 1609", *Political Writings*, 179.

[75] I am using information from the manuscript list made by James's tutor, Peter Young, that catalogued the king's library between 1573 and 1583, i.e. up until the year before James wrote *Essayes*. See the

anyone by telling them that they were going to attempt to do so. So why would James try? The poems might be better understood if we read them with the understanding that James performs *hypotyposis,* but he does not engage it qua *hypotyposis*—that is, I argue that his intentions are clearly other than what is usually intended by the device. Consider how, in the example from Shakespeare above, the Chorus completes the image of twin monarchies and interjects itself ("Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts") only at the start of his description of the armies. Imperatives mark new items for the audience to conjure. Shakespeare also gives agency to his audiences, by addressing them in the second person. In contrast, James interrupts himself in the act of "set[ting] forth" summer in the fourth sonnet by referring to his imagined reader in the third person:

> As for the grasse on feild, the dust in streit
> Doth ryse and flee aloft, long or it fall.
> Yea, let them think, they heare the song and call,
> Which Floras winged musicians maks to sound
> And that to taste, and smell, beleue they shall (4.6-11).

Although there is a full stop at the end of the seventh line, the poem continues onwards with other aspects of summer (its sounds and smells) that embellish the 'grasse on field'. But the poet's persistent narration of his own poetic process via his muse interrupts the description. "Yea" signals a return to the rhetorical stance of the poem as a written piece—a description of summer, rather than a summer day.[76] It cannot be the image that James wishes to convey, but the act of conveying an image. His purpose is to direct attention to himself as author and to his

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printed edition *The Library of James VI,* ed. George F Warner (Edinburg, Printed by T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society, 1893).

[76] See Culler, "Apostrophe"; or the idea of "ecomimesis" in Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Print, 2007): 31-33.

action of poetry-making. Memorably, Sidney accomplishes something similar, with far more finesse, at the start of *Astrophil and Stella* just a few years later:

> Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
> That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,—
> Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
> Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—
> I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe[77]

Here, the image of the desired reader's response to the sonnet is described in order to emphasize the poet's own process of making—the labor with which he constructs the love poetry. In James's sonnets, so too does the imagined future presence of the reader serve to intensify the relationship between the poet and his craft, and (in James's case) the divine muses. In Jonathan Culler's words, "invocation is a figure of vocation"—a moment where the poet draws attention to himself and constitutes himself as a poet.[78] Every gesture to the reader is a reorientation of that reader's attention to the poetry's creator, and its artifice as poetry, more than it is a blatant hope to 'deceive' or overwhelm those who encounter it.

James also draws attention to his poetry-writing's contingency upon the will of the heavens. "This *onely* thing I earnestly requyre,/ That thou my veine Poetique so inspyre" (Sonnet 1, my emphasis): the speaker's first and 'onely' wish is for divine inspiration. And the sonnets culminate in a promise, or an oath, that everything the gods endow upon the poet will reflect back upon. Thus in the myriad reiterations of "Graunt Readers may esteme…" "Let Readers think…" we may focus on the reader, or we may focus on the implicit addressee of the

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[77] Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet 1, lines 1-5. I used the edition in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. B, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Katharine Maus, George Logan, and Barbara Lewalski (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2012): 1084.
[78] Culler, "Apostrophe", 63.

vocative case. These are poems about the relationship between the speaker and his muses, and about the act of inscription. Reframed thus, the subject matter of the sonnets is political because the muse—speaker—reader relationship mirrors the divine order in which James believed. James writes to Henry, "let your own life be a law-booke and a mirrour to your people; that therein they may read the practise of their owne Lawes, and therein they may see, by your image, what life they should leade".[79] The analog in the poetry is simple and heavy handed—the speaker writes of an ideal reader's response that is brought about by the help of the classical gods just as James prays to live through his own God as a model for his people—but it is fitting for the king who later patronized Ben Jonson, author of the sentiment that poetry "offers to mankind a certain rule and pattern of living".[80] Patterns, for James, bring order to the world. "Monarchie is the true patterne of Diuinitie", he argues in *Trew Lawe*, and in *Basilikon Doron* he chides Henry that he must "teach your people by your example".[81] Through the poems, James's speaker imagines himself penning the patterns or forms for his readers' experiences with nature, and he calls upon the divine to help him in this task.

Victoria Kahn describes how successful Renaissance writers, particularly Jonson, consciously cultivate a dialectic "between rhetoric and poetics":

> This is a tension between being persuaded to moral virtue and being persuaded to appreciate the poet as maker, who draws on rhetorical techniques to shape his text. In the first case, rhetoric is a tool of a moral pedagogy […] in the second case, rhetoric calls attention to the autonomous poetic artifact, the activity of poetic

[79] James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron,* in *Political Writings,* 34.
[80] Ben Jonson, *Discoveries*
[81] James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron,* 20. James VI/I, *Trew Law,* in *Political Writings,* 64.

> making (poiesis) and the production of believability, with only an indirect, if any relationship to ethics.[82]

James's poetry reads as simple, straightforward, and amateur in part because the poet-as-mak[a]r and poet-as-moral-compass are collapsed. The rhetoric of a king is the rhetoric of a moral pedagogue; the artifice cannot exist beyond the realm of Christian ethics.

II. The "stile of gods" and the marques of kings

What I have been arguing is that James the poet and rhetorician existed alongside James the monarch and political theorist in two senses. First, James's little book of poems announced to his kingdom *and drew attention to* his status and abilities as a poet. Secondly, as I will further explore below, James's envisioned his careers as mutually constitutive. It is not that James wrote his poetry to imperfectly echo tenets of his absolutist philosophy. Rather, he imagined that poetry could take an active, constructive role in framing and instituting his political goals: as I argued above, *hypotyposis* becomes one way in which James thinks through his God-given task to create models by and through which his subjects contour their lives.

I also contend that James's use of hypotyposis draws the author to the forefront of the readers' minds even as the verses describe pagan gods and scenes of nature. But hypotyposis has other effects that I think James explores in his lengthy deployment of the literary device.

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[82] Victoria Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 22.

Despite their professed effect of making readers "see" and "hear" various scenes, hypotyposis and other ekphrasitic techniques never produce visual images. Put simply, "words are many other things but are not—and happily are not—pictures".[83] James could have chosen to deploy a sophisticated program of iconography and imagery—much as his unfortunate progeny would do south of the border, with coinage and van Dyck family portraits—to impress his subjects,[84] but he instead (at least at the start of his reign in Scotland) chose words. What are the benefits to writing an image rather than producing one? Murray Krieger draws on a future political theorist's conception of what verbal images can conjure in a reader to answer that question: reading Edmund Burke, Krieger writes that for Burke "natural-sign representation is the handicapped one because it is limited by the physical confines of the object of imitation, while language, in the vagueness, the unpredictability—but also the suggestiveness—that emanates from its arbitrary signs, can have a virtually unlimited emotional appeal".[85] In other words, Krieger understand Burke to argue that words have greater potential politically than do images because language is more affective than images. It seems to me that it is this precise quality that James cultivates through ekphrasis and hypotyposis in his poetry.

In *Reulis and Cautelis,* James's manual on Scottish poetry writing that closes out *Essayes*, James writes: "*Inuention*, is ane [one] of the cheif vertewis in a Poete".[86] Sir Philip Sidney argued something similar, writing in *The Defense of Poesie* that "[the poet] citeth not

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[83] Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: the Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 2.
[84] According to Kevin Sharpe, "Perhaps no early modern monarch paid as much attention to image as King Charles I […] yet the king's reign ended in political failure, civil war and military defeat". See Sharpe, *Image Wars: Kings and Commonwealths in Engalnd, 1603-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010): 137 and all of the prologue at the center of the book entitled "Prologue: A Failure of Images?".
[85] Krieger 24.
[86] James VI/I, *Reulis and Cautelis*, in *Essayes*, M. ij. recto.

authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire into him a good invention", though James is less specific than Sidney about whether he is discussing content or form.[87] For Rebecca Bushnell, James's discussion in *Reulis and Cautelis* on invention has a clear political agenda: it aligns with and augments the young king's position on the origins and fount of his political power vis á vis the position of his tutor, George Buchanan. Like me, Bushnell is interested in the twofold potential for conservative and liberal thought in neo-classicism, and particularly in the way in which Buchanan's writing

> demonstrates a conflict between the critical consciousness of the humanist philologist and historian who […] subjected the tyranny of custom to the light of reason, and the polemicist who knew the power of the argument of tradition and the usefulness of the myth of Scottish history in Scottish political discourse.[88]

The royal tutor and infamous monarchomach based his republican arguments on the Scottish mythic history of Fergus I, first king of Scotland, and Kenneth III, grandfather of Macbeth. In Buchanan's tome, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia,* which was later banned in Scotland by James for its anti-Marian tirade and for its contributions to anti-monarchical theory, Fergus is elected by the people of Scotland ("He, by the publick consent of the people, was chosen King");[89] and some few hundreds of years later Kenneth III commits a crucial blunder by imposing primogeniture as the law of the land (in Buchanan's colorful words: "by indirect and evil practices setled the kingdom on his posterity" and thereafter "his mind, being disquieted by the guilt of his offence, suffered him to enjoy no sincere or solid mirth")[90]. James, by contrast, is careful that his political arguments do not depend upon historical precedent, "rely[ing] most

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[87] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesie,* in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism,* 370.
[88] Bushnell, 97.
[89] George Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, (London: 1690): 136.
[90] Ibid., 278-280.

frequently not on history or tradition – except for the continuity of hereditary succession – but solely on natural law and the force of analogy."[91] Indeed I can attest that James's allusions to hereditary succession are surprisingly few in number and that more often he emphasizes a direct connection between kings and God, as in this passage written to his son from *Basilikon Doron*: "[r]emember, that as in dignitie hee [God] hath erected you aboue all others, so ought ye in thankfulnesse towards him, goe as farre beyond all others".[92] And in keeping with this philosophy about kings, in *Trew Law,* James reinterprets the origins of Scotland to make Fergus the author of his own success: "there comes our first King *Fergus*, with a great number with him, out of *Ireland* […] and making himselfe master of the countrey, by his owne friendship, and force, […] hee made himselfe King and Lord".[93] James figures Fergus as a *maker*, the inventor, author, or discoverer of his own power.

Bushnell does not look to James's sonnets, but their subject matter—each of the first eleven imagining different landscapes in the natural world alongside a Roman god or mythical figure—aspires to demonstrate this *ex natura* invention. They announce James as a poet who wishes to master the sum total of inventive potential and to do so by authoring for himself a poetic landscape in which to work. Recall when James warns in *Reulis and Cautelis* that "gif Nature be nocht the cheif worker in this airt, Reulis wilbe bot a band to Nature, and will mak zow within short space weary of the haill airt; quhair as, gif Nature be cheif, and bent to it, reulis will be ane help and staff to Nature" [If Nature be not the chief worker in this art, Rules will be only a constraint on Nature, and will make you within a short space weary of the whole

[91] Ibid.
[92] James VI/I, *Trew Law*,12. James may have had good cause to shy away from reminding his subjects of his matrilineal claim to the throne, since his mother was imprisoned and deposed.
[93] Ibid., 73.

art; whereas if Nature be chief, and bent to, Rules will be a help and support to Nature].[94] Here and elsewhere, James uses the word "nature" to signify both the natural world and natural order, which elsewhere James consistently defends as being beyond the laws or rules of individual societies. For example, in *Trew Law* James establishes that the office of the king was created by God (kings "sit upon God his Throne in the earth, and haue the count of their administration to giue unto him") and that "[b]y the Law of Nature the King becomes a naturall Father to all his Lieges at his Coronation".[95] Here and elsewhere, he avers that the office of the king is an antecedent to Scotland's legal system and its originator: contrary to various "false affirmation […] that the Lawes and state of our countrey were established before the admitting of a king: where by the contrarie ye see it plainely prooued, that a wise king comming in among barbares, first established the estate and forme of gouernement, and thereafter made lawes by himselfe".[96] But, James later repeats again and again, a good king conforms himself and his behavior to the rules of his kingdom.[97] Somewhat obviously, then, do James's rules for poetry anticipate his writings on politics. Natural order, which sets the king upon his throne, exists above and outside of man-made laws. Poetic laws—even poetic invention—should live within and alongside that order. Holistically, in the construction of *Essayes*, James reinforces this paradigm. Carefully, he enjoins the heavens to help him transport his readers to new landscapes at the start of his volume of poetry—a land of natural wonders and classical elements that he will author for his readers. Only at the end of his poetic endeavors does he append his codified

[94] James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*., K ii verso. Bushnell offers a reading of this complicated thought: James is saying that "the true poet, by nature, will understand and articulate the 'laws' which he pronounces. In effect, the treatise represents James's own precepts as a kind of 'natural law' of poetry". Bushnell, 110.
[95] James VI/I, *Trew Law,* 64-5.
[96] Ibid.,, 73.
[97] See, for example. James VI/I, "A Speach to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament […] 21 of March 1609", 184.

laws, in the form of *Reulis,* to his readers. His poetic career, and his place in the natural order, precedes his own poetic laws.

James's emphasis on invention, and his careful signaling of his poetic career as constitutive of poetic laws rather than confined by them, accounts for one final peculiar poetic choice that he makes for his opening verse in his debut printed work. The sonnet is not an obvious form for James to have employed. The young king came of age as the sonnet was gaining popularity at his court via the Petrarchan sequences that came from France and Italy,[98] but it was not yet an established, fashionable form and mode in which to write in the British Isles—we are still around a decade removed from the proliferation of sonnet sequences in English, by Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Daniels, south of the border.[99] Then there are the issues posed by the form's conventions. Sonnets often place the speaker in a submissive or subordinate position relative to the subject or beloved of the poem,[100] but Herman describes how James fumbled in his one attempt at a courtly love poem to Elizabeth because it was not

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[98] Arthur Marotti, "Love is not Love: Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order", in *ELH,* Vol. 49, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 396-428. James liked to read sonneteers, particularly Du Bellay. On James's taste in poetry, see Craigie, "Introduction", xviii. On the Italian influence of Petrarchan sonneteers on James's court, see R. D. S. Jack, *Scottish Literature's Debt to Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986): 14-17.

[99] James's own mother had composed a notorious set of love sonnets in French to her third husband and abductor, Lord Bothwell. The Casket letters and sonnets, unearthed a little over a decade before James published *Essayes,* may have been in James's possession before or as he was writing his own sonnets: their destruction is sometimes attributed to his hands ca. 1584. A Stuart monarch's public return to the form might dredge up unwanted memories for readers. Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (New York: Random House, 1969): 392.

[100] There are exceptions to this, such as Sonnet 129 in Shakespeare's sequence (which Clare Kinney pointed out to me). But these exceptions prove the general rule. On the sonnet's origins in Italy as love poetry, see A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth, "Introduction" to *Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011). Cousins and Howarth quote sonnets by George Herbert and Michael Drayton that explicitly question the dominance of romantic love as a subject for the sonnet. See p. 3-4. Two notes to consider: first, as I discuss later in this paragraph, James's court was more influenced by poetry from Italy than from England; and secondly that Herbert, Drayton, and Shakespeare all published in the seventeenth century, after James.

natural to him that a king would debase himself even rhetorically.[101] Another theme, that of courtly ambition that marks sonnets intended for or dedicated to important patrons, was also not available to him.[102] As king, James could not use sonnets to supplicate himself; rather, I believe that James played down the value of his poetry by calling his two collections *Essayes of a Prentise* and *Poetical Exercises at Vacant Hours* in order to stress that the act of poetry-making was immaterial to his authority (and would certainly not be the source of his fame).

James also found himself forced to paddle upstream as the current of poetry, particularly sonnets, trended in the sixteenth century towards the exploration of interior thoughts.[103] The major sonneteers to come out of James's court, such as William Fowler, and William Drummond, wrote in the Petrarchan style to unavailable (often deceased) love interests.[104] As Braden and Kerrigan have described, a sonneteer in the Petrarchan tradition capitalized on, rather than suffered from, the distance between himself or herself and what was desired, and used that space to turn inward and "exaul[t] the poet's own imagination".[105] But problematically for his poetic career, James wrote firmly against a king maintaining a private interiority, separate from his public role. In *Bailikon Doron*, James advises Henry to have no secret thoughts and ensure always that his outward behavior conformed to his inward mentality:

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[101] Herman, "Authorship and the Royal I", 1496-1500.
[102] Sonneteers at Elizabeth's court in the next decade "count fame-making among their prime worthiness, their capital enlarged by the posthumous fame of Petrarch's own reputation". From Gordon Braden and William Kerrigan, *The Idea of the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): 172.
[103] "Petrarchism as it unfolds in the Renaissance dilates the individual in a condition of unwanted isolation. It is another in the line of dissociated mental states that fascinated the period". Ibid., 160. Sonnets which were occasional were rare, but notably written by Tasso and, fifty years after James's poems appeared, Milton.
[104] On Fowler: although *Tarantula of Love* is sometimes dated to later in the 1590s, Sebastiaan Verweij gives strong evidence that it was composed between 1585 and 1587. See his "The Manuscripts of William Fowler: A Revaluation of *The Tarantula of Love, A Sonnet Sequence,* and *Of Death"* in *Scottish Studies Review,* vol. 8, no 2 (2007): 11.
[105] Ibid., 161.

"King being publicke persons, by reason of their office and authority, are as it were set (as it was said of old) upon a publicke stage".[106] And in both *True Law* and *Basilikon Doron,* James claims to fully "discharge" his conscience on the page, defining what we now consider to be a private or personal inner code as "nothing else, but the light of knowledge that God hath planted in me".[107] The process of disseminating his two tracts becomes, for James, an exposure of his interior moral compass for the benefit of the readers in his realm; James's interiority models godliness. Or, as Kevin Sharpe has argued, James's political texts collapse public duty and private conscience and insist on the indivisibility of the two. For James, "the sphere of conscience could [not] be separated as a personal realm outside of the public".[108] Sharpe shows that James's denial of any element of the private, or individual, associated with his conscience was in part a refutation of the Puritan belief that a conscience could be personal and its discovery a solo journey.[109] This is James's answer to the king's two-body problem: James's private person has no desires separate from that which his public persona makes manifest. This also explains James's repeated desire in his sonnet sequence for his poetry to manifest for his audience precisely what the poet intends. The modern pedagogical term that comes to mind is transparency: James wishes to make fully transparent his poetic creativity, the inner workings of his mind, on the page for his readers. So why the sonnet?

It is clear that the sonnet is indeed a deliberate choice because there are many moments, across the twelve, where the form, rather than the content, seems *the* thing. Almost a decade after James's death, John Milton appended a poem to a letter to an unnamed friend, describing that he did so with "some of my nightward thoughts […] because they come in not altogether

[106] James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron,* 4.
[107] James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron,* 17.
[108] Kevin Sharpe, "Private Conscience", 81-2.
[109] Ibid., 79; 83.

unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza". Rebecca Rush has noted that a manuscript version of the letter briefly substitutes "pack't" for "made", crossing out made and then reinserting it later; and she argues that "Milton was likely drawn to the image [of packing thoughts into a sonnet] precisely because (fulfilling Cleanth Brooks's worst fears) it reduces form to a container for thought".[110] For Milton, thoughts are prioritized over, and even prior to form. In contrast, one has the opposite intuition about James in reading his early poetry. A reader of James's twelve sonnets feels instantly that the form was important to the writer—perhaps, I might go so far to say, more important than the content. It is not that I detect a dearth of thoughts, but the lack of a more conventional sonnet sequence narrative (such as charting devotion to a beloved) creates a sense of stasis and imparts an arbitrary quality to the number of sonnets. In other words, I count few distinct 'nightward thoughts'—those present are not so much 'pack't' as expanding and luxuriating into the corners of the stanzas.

I interpret the opening of *Essayes* as James's conscious efforts to write (or re-write) Scotland onto the European scene of sonnet sequences, signaling the arrival of Scotland into the movement of cultural rebirth and humanism that had seized the continent. In that way the sequence was intended to function much like *Reulis and Cautelis* was: it is a contribution, and a wholly Scottish one, to the crowded pan-European literary field of like documents. *Reulis and Cautelis*, James writes, is necessary *because* there are so many poetic treatises "in dyuers and sindry languages", but none in Scottish.[111] Likewise, *Essayes'* sonnets charts a specifically Scottish path for the form, since James created a distinct rhyme scheme for them.[112] Though

[110] Rebecca Rush, *The Fetters of Rhyme*, unpublished book manuscript, p. 247. The quote from Milton's manuscript letter is also from Rush.
[111] James VI/I, *Essayes*, K ij recto. On *Reulis and Cautelis* as James's call for a "*professional* group of poets to form in Scotland and create a tradition distinct from the English poetic tradition, see especially R. D. S. Jack and P. A. T. Rozendaal, "Introduction", xvi-xvii.
[112] James's mother, Mary, used the form abba abba ccdeed for most of her sonnets.

ababbcbccdcdee is usually called Spenserian, James publishes *Essayes* before Spenser penned the *Amoretti*.[113] For the inaugural poems of his first publication, James invents a form and highlights it, signaling a new age of poetry that is appropriate to and a metaphor for the end of his political minority: "[Q]uhat I speik of Poesie now, I speik of it, as being come to mannis age and perfectioun, quhair as then, it was bot in the infancie and chyldheid".[114] Scottish poetry and James have transformed together, from 'children' to dominant 'men'. He aims to usher in an era marked by innovation—"lyke as the tyme is changeit sensyne, sa [so, or thus] is the ordour of Poesie changeit"[115]—a new form, and a new king.

In *Six Books of the Commonwealth,* Jean Bodin wrote of the necessity of a king to have distinguishing "marques", or "properties not shared by subjects. For if they were [all] shared, there would be no sovereign prince".[116] In Braden Cormack's words, Bodin's "mark of sovereignty is the mark that is […] not derivable".[117] Kings are absolute: self-constituted and discrete. Renaissance poets are inflected with a like desire: to author something is to be an authority on it, and its point of origin. Witness the medieval Scottish term for poet, the *makar*. To self-actualize, they must carve themselves an original space; recall Ben Jonson's epigram to James, quoted in the introduction, in which he seeks to make room for his poetic skill at court by bracketing the king's poetic career as apart from his tenure in England. Or consider Christopher Marlowe, setting *Tamburlaine* apart: "From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits",

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[113] Craigie writes that these sonnets are the first printed witness to this rhyme scheme, and he argues that the form evolved in Scotland. See "Introduction", xxvi. On the dating of the *Amoretti*, I consulted Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 296.
[114] James VI/I, *Reulis and Cautelis,*K. ij. verso.
[115] Ibid., K. ij. recto.
[116] Bodin, 46.
[117] Braden Cormack, "Shakespeare's Other Sovereignty: On Particularity and Violence in *The Winter's Tale* and the Sonnets", in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 62.4 (Winter 2011): 490.

his Prologue prepares audiences for the blank verse that they will hear in the play.[118] The titular character *Tamberulaine* too is helpful as an analog for the self-actualizing playwright and the ideal absolute ruler. "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove;/ And yet a shepherd by my parentage"[119] says Tamburlaine to the princess Zenocrate in Marlowe's play, drawing attention to his humble backgrounds and his own self invention. We can begin to understand why this invention is so important to James. His carefully constructed poetic invention, and the emphasis he places on such a trait in his poetry, fuels this double identity as poet/king. A new sonnet pattern serves as a sovereign 'marque' in this respect. It is original to James: it signals that the volume and the poetry are absolute in the sense that they derive only from him. The application of Bodin's theory to James's poetry makes it clear why James's book of poetry, despite declaring that it charts a course for Scottish poetry, does not cite, quote from, or allude to any Scottish poets (except once to David Lyndsay).[120] The omission makes a statement: the king does not borrow from his subjects.

III. Conclusions and Concluding Oaths

Several years after he published *Essayes*, James offered his son, Henry, this piece of advice about mixing a career in poetry with sovereign duties: "[I]f your engine spur you to write any workes, either in verse or in prose, I cannot but allow you to practise it: but take no

[118] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, Prologue, line 1. I used the edition within Doctor Faustus *and Other Plays,* ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: OUP, 1995; reissued 2008).
[119] *Tamburlaine,* I.ii.34-5.
[120] James contains no references to prior Scottish poets except for one allusion to Lyndsay in *The Phoenix.* See Craigie's "Introduction", p xiii.

longsome workes in hand, for distracting you from your calling".[121] Composing is not the foremost duty of a competent king—in his second book of poetry, James lamented how little time he could devote to his verses[122]—but it can be a productive pastime with at least one specific auxiliary function: "I would also aduise you to write in your owne language […] it best becommeth a King to purifie and make famous his owne tongue; wherein he may goe before all his subiects; as it setteth him well to doe in all honest and lawfull things".[123] Here, "goe before" has a double meaning: James wants kings to lead by invention, as we have seen above, but his primary purpose here is to encourage Henry to present himself to his subjects as a specifically Scottish writer, and to act as a model in national literary endeavors as well as spiritual ones. This advice reflects the importance that James placed on the Scottish language as a marker for cultural identity. It also references the image that James uses in his preface to the reader and at the start of the third book of *Basilikon Doron*, of the king as an actor "set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the peoplle gazingly doe behold".[124] But unlike an actor set on a stage, poetry allows that a king "*may goe before"* deliberately. In other words, kings as actors are subject to the gaze of their own subjects, 'set' on the stage by the divine order of the world and, literally, at their public coronations (where reports write of a dais for the throne and an audience throng); but by *choosing* to write poetry, kings can initiate an intervention into the lives of their subjects. 'Set on a stage' versus 'goe before': critics, including Goldberg and Perry, have tended to focus on the former articulation; but it is the second, which implies choice and curation, that interests me more and that has more to do with James's little sonnets here.

[121] James VI, *Basilikon Doron* 55.
[122] See footnote 10, above.
[123] James VI, *Basikion Doron,* 55.
[124] Ibid., 49. Compare with the same text, p. 4, which I quoted above.

The final poem of the sonnet sequence is the only substantially different one from the fourth, which I quoted in full above. While the first eleven invoke the panoply of Roman gods in order for the speaker to perfect poetic descriptions of different seasons and panoramas, the twelfth and final rephrases the speaker's desires as a pact between himself and his muses.

> In short, you all forenamed gods I pray
> For to concur with one accord and will,
> That all my works may perfyte be alway:
> Which if ye doe, then sweare I for to fill
> My works immortal with your praises still:
> I shall your names eternall euer sing,
> I shall tread downe the grasse on *Parnass* hill
> By making with your names the world to ring
> I shall your names from all obliuion bring.
> I lofty *Virgill* shall to life restore,
> My subjects all shalbe of heauenly thing,
> How to delate [delight] the gods immortals gloir.
> Essay me once, and if ye find me swerue
> Then thinke, I do not graces such deserue.

The speaker obligates himself to the gods: if they bestow their favour on him, he will use their gifts to praise them. With their help, his works will be "perfyte" and this perfection will reflect and amplify their glory.[125] Should he fail, he invites their judgement and even abandonment.

[125] There might be a paradox here to explore: "perfect", especially in the early modern period, has the valence of "complete" or self-contained. James wishes to be both perfect and aided by the gods. He may be alluding to Mathhew 5:48: Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect.

The imagined reader, excessively present across the first eleven sonnets and central to the speaker's ambitions, recedes to the background; there is just the one pun in line 11 on the word "subjects" that recalls James's desire to mold the people of his kingdom in the image of his own conscience. Readers remain, of course, just off the page, a presence implied or at least invited by the materiality of the poem in a printed and disseminated volume sized for private consumption. It was Shakespeare and Dekker's genius to realize that the explosion of *hypotyposis* would be more exciting and effective if the audience were made explicitly complicit. Here, by not even referencing them, the poem becomes more clearly a performance for them.

A number of studies have considered James's intended or implied relationship with his readers, most prominently those of Perry and Rickard; the former rightly notes that "[l]iterary studies which take the influence of monarchs into account often oversimplify the relationship between royal orthodoxies and the expression of subjects, either by overemphasizing the monarch's interest in intervention or by overstating his or her power of imposition".[126] Perry is interested in James's particular relationship with individual court poets and writers; but the assertion holds true for the bonds that I see James constructing here with a more general readership. What has been missing in critiques of these sonnets is a discussion of the way in which James invites the gaze of his readers—the poems are theatrical, and dependent upon witnesses for whom the poetry will have a mimetic effect. In this final sonnet, audiences witness the culmination of a pact between James's muses and himself as the speaker. The performance on the page, which triangulates the supplicant speaker, the divine muses, and silent witnesses, repeats the structural bonds important to James's conception of the origin of

[126] Perry, 7.

kings. The sonnet's publication precedes the arguments that he makes in *Trew Law* and *Basilikon Doron* against the Scottish contract theory espoused by Buchanan, but it is doing the same work. In *Trew law,* James argues:

> As to this contract alledged made at the coronation of a King, although I deny any such contract to bee made then, especially containing a clause irritant [freeing one party should the other break the "paction"] as they alledge; yet I confesse, that a king at his coronation, or at the entry to his kingdome, willingly promiseth *to* his people, to discharge honourably and truly the office giuen to him by God ouer them: But presuming that thereafter he breake his promise *vnto* them neuer so excusable; the question is, who should bee iudge of the breake, giuing *vnto* them, this contract were made vnto them neuer so sicker, according to their alleageance. […] God is doubtless the only Iudge.[127]

In J. H. Burn's words, James is "not entirely straightforward" in either of his early political treatises' discussions of the king's historical legal relation to his subjects.[128] In contrast to when Buchanan writes of the simple, foundational contract between men and their king, James devises a circuit of obligation between God, the king, and the king's subjects. James writes of the promise given *unto* his people — indeed, he uses this preposition twice above in short succession, emphasizing it, but he is not removing his subjects from the equation fully, as caricatures of absolutist thought sometimes imply. To borrow Victoria Kahn's vocabulary, James's subjects here and elsewhere in their lives as his subjects are asked "not so much [to] *consent* to political order as [to] *assent* to a natural order".[129] In other words, I see James

[127] James VI/I, *Trew Law* 81. My emphasis on the prepositions.
[128] Burns, 240.
[129] Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004): 18.

consciously combating Buchanan's notion of a contract—here in his book of poetry—by thinly veiling in poetic allegory a (re)enactment of the moment when he committed himself to God for the people. The move is political and timely: crowned at just thirteen months old, James here begins his majority with a ceremony that demands the gods' grace and the readers' complicity.

Reading these moments together—the sonnets that begin James's first publication and *Basilikon Doron*'s treatment of the origin myth of kings—offers us two insights. The first confirms that these sonnets are concerned to emphasize a relationship between the speaker and the gods, rather than between the speaker and the imagined readership. Across his political career, James writes of orienting himself towards god as a model for his subjects: here he attempts that in poetry. The second insight is an enjoinder to reconsider James's whole demeanor towards his people, especially at moments of oath-making. The next chapter looks more closely at James's English coronation, the oaths he spoke within Westminster, and the acclamation that he and the ceremonial form demanded of the crowds gathered in London's streets. It charts a path from James's absolutist view of oaths, assent, and obligation through to early seventeenth-century reappraisals of contract theory and on into early ideas about the nature of political representation.

CHAPTER TWO

Beholden to "the voice of slaves": from Contract Theory to Representation in Shakespeare's Histories and *Coriolanus*

> "You don't *vote* for kings!" – Graham Chapman as Arthur, King of the Britons, in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

Early modern absolutism was as "an intellectual construction […] hopelessly weak", pronounced George Sabine in the aftermath of World War II.[1] He was one of the first, but not the last, to notice that while unquestionably a powerful ideology, its strength lay less in the intellectual vigour by which it was defended than in the political power of the men who supported it.[2] Sabine's main issue was with the supra-legality of the concept of divine ordination, particularly in the sixteenth century (in James VI/I's words, "[t]hat which concernes the mysterie of the Kings power, is not lawfull to be disputed").[3] More recently, political historian David Smith has exposed a related problem that the Anglo-Scottish monarchy grappled with as it moved into the seventeenth century. Kings claimed an

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[1] George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory,* 4th ed., ed. Thomas Landon Thorson (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973): 365-66. Sabine was referring to the 'mysterious' quality of divine ordination, which could not be legally defined and therefore defended. Quoted and discussed by Mary Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny, and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 59.

[2] Most notably, on the British Isles, by James VI and I (see chapter one of this dissertation), and later Charles I.

[3] James VI/I, "A Speach in the Starre-Chamber, the XX of June Anno 1616", printed in *King James VI and I: Political Writings,* ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: CUP, 2006): 213.

indescribable authority that derived from god *and* from popular consent—England was a 'mixed monarchy' according to its leading legal thinkers,[4] and James VI and I declared Parliament to be "the most honourable and fittest place for a king to be in" after the Gunpowder plot scare—but this presents a "logical contradiction", in Smith's words.[5] Did royal prerogative come primarily from below or from above? Is it contingent on subjects' respect, or should it command their respect? What happens when a king claims divine ordination but does not have the support of the people?[6] In order to circumvent these questions, "Tudor and early Stuart political theory […] insist[ed] repeatedly on a natural harmony between monarch and subject. […] The idea of conflict between monarch and people appeared unnatural and abhorrent" to royal councilors, legal scholars, and theologians.[7] But not to some early modern playwrights.

Into his plays Shakespeare packed the full spectrum of monarch and subject relationships, from Falstaff's greedy affection for Prince Hal to all-out rebellion against Macbeth. This was not just because "stable regimes make for boring theatre":[8] Shakespeare evinces a deep interest in how these relationships shape and respond to power dynamics. As Ramie Targoff argues, *Richard III* can be read as either deeply suspicious of the "vulgar" act of electing and affirming a king, or the play may approve of the function of acclamation in the

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[4] For example, Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewer (Cambridge: CUP, 1982): 52.
[5] David Smith, *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c. 1640-1649* (Cambridge: CUP, 1194), 18. For the quotation from James VI/I on Parliament, see "House of Lords Journal Volume 2: 9 November 1605," in *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 2, 1578-1614*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 359. Qtd. in Smith, 21.
[6] Ramie Targoff has suggested this as one of the animating questions in *Richard III.* See her "'Dirty' Amens: Devotion, Applause, and Consent in *Richard III*", in *Renaissance Drama,* new series, Vol. 31 (2002): 76-77.
[7] Smith, 18.
[8] Katherine Bootle Attié, "Review: *Shakespeare between Machiavelli and Hobbes: Dead Body Politics"*, in *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. LXX, no. 4 (2017): 1661.

process of crowning a new king through its implicit invitation to early audiences to respond "amen" at its conclusion.[9] Furthermore, some of Shakespeare's kings are clearly alive to certain ambiguities in their position vis-á-vis their own subjects, and these ambiguities excite conflict. When he hears of his banished cousin, Henry Bolingbrook's, pleasantries with peasants, Richard II fears that this will lessen some of the goodwill that the people have towards their rightful king (Bolingbrook acts, in Richard's words, "As 'twere to banish their affects [i.e. the people's affections] with him", *Richard II,* I.iv.26).[10] Yet Richard also insists that, as a king, he was "not born to sue, but to command" (I.i.113), disdaining to grovel for their support even as it becomes apparent that he cannot mount an army to challenge Bolingbroke's usurpation.

In this chapter, I explore some of the ways in which the early modern problem of the origin of kingship is translated into Shakespeare's plays, and more specifically how it contributes to some of his most infamous kings' tragedies. To do this, I first look closely that the debate that was occurring prior to and contemporaneously with Shakespeare's career, attending to the ambivalent language that was often used in expressing a king's commitments vis-à-vis his subjects. I then turn to the two history tetralogies to show how Shakespeare engages with some of these debates in his depictions of subject-king tensions and relationships. I am particularly interested in moments in which kings, like Henry V, Henry VI, Richard II, and Richard III, are self-conscious about the construction of kingship and its intrinsic obligations. But I am attuned to the way in which—as Targoff notes—the history plays as a group consistently resist decisive readings on the nature and duty of kings.

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[9] Targoff, "'Dirty' Amens".
[10] Citations for Shakespeare's plays will be given in-line. I am using *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, revised ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2011).

However, in the last part of this chapter, I posit that Shakespeare took up the same issues more explicitly in one of his late tragedies, *Coriolanus*; and I work to show that when this final Roman play is read alongside the tetralogies, we glimpse Shakespeare more fully interrogating the issues at stake and the contradictions inherent in contemporary conceptions of kingship. *Coriolanus* has been called Shakespeare's most political play (and once, "grotesquely political"),[11] and a number of scholars have uncovered connections between its politics and conversations that were occurring contemporaneously in England at the time. For Mark Kishlansky and Cathy Shrank, *Coriolanus*'s presentation of politics is a meditation on English municipal elections.[12] And Oliver Arnold argues that *Coriolanus* weighs in on the existential debate about the nature of Parliament's representation of the realm.[13] I will build upon the work of these scholars, but whereas nearly all studies of the play have found it to be a rich repository for uncovering both Shakespeare's republican sympathies and the evidence for a robust theory of citizenship even under the Stuart monarchy, I contend that *Coriolanus* speaks not only to Shakespeare's life-long interest in republicanism,[14] but also to his abiding exploration of the nature of kingship and the relationship that monarchs can and should have with their subjects.[15]

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[11] Zvi Jagendorf, "Body Politic and Private Parts", *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 41, no. 4 (Winter, 1990), 457.

[12] Mark Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, CUP: 1986): chapter 1; and Cathy Shrank, "Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 407.

[13] Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theatre and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[14] Andrew Hadfield writes that republicanism "is one of the key problems that defined [Shakespeare's] working career"; see *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005): 1. On citizenship in *Coriolanus*, see for example Oliver Arnold, "Occupy Rome: Citizenship and Freedom in Early Modern political Culture, Recent Political Theory, and *Coriolanus*", in *To Be Unfree: Republicanism and Unfreedom in History, Literature, and Philosophy,* ed. Christian Dahl and Tue Anderson Nexø (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013): 119-138.

[15] Targoff notes that the pre-Christian citizens shout "amen" in unison when Coriolanus is proposed as consul, and this is a clear reference to the English coronation; p. 62.

In the parallels that emerge between Shakespearean kings' struggles with their populaces and Coriolanus's political tragedy, I ultimately explore how blurry becomes the line between medieval accountability and representation as it emerged for the modern era. I am interested, as are historians like Smith and Mary Nyquist, in the shared history and theoretical underpinnings of monarchism and early modern republicanism. Too often disentangled from each other and traced through separate lineages to the onset of the English and Scottish Civil Wars of the 1640s, I see Shakespeare's plays as testament to their interdependence. During Shakespeare's career, 'representation' migrated from the legal sphere into descriptions of Parliament's connection with the wider realm, and it continued to travel up the social hierarchy through the seventeenth century until Hobbes used it to denote the prerogative of a monarch.[16] In this chapter I begin with an overview of the relevant elements of political theory that suggest a joint history of monarchism and republicanism. I then turn to Shakespeare's history play and to *Coriolanus.*

I. Contracts and Coronations: English and Scottish Acclamation Theories

Cicero wrote that "no amount of influence can withstand the hatred of the masses",[17] and Machiavelli counselled that "the best fortress which a prince can possess is the affection

[16] This evolution of the word representation is detailed below.
[17] Cicero, *On Obligation,* trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: OUP, 2000): 63.

of his people".[18] Most early moderns understood this power of the population intuitively;[19] as Chris Fitter puts it, "Tudor and Stuart monarchs could never have governed early modern England with the loyalty of only the three per cent of the population who were peers or gentry".[20] (Indeed, I would add that often the monarchy could not reliably count on the nobility to support them—recall, for example, Henry VIII's constant consternation over his Catholic nobles.) Certainly, Shakespeare's audiences would have had grave opinions about the necessity of the people's consent in the establishment a peaceful reign since many of them had lived through the earlier tumult of the Tudor period before the succession of Elizabeth, when Mary Tudor was placed upon the throne through the support of the people and contrary to will of the prior monarch.[21]

But to court the common people as a means of shoring up political support—to vie for *popularity* with subordinate populations—projected an air of desperation and sordidness across the early modern period. According to Peter Lake, the word 'popularity' originated in the sixteenth century as a description of Presbyterian government; it connoted "certain versions of the polity, and certain modes of political action, that were taken to cede too great a role, too large an area of influence and choice, to 'the people'".[22] Its necessity was assured by history, yes, but to discuss it, especially in print, relinquished something fundamental to

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[18] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. C. E. Detmold (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997): 82. Quoted in Chris Fitter, "Introduction", in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners*, ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford: OUP, 2017), 5.

[19] Across the medieval and early modern period, "many [English] intellectuals believed popular consent strengthened government," even if "only a minority thought it fundamental in that it conferred legitimacy"—a point which I will discuss further below. Jean Dunbabin, "Government", in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, *c.350-1450,* ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 518.

[20] Fitter, "Introduction", 1.

[21] See Fitter's discussion, Ibid., 6.

[22] Peter Lake, "The Paradoxes of 'Popularity' in Shakespeare's History Plays", in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners*, 40-41.

English power and hierarchy. Of popular appeals, Lake reads political pamphlets and Shakespeare's plays to show that "everyone, in short, was doing it, but no one was into admitting as much".[23]

This covert ubiquity, or what Lake calls the "paradox of popularity", is one of the reasons that a king's ideal relationship with the people in the early modern period is so difficult to pin down. Another complication is the Stuart monarchy's investment in the *arcana imperii*, the special 'mystery of state' that protected a king from legal definition and implied that he encompassed more than the sum of his magisterial skills and abilities.[24] A king's power was indescribable—it superseded craft and included a sort of divine intuition. Advisors, manuals, and wisdom might proscribe certain techniques for the king to deploy in his dealings with his subjects; but it was "the mystery that [gave] shape, impetus, and legitimacy to the administrative techniques of the king".[25] Thus Richard II derides Henry Bolingbroke's "craft of smiles" for being un-kingly and transparent work to cement relations between the aspiring nobleman and English subjects. The third challenge is that, increasingly across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the belief that a king owed anything to his populace could identify the writer as a disciple of contract theory and an opponent of the Stuart kings' position on absolute monarchy. There is a continuing legacy to this polarization: modern scholarship on political theory has been primarily concerned to study the ways that

[23] Ibid., 45.
[24] Ernst Kantorowicz is among the first to discuss the *arcana imperii* and England in "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Medieval Origins", in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 48, no. 1 (January 1955), especially p. 70.
[25] Patrick Fadely, "'Unknown Sovereignty': *Measure for Measure* and the Mysteries of State" in *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies,* Vol. 18, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 5.

different factions emerged ahead of the English and Scottish civil wars.[26] Since it is part of the project of this dissertation to explore the shared developments of concepts like acclamation and accountability, representation and stewardship, what follows is a brief history of contract theory, royal oaths, and the language that writers used to describe the bond between the king and his subjects, with particular attention paid to the overlap apparent across the early modern political spectrum.

De Republica Angolurum (1565; publ. 1583), was one of the most widely read and cited legal texts in sixteenth century England. In it, Sir Thomas Smith writes to the "good and upright man" who has been presented with a questionable monarch that "it is alwayes a doubtfull and hasardous matter to meddle with the chaunging of the lawes and government".[27] But Smith does not exactly extoll passive populations, as he is sometimes taken to do.[28] When faced with a Richard II-type (i.e. a weak king who has lost popular support) situation, Smith admits that "[g]reat and hautie courages […] hath bin cause of many commotions in common wealthes, whereof the judgement of the common people is according to the event and successe: of them which be learned, according to the purpose of the doers, and the estate of the time then present."[29] In other words, he leaves open the option for posterity to weigh the situation in which would-be rebels find themselves, and to judge accordingly. What's more, Smith's "cautious pragmatism"[30] assumes a central role for the people in his description of a king, because his differentiation between kings and tyrants rests on the kind of relationship

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[26] Something similar is noted by Conrad Russell, who laments the lack of scholarly attention directed towards constitutional monarchists during the civil wars. See his *The Fall of the British Monarchs, 1637-1642,* revised ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 526. Discussed by David Smith in *Constitutional Royalism,* 8-9.
[27] Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, 52.
[28] For example, Nyquist 79.
[29] Smith, 53.
[30] Robin Headlam Wells' words in *Shakespeare's Politics: A Concise Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009): 138.

they have to their subjects: "When one person beareth the rule they define a king, who by succession or election commeth with the good will of the people".[31] By contrast, a tyrant is a king who disregards the "advice of the people". It seems that, precisely in his posture towards his subjects, a 'king' can constitute his kingship as distinct from tyranny.[32] Is acclamation, then, theoretically—even *ontologically*—necessary for the making of a king?

Nearly two decades lapsed between the completion of Smith's manuscript and the first printed edition. In the 1583 version of *De Republica Anglorum,* part of what I quoted above was amended to chastise kings who disregarded the "advice *and consent* of the people". [33] This expansion explicitly identifies the text with the tradition in medieval English and early modern Scottish political writing that considered the coronation to be a moment of contract between the king and his subjects and that located the origin of power in the people of a land. An early well-known proponent of this view in England was Sir John Fortescue, whose *De laudibus legum Angliæ* (ca. 1468-1471) circulated widely in manuscript and was printed in 1616. Fortescue draws on Aristotle's use of the body politic metaphor to describe how, just as blood moves through the whole body and "quicken[s]" and enlivens it, so "the intention of the people is the first living thing" in a commonwealth. Furthermore,

> The law, indeed, by which a group of men is made into a people, resembles the sinews of the physical body, for, just as the body is held together by sinews, so this body mystical is bound together and preserved as one by the law […]. And just as the head of the physical body is unable to change its sinews, or to deny its members proper strength and due nourishment of blood, *so a king who is the*

[31] Smith, 53.
[32] Ibid., 52 & 53.
[33] Ibid. See the editor's comments on the change from the manuscript to the printed edition, 15.

> *head of the body politic is unable to change the laws of that body*, *or to deprive that same people of their own substance uninvited or against their wills* (my emphasis). [34]

This passage is an important witness to Fortescue's central characterization of England as a country in which policy and the law take precedence over the king.[35] But we can trace an insistence on certain inalienable rights for the people under English law. They are the foundation and the lifeblood of the kingdom. In *Coriolanus*, Menenius inverts this version of the body politic by centering the senators as the heart of the body responsible for the "proper nourishment" of its members (I.i.127-138). In this sense Menenius is more "English" in his understanding of Aristotle's original metaphor: despite the legacy of Fortescue, sixteenth-century English writers (like Shakespeare's main source for the scene in *Coriolanus*, Sir Thomas Elyot) used the body metaphor to establish hierarchy rather than social constructivism.[36] Scotland, however, retained a strong commitment to rooting the state in the decisions of the common people across the sixteenth century. Writing of Scotland's first semi-mythical king, who sailed from Ireland to protect the Scots and was subsequently crowned for his service, John Mair's 1521 historical account of Britain stressed that "a free people confers authority upon its first king, and his power is dependent upon the whole people; for no other source of power had Fergus" the mythical first king of Scotland.[37] Under the Calvinist

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[34] John Fortescue, *In Praise of the Laws of England*, in *Sir John Fortescue: on the Laws and Governance of England*, trans. S. B. Chrimes, ed. Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 20-21.
[35] See Shelley Lockwood's "Introduction" to *Sir John Fortescue*, xxx-xxxi.
[36] R. B. Parker, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, ed. R. B. Parker (Oxford: OUP, 2008): 19; and Lockwood, "Introduction", *Sir John Fortescue,* xxvii.
[37] John Mair, *Historia majoris Britanniae* (Paris: 1519). I've used John Mair, *A History of Greater Britain*, trans. Archibald Constable (Edinburgh 1892), p. 213. George Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum historia* (Edinburgh 1582). I've used the first English edition: *The History of Scotland* (London: 1690): 95.

resistance theorists of the mid sixteenth-century, consent and contract created an obligation for the king that theoretically extended past his inauguration: George Buchanan, who had studied with Mair at the University of Saint Andrews and in Paris, made the importance and implications of popular consent a theme of his own history.[38] And in *De Iure Regni*, he argued further that the people of a kingdom "who have granted [the king] authority over themselves, [should] be allowed to dictate to him the extent of his authority".[39]

"Consent" and "contract" were positioned against the language of promises, covenants and oaths.[40] "Contract" signifies a horizontal relationship of mutual obligation. Oaths, however, were made to God and cemented "by God"; as such, they oriented the King towards his religious responsibilities rather than towards his populations.[41] In *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, James VI/I was careful to distinguish between them: "As to this contract alledged made at the coronation of a King, although I deny any such contract to bee made then […]; yet I confesse, that a king at his coronation, or at the entry to his kingdome, willingly promiseth to his people, to discharge honorably and trewly the office…".[42] We have here what David Smith identified (quoted above, in the opening paragraph): a dogmatic

[38] Buchanan, *History*, book seven. This particular section, which dwells on Scottish elective monarch, or the custom of "tannistry" is a source text for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. See David Norbrook, "*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography", in *Politics of Discourse: the Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England,* ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press): 78-116.

[39] George Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots*, trans. and ed. Roger Mason and Martin S. Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 55. More on Buchanan below, in chapter three of this dissertation.

[40] I primarily use the words 'oath' and 'promise' because this is James VI/I's vocabulary. Later writers, such as Hobbes, as well as the Calvinists (following Calvin's own writing) opposed 'contract' with 'covenant'.

[41] John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: OUP, 2016): 16.

[42] James VI/I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies,* 81.

insistence that the king and the people will remain in accord while denying the existence of any mechanism that would compel that they do so.

Yet despite James's differentiation between contract and oath, the English coronation liturgy, which invested him with the English crown in 1603, perpetuated the rite of acclamation at the heart of the ceremony.[43] Before James affirmed the same oaths that his Tudor predecessors had—though he was the first king to speak the English translation rather than the Latin[44]—he also participated in the medieval and Tutor traditional start to the ceremony, called "the People demanded if they be wiling". Outside of Westminster, James stood by while the Bishop entreated the crowds: "Will you take this Worthy Prince *James*, right Heir of the Realm, and have him to your King, and become Subjects to him, and submit your selves to his Commandments?"[45] He then waited for the people's assent before proceeding into Westminster (where he performed his oath and was formally invested). The language of the coronation oath concedes nothing in terms of an obligation on the part of the king to the people to act in a certain way; nevertheless, the ceremony emphasises the consent of the new king's subjects in the process of king-making by placing the "People demanded"

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[43] Much less evidence survives from the liturgy that invested James as King of Scotland. But in general Scottish coronations even more heavily emphasised the "contractual relationship between sovereign and subjects" through an elaborate pre-crowning ritual convened by representatives of the three estates of the realm on the day before the coronation than English ones did. See Andrea Thomas, "Crown Imperial: Coronation Ritual and Regalia in the Reign of James V" in *Sixteenth Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*, ed. Julian Goodare and Alasdair A MacDonald (Boston: Brill, 2008): 51. On James VI's coronation in particular, see the very colourful account by James Cooper, *Four Scottish Coronations Since the Reformation* (Aberdeen: Printed for the Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Society and the Glasgow Ecclesiastical Society, 1902): 16.

[44] Joseph Hardwick, *The Coronation Service,* 5th ed (London: Skeffington & Sons, 1911): 112.

[45] Ibid., 4.

ritual at its start and ahead of the king's procession into Westminster. In a telling contrast, Charles I struck this portion of the ceremony from his coronation in 1625.[46]

Throughout the two political treatises that James wrote prior to his English coronation, there is often a sense of the precarious balance of obligation and entitlement that a king must negotiate.[47] To his son, he writes in *Basilikon Doron* that: "The [king] acknowledgeth himself ordained for the people, hauing receiued from God a burthen of gouernment, whereof he must be *countable*" (my emphasis).[48] Here, James stresses his commitment to his people but carefully distinguishes that his "burthen of gouernment" derives from heaven and not from their favour. As many scholars have noted, there is an important element of practicality to James's rigid political theory, especially considering the decentralized nature of Scotland's monarchy.[49] There was little bureaucratic infrastructure in Scotland in the late sixteenth century—none to speak of that extended into the Highlands—and lairds and clan chiefs wielded more sway with local populations than did their equivalent English lords. As a result, far fewer medieval and early modern Scottish kings 'died in [their] bede' than did English ones, as one commentator noted in his copy of Hector Boece's *Croniklis of Scotland*.[50] But consider the way in which James thinks about his obligation to the source of his royal prerogative. He intuits a diachronic relationship to the medieval custom of obligation that is its logical extension but is not always spelled out by political thinkers on either side of the

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[46] *The Ceremonies, Forms of Prayer, and Services used in Westminster-Abby* (London: printed by Randal Taylor, 1685): 19. I consulted with the copy in Special Collections.
[47] Discussed at length in Chapter One of this dissertation.
[48] James I, *Basilikon Doron*, in *Political Writings,* 20.
[49] Noted by a number of historians; see for example Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" in *History,* vol. 68, no. 223 (1983): 193-4.
[50] The quotation is from the marginal note repeated throughout Corpus Christi College's copy of Boece's *Croniklis of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1540), signifying how one intrepid reader set out to find every Scottish monarch that did not meet with a bloody end. There were few. Corpus Christi College, delta 21.13. See for example recto Rr. Ii.

contract/oath debate. In other words, he says that he remains '*countable'* to God to uphold his oath, suggesting an ongoing relationship that is only one level removed from his relationship to his subjects. Indeed, there is a sense that James has very consciously avoided describing a relationship between king and subjects that we would characterise as contingent.

To be "[a]countable" in government to a body of subordinates—to be contracted to them—is an inverse way of describing the task of political representation, though this phrase, until the seventeenth century, primarily signalled the one-to-one substitution of a person or their interests by an advocate.[51] Shakespeare, who uses it just three times across his corpus, retains this meaning: in one of his earliest plays, *2 Henry VI*, the Earl of Suffolk addresses his king's two hands as "the substance / Of that great shadow I did represent" when he returns to the English court with Princess Margaret, having stood proxy for the royal marriage in France.[52] Any application of the term to mean one or several people standing in for a greater number was (like the king's relationship to the people) undertheorized through the turn of the seventeenth century; however by the 1620s representation was more and more often used to attempt descriptions of Parliament's relationship with the people of England.[53] Modes of representation were related to procedure: "the parliament of Englande […] representeth and hath the power of the whole realme both the head and the bodie. For everie Englishman is entended to bee there present, either in person or by procuration and attornies", details

[51] For the history of political representation, I have used Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), especially the introduction; Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983): 266; and Ian McLean and Alistair McMillan, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2009): "representation".
[52] Nevertheless, Arnold argues that Shakespeare knew the more modern meaning of the word through his familiarity with political tracts like John Hooker's pamphlet, *The Order and usage of the keeping of a Parlement in England,* which discussed parliament's theoretical relationship to the realm. See Arnold, *Third Citizen,* 21.
[53] Williams, 266; Arnold, *Third Citizen,* 68. Pitkin begins in the seventeenth century, which is when she says that representation acquired its modern meaning, 8-9.

Smith.[54] Who is 'entended' to be present, and who is represented by 'procuration' or by an attorney in Parliament depended on the legal or judicial matter under consideration. A full theory of the fiction of one group standing in for a larger one was still some decades away. When James VI/I addressed the House of Commons in 1604, he fumbled with Shakespeare's poetic terms: "this house doth not so represent the whole commons of the realm as the shadow doth the body, but only representatively".[55] Expanded beyond the substitution of one for one, representation is now *not* shadow-like: it is a simile that cannot be unpacked metaphorically.

Representation moved definitively from nebulous descriptions of Parliament and entered the discourse of sovereignty via chapter sixteen of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, which uses the word to describe a king's prerogative vis-à-vis the people. Hobbes claims for the term a definition so expansive it is hardly recognisable to modern-day readers: he wrote that all governments (including absolute monarchy) act in the name of those that have implicitly agreed to reside within its bounds,[56] and that representation does not always imply any obligation on the part of the representative towards those who have authorised their control.[57] Working backwards from 1651, I will argue that the literary history of imagining consent and acclamation as a component of sovereignty is bound up with issues we now associate with

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[54] Smith, 79.

[55] James VI/I, "Speech at the prorogation of Parliament, 7 July 1604", printed in J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966): 40

[56] Pitkin, 4. For the relevant passages, see Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chapter XVI, especially p. 112. "Of Persons Artificiall, some have their words and actions *Owned* by those whom they represent. And then the Person is the *Actor*, and he that owneth his words and actions, is the AUTHOR. […] From hence it followeth, that when the Actor maketh a Covenant by Authority, he bindeth thereby the Author […] he that maketh a Covenant with the Actor, or Representer, not knowing the Authority he hath, doth it at his own perill. For no man is obliged by a Covenant, whereof he is not Author".

[57] On obligation in Hobbes' concept of political representation, see Pitkin, chapter two. Quentin Skinner amends Pitkin's reading slightly by showing that Hobbes was responding to pamphlet literature that levied obligation onto the king: for this and a more expansive view of Hobbes and representation, see his "Hobbes on Representation", in *European Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 13, no. 2 (2005): 155-184.

'representation' (even if Hobbes did not): how to imagine a relationship between dominant and subservient members of a realm that is, firstly, constitutive for both parties; and that is, secondly, dynamic and diachronic—extending beyond the moment of its inception, beyond 'acclamation' or election. We can see this connection most clearly in Shakespeare's corpus where, through a recycling of tropes and language patters, the continuities between Shakespeare's English history plays and *Coriolanus* illuminate the theoretical parallels between theories of kingship and theories of representation.

Especially when I turn to *Coriolanus*, my work is indebted to that of Oliver Arnold's *The Third Citizen,* the most thorough analysis of representation politics in Shakespeare's Roman plays (he has already been cited extensively throughout this chapter) to date. I try not to cover too much of the ground that he has already mapped. But I differ in my study from Arnold's in that I connect *Coriolanus*'s politics to monarchic theory as well as to innovations occurring within discourse about Parliament. I also do not claim any particular stance on representative politics for Shakespeare. For Arnold, Shakespeare's work uncovers the fundamentally conservative and limiting nature of representation. In his words, "[i]n Shakespeare's canon, there is not a single exception to this rule: when they invest representatives with their voice, the people lose both power and their capacity to articulate cogently their aims and desires".[58] For Arnold, Hobbes' appropriation of representation to further his royalism is a natural or fitting use of it. For me, Hobbes is only an indication of the movement back and forth across the political spectrum that certain terms achieved; and my Shakespeare is not a political theorist, only a keen observer.[59] He allows us to see all the ways

[58] Arnold, *Third Citizen,* 12.
[59] In Attié's words, "Plays require conflict; a representation of, say, a popular rebellion, even a successful one, is not a theoretical endorsement of the people's right to rebel", 1660-1.

that governments could manifest their relationships with their populations in the early modern period, and to attend to the gaps in early modern political theorising.

II. "One Jot of Ceremony": Shakespeare on the Origins of Kings and Consuls

The question I began with was how early modern literature (and specifically Shakespeare's work) more productively explores or reconciles the dual sources of a king's authority—his subjects' acclamation and divine ordination—than does political theory from the period. The nature of kingship clearly interests Shakespeare: especially in the history plays, characters often reflect upon what it means to be a king and from whence comes kingliness. Justifying his own ambitions for Henry VI's throne, the Duke of York growls that he is not only "far better born" than Henry, but also "[m]ore like a king, more kingly in my thoughts" than Henry is (*2 Henry VI,* V.i.28-29). Later, he also suggests that he would "govern and rule [the] multitudes" more capably than his foes (V.i.94). In other words, York suggests that there are kingly capabilities necessary to rule on top of the requisite noble birth, among them the ability to steward the people well. He also implies that part of the craft of kingship is only tautologically describable (a king's mind is kingly). Because York is desperate to supersede Henry by means of violence or subterfuge, his personal justifications pile one upon each other, and he doesn't parse their interrelations or their relative weight.

York is right, of course, about his current king: Henry VI sighs that he "long[s] and wish[es] to be a subject" (IV.ix.6) and laments the early age in which he came to the throne:

> Was ever king that joyed an earthly throne
>
> And could command no more content than I?
>
> No sooner was I crept out of my cradle
>
> But I was made a king at nine months old (IV.ix.1-4).

Henry locates the origins of his troubles in the moment of his coronation, when he was 'made' a king (never would he claim to have been "born […] to command" like Richard II does). In this passage there is a sense that he knows it was a sad accident for England that he was crowned.

Surprisingly, Shakespeare's Henry V, a vastly more competent ruler than his progeny, echoes many of Henry VI's sentiments. He does not outright wish for a demotion, but he imagines the easy sleep even "the wretched slave" gets compared with any rest that a king can take (*Henry V,* IV.i.264). He too is anxious about the origins of his kingliness. The status of his father as a usurper weighs on him, but so too the more general nature of kingship:

> And what have kings that privates have not too,
>
> Save ceremony, save general ceremony?
>
> And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> O ceremony, show me but thy worth! (IV.i.234-6; 240).

As scholars have noted, Henry appears presciently Protestant here, affirming the 'idolatry' and emptiness of what only amounts to a "tide of pomp" (IV.i.260).[60] The status of the coronation ceremony as the locus for king-making had, in truth, been concerning to medieval Catholic theologians since Henry III had died while his son, Edward, was abroad crusading

[60] See for example David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), p. 332.

and thus unavailable to be crowned. England could not be without a king, after all.[61] But the Reformation sealed its auxiliary status: writing of the central moment in its liturgy, Archbishop Cramner affirmed that "[anointing] oil, if added, is but a ceremony; if it be wanting, that king is yet a perfect monarch notwithstanding, and God's Anointed as well".[62] Shakespeare's Henry V seems to parrot the Archbishop when he insists that "I am a king that find thee, and I know / 'Tis not the balm" (IV.i.255-6). But the matter was not totally settled by the time Shakespeare wrote his plays; or at least we should note that in 1609 Sir Edward Coke felt the need to explain away any last considerations of "essential ceremony" in the coronation of a king: "by Queen Elizabeth's death, the crown and kingdom of England descended to his Majesty [James VI/I], and he was fully and absolutely thereby King […] for coronation is but a royal ornament and solemnization of the royal descent, but no part of the title". He writes this, he says, because "in the first year of his Majesty's reign" (i.e. 1603) a number of men, including some clerks and priests, insisted that they had no king until the coronation ceremony.[63]

If not "the balm, the sceptre and the ball, / The sword, the mace, the crown imperial", where does Henry V locate his kingliness? In the long soliloquy that includes his musings on

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[61] Percy Ernst Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, trans. Leopold G Wickhamm Legg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937): 166-7. About Hal's relationship to ceremony, Peter Lake concludes that *Henry V* "reveals 'ceremony' to be both a set of empty forms *and* absolutely crucial to the maintenance and deployment of royal power". See his *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016): 378.

[62] Qtd in Schramm, 122; and qtd and discussed more extensively in Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 318.

[63] Sir Edward Coke, "Calvin's Case", printed in *The reports of Sir Edward Coke, Knt. In English, in thirteen parts complete,* vol. IV (Dublin, 1973): 20. Discussed in Kantorowicz, 317. And some readings of *Henry V* have confirmed the ambiguity present at Shakespeare's time and in that particular play surrounding ceremony: Peter Lake, for example, argues that the lines that I quote and the play as a whole "revea[l] 'ceremony' to be both a set of empty forms *and* absolutely crucial to the maintenance and deployment of royal power". Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage*, 378.

ceremony, he gradually comes to agree with the sentiments expressed by the Duke of York: it is in his thoughts. Henry decides that the sleepless nights prove his royal nature—the "watch the King keeps to maintain the peace / Whose hours the peasant best advantages" (IV.i.279). James VI/I would call this his fatherly duty toward his subjects; we might describe it as stewardship, or good governance.

So while neither *Henry V* nor *2 Henry VI* (or their eponymous kings) directly contrasts divine transformation at the moment of ceremonial investiture with the acclamation of their would-be subjects, in both plays anxiety around the ontology of kingship leads characters to reflect both on ceremony and on their posture towards the English people. The two are not presented as mutually exclusive—they are not alternate answers to an answerable question, in other words—but then, as noted above, these twin underpinnings of a king's power were rarely unpicked by legal experts either. And Shakespeare's English kings, across the history tetralogies, are always already legitimated or de-legitimated through nobleness of character, birth right, and prowess before they appeal to their people or before their subjects rebel.[64] In other words, the origin of their powers is rarely germane. Richard III, for example, proves himself unequal to the task of ruling through his behaviour towards Anne and his brother Clarence long before the people judge him with their profound silence. Henry V equips himself for kingship by hanging around the taverns in Cheapside to "study his companions / like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language" (*2 Henry IV*, IV.iv.68-9)—but his legendary victory at Agincourt precedes all of his adolescent stage antics into the early modern theatre.

[64] We may wish to connect Hal's humble company and whore-house popularity with Henry V's regnal qualities, but he himself and other characters in the play see his youth as a dark backdrop against which his later glory will shine more brightly (*Henry IV* Part 1, I.ii.192-212).

Still, questions about the fount of kingship and the necessity of the people to the sanctity of the position remain unanswered. Henry IV does not believe that Hal's cavorting with "rude society" is good "accompany[ment] for "the greatness of [hia] blood" or for the health of the kingdom (*1 Henry IV* III.ii.14-16). Henry IV fully admits that "opinion" helped return him from banishment and overthrow Richard II, but—according to the older king—opinion and the good graces of the people are not won through continual contact with commoners:

> Had I so lavish of my presence been,
> So common-hackney'd in the eyes of men,
> So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
> Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
> Had still kept loyal to possession,
> And left me in reputeless banishment (III.ii.39-44).

There is a fine line between cultivating the right kind of popularity, and the crude kind. Of course to Richard II, Henry IV *does* cross that line; as I will discuss immediately below, Henry's cavorting with an "oyster-wench" and a "brace of draymen" on the shores of England is precisely this kind of taking up with "vulgar company" that Henry IV warns his son not to do (*Richard II*, I.iv.31). It seems that one way to label the wrong kind of usurper is to show him working hard to win over the common people. The Duke of York, for example, sends Jack Cade to London "[t]o make commotion, as full well he can" in order that York "shall perceive the commons' mind" and attitude towards his own planned insurrection (*2 Henry VI,* III.i.357, 373). This is the paradoxical side to courting popularity—it may be a dirty business, a ring road around legitimate kings that leads to power. But at what cost, and to what extent

does a king owe his subjects for his position? Jack Cade himself, a pretender to the royal line unaware that he is being used as a pawn by nobility, trades explicitly in consent and contractual politics. From his marketplace pulpit, he asks the people what they want from him ("kill all the lawyers!"), and offers it immediately in exchange for their support.

Of all of Shakespeare's kings, Richard II is the most articulate about his distaste for appealing to his subjects. He practically spits when he recalls how his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, took his leave of English soil:

> What reverence he did throw away on *slaves*
> Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
> And patient underbearing of his fortune,
> As 'twere to banish their affects with him.
> Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench
> A brace of draymen bid God speed him well
> And had the tribute of his supple knee,
> With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends' (*Richard II,* I.iv.27-34 [my emphasis]).

The vitriol contained in this quotation stems from two sources: on the one hand, Richard mocks the crudity and the absurdity in Henry's actions, bestowing 'reverence' on 'slaves', and debasing himself to an 'oyster-wench'. Richard is at pains to describe how something in the natural order has been inverted when a nobleman pays 'tribute' to draymen and other dock workers. Rather than maintain appropriate aloofness, Henry exposes his gentility as partly the "craft of smiles". On the other hand, Richard fears (and therefore hates) what he has seen: even though he has been banished, Henry has consciously begun the process of garnering the

people's acclamation for his future royal bid.[65] Richard stands with most of Shakespeare's other monarchs in actively averring that his royal power derived from his birth and from God, yet other monarchs recognise the need to fold acclamation into this hierarchical world view. Richard III, for example, grows nervous when London throngs will not cry "God save Richard" after he has swiftly claimed the throne (*Richard III*, III.vii.24-43). In the case of this York usurper, acclamation functions symbolically to reflect divine provenance: audiences understand the people's hesitation as a moralistic judgement of Richard.[66] It is also its own pragmatic necessity: with the people's consent comes a sense of security that no angry mob will be recruited by some other nobleman against your person.[67] Indeed, the future Henry IV returns and easily raises an army against Richard II in part because he is so able to "dive into [the people's] hearts / With humble and familiar courtesy" (*Richard II,* I.iv.25-6). Richard II, more forcefully than Shakespeare's other kings, puts this question to discerning audiences: how exactly does a king reconcile his superiority over and his dependence upon his subjects, especially in periods of tension and rebellion?

The question is there, I argue, just beneath the surface of *Richard II*; but Shakespeare does not provide a direct answer. He avoids it in part through Richard's two-body musings later in the play. Kings are, historically, often killed by their inferiors (upon returning to England from Ireland, Richard becomes preoccupied with "sad stories of the death of kings", III.ii.156-160) but the King as a divine entity can never die and therefore in a certain sense

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[65] Peter Lake has a similar reading of these lines; he calls Richard's judgement of Henry's populist actions "political sagacity of a rather higher order". See Lake, "The Paradoxes of 'Popularity'", 48.
[66] On acclamation in this scene, see Targoff, 71-77.
[67] Fitter, "Introduction", in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners,* especially 1-6. Peter Lake also discusses how the people's propensity to rebel under an unwanted monarch at the monarch's ascent influenced an interregnum law created under Elizabeth's reign. See Lake's article in the same volume: "Paradoxes of 'Popularity'", p. 44.

can never be successfully opposed.[68] His metaphysical body remains beyond the grasp of his own subjects' powers. This is probably of no comfort to any of Shakespeare's kings who face armed rebellions and insurgencies, but it suggests a way in which acclamation travels with and signifies divine ordination at the moment of the destruction of one king in favour of another.

The other way in which Shakespeare suggests a resolution to the potential incompatibility between divine ordination and popular consent in *Richard II* is through his choice of vocabulary. The word "slaves", at the start of quoted passage above, does a lot of work: it marks Richard's speech with the valence of a traditional early modern tyrant who encroaches on his people's liberty.[69] As Mary Nyquist argues, because it is so clearly inappropriate to describe an Englishman as such, a king's use of the term "slave" renders him unfit to rule an English population and, paradoxically, draws attention to the extant liberties of that population indicated.[70] In other words, "slave" works against Richard, decrying him a tyrant and affirming that English medieval and early modern subjects live precisely in that world where noblemen genuflect before "draymen". Now, even according to James VI and I tyrants have no holiness about them and must answer to God.[71] Richard has lessened his divine claim to the throne at the same time that he has lost his subjects' support.

The matter of how much the people's opinion matters is not so easily shunted to the side in Shakespeare's later play, *Coriolanus*. It is, quite clearly, at the heart of the tragedy.

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[68] See Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies,* new ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), chapter two.

[69] The use of the metaphor of 'slavery' in anti-tyrannical tracts is discussed across the whole book, but see particularly Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule,* chapter two.

[70] Nyquist writes: "To represent its very possibility is to avow a conviction that those who depict themselves (or are depicted) as threatened with enslavement deserve the continued enjoyment of their privileged, free status". Ibid., 23.

[71] *Trew Law* 65 and especially 83.

Coriolanus himself reminds me of Richard II; consider the following speech—Coriolanus has, by this point, lost out on his fraught bid for the Roman consulship and been banished from the city. He arrives at the camp of his Volsci enemies and presents himself to their leader, Aufidius:

> My name is Caius Martius, who hath done
> To thee particularly, and to all the Volces,
> Great hurt and mischief. Thereto witness may
> My surname Coriolanus.
> . . . . . .
> Only that name remains.
> The cruelty and envy of the people,
> Permitted by our dastard nobles, who
> Have all forsook me, hath devouried the rest,
> And suffered me by th'voice of *slaves* to be
> Whooped out of Rome. (IV.v.66-69; 74-79)

Anne Barton remarks that Shakespeare must have had his classical source, "Life of Coriolanus" at his elbow when he wrote much of the play; [72] here, he reproduces Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's version of Coriolanus's speech nearly verbatim *until* Coriolanus's description what happened in Rome.[73] "Whooped out of Rome" by "th'voice of

[72] Anne Barton, "Livy, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*", in *Shakespeare and Politics*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: CUP, 2004): 77.

[73] Plutarch's corresponding speech reads: "I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thyself particularly [Aufidius], and to all the Volsces generally, great hurt and mischief, which I cannot deny for my surname of Coriolanus that I bear. […] Indeed the name only remaineth with me: for the rest the envy and cruelty of the people of Rome have taken from me, by the sufferance of the dastardly nobility and magistrates, who have forsaken me, and let me be banished by the people". See Plutarch, "Coriolanus", *The Lives of*

slaves" instead of Plutarch's "banished by the people", Shakespeare's general emphasises the incongruity of what has occurred in a manner that sounds familiar. Like Richard II, Coriolanus is appalled that a great man (a general and the scourge of Rome's enemies) could be evicted by men who, he believes, should be given no voice and no say in the state. And in his use of that loaded term, *slave*, he echoes Richard's tyrannical vocabulary. This time however, in this setting, certain questions linger. As David Norbrook has shown, Shakespeare's early editors "conflated with apparent authorial approval" a number of terms for the unnamed Romans that people *Coriolanus's* stage: "'citizens', 'plebeians', 'people', and 'rabble'".[74] The lack of a precise vocabulary renders the term 'slave' less incorrect, or at least less incongruous. Rather than function as the mark of Coriolanus's tyrannical disposition, it encourages audiences to consider: what is the correct relationship between Coriolanus and the people of Rome?

There is a moment in the middle of *Coriolanus* when it seems that the eponymous general will succeed to a government position. But upon hearing that the Senate has confirmed him as consul, he begs of them to let him "o'erleep that custom" of presenting himself for a vote in the market place (II.ii.135). To Coriolanus's objections, the senator Menenius reminds him that "Have you not known / The worthiest men have done't?" (II.iii.47). Coriolanus wishes himself exempt from the pressures that the common men might exert on him. So too, we have noticed, does Richard: appealing to the people may make little theoretical sense to the young king, but the career of every medieval king before him (and many early modern ones after) attest to its necessity. In what follows I argue that Shakespeare

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the Noble Grecians and Romans, trans. Thomas North (London, 1579). Reprinted by Forgotton Books, 2012, p. 24.

[74] David Norbrook, "Rehearsing the Plebeians: *Coriolanus* and the Reading of Roman History", in Fitter, *The Politics of the Commons*, 180.

transferred his perennial interest in the question of what terms early modern writers could use to describe the mutual dependency between a king and his people to a Roman setting at the end of his career. Coriolanus is clearly not vying to be a king,[75] and there are important differences and reasons that Shakespeare kept his election within a republican community. But the continuities between Coriolanus's struggle and those of Shakespeare's early kings, and the echoes that resonate between the history plays and this last Roman one, show off Shakespeare's continuing engagement with the continuum of responsibility on the part of an executive power towards the people that is not well delineated in early modern political theory.

The decorated general Coriolanus has been persuaded to run for the consulship of Rome upon his return from war on the grounds that he deserves it: a member of the elite ruling class of Rome ("born […] to command"), he singlehandedly defeats the Volsci at Corioles, and he has the backing of the most important senators. Still a hurdle emerges between himself and the position, which Menenius (an older senator) and Sicinius (a tribune of the people) are quick to point out to Coriolanus:

Menenius: The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleas'd
To make thee consul.

. . . . . .

It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

Coriolanus I do beseech you
Let me o'erleap that *custom*, for I cannot

[75] The comparison is helped, however, by the fact that no second consul is ever mentioned in the play. Coriolanus alone stands for the highest executive position in the city. Noted by Kishlansky, p. 4.

Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them
For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage. Please you
That I may pass this doing.

Sicinius Sir, the people
Must have their voices; neither will they bate
One jot of *ceremony*. (*Coriolanus* II.ii.132-41, my emphases)

On behalf of the senators of Rome, Menenius confers, and Coriolanus accepts, the consulship; but there is a "custom" of soliciting the Roman people's "voices". For Coriolanus this is merely spectacle and a charade— "a part / That I shall blush in acting" (II.ii.144-5). He is concerned that he must dress up and present his war-battered body for the people when the qualities that recommend him to the consulship—valour and nobility—cannot be represented or re-embodied in the marketplace.[76] So when he terms the people's acclamation a 'custom', he means to deride this expectation. Customs can be tyrannical, he explains later in the play:

What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
The dust on antique time would like unswept
And mountainous error be too highly heap'd
For truth to o'erpeer. (II.iii.117-20).

Coriolanus here sounds very much like Montaigne, who postulates that many customs "have no support but in the hoary beard and wrinkles of the usage which attends them".[77]

In contrast, Sicinius declares the process in which a candidate garners the people's acclamation to be "ceremony". He is the only character to call it this, and it is clear that his

[76] I benefitted from Jagendorf's reading of this scene in "Body Politic and Private Parts", 455-469.
[77] Michel de Montaigne, "Chapter XXII: Of Custom, and that we should not easily change a law received", in *The Essays of Montaigne,* trans. E. J. Trechmann (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1927): 113.

choice of the word emphasises the import of that process: "[t]he people *must* have their voices". It is also clear that Sicinius promotes ceremony and the people's acclamation over and against those who would affirm Coriolanus on the basis of his intrinsic virtue. Menenius says that the senate confirms Coriolanus because he is, succinctly put, "right noble" (II.ii.128), and Coriolanus believes that he deserves the position (II.iii.64 and II.iii.110); but the tribunes and the people understand the general's worth as part of the process that ends with—and perhaps even compels—their confirmation: "if he tell us his noble deeds we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them" they agree among each other before Coriolanus enters the marketplace (II.iii.6-7). It is a subtle but important difference: the people of Rome confirm that Coriolanus merits government office, but that he does not become invested with the power and responsibility of the position until he has proved that desert to them.

From this short exchange we can tease out questions about the ontology of political power in Shakespeare's Rome: whether it inheres in the people's voices or in the senate's conference. For his expansion of the election scene out across two play acts from just one sentence in the original source materials, a number of scholars have argued that Shakespeare drew on his own experiences with politics in early modern London.[78] I argue that he also drew on his distinctly non-Roman experience of being a subject under the English monarchy, and that while *Coriolanus* may engage with debates surrounding parliamentary elections at the

[78] For Mark Kishlansky, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* indicate that "Shakespeare had first-hand experience, either of wardmote [assembly of citizens] selections to the London Common Council or of parliamentary selections themselves", so well did he alter and adapt a piece of Roman history to mirror the process by which gentlemen became MPs at the turn of the seventeenth century. Chief among the similarities between the play and the process are the notions of 'giving one's voice' as acclamation rather than 'voting', and confirmation rather than choice. See Kishlansky, 4-7. Building upon Kishlansky's work, Oliver Arnold reads *Coriolanus* for its interventions into contemporary conversations, located in parliamentary speeches and extant pamphlets, that debated the nature of a parliamentary representative's special connection to the common people in the decade contemporaneous to *Coriolanus*'s inception. See Arnold, *The Third Citizen,* Chapter 5.

turn of the seventeenth century, it also questions the ontology of magisterial (monarchical, executive) power. This scene in which Coriolanus seeks to exempt himself from appealing to the people of Rome probes the very nature of political ceremony—whether it reflects and represents, or originates and constitutes, political power. It put directly to the early modern audience, who may remember the ceremonial moment at the start of James VI/I's English coronation in which they were appealed to by the Archbishop for their consent: when is the act of garnering acclamation a ritual and a performance, and when is it the root of political legitimacy?

The scene also exposes a related rift between Coriolanus and the citizens of Rome. The crux of this difference is in the various parties' expectations for what we might anachronistically term political transparency. To Coriolanus's mind, parading in the marketplace in order to demonstrate scars that attest to his value would, paradoxically, devalue them by making it seem "[a]s if I had received them for the hire / of their breath only!" (II.ii.148-9). Put differently, he believes the action would demystify his personal worth. When one of the citizens of Rome confronts Coriolanus's bid for consulship by telling him bluntly, "You have not, indeed, loved the common people", Coriolanus counters by spitting "You should account me the more virtuous that I have not been common in my love" (II.iii.88-90). In Coriolanus's mind, his merit sets him apart and above other Romans, and this exceptionalism recommends him for the consulship.[79] To have to prove his nobility would be an act, it seems, akin to destroying the *arcana imperii* of a medieval or early modern king.

[79] He adheres to Aristotle's thesis that in a thriving polis a man who exceeds all others in excellence and virtue cannot be an equal subject and should elevated to magistrate. Aristotle also says they may be ostracized in *Politics*, Book III, chapter 14. See Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics,* trans. Carnes Lord, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013):87-89. For a near-contemporary early modern discussion of this principle in Aristotle, see Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship,* 41-43.

Recall that James VI/I invested heavily in this myth of his irreducible abilities, arguing at one point that his inexplicable *arcana imperii* stood in for and superseded empirical knowledge.[80] Coriolanus, too, understands his worth as more than the sum of his scars—for him there can be no adequate physical synecdoche for his noble character.

Irate at the people who gather about him in the marketplace, Coriolanus exclaims to himself midway through the ordeal: "since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practice the insinuating nod and be off to them most counterfeitly" (II.iii.94-5). The comment is so vitriolic that audiences may be surprised at how enthusiastically the next few citizens approve him for the consul position. This is because the people are quite content for Coriolanus to be but an imitation— a "counterfeit". It is what they want: for him to do nothing but re-present their wishes, to be one of them and just as them, interchangeable, exchangeable. Ever the egalitarians, they tell Coriolanus, "You must think that if we give you anything we hope to gain by you" (II.iii.68). The people take a pragmatic, *political* approach. Coriolanus, by contrast, wants the nature of his heart, its unquantifiable worth, to be considered by his constituents. But when Coriolanus again sarcastically wishes "away [his] disposition" (III.ii.113), the people are sincere in their hope that he will do just that.

Indeed, Coriolanus cannot wish away his exceptionality — down to even his name, given to him after the battle of Corioles, his whole being reflects his merit. The people register this as a threat. Sicinius complains, "Was ever man so proud as is this Martius [Coriolanus]?" and Brutus re-joins "He has no equal" (I.i.250). Brutus consents to his fellow

[80] James VI/I claimed it imputed him with a "universal reason perfected both by divine dispensation and long experience as a monarch" and rendered his "lack of empirical knowledge [about English Common Law] practically irrelevant" to governing. Patrick Fadely, "'Unknown Sovereignty', 8-9.

tribune's point that Coriolanus is the proudest man in Rome, but his reply might be read as a separate grievance. The people seek homogeneity. Menenius warns Brutus, "I know you can do very little alone, for your helps are many, or else your actions would grow wonderously single" (II.i.33-4). Individually, their voices are the random warbling of a rabble; together, they can make decisions that change the republic's political scene—in the end, they succeed in driving Coriolanus from Rome. Incensed by the people and unable to relate to their demands, Coriolanus understands that it is his merits that may frustrate his political goals: "Who deserves greatness / deserves your hate" (I.i.173-4).[81]

The people eventually (and temporarily) consent to giving their 'voices' to Coriolanus's election ("Coriolanus: Your good voice sir. What say you? / Second Citizen: You shall ha't, worthy sir"; II.iii.74-5). The word, in this context, has a distinct early modern meaning: according to Kishlansky, in parliamentary contests, "electors gave voices rather than votes […]. Rhetorically, giving voices meant giving assent, agreeing to something rather than choosing it".[82] Coriolanus then thanks the citizens, complementing their "[m]ost sweet voices" (II.iii.108). But later in the same scene, several of the citizens meet with the two tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, and the latter exclaims in a way that shifts the meaning of this noun, 'voice':

> Get you hence instantly, and tell those friends [who have confirmed Coriolanus]
> They have chosen a consul that will from them take
> Their liberties, make them of no more *voice*
> Than dogs that are as often beat for barking,

[81] On Coriolanus's world-view as meritocratic, see also Paul Cantor, *Shakespeare's Rome,* second ed. (Chicago: University Chicago, 2017): 81; or Shrank, "Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*", 415.
[82] Kishlansky, 10.

And therefore kept to do so (*Coriolanus* II.iii.209-13; my emphasis).

The loss of liberty is a standard fear associated with the threat of tyranny, and it was invoked frequently across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But Brutus has a further premonition to complain about: Coriolanus, he says, will render the people as good as dogs who can sound out but have no language.[83] Coriolanus will allow the people to "bark"—perhaps, to analogize, he will allow them keep tribunes—but their voices will be nothing more than noises that occasion scorn. 'Voice' is even further from 'vote' here than it was in the marketplace: its primary meaning accords with the *OED's* 1a definition of "[s]ound produced by and characteristic of a specific person or animal […] used to represent the person or being who produces it". Brutus's ideal 'voice' is more than the tool that early modern voters could use to assent to or even consent to an election because it continues to intervene productively. He implies that the citizens of Rome long for their cumulative voice of assent to echo across the years that Coriolanus is consul; that they fear that their voices will be arbitrary under his rule. This particular anxiety exposes their wish for continual, not incidental, recourse to whomever is in power. Brutus calls for a politician who will value the people's voices expansively across his tenure. He calls for a kind of modern political representation.

Bound up in the questions that *Coriolanus* poses about the origins of magisterial power is a second, related question about the extent to which that origin exerts an influence over the tenure of that power. James's sense of obligation rendered him "countable" to god for the duration of his reign but not specifically to his people. Coriolanus accepts neither the premise that his power derives from the citizens of Rome, nor the responsibility to weigh the

[83] Brutus has already complained of this; see *Coriolanus* II.i.242-4.

needs of his constituents against his own judgement. In contrast, Brutus imagines that a consul who derives his position from the voices of the people will continue to listen to those voices after he is confirmed. In his article primarily about Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Quentin Skinner suggests that parliamentarian writers in the 1640s began to explore the ways that consent on the part of a population given freely to a monarch came with certain continuing responsibilities to act in a certain manner. Consent, or authorisation, according to such writers as Henry Parker and William Prynne, inferred an obligation on the part of kings to their people, since the fact that kings were authorised by the people implied that they "must be lesser in standing than the people to whom their authority is owed". Logically, then, the king would have a perpetual obligation to those that set him on the throne.[84] The people would get their voice.

Precisely because political representation was not well theorized until at least the Civil Wars,[85] literary works like *Coriolanus* are valuable witnesses to its nascent stages of intellectual evolution. Precedents that portray political representation on stage and in literature were non-existent.[86] The word "representation" never appears in *Coriolanus,* but the play can still be felt to grapple with all of the vagaries that accompanied that term into the seventeenth century. As Raymond Williams put it in his encyclopaedic *Keywords*, "it was mainly in C17 that the sense of standing *for* others, in a more diverse way, began to come through".[87]

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[84] Skinner, "Hobbes on Representation", 158-159.
[85] Pitkin, chapter 1. Paul Halliday taught the "Putney Debates" as the pivotal moment in representational democracy in his lecture on 19 February 2018 for HIEU 3471/5559: "English Legal History" at the University of Virginia. See also David Wootton's introduction to *The Putney Debates* printed in *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England,* ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003): 274.
[86] As Arnold notes, representation was not a "recognized [political] structure" in Ancient Rome, despite the presence of tribunes. See his *The Third Citizen,* 15.
[87] Williams, 266.

'Diverse ways', in *Coriolanus,* might be said to describe the way in which different characters try to pin down the tribunes' relationships to the citizens: Sicinius says proudly that he and Brutus "stand [for]" the people (II.i.223); Coriolanus alleges that the tribunes "defend [the people's] vulgar wisdoms" (I.i.213); and an unnamed senator addresses the two as "Masters o' th' people" (II.ii.48). In other words, the tribunes may be two among the people, as they often appear in mob scenes; they may figure as embodiments of the people's collective knowledge; or they may aspire to special control over the people. (It certainly seems that they fit best with this last characterisation at the close of Act II when, after describing to the audience their confidence that the plebeians will never approve Coriolanus's bid for consulship, Sicinius and Brutus are enraged to discover that the crowd has in fact assented to Coriolanus's election. The tribunes set about swaying the opinion of the people — rather than reflect the people's wishes, they machinate to have the people reflect their own.) All three of these represent positions defended in the eighteenth century and beyond by republican theorists.

But even as the plebeians act to bring this kind of relationship to bear on the consulship, they register what Hannah Pitkin describes as the knot that tangles representation theory: "representation, taken generally, means the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact. Now, to say that something is simultaneously both present and not present is to utter a paradox".[88] What Pitkin has identified is a tension between the term's literal or material definition — to make present, in space and time — and its metaphorical or metonymical usage — to embody and account for

[88] Pitkin, 8-9.

more than what stands physically present. Musing on the abuse most often levelled at the common people in *Coriolanus*, the Third Citizen wonders,

> We have been called [the many-headed multitude] by so many, not that our heads are some brown, some black, some abeam, some bald, but that our wits are so diversely coloured; and truly I think if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o'th' compass (II.iii.15-21).

The immediate context for these lines is a discussion between the citizens about what they want and need from a consul as they wait for Coriolanus to approach them in the marketplace. The Third Citizen responds to the First Citizen's recollection of Coriolanus's insulting response to their uprising over the Senate withholding a grain surplus. Primarily, his words denote his concern that common people can never act as one cohesive group for their own advantage. During the immediate lead-up to the civil wars, parliamentarian writers were concerned with this as well, and they took pains to emphasise the cohesive nature of the community that gave consent to a representative—in Skinner's words, they insisted that "the people must never be considered as a mere collection of individuals".[89] Here, Shakespeare's citizens feel acutely that they themselves are a group of individuals, with "diversely coloured" wits. They thus come to a fundamental question about the event for which they wait—the election process and its aftermath. They query the very nature of representation: how can one skull (potentially Coriolanus's, in this case) contain many wits? How can one person embody and represent disparate people?

[89] Skinner, "Hobbes on Representation", 158.

Should Coriolanus's exceptionality recommend him to the role of the consulship, as he believes; or should all that elements that differentiate him from his constituency bar him from the position? Do the tribunes, as individuals chosen from among the body of citizens, have a duty to speak on behalf of their fellow men in an ad hoc manner, changing their tune with the winds that scatter the many wits? Or have they the freedom to interpret and apply their own wisdom to a situation? A century and a half after Coriolanus first died upon a stage, Edmund Burke weighed in on the debate over the ideal representative relationship, validating the peoples' position but endorsing our general's:

> [I]t ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. […] But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living.[90]

It is "the happiness and glory" of a king to also live in deep accord with his subjects, or as James VI put it, "holy and happy emulation may arise betwixt him and you [the king and his people], as his care for your quietnes, and your care for his honour and preseruation, may in all your actions daily striue together".[91] But now we have come a long way from medieval kingship theory: by the eighteenth-century it was possible to admit of times when a government, endeavouring as ot might be to live in the "strictest union" with the people, must break from its desires and follow "his enlightened conscience".

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[90] Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol", given 3 November, 1774. Printed in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol 2 (Boston: Wells and Lilly—Court Street, 1826): 10

[91] James VI/I, *Trew Law*, 84.

III. Conclusion

In a book otherwise devoted to Shakespeare's Roman plays, Oliver Arnold includes one chapter on Parliament and the parliamentary role of speaking for the people in *2 Henry VI*. An early insight in the chapter is his notice of Henry's sudden departure (he calls it an "abdication") from Parliament, and the immediately subsequent entry of Jack Cade into a London square, where he proclaims that "[his] mouth shall be the Parliament of England" (IV.vii.11-12) comprising all the "laws of England" (IV.vii.5).[92] Arnold calls this Cade's total "usurpation of Parliament"—"Cade swallows [Parliament]: the Kentish tailor imagines an absolutist reunification of king and Parliament" that is a fantasy of "absolute representation".[93] I understand Arnold's characterisation of Cade's style of representation as Hobbesian: once a king is authorised by the people to act on their behalf as representative, he has "Dominion" or the "Right of doing any action".[94] Recall that for Hobbes, kings were not the voice of the people, speaking *as* them; rather they were authorised to be the voice for the people, speaking *on behalf of* them. In this way, Cade is exemplary of a conservative strain of representative politics, and Cade also signals to audiences that his aspirations are tyrannical because his fantasy of total representation—of the realm, the people, and laws—amounts to an extreme absolutism.[95]

But Jack Cade is also a progressive figure in Shakespeare's early corpus, and his attentions to the politics of representation are also forward thinking and suggest a bridge between monarchism and early republicanism. You may think that the case against Cade's position as a

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[92] Arnold, *Third Citizen,* chapter two, especially 77-82.
[93] Ibid., 80-82.
[94] Hobbes, 112.
[95] Arnold, *Third Citizen,* 82.

would-be tyrant couldn't be helped by drawing attention to the scene in which he aspires to "kill all the lawyers"; indeed, readers have long noted this as a prominent indication that Shakespeare "had contempt for mobs" and common men.[96] But while Cade has, from one angle, tyrannical designs on England and English law, he also deploys a modern, or republican, style of representation in his approach to the London mobs. Entering into a busy crowd, Cade makes no friends by falsifying his lineage and padding out his ancestry with Plantagenet blood. It is only after he has promised to designate Cheapside a common space for animals that the people leave off mocking him and cry "God save your majesty!" (IV.ii.65-66). In other words, it is clearly not the 'majesty' of Cade's birth, but of his promises, that woo them. In exchange for support against the upper classes Cade makes a number of campaign promises, telling his onlookers that "all shall eat and drink on [his] score!" (IV.ii.69). When the Butcher cries that he wants Cade's first act to be to rid the land of lawyers and other literate professionals, Cade recasts himself as the executor of the will of the people (literally) by having a clerk hauled to the gallows (IV.ii.73; 103). No other prospective king—not even Hal, as he traipses about the army camp—inquires of the people what they wish or expect from him. By making promises to his would-be constituents and then keeping those promises, Cade signals a willingness to do precisely what the tribunes ask of their new consul in *Coriolanus*: he promises to (and indeed *does*) give voice to even the harshest growls emitted by a barking populace.

What I have been arguing is that the relationship between kings and subjects, ambiguously constructed in early modern political theory, is a central concern of Shakespeare's; and furthermore, that reading the history plays alongside *Coriolanus* draws out the way in which the

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[96] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, qtd. in Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 9. Patterson gets around this conclusion by insisting that Cade does not directly represent the common man and his actions, but rather "doctrinaire inerudition". See pp. 48-50.

former is interested in politics (not just power), and the latter in kings (not just consuls). Jack Cade missed his calling as a Roman tribune; Coriolanus's questioning of ceremony and performance speaks to Jacobean suspicions that the coronation at Westminster, with its appeal to the London onlookers, had little practical import. My larger claim is that themes and sympathies that we often attribute to early modern proto-republicanism, especially in Shakespeare's plays, can also play a part in our inquiries into monarchism and the more traditional and overtly powerful hierarchies that governed England and Scotland. In other words, *contra* Andrew Hadfield's methodology, Shakespeare's appropriation of republican stories and motifs may not have signalled either his interest in the political position nor his aversion to it.[97] Rather, I argue that he found within the story of *Coriolanus* a vehicle for exploring the politics of his own day, and namely the proper posture that king should assume towards his subjects.

In the introduction to her study on political representation, Hannah Pitkin acknowledges that "[s]ince representation is a human idea, it may be asserted or assumed by some and questioned by others. This has led some theorists to a kind of 'reductionist realism', to assume that representation exists if and only if people believe in it".[98] What we recognise as modern political representation emerged sometime between the first and fourth decades of the seventeenth century when, as Skinner, Arnold, and Kishlansky (among others) have clearly shown, there was a discourse alive within political treatises and descriptions of Parliament that described the relationship of MPs to the broader population and considered the obligations of this elected branch in Westminster. But against this "reductionist realism" Pitkin defines her own project, and her lines of inquiry are similar to what I have been endeavouring to explore here: "I

[97] This question, of whether Shakespeare had or did not have republican sympathies, animates Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* as well as Patterson, *Popular Voice,* and Jeffrey Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017).
[98] Pitkin, 9.

want to ask, rather: When should men feel that they are represented/ When would it be correct to say that they are represented? Or again, What would count as evidence that they are represented?".[99] My chapter has put these questions in only slightly different words: when did English and Scottish subjects come to expect a reciprocal relationship between themselves and their government—be it the monarch or Parliament? When did they consider themselves to have a certain authority in that relationship? And when and how did they expect that a diachronic relationship between themselves and the government would actively reflect their wishes or interests? In this chapter, I show that the answer to these questions positions the origin of the discourse that lead to early modern representation at a much earlier point in time; and that the story of political representation includes within it sixteenth-century acclamation and resistance theories, and Shakespeare's plays. In other words, waiting for the word "representation" to appear in significant political discourses gives us only part of the concept's story; conversations on obligation and diachronic political relationships (important components of representation) existed in an advanced form at least a century ahead of Henry Parker and Hobbes—and they made it into popular drama.

[99] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

"In what sense [do] they understand the word 'people'?": Republican Theory and Shakespeare's Plural Populations

Several years after completing *Patriarchia*, upon which his reputation as a political theorist now largely rests, Sir Robert Filmer entered into the pamphleteering fray that surrounded the English and Scottish Civil Wars with *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy* (1648).[1] It hardly needs reporting that the text was offered on behalf of the royalist cause, but rather than answer charges lodged by strict Parliamentarians or Puritan radicals, Filmer addresses the moderate Sir Philip Hunton, and particularly his 1643 work, *Treatise of Monarchy*. Here, Hunton had described England as a mixed monarchy in which the king is usually the dominant component, but where Parliament retains some powers, notably legislative. Although such a conception of England was close to the historical truth about how the country had operated for several centuries, its articulation placed Hunton firmly in conflict with the monarchist theorists of the past eighty years, like Jean Bodin (and Filmer), who believed that an inherent quality of sovereignty was its indivisibility.[2] Yet Hunton did not agree with the Parliamentarians, monarchomachs, and republican thinkers on one of their

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[1] On the date for *Patriarchia*'s composition, see Johann P. Sommerville, ed., "The Authorship and Dating of Some Works Attributed to Filmer" in *Sir Robert Filmer: Patriarchia and Other Writings* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004): xxxii-xxxiii. This volume contains the edition of *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy* that I have used. Published in April 1648, it may be Filmer's first or second political pamphlet: though long attributed to Sir Robert Holborne, *The Freeholder's Grand Inquest, Touching our Sovereign Lord the King and his Parliament*, is now thought to be Filmer's work and appeared earlier the same year.

[2] Julian Franklin, ed.,"Introduction," in *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from "The Six Books of the Commonwealth," by Jean Bodin* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), ix–xxvi.

most important points: he did not ascribe to the people the right to initiate rebellion.[3] Central to the Scottish and English revival of republicanism from the mid-sixteenth century onward was the notion that power originated in the people of a land, who had at some moment in history only delegated that power to kings and princes—against whom they might rise up and reassert themselves when they felt it necessary. To this Hunton wrote that no government may function where a community who has previously given up their power could take it back at any moment.[4] However, Hunton did argue that the people, although they normally held no check on their government, might become the natural arbitrators of disputes between the two sovereign powers, Parliament and the king, when conflict that required outside arbitration arose.[5] Such a privilege would provide a "salve" to the most "fatal disease of these governments"—internal civil war, like the one Hunton was fated to live through just a few years later—without admitting a foreign power into the kingdom.[6] According to historian Julian Franklin, this maneuvering within ideologies was brilliant: Hunton could deny the common people access to sovereign power, sidestepping the histrionic and universal early modern fear of government succumbing to anarchic democracy, whilst still providing an internal judicial check on arbitrary, extra-legal actions committed by the sovereigns.[7]

In *The Anarchy*, Filmer appears neither impressed nor swayed by Hunton's argument. He complains that Hunton does not draw adequately on the Bible or Aristotle, that he has

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[3] Philip Hunton, *A Treatise of Monarchy* (London, 1643): chapter II, section VI. For the best discussion of Hunton, see Julian Franklin, *John Locke and the Theory of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978): 39-48.
[4] "Thus the community, whose consent establishes a power over them, cannot be said universally to have an eminency of power above that which they constitute […]. If they have constituted a monarchy (that is, invested one man with a sovereignty of power, and subjected all the rest to him), then it were unreasonable to say they yet have it in themselves, or have a power of recalling that supremacy…" Hunton, chapter II, section VI.
[5] *Hunton, Treatise,* chapter II, section VII.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Franklin, *John Locke,* 44-45.

misunderstood the fundamental nature of monarchy as precisely "the government of one alone", and that while "[t]here is scarce the meanest man of the multitude but can now in these days tell us that the government of the kingdom of England is a limited and mixed monarchy", this pervasive view "is an opinion but of yesterday, and of no antiquity".[8] Hackneyed insults out of the way, Filmer performs careful exegesis of Hunton's text. Treating the *Treatise of Monarchy* page by page and sometimes word by word, Filmer uncovers a weak point at the level of its language that he believes is a fatal and endemic problem in all Parliamentarian and republican thought:

> Because the power and consent of the people in government is the burden of the whole book […] and since others [other republican writers] also maintain that originally power was or now is in the people, and that the first kings were chosen by the people, they may not be offended if they be asked in what sense they understand the word 'people', because this - as many other words - hath different accept[at]ions, being sometimes taken in a larger, other whiles in a stricter sense. Literally, and in the largest sense, the word people signifies the whole multitude of mankind. But figuratively and synecdochically, it notes many times the major part of a multitude, or sometimes the better, or the richer, or the wiser, or some other part. And oftentimes a very small part of the people, if there be no other apparent opposite party, hath the name of the people by presumption.[9]

[8] Filmer, *Anarchy*, 133-135. Filmer means that it is old (of yesterday) but that it is not leant the weight given to political philosophy with Greek or Roman origin.
[9] Ibid., 140.

Filmer accuses all republican theorists, including Hunton, of playing fast and loose with the concept of 'people': if Hunton is prepared to dilute some powers of arbitration into the population, the precise nature of that group needs to be defined because it is an amorphous category. On the one hand, surely Hunton cannot mean *all* the people. "Mankind is", Filmer opines poetically, "like the sea, ever ebbing or flowing, every minute one is born another dies".[10] Shall the infirm and the infantile be included in Hunton's access to power? Then there is also the logistical problem of assembling all the 'people' any time their consent or their judgement is required: "it cannot truly be said that ever the whole people, or the major part, or indeed any conservable part of the whole people of any nation ever assembled".[11] On the other hand, if Hunton and his likeminded theorists use the word people "figuratively", they are being unclear *and* they are positing a natural condition of access to power that belongs to only some of the population without creating criteria for that restriction.[12] We are still thirty years before Locke's right to "Life, Health, Liberty, [and] Possessions" for all.[13] Finally, if Hunton and others mean people "synecdochically", they need to present mechanisms of representation and delegation.

Filmer's attack on republicanism is noteworthy because its focus is neither the radicals' perceived denigration of the monarch (which so offends James VI/I, for example); nor is it here the *character* of the common people that is bestial or otherwise unfit for political enfranchisement. These are the twin concerns of less imaginative conservatives. Filmer is

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[10] Ibid., 142.
[11] Ibid., 141.
[12] Recall that Filmer is pointedly attacked by John Locke in his *Second Treatise.* Here, Filmer argues that natural rights cannot include this power of arbitration because babies would then necessarily have it from birth, and thus need to be included in assemblies. Ibid., 142.
[13] John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government: A Critical Edition*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960): 289.

also—to my knowledge—the first early modern political theorist to uncover a host of tangles associated with the imprecise way in which early modern republican theorists have deployed the concept behind the simple word "people". (Although he is speaking of Hunton primarily, Filmer does not limit this particular critique to his one contemporary. He refers to those "others" who "also maintain that originally power was or now is in the people".) Twenty-first century scholars have identified similar muddles created by the term "people" in Filmer's theoretical predecessors: a debate persists among Roger Mason, J. H. Burns, Julian Goodare and Quentin Skinner as to whom George Buchanan, sometimes dubbed the earliest true populist,[14] meant when he asserted in *De Iure Regni* (1569) that the power to elect and depose sovereigns lies with "the whole people indeed, or in the greatest part thereof […] the greatest part [*maior pars*] of them shall transmit that power"[15]. Interpretive problems hinge on *maior pars*: retreating immediately from the indefensible position of lending power to "the whole people", Buchanan may be calling for a majority rule, or he may be conservatively advising that a council of 'great men' assume responsibility.[16] In other words, he may be speaking figuratively or "synechdochially"—precisely the vagueness that Filmer noted.

Chapters on Shakespeare and politics do not usually enter into conversation with the theories of Sir Robert Filmer for the obvious reason that the writers' lifespans hardly overlap and the intervening decades between their respective careers contain intense political change. But I find in this under-studied sliver from the pamphleteering war of the 1640s a useful lens through which to re-approach the playwright. Debates about Shakespeare's political

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[14] Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* vol. II (Cambridge: CUP, 1978): 339.
[15] George Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship Among the Scots*, ed. Roger A. Mason and Martin S. Smith (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004): 139.
[16] The best overview of this debate is in Roger A. Mason and Martin S. Smith's "Introduction" to *A Dialogue,* lix-lxii. See also J. H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early-Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996): chapter 6.

allegiances, or his plays' intended political messages, often draw from the breadth of literature and theory that Shakespeare might have read or imbibed through London culture. Scholarship has shown, for example, that Shakespeare almost certainly knew the work of Buchanan.[17] But those sources, as works of theory, can eschew the embodied particulars that *staging* politics demands—and that Filmer queries. Andrew Hadfield has made the case that republicanism was "one of the key problems that defined [Shakespeare's] working career".[18] And Annabel Patterson and Jeffrey Doty, among others, have insisted on Shakespeare's commitment to treating the public and popular dimensions of politics alongside the personal and ritualistic, something which sets him apart from other renaissance playwrights.[19] Doty writes that "what makes Shakespeare seem so anticipatory of modern politics is not just his detailed attention to political techniques […] Shakespeare goes beyond Machiavelli and Renaissance politic history by enveloping political action in publicity".[20] In other words, these scholars are at pains to show Shakespeare's commitment to representing lived political experiences that might challenge or stretch theory. To argue that Shakespeare slightly preempted Filmer's question, "in what sense [do republicans / does republican thought] understand the word 'people'", is to extend the conclusions firmly supported by this research.

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[17] David Norbrook, "Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography", in *Politics of Discourse: the Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987): 78-116. Apart from *Macbeth*, a poem by Buchanan may be one of the sources for *Venus and Adonis*. See Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (London : Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001): 72-3.

[18] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005): 1.

[19] Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1989). Jeffrey Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cam: CUP, 2017). Also useful for thinking about Shakespeare's commitment to popular forms of power is Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theatre and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[20] Jeffrey Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cam: CUP, 2017): 2.

Besides lending my inquiry its central question, Filmer's *Anarchy of Mixed Monarchy* is also a reminder that even as the political climate polarized ahead of the Civil Wars, early modern political debates could not ever be fully reduced to the straightforward camps of liberalism and conservatism, or monarchism and republicanism. Here, it is his frustration with a moderate that leads Filmer to make his most interesting and—I argue—trans-historical critique of early republicanism. Elsewhere in this dissertation, I have engaged with historical scholarship on the "monarchical republic" of England and the intellectual tradition of constitutional royalism that tried to temper the ideological extremities at war in the middle of the seventeenth century.[21] Too often in Shakespeare studies, scholars work to place the playwright in one camp or the other. E. M. Tillyard was the first to introduce this binary way of thinking about Shakespeare, concluding that he was a conservative defender of the status quo. As Blair Worden noted a few years ago, "Tillyard's answers have been challenged more often than his questions".[22] By that he meant that we are more often interested to consider what Shakespeare's political affiliations were, along black and white terms, than to interrogate whether that question facilitates important or useful interventions into the plays. Filmer and Hunton remind me that political questions which do not cluster around the sovereign and his access to unlimited power—for example, questions about the enfranchisement and local political activity—do not always divide neatly along ideological lines.

In some of Shakespeare's most complicated political plays, notably *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, the common people are minor characters—they are hardly ever at the center of the action—but their presence from the margins excerts important pressures. Put differently, the

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[21] Collinson's phrase. See "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" in *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 31-57.
[22] Blair Worden, "Shakespeare and Politics", *Shakespeare Survey,* Vol. 44, ed. Stanley Wells, (1991): 3.

force of the common people is alluded to by characters onstage at pivotal moments whether they are or are not present. The mob weighs heavily on Claudius's mind, for example, when he considers how to punish Hamlet for Polonius's murder: "How dangerous is it that [Hamlet] goes loose! / Yet must not we put the strong law on him: / He's loved of the distracted multitude" (*Hamlet* IV.iii.2-4).[23] Both plays are set in places and times where elections determine elements of government[24] Both plays signal the beginning of the final crisis by an untimely and threatening mob: Danes try to rush the stage to crown Laertes king as Ophelia is revealed to have been struck by madness; a Roman mob lynches the innocent poet Cinna to begin a reign of violence that will not end until the last act of the play's sequel. In what follows, I consider how these two plays explore the gap between the idealism that underlined early republican thought and the material and prejudicial limitations on populism enforced in the political sphere. And I argue that Shakespeare's plays prepare us for the ways in which mid-century republican theorists traded on a language of populism that they were not prepared to uphold.

[23] Citations from Shakespeare's plays will be given in-line. Unless otherwise noted, they are from *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works,* ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, 3rd edition (2011).

[24] This is important because the people to some extent in these plays are already presumed part of the political sphere. This is not the case in England yet, though it will become so by the middle-end of the seventeenth century.

I. Tear them all to pieces: Effacing the Mob in *Julius Caesar*

> "Yet might one say, that in the estate of the Romans the lesse part of the people chosen out of the richer sort made the lawes, and the greatest officers; … and that the greater sort of the people made the lesser officers…" — From the 1606 English translation of Jean Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonweale*[25]

Caesar has been slain, and Brutus has foolishly granted Mark Antony's request to speak in memoriam before the restless crowd. At the conclusion of his own oration, Brutus gestures to Antony, who has arrived onstage bearing the bloody body of Caesar, and observes: "Here comes his [Caesar's] body, mourned by Mark Antony, who, though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth, *as which of you shall not*?" (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.41-44; my emphasis). The rhetorical question, the last of many which Brutus has put to the crowd, contains an oblique promise, the implication that Caesar's death will confer upon the plebeians of Rome some "place in the commonwealth" that had hitherto been denied them. Put differently, it sounds as though Brutus is promising to the people (and to Mark Antony) different or increased access to power. By phrasing it as such, Brutus is counting on the strength of the idea of a commonwealth to impel the people towards constructive work in rebuilding the government and to redirect popular attention away from the crime that he and the other senators have committed. And he is also channeling

[25] Jean Bodin, *Jean Bodin*, *The Six Books of the Commonweale: A Facsimile Reprint of the English Translation of 1606,* ed. Kenneth Douglass McRae (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962): 195.

classical and early modern republican ideology: the death of a tyrant redistributes power back into the hands of the common people, from whence, republicans posit, it originated. George Buchanan, tracing Scottish history back to a time when people lived in simple huts and chose to gather in groups for protection in his *De Iure Regni*, insists that "the people have"—and have always had—"the right to bestow authority on whomever they wish".[26] A tyrant is a king who denies the people this power—a favorite early modern metaphor for the subject under a tyrant was the slave or bondman, and Brutus invokes it to emphasize his work in freeing the people from Caesar's tyranny:[27] "Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves" (III.ii.22-3) he asks the crowd before him. Now, Brutus awakens his audience to their own potential to help construct a new commonwealth.

Brutus and his conspirators aspire to be paragons of republican action,[28] and Brutus in particular holds himself and his fellow Romans (Caesar, most disastrously) to rigid standards that were set by his ancestor, Junius Brutus. Staunch republicans serve the public; Brutus says he will look "indifferently" upon death so long as he is working in the service of "the general good" (I.ii.85). Thus, too, does Brutus emphasize how much he loves Caesar when he confesses that he killed his friend because he "loved Rome more" (III.ii.20). As Peter Lake's careful reading of the play has shown, the greatest "general good" in the eyes of the

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[26] Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 27

[27] Buchanan provides an exemplary republican definition of a tyrant. Ibid., 85. Much later, Hobbes complains about this belief that republicans hold: they "that the Subjects in a popular Common-wealth enjoy Liberty; but that in a Monarchy they are all Slaves". See *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 226.

[28] A number of scholars have noted that Brutus's character is constructed as the ideal Roman republican, complete with all its contradictions and flaws. See, for example, Arthur Humphries, ed., 'Introduction' to *Julius Caesar* (Oxford: OUP, 1987): 28. A number of *other* scholars have noted the difficulty in pinning down an exact definition for early modern republicanism. For a summary of the issues associated with that, see Anthony DeMatteo, "Was Shakespeare a Republican? A Review essay", in *College Literature* 34.1 (Winter 2007): 196-212.

republican conspirators is to create and maintain the conditions for men to be able to be honorable and virtuous and noble. But this is only possible if men exist freely, if they have "the capacity not to be 'in awe' of any other mortal".[29] As a later republican poet wrote, "every mature man might have to exercise his owne leading capacity" to discover, for himself, virtue.[30] Freedom is a precondition for honor and also the responsibility of those who would call themselves honorable: to allow subjugation in the place of freedom is dishonorable.[31] Casca declare that "every bondman in his own hand bears / The power to cancel his captivity" (I.iii.101-2), insinuating that suicide is preferable to the reduced state that the men now perceive themselves to be in under Caesar. Cassius agrees: "And why should Caesar be a tyrant then? / Poor man, I know he would not be a wolf / But that he sees the Romans are but sheep" (I.iii.103-5). Their point is that the Roman people have cultivated an environment prone to tyranny: Casca and Cassius blame themselves, and they blame the people. Just as the mettle of the Roman men has allowed for Caesar's rise, the right conditions for a republic perpetuates that republic by also fashioning men who will uphold it. Freedom begets free men. It is a constitutive circle, or what Lake calls a "nexus" of "intensely related, perhaps even mutually dependent, terms"[32] where state and men are inextricably linked—an early modern version of biopolitical theory. It is the republican man's duty to safeguard the urban conditions in which virtue, honor, nobility, and freedom can thrive.

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[29] My understanding of republican freedom, and its relation to honor, comes from Peter Lake's reading of it in *Julius Caesar* in *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Plays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016): 442-456. This quote is on 443.
[30] John Milton, *Areopagitica,* printed in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Modern Library, 2007): 938.
[31] Milton again: "none can love freedom heartily but good men; the rest love not freedom but license". From *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, printed in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, 1024.
[32] Lake 443.

From the commitment to this duty—and the belief in this interrelated web of the state and men's virtue—arises a strikingly modern philosophy about the construction of the self. As Katharine Maus, among other scholars, has noted, *Julius Caesar* can be read as a turning point in the maturation process of Shakespeare's art.[33] There is something about the men in *Julius Caesar* that is distinct from the characters in his earlier plays: Maus ascribes this to Shakespeare's new mode of "character conception", which "is related to, and perhaps inspired by, the move from English to Roman historical material […]. The ancient Roman setting, I believe, encouraged Shakespeare to attend to processes of choice-making, and to find innovative means for representing those processes onstage".[34] In Brutus's soliloquy in Act II, for example, Maus writes that Shakespeare shows him struggling with "the kind of choice that will not only determine his immediate course of action but that will determine the kind of person he will be able to become in the future, and the kind of world he will find himself living in".[35] For Maus, the idea of constitutive choices, which Shakespeare clearly carried into *Hamlet*, originates in a Roman play because it seemed to Shakespeare a part of the classical world: in law and inheritance, Romans had greater liberty to construct their family and their legacy through their own agency. I argue that this is connected to the Roman republicanism represented in the play too: Brutus and his conspirators believe deeply in being able to constitute themselves and their state through their actions (and through the way that they describe those actions) as part of their republican ideology. Again, "Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius": it is not just that by assassinating Caesar that Cassius will be set 'free'.

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[33] For example, James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of Shakespeare: 1599* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), xxii.
[34] Katharine Maus, "The Will of Caesar: Choice-Making, the Death of the Roman Republic, and the Development of Shakespearean Character", *Shakespeare Survey*, vol 70 (2017): 249-258.
[35] Ibid., 250

Cassius, through his choice to partake in the assassination, creates—constitutes—a new Cassius, one with a set of ideologies that fully govern his sense of self. It is a restitutive act to take down Caesar, but it is also a constitutive act: the conspirators create themselves as republicans, as Romans, as the inheritors of the legacy of tyrant-slayer Junius Brutus.

So when he addresses the plebeians, Brutus means to affirm a shared, reclaimed praxis of Roman citizenship that is central to republicanism; perhaps he indicates to them a moment in which they can choose to constitute themselves. "[W]hich of you shall not" may be a challenge that he dares them (or some of them?) to meet.[36] Nevertheless, by posing the phrase as a question Shakespeare invites audiences to answer it critically over the course of the play (that is, we need not treat it as rhetorical). Will the common Romans' "place in the commonwealth" alter with Caesar's death? As the next two acts unfold, do they involve themselves democratically in the ensuing power struggle? Of course not: in Blair Worden's words, "[i]t would be as surprising to find a Renaissance playwright hoping for democracy as it would be to find a modern playwright arguing against it".[37] In practice, sixteenth-century republicanism (or proto-republicanism) agitated for a kind of meritocratic oligarchy, or an expanded bureaucracy, where kings and state officials were somehow obligated to rely on councilors, lawyers, and philosophers to govern.[38] Its chief concern—reflected in the fear that preoccupies Brutus and his fellow conspirators—is the creation and enablement of a tyrant;[39]

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[36] Shakespeare's development of the central figure in his plays comes at cost, I would argue, to his marginal figures. As the men around whom the plays turn progress psychologically, the common people grow less interesting. No Falstaffs flounce across the later stages, and even 'Poor Tom', who effects in Lear a real moment of consideration for his starving masses, is of course a nobleman in disguise.
[37] Worden, "Shakespeare and Politics", 6.
[38] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 17.
[39] Brutus muses on these fears in II.i.10-34. This fear fuels all of the questions that begin the four sections of *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, particularly the first: "Whether subjects are bound and ought to obey princes, if they command that which is against the law of God". See *A Defence of Liberty against*

and wise council and strong laws provide the antidote, not universal or even partial enfranchisement.[40] Furthermore, the play suggests that the qualities that republicans associate with citizens or citizen-subjects are only available for cultivation by the upper classes who have the time and means. Brutus insists that he will act as honor compels him ("Set honor in one eye, and death i'th' other, / And I will look on both indifferently", I.ii.86-7); while in the first scene one of the mob of plebeians, a cobber, suggests that he is helping to incite merriment and holidaymaking as a means of generating necessary business:

> FLAVIUS But wherefore art not in thy shop today? Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?
>
> COBBLER Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work (I.i. 28-30).

The is hardly the statement of values that Flavius, a tribune of the people, expects when he accosts the mob.

What if we rephrase the original question—would the Roman republic that the conspirators seek to create extend political power to the masses? –using the republican terms that Brutus employs: does *Julius Caesar* suggest that Caesar's death effects a transformation of the plebeians from 'bondmen' into citizens? Hardly: the plebeians are rarely onstage in the second half of the play; and the people's tribunes disappear after the first act.[41] *And yet,* if the early modern expectations for republican governments fall short of its more modern, inclusive definition, *rhetorically* the republican characters in *Julius Caesar* and republican writers

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Tyrants: A translation of Vindiciae contra tyrannos *by Junius Brutus,* ed. Harold J. Laski (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924; reprinted 1972): 65.

[40] Buchanan advocates for a council of men that consult with the king to create the laws of the kingdom. See his *De Jure Regni,* 55.

[41] They are put "to silence" by Caesar (I.ii.285-6). See a discussion of this in Doty, 111.

contemporary to Shakespeare have a slippery habit of extending their expectations and values seemingly towards the universal. The latter occurancse are what prompt Filmer's comments in the mid seventeenth century. Consider George Buchanan, patron republican of this paper:

> Who, then, are to be counted as citizens? Those who obey the laws and uphold human society, who prefer to face every toil, every danger, for the safety of their fellow countrymen rather than grow old in idleness, enjoying an ease divorced from honor […] So if citizens are reckoned, not by number, but by worth, not only the better part but also the greater will stand for freedom, honor and security.[42]

In Buchanan we see that same emphasis on working for the public good that contributes to Brutus's requirements for a virtuous member of a republic. Indeed, Buchanan seems to hinge his definition of citizenship on the mettle of individual men. And like Brutus, Buchanan does not limit or definitively extend this potential enfranchisement into specific groups of people, or cap it at a certain number. Of this vagueness in Buchanan, the historian Roger Mason writes that there is a "conspicuous absence from Buchanan's definition of citizenship of any reference to social class, wealth or, most notably of all, property. The inference must surely be that any man – whether of noble, middling or common status – has the duty as well as the capacity to participate in the active civic life."[43] The theory is left open to anyone who takes it upon themselves to "uphold human society" and take action.[44] In practice, Francis Oakley

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[42] *De Jure Regni*, p. 141.
[43] Mason, "Introduction", lxii.
[44] In a very new history of the political concept of 'liberalism' Helena Rosenblatt argues that at the turn of the seventeenth century the virtue of being liberal—traditionally tied to social comportment, civic duty, and public generosity—moved from being only available to the upper classes to standing for something every man should aspire to embody. See *The Lost History of Liberalism* (Princeton University Press, 2018), especially pp. 16-17.

has noted that Buchanan may meant the Scottish Estates.[45] In *Julius Caesar*, what makes it difficult to shrug off Brutus's magnanimous speech as directed only at the other senators and people of wealth in the crowd is the fact that he and Cassius are clear in their condemnation of the the people of Rome in the lead-up to the murder. Caesar is a "wolf" because the Romans are ignoble, unfree "sheep". To consider an individual or party guilty is to posit that they might have acted otherwise; here, at least when they are casting blame, Cassius and Brutus must feel the people of Rome have the capacity to become virtuous members of the state.

Although Brutus's sentiments seem borrowed from those of the radical monarchomachs George Buchanan into the Roman forum, it may be that his ideas more closely resemble the tempered (if still idealized) descriptions found in Thomas Smith's popular and well-respected *De Republica Anglorum* (pub. 1583), which defined England as a "society or common doing of a multitude of free men"[46] operating under the authority of Elizabeth I. Translations adopt the word "commonwealth" for Smith's frequent use of *republica* or *res publica*; interestingly, Brutus, too, calls Rome 'the commonwealth' as he ends his oration, linking his Rome to sixteenth-century England. Smith's book describes how subjects had a simultaneous duty to obey the queen and to contribute to and collaborate in local government as responsible citizens, taking as their model for this latter role classical examples and especially Cicero. Patrick Collinson has dubbed this construction of England

[45] Francis Oakley, "On the Road From Constantance to 1688: the Political Thought of John Major and George Buchanan", in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (May 1962): 24-26. Oakley isn't fully confident in this, and considers other meanings for "*maior pars*". Mason does not believe that this is what Buchanan meant; see his "Introduction" to *De Iure Regni* lxi.

[46] Thomas Smith, *De Republica Angolorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge: CUP, 1982): 57. This quote is used early in Collinson as an important piece of evidence. Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" in *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 36.

the Elizabethan "monarchical republic" and traced the ways in which towns and burgesses saw widespread political participation at the local level.[47]

Smith stratifies England into a conservative hierarchy of power, but he ascribes to every level a responsibility towards the state. Political participation thus extends out past the sphere of the king and into everyday life across England—something rarely if ever considered in the tracts of Buchanan, Ponet, or the author of *Vindiciae*. He also admits of some porousness to the different classes of men; for example, many yeomen "after setting their sonnes to the schooles, to the Universities, to the lawe of the Realme, or otherwise leaving them sufficient landes that they may live without labour, doe make their saide sonnes by those means gentlemen".[48] Pertinent to my inquiry is the way in which he walks back his description of a lowest strata of society, the day laborers. First, Smith denies them political access, calling them the final "sort of men which doe not rule". But then he considers some exceptional circumstances:

> day labourers, poore husbandmen, yea merchantes or retailers which have no free lande, copiholders, all artificers, as Taylers, Shoomakers, Carpenters, Brickemakers, Bricklayers, Masons, &c […] have no voice nor authority in our common wealth, and yet they be not altogether neglected. For in cities and corporate townes for default of yeoman, they are faine to make their inquests of

[47] "Elizabethan England was a republic which happened also to be a monarchy: or vice versa". Collinson, 43.
[48] Smith, *De Republica Anglorum,* 74. It has become commonplace since Richard Helgerson's *Forms of Nationhood* to comment on the increase in social mobility in the latter half of the sixteenth century. *Forms of Nationhood: the Elizabethan Writing of England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): Chapter 1.

> such manner of people. And in villages they be commonly Churchwardens, alecunners, and manie times Constables.[49]

In other words, "day labourers" and "husbandmen", *as well as* merchants, may occupy the place of yeoman in cities and towns, where there were not yeoman. They cannot participate in elections, but they may hold the offices and officiate in legislative and judicial matters in their community. In *Perkin Warbeck*, a drama by John Ford written after Shakespeare's death, a silly servant who has been confused by the appearance of a royal usurper mutters to himself "kings must be kings, and subjects subjects. But which is which, you shall pardon me for that".[50] Reading Smith, one has the sense that early modern people were rarely confused between royalty and non-royalty; or aristocracy and non-aristocracy; but that nuances between strata within "the commons" were less self-explanatory, more often trespassed, and there was more at stake in terms of access to local power. The tangle of people who may "count" in a commonwealth grows impenetrable. We cannot look only to those who are enfranchised to vote in the House of Commons elections, though those numbers are imprecise anyway.[51] How to we account for a laborer constable, unable to vote but with judicial powers, when we reckon the number of politically active men in England?

Shakespeare's Roman politics cannot be squeezed into a straight allegory for any of England's political situations. But I suggest that when Brutus addresses his onstage crowd and the play's onlookers, Shakespeare leaves a rhetorical question dangling before an audience

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[49] Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, 76-7.
[50] John Ford, *Perkin Warbeck,* Act V, scene ii, lines 113-115. I used the edition contained in John Ford, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore *and Other Plays,* ed. Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[51] See Annabel Patterson's overview of studies in her "Afterward" to *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History*, ed. Christ Fitter (Oxford: OUP, 2017): 3. She notes that statistics about enfranchisement in the seventeenth century range from estimates of 40-odd percent to 5 percent.

with whom it would have resonated. Who can be a citizen – who can step into the role of protecting and regulating public spaces? I want to consider one final way in which these questions are presented directly to audiences of *Julius Caesar* by looking closely at two parallel scenes where characters attempt to police others in the name of the community justice. The second of these scenes has long troubled scholars trying to claim Shakespeare for the modern left. In Act IV, having been incensed by Mark Antony to hunt down Caesar's murderers, a group of plebeians (now a mob) come upon a nobleman in the streets who is hurrying to Caesar's funeral. At first the mob does not know that the nobleman they have surrounded is not lately a conspirator; but when Cinna the poet distinguishes himself from Cinna the senator, they pronounce that profession guilty of crimes as well:

> 1 Plebeian: Tear him to pieces, he's a conspirator!
>
> Cinna: I am Cinna the poet! I am Cinna the poet!
>
> 4 Plebeian: Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses
>
> Cinna: I am not Cinna the conspirator.
>
> 4 Plebeian: It is no matter, his name's Cinna (III.iii.30-34).

In brutalizing the wrong Cinna, Shakespeare seems to suggest that his Roman population is "dangerously unstable", for they cannot master their own passions[52]; and for Robert Miola, this scene helps to "render meaningless the question about whether the people consent to the assassination" of Caesar and to any new mode of government that might be installed, since

[52] Nussbaum's argument for Shakespeare's anti populism rests in part on her comparison between the common people in his play and the common people in Plutarch, though she does not consider this scene, "'Romans, Countrymen, Lovers': Political Love and the Rule of Law in *Julius Caesar*", in *Shakespeare and the Law*, ed. Bradin Cormack, Martha Nussbaum, and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 264-266.

"[s]uch consent could only be capricious whim".[53] This mob is even more frightening than Plutarch's in the parallel scene, Shakespeare's source, for Plutarch twice indicates that the Roman people do not realize their identification mistake.[54] In contrast, Shakespeare's people clearly proceed *despite* the identity mishap. And there is something "unstable" about the text itself in the revelation that the wrong Cinna has been killed, for the 'right' Cinna sets himself up for his own end at the hands of the people. It is he who tries to rush forward first, steeped in Caesar's blood and with dagger still in hand, to proclaim to the people that "Tyranny is dead!" (III.i.79), sure of the favorable reception that the news will have with the common people. Unsure of what might ensue, Brutus deters him and tell him to wait.

But there is another way to read the scene. Cinna the conspirator and Cinna the poet share a name and, by extension, elite status in the commonwealth that is other to the plebeians, so individual differences betwixt the two Cinnas do not matter to the crowd. A mob always effaces particularization: it represents the suppression of individuality in favor of generalizations about both its victims and its participants. Thus as one Cinna stands in for another in the eyes of the mob, are we not also reminded of how one plebeian onstage feels interchangeable with and indistinguishable from another in Shakespeare's Roman plays?[55]

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[53] Robert S Miola, "Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate", in *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2 (Summer, 1985): 288.

[54] "When [Cinna] came thither [to the marketplace], one of the mean sort asked him what his name was? He was straight called by his name. The first man told it to another, and that unto another, so that it ran straight through them all, that he was one of them that murthered Caesar: (for indeed one of the traitors to Caesar was also called Cinna as himself) wherefore taking him for Cinna the murtherer, they fell upon him…" From Plutarch, "Life of Caesar", paragraph 45. I used *Shakespeare's Plutarch,* ed. Rev. Walter W. Skeat (London: Macmillan and Co., 1875): 102-13. Next: "And because someone called him by his name Cinna, the people, thinking he had been that Cinna who in an oration he made had spoken very evil of Caesar, they, falling upon him in their rage, slew him outright in the market-place." Plutarch, "Life of Marcus Brutus", para. 16. In *Shakespeare's Plutarch*, p. 121.

[55] Oliver Arnold attempts to distinguish a particularly prescient personality for the 'Third Citizen' in *Coriolanus*, but diverse characterization in any given crowd scene is an unlikely goal of Shakespeare's. Hence Arnold's title, *The Third Citizen.*

And, by extension, how those with access to state power are as capable of senseless violence as the mob for whom that violence is prejudicially characteristic?[56] *Julius Caesar* further encourages this comparative reflection with the structural parallel it creates between Cinna the poet's lynching and the play's opening scene. In Act I, the tribunes accost a group of plebeians with the same questions that the plebeians will later put to Cinna—who are you, what are you doing—and, though the tribunes receive answers that distinguish two of the '*certain* Commoners' as a carpenter and a cobbler, they continue to address the crowd as if it were composed of featureless faces. "You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!" (I.i.35).[57] They ignore the distinctions that have just been supplied them about the individual men. Across the corpus of Roman plays, "[f]or the patricians, the plebeians have no names".[58] But here in *Julius Caesar*, even the people's tribunes do violence to their constituents' identities. No wonder the crowd cares little for distinctions between Cinnas and senators.

I think Shakespeare's point is not to depict the plebeian (or patrician) class as wholly unfit to rule, but to suggest that there is a violence to the way that categories imposed upon a body of people obfuscate individual identities in all cases.[59] Here again I circle back to what Brutus precisely meant by asking the crowd, "which of you", because his literal question implies the distinguishing between individuals at some level (which out of all of you, as

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[56] Annabel Patterson writes that "Possibly the most acute strategy that Shakespeare uses to attack class prejudice is his attributing all the invidious clichés about the common people to patricians, especially Coriolanus himself, and his mother, who apparently believes that Rome could manage perfectly well without all its tradesmen. Meanwhile his son is praised for torturing butterflies and then tearing them apart". In her "Afterward" to *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners,* 260.

[57] The Folio's stage directions briefly admit diverse markers for the crowd: there is *Car.* and *Cob.,* but the distinctions don't stick. The crowd gathered before Brutus and Mark Antony several acts later is composed of '1', '2', etc.

[58] Stephen Greenblatt, *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2017): chapter 10

[59] Certainly, the state-sanctioned idea of honor that Brutus has in his mind creates the reputational, and later physical harm, that comes to him.

opposed to all of you). Working with just twelve cast members, Shakespeare creates a thronging marketplace with only four or five 'plebeians' onstage in part by giving no one a unique personality. Each is an everyman, a synecdoche for Rome's lowest class. But when Brutus puts to the crowd his rhetorical question, he literally queries the access of individual men to an imagined inclusivity—"*which* of you" draws our attention to every single man. Brutus dares *each* plebeian in the crowd to assert that he alone will not enjoy a better position within the commonwealth because of Caesar's death. Audience-members now hold in their imaginations two competing presentations: actor as representative of a body of people—the four onstage represent a huge restless crowd, a similar imaginative leap famously called for by the Chorus at the start of *Henry V*—and actor as representative of *a* common man within the commonwealth, to whom Brutus appeals. "[W]hich of you" simultaneously singles out men for their own capacity to participate and gestures to universality for its claim with an air of magnanimousness. The theatre presents this paradox physically, staging a conundrum that mirrors one Christoper Pye argues is the fate of the citizen-subject under any elective rule: the "definitionally limitless 'universal' being", endowed with consciousness and subjectivity, is always contained and therefore negated by parameters set by the state.[60] "Negation—subjectivity's reduction to a vanishing point—is the very condition of its universalisation".[61] For Pye, Othello's identity within the state is fixed to his blackness; Julia Reinhard Lupton extends the argument: "as some version of this vanishing is also suffered by every citizen-subject—by everyone who accedes to membership in an artificial group—Othello's blackness

[60] Christopher Pye, "'To Throw out our eyes for brave Othello': Shakespeare and Aesthetic Ideology", in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol. 60, no. 4 (Winter, 2009): 425.
[61] Ibid., 431.

comes to name a universal dilemma, although one articulated differently".[62] Individuals—and their individual subjectivities—in Brutus's Roman audience vanish as the crowd comes in to view on the stage. The two iterations are at odds with each other.

Early modern republicans perform the same paradoxical negation as they imagined the 'whole' people who are not literally the whole. Recall the quotation from *De Iure Regni* above, Buchanan's monarchomachic dialogue in which he first enfranchises "the whole" of Scotland with the power to elect a monarch, and then qualifies his statement by conceding that he means some oblique "*maior pars*" of the whole. Earlier in the text, Buchanan's mild interlocutor, Thomas Maitland, had pressed upon exactly whom Buchanan truly means to grant power to:

> *Buchanan*. […] I believe that, after consultation with the king in council, a decision should be taken in common in matters which affect the common good of all.
>
> *Maitland*. Then you want to grant this function to the people?
>
> *B.* Yes, to the people, unless you think otherwise.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *M.* You are familiar with the phrase 'the many-headed monster'. You know, I think, how rash and fickle the people are.
>
> *B.* I have never thought that this task should be left to the judgement of the people as a whole. Rather, as it is roughly our own practice, selected men from all estates should meet with the king in council; then, once a preliminary

[62] Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Shakespeare's Citizen-Subjects: Distracting the Gaze, Contracting the City. *A Response to Christoper Pye",* in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol. 60, no. 4 (Winter, 2009): 449.

> resolution has been drawn up by them, it should be referred to the judgement of the people.[63]

It is clear from this discussion that Buchanan means for there to be a Parliament of some sort assisting the king with matters that "affect the common good". This is hardly a radical suggestion. And yet, Buchanan later declares power for the "whole" population, eliding his representative level of governance. It is not just that Buchanan (and early modern England, before the turn of the seventeenth century) lacks a concrete theory for government representation, but that the "whole" of the people remains an unfixed, un-embodied ideal. It is a fiction akin to the burgeoning concept of the state, and to entrench oneself in particulars about *which* people is to lose the entire forest for the sake of the trees.[64]

Perhaps, as Oliver Arnold argues, Brutus believes that he is acting as the embodiment of the Roman people's general will—that the general populace really does wish themselves freed from Caesar.[65] This may be true, but it is also true that the conspirators acknowledge the probable possibility that the common people will be aggravated by Caesar's murder; this is why the idea of including Cicero in the scheme arises. Metellus says, "O let us have him [Cicero], for his silver hairs / Will purchase us a good opinion, / And buy men's voices to commend our deeds" (II.i.143-5). And when the murder has been carried out, they are wise to their own vulnerability with regards to the mob. They urge Brutus to "go to the pulpit" before news of the murder travels organically, and to not let Antony speak to the crowd (III.i.84).

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[63] Buchanan, 55. J H Burns notes this but still avers that Buchanan theorises for his common people "more continuous sovereign control than Locke was to accord them in the *Second Treatise"*. Burns, "The Political Ideas of George Buchanan", *The Scottish Historical Review,* Vol. 30, no. 109, part 1 (April, 1951): 64.

[64] James Tully describes leftist thought before Locke's *Two Treatises* as believing that "political power inheres in the people as a corporate body, not individually". See his entry, "Locke" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700,* ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: CUP, 1995): 621-2.

[65] Arnold, *Third Citizen,* 143-4.

Brutus says that he acts for the "general good" of "Rome" (I.ii.84), but I cannot find anything in the text that suggests that he equates this with the will of the common people. In the moments where he considers what is best for Rome, Brutus sounds less like a republican and more like a benevolent father, working out what is best for his children—such a tenor aligns him with James VI/I's patriarchal rhetoric of the king as head of a potentially unruly household.[66] Brutus muses to himself on the eve of the murder, "I know no personal cause to spurn at him / But for the general" (II.i.11-12). What composes the general if not the aggregate of particulars—of personals and personnel? Rome encompasses the people, and in killing Caesar, Brutus certainly believes that he effects their freedom (III.ii.22-24). But Rome is a universalizing way of viewing the people as part of a larger whole rather than as a group of individuals. Rome is not the sum of its constituent subjectivities: it is the effacing of them.

Brutus's proffered egalitarianism, beginning with his encompassing "Romans, countrymen and lovers" (III.ii.13), should ring as problematically to us as Hunton's expansive use of the term "people" does to Filmer. The tenor of Brutus's speech trends towards some oblique promise of enfranchisement and power for the people that is fully immaterial in its conception. Rome is not a composition of its lower-class citizens: it is an ideal to which they may or may not conform themselves, crafted in the unattainable shape of the powerful republicans. We know, as I am sure that early modern audiences understood all too well, that power will never slip from the inept hands of the senator class, whether Caesar be alive or murdered. But the rhetoric that Brutus must use to defend his own actions will develop a life of its own over the seventeenth century.

[66] Miola reminds us that the Roman government was representative. See 276.

II. *Hamlet* and Human Plurality

> *"Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech…"*
>
> — Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958)[67]

Having demonstrated the irrationality of republican claims to enfranchise 'all the people' or even some majority slice, Sir Robert Filmer's *The Anarchy of Limited or Mixed Monarchy* moves against the historical argument for popular governments. "To all this"—the impossibility of gathering babes and babushkas for a country-wide vote, and the imprecision that his republican antitheses allow into their language—he writes that "[my argument] may be opposed: what need dispute how a people can choose a king since there be multiple examples that kings have been, and are nowadays chosen by their people?"[68] In other words, Filmer acknowledges that it is commonly thought in England that certain populist monarchies exist on the continent, and it is bad form to harness even the most eloquent of rhetoric against what may be fact. But the truth is, he insists, that "[m]any kings are and have been chosen by some small part of a people. But by the whole or major part of the kingdom not any at all. Most have been elected by the nobility, great men, and princes of the blood, as in Poland, Denmark and in Sweden—not by any collective or representative body of any nation."[69] It is only falsely assumed that Scandinavian countries have populist mechanisms; it is hearsay, or "a great rumor in this age of moderated and limited kings",[70] but Filmer has studied them. Deploying several pages of quotes from Jean Bodin, Filmer corrects his audience's

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[67] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 175.
[68] Filmer, *The Anarchy of Limited or Mixed Monarchy*., 143.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

misconceptions, and then he returns to Denmark to emphasize that the country is not even as progressive in spirit as it may seem in the letter of the law. Denmark has senators, yes, to elect a king, but what does it matter anyway for the republican cause? "They [the senators] have always in a manner set the king's eldest son upon the royal throne".[71]

This is the end of Filmer's forty-some page pamphlet, and in any case it is not in his interest or to his absolutist ends to entertain hypothetical situations whereby a Danish senate might not choose the king's eldest son as the heir to a kingdom. Indeed, Filmer's point is that the historical absence of such a scenario indicates that the mechanism for choice should be viewed as a formality or even an illusion. His source for Danish history from half a century earlier, Jean Bodin's *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* agrees: "the nobilitie of Polonia, Denmarke, and Sweden, pretend [i.e. claim] the right of Soueraigntie to belong vnto them"; although, Bodin allows that Danish kings have historically been hampered by strong nobility and inflexible laws.[72] They are, in other words, far from the idealized portrait of an 'absolute' king that Filmer and Bodin share, and both theorists go to great pains to insist that Denmark's situation is nothing but an exception that proves the rule. It is complicated and dangerous to have an elective monarchy and a king who must answer to the law of his courtiers. Some pages later, Bodin calls on Denmark and its sixteenth-century succession crisis that was precipitated when King Christian was overthrown by his senators to warn readers that "where the rights of soueraigntie are diuided betwixt the prince and his subiects: in that confusion of the state, there is still endlesse sturres and quarrels […]. Whereof as there be many examples of old, so is there none fitter in our time, than the example of the kings of Denmarke"[73].

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[71] Ibid., 170.
[72] Bodin, *Six Books*, 163.
[73] Ibid., 194.

For these two early modern political thinkers, writing over half a century apart, Denmark presents itself as a liability in their historical theorizing: it is a place where sovereignty does not always function as it should, where the nobility and the law sometimes prove stronger powers than the king, and where (in Filmer's account) custom and reason only precariously prevent populism from prevailing: dangerously, primogeniture is not written into the law. Furthermore, Denmark seems to have inspired liberal perceptions—encouraged speculation about the potential for mixed monarchy. And, alluded to inadvertently by Filmer, there is a Danish scenario ripe for imagining, possibly for dramatization: what should happen when a land whose people (or, at least, some of the people) have in name the power to elect a king go against tradition and choose someone other than the prior king's eldest son?

We know the name of that story: it appeared on the English stage long before Filmer's pamphlet and several years ahead of the English translation of Bodin's *Six Books,* but it stages the scenario that they fear with all of the tragic conclusions that they predict. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* need not be understood as a work with conservative political convictions, nor need Shakespeare have read Bodin, but it shares with Bodin and Filmer some skepticism about an elective system of monarchy. *Hamlet* is a play predicated on a political scenario that could not happen in England (but which would clearly worry one English writer forty years later). In Margareta De Grazia's words, "Denmark's electoral constitution is crucial to the play's dramatic set-up. It allows for a situation impossible in a primogenitary monarchy: the Prince remains at court in the company of the king who was preferred over him".[74] The tragedy spins out from this premise, and thus, like *Julius Caesar*, it might be read as an investigation into the issues associated with early modern populism and proto-republicanism.

[74] Margareta de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007): 88-9.

But that line of inquiry is more difficult here than it was in the Roman play because of the way in which *Hamlet* the play represents—or does not represent—the facts of its political environment. Allusions abound, details evade. Claudius declares his thanks that the courtiers' "better wisdoms […] / have freely gone / with this affair along" (I.ii.15-16), but "affair" might allude to his recent marriage to Gertrude, his "sometime sister" whom he has just formally re-introduced in her new role as his queen (I.ii.8), or his coronation—in which case, it takes on a more surreptitious or at least extra-ordinary connotation.[75] More disorienting for its imprecision is the moment in the fourth act of the play when, with the clamor of a mob just offstage threatening the inner chambers of Elsinore's court, a messenger delivers this report to King Claudius, Gertrude, and Horatio:

> the rabble call [Laertes] lord,
> And, as the world were now but to begin,
> Antiquity forgot, customs not known—
> The ratifiers and props of every word—
> They cry, "choose we! Laertes shall be king." (IV.v.102-6)

Laertes, we learn, has just discovered that his father has been slain, and he wrongly assumes the deed to be the work of Claudius. He storms the court and revenge Polonius, and a mob of common people follow him. The messenger, however, makes no mention of the theme of justice; rather, he ascribes to the people a kind of political amnesia. They have forgotten their appropriate place in the political structures of the country; and they seek the throne for Laertes "as if the world were now but to begin" and Claudius did not already reign. They do not rebel against their king: they relive the republican origin myth, wayward commoners banding

[75] In context the primary meaning is Claudius's recent marriage. But De Grazia makes a case that he's also thanking his courtiers for their hand in electing him. See *Hamlet without Hamlet*, p. 87.

together to choose a protector.[76] When the messenger says, however, that the crowd must have 'forgot[ten]' the customs of their country, he reminds us that no one in the audience can tell quite what those customs may be yet. Claudius, the brother to the late king, now rules Denmark even though the elder Hamlet had an adult son—and the courtiers, the messenger included, accept whatever "affair" brought that about. Hamlet later reveals to Horatio that Claudius "popp'd between th'election and my hopes" (V.ii.64-5), but as of even this late scene no mention of an elective monarchy has been made in the play (and Hamlet, who earlier and often lists Claudius's sins against him, had never noted this particular one).[77] The "customs", indeed, are "not known" in this land—by anyone, it seems.

In even the best scholarly works on the political situation in *Hamlet* and its relationship to the tragic events that unfold, conjectures substitute for definitive diagnoses. Margareta de Grazia's study emphasizes the way that "the play repeatedly conjoins Claudius's kingship with his courtship of Gertrude" and she therefore asserts that "[h]ad the 'queen-mother' preferred her son to her brother-in-law, the empire might well have settled on Hamlet".[78] That emphasis may well be borrowed from Shakespeare's source material: *Hamlet* draws on the Norse saga of Amlath, which survives in manuscript from the twelfth century but was first printed in France in 1517.[79] When the French translator François de Belleforest published a collection of stories, the *Histoire Tragiques,* that included the tale of "Hamblet" in in 1570 (it was this version that Shakespeare likely knew), he made it clear that Hamlet's father assumes the crown because of his marriage to the daughter of his king, and that

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[76] See, for example, Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, p. 17-27.
[77] Neither does Gertrude, when she diagnoses Hamlet's madness as the product of "His father's death and our o'er-hasty marriage" (II.ii.57).
[78] de Grazia, 105-106.
[79] For a concise history of the *Amleth/Hamlet* saga and its journey to England, see the entry for François de Belleforest in Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books,* especially p. 39.

Hamlet's uncle was "provoked" to murder by "a foolish jealousie to see him honored with royal alliance".[80] But in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, I find that the two events are often spoken of together by Hamlet because they are twin usurpations committed by Claudius, but he does not imply causation.[81] Andrew Hadfield describes how "Hamlet becomes king briefly while dying", noting the moment earlier in the play when Claudius makes his nephew his heir.[82] But what about the Danish election process—and why then does Hamlet give his 'vote' to Fortinbras with his final breath? Both of these readings of the play, in short, are based on inferences. More generally, both posit a static and knowable political situation buried between the play's lines and extrapolating from precious textual clues.

What if we return to Filmer's suggestion that Denmark had a misappropriated cultural significance in England, and allow obfuscation to guide our reading of the play? Denmark, in Shakespeare's England, was known to be an elective monarchy,[83] with a strong legal system that enclosed even the sovereign in its inflexible grip.[84] But, as András Kiséry has recently asserted, the further operations of its political system was largely unknown to England:

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[80] François de Belleforest, *Histoire Tragique*, trans. as "The Hystorie of Hamblet" (London 1608), printed in Sir Israel Gollancz, *The Sources of Hamlet: with essays on the legend* (London: H Milford, 1926): 185. Gollancz prints Belleforest's French and the first English translation on facing pages. The latter was published after Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet,* but I quote it because it reproduces the French version (which Shakespeare may have seen) verbatim.

[81] See, for example, Hamlet's speech at I.ii.150-158. Claudius does call Gertrude the "imperial jointress" to Denmark, describing her, in other words, as an estate-holding widow. But its later clear that this a metaphor because Claudius speaks of his election; and no other clue in the text suggests that Gertrude has much agency in anything. See I.ii.9 and also the note about this in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London: Arden, 2006): 166.

[82] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* 188. Margareta de Grazia repeats this assertion and, in a footnote, defends it by recalling two different moments where Hamlet is referred to as Claudius's heir. Against this argument, I take seriously the notion that any king would first need to be ratified by particular group of electors.

[83] András Kiséry, *Hamlet's Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2016): chapter two.

[84] James VI/I, "Speech to parliament 21 March 1610", printed in J. P. Sommerville, ed., *James VI and I: Political Writing* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994): 186.

although the English would shortly have a Danish queen, very little information was published about the Nordic country.[85] It is forty years later when Filmer writes that the common people consider Denmark to be populist, but I imagine that 'rumour' developed earlier in the century.[86] With no election properly staged within the play—only the suggestion of one in the recent past—perhaps the Danish people of *Hamlet* should be forgiven for forgetting the country's 'customs', for apparently overstepping the limits of their power, and for misjudging their role in monarchical successions. They may merely be doing as their immediate English audiences expected.

In other words, although we enter into the court of Denmark at a clearly abnormal political moment, perhaps no normative system may be inferred from the abnormalities present. Maybe the play asks to be read in a critical mode that focuses on what is possible to imagine about the politics of Elsinore, not what is probable, especially in relation to the potential for the common people to carve a place for themselves within bureaucratic operations. This could explain why Shakespeare wrote a tragedy that turned on a political act and yet concealed that act and its accessories from audiences. Whereas other Shakespearean tragedies, notably *Titus Andronicus* and *Macbeth*, stage elections or ceremonies to appoint an heir that set in motion the play's bloody trajectory, Claudius's ascent has already happened ahead of Act I.[87] Perhaps, too, the play means to obscure the identity of the electors and the precise role of the common people in government in order to explore the potential of the common people in early modern political imaginings. The guards who look out from walls of

[85] Kiséry, p. 90.
[86] Filmer, *Anarchy*, p. 167.
[87] Compare with Shakespeare's two sources for the story: Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest. In both, Hamlet's father rules for a time before he is betrayed by his brother. See Saxo Grammaticus, "Hamlet", printed in *The Sources of Hamlet*, 101, and Belleforest, 183-5.

Elsinore see only the ghost of a murdered ruler, not the countryside; Hamlet encounters just pirates and Norwegian soldiers when he travels; and audiences do not learn that the country has an elective monarchy—a key detail for understanding Claudius's rise to power!—until the final act of the play. The peculiar specifics of Elsinore's workings are at once key to understanding the action and deliberately set offstage. Rhodri Lewis has recently noted that

> critics have too often been prepared 'to indulge a not wholly explicable fancy that in *Hamlet* we behold the frustrated and inarticulate Shakespeare furiously wagging his tail in an effort to tell us something'. Throughout, my working assumption is that Shakespeare was neither frustrated nor inarticulate, and that he carefully crafted *Hamlet* with particular effects and purposes in mind[88].

And Stephen Greenblatt has famously argued that the play resists any single religious affinity: *Hamlet* contains "a pervasive pattern, a deliberate forcing together of radically incompatible accounts of almost everything that matters".[89] What scant political clues we can clean from the text do not build a kingdom: rather, I argue that they question the foundations for early modern kingdoms and assumptions that underline populist thought.

Claudius the character is himself a locus of "radically incompatible" political tropes cluster confusingly. A number of scholars have noted and left unreconciled the question of whether he is a legitimate king or a tyrant.[90] He is certainly no usurper: although Hamlet catalogues Claudius's election win alongside his uncle's crimes—"He that hath kill'd my king

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[88] Rhodri Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017): 7. Lewis quotes Stephen Booth in this excerpt.
[89] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 239.
[90] Andrew Hadfield asks "Is Claudius a good ruler", *Shakespeare and Republicanism,* p. 199; and Amir Khan, more interestingly, puts to his readers, "Does it matter that Claudius killed the king if the state thrives afterwards?" but does not attempt to answer it with any appeals to early modern political theory. See Amir Khan, "My Kingdom for a Ghost: Counterfactual Thinking and *Hamlet*", in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol. 66, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 41.

and whor'd my mother, / Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes" (V.ii.64-5)—there is no evidence to suggest that Claudius did not win the electorate's consent fairly, albeit after he had forced the election through fratricide.[91] (It must have maddened Filmer, if he read the play, when Hamlet uses his dying breath to "vote" for Fortinbras's election to the throne of Denmark: the young prince himself never blames the system, so to speak, for his calamity.) In a sense, Hamlet-the-delayer has delayed already too long even at the start of the play. Claudius's crimes have been legitimated by the law that placed him on the throne.

Claudius perfectly represents the paradox of the play's political commitments: he strong-armed his way into the position to be elected king by poisoning his brother, but he wins an election and commits, in his first speech to the court, to modelling himself as a humanist prince who invites council (for example, in II.ii). He gathers about him only university-trained men, including Polonius, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Horatio and Hamlet; he recalls the "divinity" that "doth hedge a king" when faced with a riot (IV.v.123), but he also assures Gertrude that he is certainly spying lawfully on Hamlet and Ophelia, and not overstepping his prerogative (III.i.35). He will not alter his behavior or give up his nefariously-got possessions to save his soul, but he considers the Danish people and their sympathies in bringing justice down upon Hamlet for the murder of Polonius: "How dangerous is it that [Hamlet] goes loose! / Yet must not we put the strong law on him: / He's loved of the distracted multitude" (IV.iii.2-4). When Hamlet stabs Polonius, he puts Claudius in a tight spot: the people require the king to be a model and fount for jurisprudence above all,

[91] Margareta de Grazia is also concerned to absolve Claudius of is sometimes-label 'usurper', pp. 87-88. On the various definitions of a tyrant in early modern thought, and whether the way in which the throne is attained is enough to make a king a tyrant, see Miola, "*Julius Caesar* and the Tyrannicide Debate", 279-80.

and to maintain peace secondarily.[92] Claudius' circuitous and ultimately unsuccessful scheme to have Hamlet the younger killed in the court of the English king is a solution that reflects for some scholars his *realpolitik* associations with Machiavellian thought: Claudius identifies what must be done to maintain power and stability in the kingdom, and furthermore understands that he must accomplish the task outside of the law.[93] To me, the strategy also employs the humanist logic through which Thomas More advocated for all violence to be deferred and marginalized in an ideal kingdom.[94] This reading de-accentuates the extra-legality of the attempted murder, and emphasizes Claudius's goal to maintain civic and civilizing order. Kingship, and specifically Claudius's relationship to the people, redraws Claudius's murderous tendencies within the parameters of justice. So then, what to do with a king whose conscience is unclean, but whose public demeanor is unimpeachable?

When Belleforest drew on Saxo Grammaticus's tale for his *Histoire Tragique*, he maintained the Norse epic's pre-Christian setting, finding the story apt to show off what life was like in the days when "common people […]were barbarous and uncivill, and their princes

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[92] All early modern theorists describe the function of the king in language that includes a leading judiciary role, even those who deny an originary contract. See, for example, Sir Matthew Hale, *The Prerogatives of the King,* ed. D. E. C. Yale (London: Seldon Society, 1976): 42: "Concerning the power of judicature it is clear that all jurisdiction was originally translated into the crown".

[93] See Hugh Grady's discussion of Claudius as a mediocre Machiavellian prince in *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from* Richard II *to* Hamlet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 248-249.

[94] This is Laurie Shannon's reading of Thomas More's *Utopia*: Shannon criticizes the way in which More advocates for all animal butchery to be relocated outside of the city walls and conducted only by bondsmen. This displacing of violence is meant to demonstrate the civility of the utopians but instead highlights the subversion of violence. See Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013): 23. The relavemtn passage in *Utopia* can be found in: Thomas More, *Utopia: A Revised Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*, trans. George M. Logan, 3rd ed. (New York, N.Y: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011): 50.

cruell".[95] In such an era, Fengon, brother to the king and Hamblet's uncle,[96] leads a band of men to slaughter the king and his comrades while they banquet, and then proves to be such a tyrant to the people that they rejoice when his palace burns down. In contrast, Shakespeare's Claudius is unmistakably an early modern king. Carl Schmitt likened him to Mary Queen of Scots[97]—both married surreptitiously and were later plagued by rumors of murder—while I think a host of European monarchs, including Elizabeth and James VI/I, might have initially identified with the position that he finds himself in at the start of the play (before we learn of the murder): the inheritor of a longstanding military struggle and the caretaker of a population wearied by wars. Poor Marcellus the guard sighs to Horatio that "nightly toils the subject of the land" in armed watch, while daily he makes instruments of war (I.I.88-89), and Claudius's first order of business is to deal diplomatically with Norway's encroachments (II.ii.80-84).[98] Thus in very few ways does Claudius recall his literary progenitor, the evil Fengon, except in the outline of the plot.

But as the Claudius/Fengon figure evolves into a humanist prince under Shakespeare's pen, Hamlet loses some of his association with classical antiquity in his transitions to the stage. Belleforest's 'Hamblet' makes his entrance into the narrative by way of a mighty, Roman analogy:

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[95] Belleforest, "The Hystorie of Hamblet, Prince of Denmark" 179. The French from 1570 (printed on the facinig page) is almost verbatim translated: "comme le peuple fut assez Barbare et mal civilisé, aussi leurs Princes estoyent cruelz", 178.

[96] In order to distinguish between the two versions of the prince, I am using the early modern misspelling by Belleforest's first English translator of Hamlet's name, Hamblet, for Belleforest's character.

[97] Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Irruption of Time into the Play*, trans. Simon Draghici (Corvallis, OR: Plutarch Press, 2006): 18. He was not the first to find parallels between Elsinore and Edinburgh: see, for example, Lilian Winstanley, *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession* (Cambridge: CUP, 1921): esp. chapter III.

[98] On another way in which Claudius seems to be a successful king because he demilitarises the Danish state see, Khan, "My Kingdom for a Ghost", 45.

> Behold, I pray you, a great point of a wise and brave spirite in a yong prince […]. In like sort, never any man was reputed by any of his actions more wise and prudent than Brutus dissembling a great alteration in his minde, for that the occasion of such his devise of foolishnesse proceeded only of a good and mature counsell and deliberation, not onely to preserve his goods, and shunne the rage of the proude tyrant, but also to open a large way to procure the banishment and utter ruin of wicked Tarquinius, and to infranchise the people (which were before oppressed) from the yoke of a great and miserable servitude.[99]

Unlike the more dramatic Hamlet, Belleforest's Hamblet does not equivocate or philosophize (although for practical reasons it does take him much longer to get around to killing his uncle). His actions are produced by the clear situation in which he finds himself. His father has been murdered, his mother dishonored: Hamblet has the luxury of being sure of these facts, unlike Hamlet, who receives his knowledge from a questionable ghost.[100] Furthermore, in this *Historie of Hamblet*, the people of Denmark have come under the yoke of a tyrant, by virtue of the unlawful way in which Fengon has succeeded to the throne. It is up to Hamblet, *just as*, the narrator reminds us immediately upon introducing his prince, it was up to Junius Brutus in the time of Tarquin, to restore correct government to the common people for the health of the state. Junius Brutus and Hamblet even adopt the same guise whilst they plot against the tyrant.

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[99] Belleforest, 193.

[100] On the issue of knowing in *Hamlet*, and its connection to Hamlet's delay, see Amir Khan, "My Kingdom for a Ghost: Counterfactual Thinking and *Hamlet*", in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol. 66, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 29-46. As I noted above, by removing Hamlet and the audience as a witness to these events, Shakespeare already begins to destabilise the political information available in the play.

Prince Hamblet is a man of the people. He is presented as a northern iteration of Junius Brutus and of the later and more controversial republican, Brutus. After beheading his fratricidal uncle and burning down the castle in which all the corrupt courtiers remain locked, Belleforest's prince appears before the Danish people to defend his actions. He delivers this speech, which has close parallels with one that Shakespeare imagines Brutus giving to the Roman people:[101]

> If there be any among you, good people of Denmark, that as yet have fresh within your memories the wrong done to the valiant King Horvendile, let him not be moved, nor think it strange to behold the confused, hideous, and fearful spectacle of this present calamity. If there be any man that affecteth fidelity and alloweth of the love and duty that man is bound to show his parents, and find it a just cause to call to remembrance the injuries and wrongs that have been done to our progenitors, let him not be ashamed, beholding this massacre, much less offended to see so fearful a ruin both of men and of the bravest house in all this country. For the hand that hath done this justice could not effect it by any other means…[102]

Fresh from the murder of his uncle and all of the Danish courtiers, we can imagine Hamblet with his hands "bathed" in blood, "up to the elbows and besmear[ed]" on his sword, as he

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[101] The following is the 1608 translation. The French reads: "S'il y a quelqu'un d'entre vous, Messieurs, de Dannermarch, qui aye encore fresche memoire du tort fait au puissant Roy Horvvendille, qu'il ne s'esmeuve en rien voyant la face confuse et hydeusement espouventable de la presente calamité: S'il y a aucun qui aye la fidelité pour recommandee, et cherisse l'affection qu'on doit à ses parens, et trouve bonne la souvenance des outrages faicts à ceux qui nous ont produits au monde, que celuy ne s'ebahisse, contemplant un tel massacre, et moins s'offence en advisant une si effroyable ruine, et d'hommes et des plus superbes edifices, de tout le pays: car la main qui a executé ceste justice, ne pouvoit en chevir à meilleur marché…" Belleforest 264.

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[102] Belleforest 265. The speech continues for some 18 pages.

gives this very Roman oration (*Julius Caesar* III.i.106-7). The parallels with Brutus's speech exist beyond the rhetorical echoes, although it is important to note that both men repeat the refrain "if there be any among you…" as a way of invoking collective conscientious reflection within the crowd, of re-affirming a shared history by speaking as if to every individual alone (since Shakespeare only had access to the French edition of the passage above, the repeated phrases that the translator interprets as "if there be any among you" and "if there be any man" are "s'il y a quelqu'un d'entre vous" and "s'il y a aucun qui").[103] Belleforest's hero has found himself in a situation analogous to the famous Roman: he has just killed a king whose sins may not be immediately apparent to his public. In Brutus's case, this is because Caesar has not yet committed the crimes for which he dies; in Hamblet's, several years have elapsed since Fengon, his evil uncle, slew Hamblet's father, Horvendile. And their objectives are similar: they need the approval of the people. "Censure me in your wisdom and awake your senses, that you may the better judge" cries Brutus to the crowd at the start of his defense (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.16). For Hamblet, "[t]he oration of the young prince so moved the hearts of the Danes and won the affections of the nobility that […] all with one consent proclaimed him King".[104]

This contrast with this early source material allows us a glimpse of what Shakespeare's Hamlet is not. Hamlet is not political, and he is certainly not a republican (though he does die casting his vote for the future of Denmark). He may have compassion for the interests of the common people, as when he muses morosely on the fate of poor foot soldiers (IV.iv.28-32). But he does not seek to act in the interest of the state; indeed, for

[103] Ibid., 264. I cannot find any scholarship that discusses Belleforest as a possible source for Julius Caesar, and most scholarship says that Shakespeare had no direct source for Brutus's speech. Shakespeare did likely read Belleforest the same year that he wrote Julius Caesar in preparation for writing Hamlet.
[104] Ibid., 283

Hamlet, the dilemma in which he finds himself is excruciating precisely because it is only personal. Tasked by his ghostly father to "let not the royal bed of Denmark be / a couch for luxury and damned incest" (*Hamlet* I.v.81-2), the elder and younger Hamlets' fixation with Claudius's personal immorality is not, on first glance, peculiar. Lasciviousness, inappropriate sexual desire, and perverse crimes are all trademarks of early modern (and classical tyrants): they signal a king who will rule arbitrarily and whose kingdom will grow "rank and gross in nature" because it is possessed by one who is such (I.ii.136).[105] But Hamlet, if anything, becomes more narrowly fixated on the private details of his uncle and mother's relationship despite the Ghost's command that he not "taint" his mind against Gertrude (I.v.85); and (as I argued above) Claudius's domestic sins never become signifiers or metonyms for grosser and grander violences. In killing Claudius, Hamlet (like Hamblet poised to take out his uncle Fengon) knows that he will be committing an act of treason.[106] But unlike its source material, *Hamlet* does not suggest that its main character became a national hero—though Fortinbras indicates in the final speech that the prince was "likely […] to have prov'd most royal" had he lived longer (V.ii.404-5). The play does not suggest that any such hero might exist at the Danish court. Polonius does not take for granted that Hamlet has even *heard* of Brutus: ponderously, he explains to the prince, "I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th'Capitol. Brutus killed me" (III.ii.104-5). Hamblet, incarnation of Rome's famous Brutuses, who slew Tarquin and Caesar, becomes Hamlet, who only manages to stab an old councilor that once acted in a poor play as Caesar.

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[105] Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990): 38.
[106] Margareta de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet,* p. 2.

The contrast also points to what the Danish people are not—and where they are not. Here my discussion circles back around to the interrogative impetus for this chapter: who are the common people, and what is their role in the play's imagined Denmark? They do not motivate Hamlet to act against a tyrant, and they are not consulted after the murders (although Hamlet does ask Horatio to "tell [his] story" (V.ii.356) upon his death). Removed from the revenge equation by Shakespeare's retelling of the saga, they remain frustratingly marginal for a twenty-first century scholar interested in politics. *Hamlet* has been set at a court marked by those elements which are most prized by republican thinkers in the sixteenth century—the election, the prominence of educated councilors who have access to the king—but the play makes scant room for populism or, indeed, the populace. Those that have investigated themes of populism have tended to consider the play in its material form, imagining the dialogue it would have created with early modern audiences and early modern theatrical culture. Thus Annabel Patterson investigates Hamlet's theory of theatre as anti-populist,[107] and András Kiséry writes that *Hamlet* is a play concerned to educate audiences about the new concept of politics as a profession—politics as an end in itself—thus consciously "helping to create a new public for a professional style of political discourse".[108] I accept Kiséry's argument that *Hamlet* contributed to and documents the rise of the career politician in early modern England, but the text of the play itself seems to critique that cultural moment as well, suggesting by its own lack of Jacks and Molls that the swell in university-trained and middle class councilors around the king in place of hereditary lords did not mean government and monarchs became more accessible to common people. Fewer grace the stage than

[107] Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood Inc., 1989): chapter one.
[108] Kiséry, p. 8.

Shakespeare's earlier English history plays; and the joker from the prince's youth, Hamlet's Falstaff, is already long dead by the advent of the first act.[109]

In *Henry V,* we are enjoined to imagine vast armies onstage; in *Julius Caesar* four plebeians stand in for the crowd that swarms Caesar's murderers in the marketplace. *Hamlet* asks of its audience to make these representational leaps more infrequently, since most of the action takes place within the inner chambers of Elsinore's palace. The first gesture towards imagined wider Danish populations comes when Claudius thanks his court's "better wisdoms" for placing him on the throne (I.ii.15), presumably indicating the electorate materially responsible for his new position (unlike other Shakespearean kings, Claudius does not thank God). If only he had said some few words describing the group to whom he faces! Does he speak to several noblemen, or a court of senators; does he face the audience and extend his gratitude towards an expansive electoral body signified by the heterogeneity of the theatre-goers? Since walls have been erected around Elsinore in the first act, it is likely that Claudius's audience is elite; and this is consistent with what Filmer later insists is the historical truth of sixteenth-century Denmark[110]. But the text provides the space for the king to look out over the groundlings as he effuses his gratitude.

And certainly the weight of the common people's approval presses on Claudius. As noted above, he worries the 'distracted multitude' will become incensed if he punishes Hamlet for Polonius's murder because the prince is so popular with the people, and this pushes him to attempt to have his nephew beheaded in a foreign land. The people, then, have some uncodified sway over political events. Later, when it becomes clear that his plan has failed, he

[109] To the best of my knowledge, though, this *is* in keeping with the genre of the early modern revenge play, most of which take place within a court setting. Consider Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, or John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.
[110] Scholars, such as de Grazia, take this for granted.

reiterates this fear of his populations' dissatisfaction to Laertes, who has just asked him why they might not seek justice via the usual channels for Polonius's murder. Claudius is forced to reveal his own subservient position in relation to Denmark's judiciary tradition:

> Why to a public count I might not go
> Is the great love the general gender bear him,
> Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
> Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
> Convert his gives to graces; so that my arrows,
> Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
> Would have reverted to my bow again,
> And not where I had aim'd them (IV.vii.18-25).

Claudius does not trust the public to indict Hamlet, though he is certainly guilty, because of the "great love" of the "general gender" towards the prince.[111] Put differently, Claudius thinks that this love will make a jury unable to "denote [Hamlet] truly" (to use Hamlet's own expression, I.ii.83)—they will turn his "stone" inot "wood", his faults to "graces". Like the prince himself then, Claudius worries about the difference between what "seems" about a person and what is true beneath the surface, and finds in Hamlet the breakage between the two. This leads Claudius to ruminate on his own social and political position. He says that in this matter of bringing justice to Polonius, his voice will be an arrow "too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind": in other words, though he is king, he fears that he will not be able to control the process of justice within a "public court". Here in this short and overly-fragrant phrase is a key theoretical detail about the difference between Shakespeare's imagined Denmark and

[111] "Count" here is glossed as a public indictment by Thompson and Taylor. See their note on the line in *Hamlet,* 395.

early modern England: English monarchs before the Civil Wars considered themselves above the law, and the Stuarts were particularly vocal about this.[112] They are, themselves, the fount itself of jurisprudence. It was a piece of the republican agenda to circumscribe the king within English law. In this passage, Claudius positions himself at the mercy of the courts—something I think James VI/I would never do—and admits that he does not control judiciary precedings. He is a king inscribed by the law and customs of the country. Bodin predicts that a submissive sovereign can only lead to "endlesse sturres and quarrels"—*Hamlet's* Denmark is guided by Claudius towards a castle full of corpses and a foreign army at its gates.

But "endlesse sturres and quarrels" may be said to characterize all of the Danish history that we receive over the course of *Hamlet*, not just those few months presided over by Claudius. As the new king says shortly after his marriage, his is a "warlike state" marked by long conflict with neighboring Norway. For the final reading of this chapter, I want to return to the moment in which the common people burst upon the stage in support of Laertes' bid for the throne. Recall that, according to a hurried messenger, the angry mob rallying behind Laertes behaves as if "the world were now but to begin, / Antiquity forgot". He *means*, of course, that the people are interrupting the well-preserved processes of state. I have been asking, what are those processes, and can they accommodate populism? But I should also like to ask, what precedence does any process have in *Hamlet*'s Denmark? And does the play suggest that Denmark can be shaped by populist actions? The people of Denmark have a kind of indirect sway over their king, but in this scene they attempt to be a real political power and to rupture the system for their own benefit. The moment appears inconsequential to the plot of the play, since Laertes does not seek the crown and immediately asks his followers to "stand

[112] See chapter one of this dissertation.

you all without" (IV.v.112). The people resist disappearing into the margins of the story only for a moment; when Laertes asks them again to go, they leave the stage and never reappear en masse. On the surface, the scene depicts a failed uprising; dramaturgically, the mob only serves to heighten the stress already felt by the audience as they watch Ophelia teetering towards insanity. But in the context of Denmark's history pockmarked with violence, and read alongside the theories of political engagement proposed by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*—a work which has made its way slowly but forcefully into Shakespearean studies thanks in part to Julia Reinhard Lupton and Theodore Kaouk—Shakespeare may be suggesting something less damning about democratic action.[113]

From the first act of the play, characters are preoccupied by the history of Denmark. Shakespeare builds Denmark diachronically: it has a solid, dynamic past even as its present operations seems uncertain and unclear. From Horatio we learn what may be a kind of origin myth for the modern country: thirty years ago, King Hamlet the elder fought Norway's Fortinbras for control over the territory that may or may not include Elsinore.[114]

> Our last King,
> Whose image even but know appeared to us,
> Was as you know by Fortinbras of Norway—
> Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride—
> Dared to the combat, in which our valiant Hamlet

[113] These two works which have been instrumental to my thinking about Shakespeare, politics, and Arendt: Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); and Theodore F. Kaouk, "Homo Faber, Action Hero Manqué: Crafting the State in *Coriolanus*" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 409-439.
[114] Some details, like the length of time, aren't supplied until the final act, when the Gravedigger notes the year of the duel between Hamlet and Fortinbras the elders (V.i.150). All other information about Denmark's legendary past is given by Horatio.

(For so this side of our known world esteemed him)

Did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact

Well ratified by law and heraldry

Did forfeit with his life all these his lands

Which he stood seized of to the conqueror (I.i.79-88).[115]

Scholars have usually assumed that the lands that Fortinbras gave to the king of Denmark comprise small territories somewhere on the edge of Denmark, which might naturally be disputed and were here won by Old Hamlet.[116] This can only be an inference, and I argue that elements of the text might have us believe Elsinore was included in those lands. In the Folio edition, Horatio says "all those his lands / Which he stood seized", but in the Second Quarto Horatio says "all *these* lands", as if to gesture to Elsinore's environs. Later, Hamlet meets Fortinbras's army on their respective ways to England and Poland and asks a captain whether the force moves against central Poland or a remote corner of the country. The captain does not directly reply, but says they aim to take a heavily garrisoned "little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name" (IV.iv.17-18). Appearing as he does in the very armor in which, alive, the old king defeated Fortinbras, Old Hamlet seems a symbol of the Danish nation state, his actions and the health (or lack thereof) of his person metaphors for its constitution.

Hamlet and the Ghost are more obsessed by the next chapter of Danish history: the end of Old Hamlet's rule and the beginning of Claudius's, which happened only months prior to the play's action. Once again, a bold action—this time not done in public, but affecting the public sphere—reshapes Denmark's political landscape. Events are murky: Amir Khan is the

[115] Here I've used the Arden Shakespeare third series 2006 Hamlet because it explains the change from *those* to *these*; see the discussion on the next page.
[116] Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, chapter one.

latest in a series of scholars to remind us that the average courtier (and, likely the average Dane) does not know the full circumstances by which Claudius assumed the throne. But even if the murder is obscured, and/or the new king's guilt never suspected, Hamlet senior's death was an extraordinary event.[117] It was a sudden rupture of the specifically quotidian: the king *customarily* took a midday nap in his orchard (it was, he says, his "custom always of the afternoon", I.v.59-60), and one day he did not wake up. No war, no wounds, no prolonged illness or descent into old age and decrepitude. We imagine the kingdom must have reeled, and the election called soon after hastily organized. In Old Hamlet's stead is placed Claudius, a much different king to the ageing warrior that came before him. Where the ghost returns to haunt his kingdom in a full suit of armor, recalling battlefield deeds, Claudius roams the inner chambers of Elsinore, engaged in diplomacy, feasting, and (its corollary) drinking.

So when the messenger, running ahead of Laertes' populist mob, derides the crowd by saying that their minds have "[a]ntiquity forgot" (IV.v.105), the antiquity to which he refers might be this series of bloody and exciting events that has shaped Denmark, and no one, in fact, has forgotten about it. After all, we learn from a disgruntled gravedigger that "[e]very fool can tell" the date of Old Hamlet's triumph over Fortinbras (V.i.138). The political history of the play's Denmark is comprised of aggressive actions that usher in extreme change; and, as I noted above, the bureaucratic niceties of the system, such as the electoral process, go unmentioned until the final act. There is a custom of rupturing customs, and the political *modus operandi* of Denmark up to Claudius's reign resembles what Hannah Arendt identifies as its purest, Aristotelean form: the product of human activity made possible and shaped by the condition of human plurality. For Arendt, who is a useful interlocutor with seventeenth-

[117] Khan draws on W. W. Greg's argument, see pp. 33-35.

century politics in part because she is a careful reader of classical texts and in part because her political positions resist our twenty-first century divisions between left and right,[118] bureaucracy, stasis, and procedure dilute politics and force down human potential.[119] Politics is the sphere of action, and consequently it is the forum for innovation and advancement. And innovation—originary movements—are always republican for Hannah Arendt in their nature because they represent freedom.

Arendt remind us that "The modern age […] was not the first to denounce the idle uselessness of action and speech in particular and of politics in general. Exasperation with the threefold frustration of action—the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors—is almost as old as recorded history".[120] Claudius, who embraces bureaucratization and resists outright violence, nullifies the people by refusing to fear for his life. He makes useless their action by belittling its potential to harm. The very speed with which the rebellion recedes, and the little impact it has upon the plot, illustrates one of Arendt's most important themes. In Julia Reinhard Lupton's words, Hannah Arendt reminds us "Whereas later writers on biopower [such as Foucault] focus on the violence created by the exclusion of life from the polis, Arendt insists [her emphasis is on] on the fragility of such *human* spaces appearing".[121] As the messenger prompts us the audience to recollect the antiquity of Denmark and simultaneously derides the common people for acting

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[118] There is a useful episode of the *In Our Time* podcast on Hannah Arendt which discusses the difficulty of categorising Arendt. See Melvyn Bragg, "Hannah Arendt", interview with Lyndsey Stonebridge, Frisbee Sheffield, and Robert Eaglestone, *In Our Time,* podcast audio, 2017, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08c2ljg.

[119] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), esp. I.i.

[120] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 220.

[121] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essayes on Politics and Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 8.

brashly, violently, energetically and hopefully, should we not read an intended irony into these lines? Do the history and customs of Denmark not condone such actions? Are the people not inserting themselves into politics in quite the same way Claudius and Old Hamlet have done? The public sphere of Denmark is presented by the play as having always been a space for innovations and thus, inherently, for unexpectedness, or tragedy, or progress.

IV. Conclusions

In a review surveying the literature available ten years ago on the topic of Shakespeare and republicanism, Anthony DiMatteo offers an excellent account of the difficulty in defining republicanism in the fifty years before the Civil Wars. He welcomes the wealth of books that take on the slippery theme in Shakespeare, however, and he offers this opinion: "The best form of republicanism, it seems to this writer, be it in early- modern or current times, continues to raise profound questions about the power of authority figures and how that form does or does not contribute to the common good".[122] It seems, too, that republicanism by nature should push us to think critically about those who are decidedly not the authority figures in a state or even a kingdom. Republicanism may have been one framework through which Shakespeare considered ways that common people might engage with their government, in a different time (ancient Rome) or place (Denmark).

[122] Anthony DiMatteo, "Was Shakespeare a Republican? A Review Essay", in *College Literature* 34.1 (Winter 2007): 201.

For the epitaph introducing my discussion of *Hamlet*, I quoted Arendt: "human plurality [is] the basic condition of both action and speech" –politics, in other words. The potential to accommodate, or to squash, human plurality: this is what preoccupies Shakespeare about politics. Yes, his plays show us the upheaval that arises from the public dynamism Arendt champions, but we lose sight of an important point by not also noting that he also makes clear the violence that entrenched political systems wreack on both the common people and the idea of the common people when plurality is not accounted for.

AFTERWORD

A 2017 article in *The New Yorker*, which I read just as I was beginning to research this dissertation, enjoined audienes to consider "what calling Congress achieves" in twenty-first-century America. It was written in reply to the upswing in voice messages left on government phone lines after the 2016 election, which in itself had imbued in the (slight) majority of Americans a sense of disenfranchisement and an existential fear that they had somehow fallen asleep at the wheel of their country and allowed everything to roll off course. The article opens with a question: "[calling congress] is said to be the most effective way to petition the government, but does it really make a difference?"[1] What follows is not a philosophical inquiry, but a depressing investigation into the tangled beaurocracy and private technology that manages congressional-constituent relations. Here is one of its insights:

> No matter how a message comes in—by phone, e-mail, fax, carrier pigeon—it is entered into a software program known as a constituent-management system. Owing to a stringent security requirement, only a few of these systems are authorized by Congress, and many members use one called Intranet Quorum, made by Leidos, a Virginia-based defense contractor […].
>
> Exactly how many calls and emails and the like are collectively entered into constituent-management systems is impossible to say, because the members of Congress are under no obligation to release that data.[2]

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[1] Kathryn Schultz, "What Calling Congress Achieves", in *The New Yorker*, March 6, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/what-calling-congress-achieves.
[2] Ibid.

One really gets a sense of the abundance of apparatuses that have sprung up to intervene in and conduct the channels between those who want to be represented in government and those who represent. On the surface, the article explains in excrutiating detail what Raymond Williams, over a half a century before, could only describe vaguely: that to represent a body in government means to stand in for others, "in diverse ways […] symbolising or generally characteristic of the others who are not present".[3] Yet, the proliferation of infrastructure in contemporary America ("constituent-management" technology, I'm sure, was not one of the "diverse ways" that Williams had in mind) has in no way yielded a more secure connection, or more exact critieria for the relationship it is said to facilitate. And, as in many *New Yorker* exposés, the point is that the knell is tolling: the system has failed.

Forward three years: Feisal Mohamed's most recent study, published in 2020, turns away from what he calls the *vogue* for studying early modern republicanism because, he says, the term is too "diffuse" in what it represents. Republicanism "name[s] various strains of neo-Roman thought with little connection to a republican political program".[4] Mohamed's book instead looks closely at sovereignty in the seventeenth century, arguing that the period's impact on theories of sovereignty and power "cannot be overstated".[5] His third chapter takes up Milton's view of "the people" and draws on Sir Robert Filmer's critique of the term—unforutnatley, it was published too late to be of help in my own third chapter's analysis. Neverthless, Mohamed's focus on sovereignty, rather than inter-governemntal relationships, leads him to make the persuasive argument that while "Milton promotes in the wake of the regicide a government reflecting the will of 'the people', the Restoration Milton must concede

[3] Raymond Williams, *Keywords,* second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983): 266.
[4] Feisal G. Mohamed, *Sovereignty: Seventeenth-century England and the Making of the Modern Political Imaginary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 2.
[5] Mohamed, *Sovereignty,* 3.

that 'the people' have not yet fully emerged" as worthy enough to be a "political entity".[6] In other words, Mohamed argues that there is, for Milton, a minimum qualification of unity and some dignity in order to be a political force.[7] Against Milton, Locke will write his treatises, and many of the liberay thinkers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries will write. But if this is, indeed, a concession that Milton-the-sovereign-theorist makes, it is *not* one (I have been arguing) that Shakespeare the dramatist—or even James the poet-king—concludes. For different reasons, both of these early modern men adopt a kind of *realpolitik* view of the political power that even disenfranchised subjects wield.[8] And both, even James, are willing to accept it as an interlocutor in their own explorations of power. It is not always a form of sovereignty, though certainly Shakespeare is interested in the views of sixteenth-century thinkers (like Buchanan) who locate the origin of soverign power in the people, but it is a force with the potential to destabilize—to disrupt plot, to bring down great men, to weaken kingdoms. Both men, too, evince an interest in what that power can accomplish when it is impressed upon the highest echelons of English and Scottish hierarchy; and even more of an interest in how those with codified sovereign power should respond to their base—what, anachronistically, "calling congress" really achieves.

And precisely because America, our republican democracy, has not yet established strong conduits between the government and its people, I wanted to return to the early modern period, where "seismic shifts in authority" occurred and the origins of the modern beuaurocratic state have often been traced,[9] and consider the ways in which some early modern

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[6] Ibid., 95.
[7] Ibid., 95-7.
[8] My own characterization of James based on my study. On Shakespeare and Machiavelli's realpolitik, see Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from* Richard II *to* Hamlet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): chapter one.
[9] Ibid., 3.

men were able to imagine relationships across strata of power. It is worth noting, so I can remember in the future, that the span of this project coincided with a period in American history most tortured by questions about how closely governments (incompetnent, "tyrannical" governments) reflect their constituents.

In other words, I take Mohamed's point that "republicanism" has stretched to accommodate a variety of studies into early modern politics that might be better labeled as investigations into English civic humanism, Scottish Calvinist resistance thought, or populism. But I have been arguing here that the word is not in itself fully exhausted, and that the relationship that it denotes, between a government and the people who have some sort of codified sway in said government, is an element of its "diffuse" meaning that has not been explored for its application to monarch-subject relationships. This dissertation is by no measure a comphrensive study of that topic, but it is a start.

7 April 2021

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