The People in Marvell and Cavendish

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1.

Elite writers of the civil wars regularly present the people as common, irrational, and vulgar. The poet Sir William Davenant despaired of finding virtue or wisdom in "the common Crowd (of whom wee are hopelesse)".[1] Prejudice against the crowd presented a problem for writers who sought to grant the people a more politically meaningful status. John Milton, for instance, distinguished awkwardly between the "Worthies" who led the people's cause, and the "throng and noises of Vulgar and irrational men".[2] Milton's is one of many attempts among parliamentarian theorists to articulate a doctrine of political representation. Henry Parker claimed that the elected House of Commons was "equally, and geometrically proportionable" to the "reall body of the People".[3] This solution was derided by royalists, as Sir Robert Filmer scoffed: "though they talk big of the people, yet they take up and are content with a few representers (as they call them) of the whole people".[4] This difficulty of representing the people proves central in the writings of Andrew Marvell and Margaret Cavendish. Marvell's Restoration satirical poem "The Last Instructions to a Painter" reflects on the difficulty of depicting the English people, "this race of drunkards, pimps, and fools", by invoking the painter Protogenes, who attempted to portray a mad dog—and succeeded only by accident, throwing his sponge in frustration: "Chance finished that which Art could but begin, | And he sat smiling how his dog did grin".[5] The grinning dog embodies the gleeful way in which the people resist, escape, or

[1] William Davenant, *The Author's Preface* (1650) in *Gondibert* (1651), ed. by David Gladish (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 13.
[2] *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), in *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, ed. by Neil Keeble and Nicholas McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 157, 152. Paul Hammond, *Milton and the People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 119-23.
[3] Henry Parker, *Observations upon some of His Majesties late answers and expresses* (London, 1642), pp. 23, 15. Discussed by Quentin Skinner, *From Humanism to Hobbes: Studies in Rhetoric and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 203-11.
[4] *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government* (ca. 1652), in *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. by Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 198; quoted in Hammond, *Milton and the People*, p. 121.
[5] Andrew Marvell, "The Last Instructions to the Painter", ll. 12, 25-6, in *Poems*, ed. by Nigel Smith, rev. ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2007). References to Marvell's poems use this edition.

disrupt attempts to represent them. This resistance in itself offers a way for these socially elite poets to approach the thorny issue of the people's unruliness, and their political agency. Marvell and Cavendish invoke the people in familiar terms of abuse, as the rout and the vulgar, and in more neutral but highly slippery terms, the public and the commons. But they also imagine them through a range of metaphors: body-parts, atoms, Israelites, mowers, shepherds, and flocks of birds.

The prevailing focus in political readings of Marvell and Cavendish has been on ideas of rulership. Marvell's political verse is dominated by modes of panegyric or satire which direct praise or blame at leading individuals—as in his trio of poems on Cromwell in the 1650s. For example, in "The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C." he presents a normative view of the Protector as "the headstrong people's charioteer", drawing on a tradition of political theory that stressed the necessity of government to bridle the unruly people. Similar views can be readily found in Cavendish. Cavendish studies have taken their cue from her self-identification as "Margaret the first" to trace personal sovereignty as a central preoccupation of her writings.[6] Her most-read work today, *The Blazing World* (1666), focuses on the dazzling supremacy of a fantasy empress; a modern edition of this text describes its politics as "familiar and deeply conservative".[7] Although Cavendish's fascination with absolute sovereignty is often disruptive in its own way, it is often framed in elitist, monarchical terms.

In the aftermath of the regicide and during the years of republican rule, however, both writers took account of more radical possibilities. Marvell had spent the later 1640s in London, on the fringes of royalist poetic coteries, but in 1650-51 moved into service for the regime.[8] Cavendish, meanwhile, was in exile in Antwerp, writing her essay collection *The Worlds Olio*—published in 1655, but written, she tells us, "five years since".[9] In 1651-2, she returned to England to petition for a portion of the estates that parliament had confiscated from her husband (William Cavendish, the Earl of Newcastle). This plan prompted a row with William's brother, Sir Charles Cavendish, who held

[6] Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England', *Genders*, 1 (1988), 24–33.
[7] Susan James, ed., *Political Writings*, p. xxv.
[8] Nicholas McDowell, *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause of Wit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[9] Margaret Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio* (London, 1655), sig. A3v.

himself still bound by his promises to the king, but it signals a political flexibility on the Newcastles' part that has been obscured by the fact that their petition was ultimately rejected. Yet this flexibility is key to the politics of *The Worlds Olio*, and to the collection of poetry that Cavendish began to compile during her sojourn in London, when she, too, participated in royalist literary and musical coteries.[10] The results were published as *Poems, and Fancies* in 1653.

Despite being among the most vivid, and most studied, writers of the civil wars, there have been surprisingly few attempts to read Marvell and Cavendish alongside each other.[11] Cavendish (presumably) did not have access to Marvell's works in manuscript; Marvell's few allusions to her in his Restoration satires reveal no familiarity beyond the usual jibes at her perceived eccentricity. Yet they had common acquaintances in royalist literary communities: both knew William Davenant and read his works carefully. Davenant, reacting against his own socially lowly origins, expressed a fierce anti-populism, noted at the outset; the contrast with Marvell and Cavendish's ambivalence is suggestive. While hailing from respectable backgrounds, both Marvell and Cavendish held relatively precarious status within the literary elite. Despite his close attention to his royalist peers, Marvell also often conveys an impression of diffidence and solitariness. His constant reliance on patronage has been read as a source of humiliating dependence, and linked with contemporary perceptions of him as castrated, effeminate, sexually other.[12] Cavendish was raised with little expectation of female education, but her marriage to William catapulted her into the aristocracy and the intellectual avant-garde. Her writings reveal a dependency on a different kind of patronage, the intellectual recognition of the male republic of letters—while also fiercely declaring her independence from it, often obfuscating the depth of her own reading. Cavendish's ambiguous status is likewise expressed through an anomalous gender identity: she imagined herself sometimes as a hermaphrodite, and at

[10] Clarendon, *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1759), p. 128. Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer, and Romantic* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), pp. 136-40. Hero Chalmers, "Dismantling the myth of 'mad madge': the cultural context of Margaret Cavendish's authorial self-presentation", *Women's Writing*, 4.3 (1997), 323-40, pp. 324-5.
[11] A relevant example here is John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[12] Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker, *Andrew Marvell, Orphan of the Hurricane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 43-45 and passim. See also Paul Hammond, "Marvell's Sexuality", *Seventeenth Century*, 11 (1996), 87-123.

others a separatist Amazon.[13] She understood women to be an oppressed class, and presented her writings as a form of emancipation: "for Thoughts are free, those can never be inslaved".[14] Both poets, then, were an awkward fit with their cultural milieu, and this gives us a context for reading their attraction to ambivalence in general, and particularly to ideas of the people as sources of unruliness and resistance.

2.

Recent historiography has opened up new insights into the social depth of political engagement and participation in the civil wars. Grassroots political mobilization took the form of campaigns of print distribution, preaching, and oath-taking, that "radically expanded the social contours of the political nation".[15] An important recent intervention has shown that there were serious intellectual attempts to theorize a politics of a popular republic and even of democracy. Marvell's reference to "the democratic stars" in his elegy "Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings" (1648) has even been adduced as evidence of royalists' discomfort at the perceived "rise" of democratic ideas.[16] One of the most eye-catching examples of this expanding political nation is the deputation of women, led (probably) by Katherine Chidley, who petitioned the House of Commons in April 1649 against the imprisonment of the male Leveller leaders. A contemporary newsbook reported an MP opining that "it was strange that women should petition"; the women replied, "it was strange you cut off the Kings Head, though I suppose you will justify it".[17] This incident captures the radical fracturing of precedent

[13] L. E. Semler, 'Margaret Cavendish's Early Engagement with Descartes and Hobbes: Philosophical Revisitation and Poetic Selection', *Intellectual History Review*, 22 (2012), 327–53. Deborah Boyle, "Margaret Cavendish on Gender, Nature, and Freedom", *Hypatia*, 28.3 (2013), 516-32, pp. 521-2.
[14] *The Worlds Olio*, sig. A5r.
[15] Chris Kyle and Jason Peacey, "Introduction", in (eds.) *Connecting Centre and Locality: Political Communication in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 7-9. John Walter, *Covenanting Citizens: The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 200 and see also pp. 4-5. David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 10-12 and passim.
[16] Markku Peltonen, *The Political Thought of the English Free State, 1649-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2022), pp. 9-11 and 186. Marvell, "Upon the Death of Lord Hastings", l. 25.
[17] *To the Supream Authority of this Nation, the Commons assembled in Parliament: The humble Petition of divers wel-affected Women* (London, [April 24] 1649); *Mercurius Militaris*, no. 1 (1649), p. 13; Jaqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 148-52; Marcus Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 63-4.

embodied by the regicide. Yet, at the same time, the newsbook anecdote follows established rhetorical patterns: a series of pamphlets by women petitioners had already emerged through the 1640s, but also a converse series of satires on the "Parliament of Women" (associated with Henry Nevile).[18] A growing confidence in articulating popular politics thus developed alongside satirical forms that ridiculed the incursion of women and non-elite people into the political sphere.

Cavendish's writings show familiarity with the "Parliament of Women" genre—for example, her *Orations of Divers Sorts* (1662) include a section of "Female Orations" within an assembly of women. But these texts also engage seriously with radical ideas. These include arguments for women's intellectual liberty, and in favour of popular sovereignty and common property—although other speakers are always on hand to supply counter-arguments.[19] Similar expressions can be found in Cavendish's earlier writings, and not always with the cautious, containing frames. Her dedicatory epistle "To all Writing Ladies" in *Poems, and Fancies* draws on satirical tropes of female misrule, but transforms them into a stirring call to arms:

> And if it be an age when the effeminate spirits rule, as most visibly they do
> in every kingdom, let us take the advantage, and make the best of our time,
> for fear their reign should not last long.

Significantly, this text was suppressed from the revised editions of *Poems, and Fancies* published after the Restoration, in 1664 and 1668, presenting a more formally polished, but more conservative text.[20] Cavendish uses the term "effeminate" normatively, to designate feminine, or unmanly qualities—but this coexists with a more subversive sense of female misrule. The influence of misogynistic tropes on the latter usage of "effeminate" appears clearly in a similar prefatory apology for women's writing in *The Worlds Olio*:

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[18] See, e.g., *A True Copie of the Petition of the Gentlewomen, and Tradesmens-wives, in and about the City of London*, presented in February 1642 (London, 1642); and [Henry Nevile], *The Parliament of VVomen. With the merrie Lawes by them newly Enacted.* (London, 1645).

[19] Margaret Cavendish, *Orations* (1662), in James, ed., *Political Writings*, pp. 248-51 and 265. Lisa Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 214, 218.

[20] *Poems, and Fancies*, ed. by Brandie R. Siegfried, p. 368. Siegfried's edition follows the 1668 text, inspired by feminist studies of her status as "Editor and Reviser" (see Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture, 1640-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 60-1). The 1653 text, however, can capture more radical possibilities, and therefore is preferred for the purposes of this essay.

> [Men] know Womens Tongues are like Stings of Bees; and what man would endure our effeminate Monarchy to swarm about their ears?[21]

Notwithstanding the conventionally misogynistic trope, Cavendish's prefaces feed on the ambiguous energy of satire to grant a kind of inverted empowerment to women's rule. The image of beestings reveals her imaginative sympathy and engagement with the generative power of the smallest and lowliest bodies. In *Poems, and Fancies*, beestings provide a key example for her vitalist metaphysics (i.e. the belief that matter is self-moving), leading to the familiar georgic metaphor that associated bees' industry with imaginative creativity.[22] Cavendish repeatedly describes the creative combinations of atoms in georgic and democratic terms, as like "workmen which amongst themselves agree".[23] In *The Worlds Olio* she analogizes the excitement of unchecked fancy with "the common people in an uproar, that runs without any order, and disperses without successe". Again, the satirical energy of this image of disorder creates a kind of inverted empowerment—the unruly people become an apt metaphor for the creative motion of imagination. An essay on education again turns to georgic metaphors to describe the tending and "manuring" required to cultivate "the Thoughts, which are the People".[24]

If Cavendish's female orations were galvanized by the Leveller women's incursion into parliament, that incident also echoes in a contemporary poem by Marvell, "To his Noble Friend, Mr. Richard Lovelace". This was a dedicatory poem for Lovelace's *Lucasta* (1649), a volume which otherwise barely alludes to the people. Marvell's poem defends Lovelace from a "swarm" of "word-peckers" and "book-scorpions", the world of public contention and Presbyterian censorship that threatens the delicate beauties of his poetry. In the final section of the poem, Marvell describes how, when the "beauteous ladies" heard "that their dear Lovelace was endangered":

> They all in mutiny, though yet undressed,
> Sallied, and would in his defence contest.

[21] Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio*, sig. A4r.
[22] "Fire Compared to Stings" (25); "The Head of Man Compared to a Hive of Bees" (199).
[23] "A World Made by Atoms" (3: 5, 15).
[24] *The Worlds Olio*, pp. 135, 106. Note Cavendish saw paradox as fundamental to the workings of the mind: "I contradict, or rather please my self", p. 5.

And one, the loveliest that was yet ere seen,

Thinking that I too of the rout had been,

Mine eyes invaded with a female spite

(She knew what pain 'twould be to lose that sight).

O no, mistake not, I replied: for I

In your defence, or in his cause, would die. (39-46)

This incursion of mutinous women into the male, homosocial space of Lovelace's poems, in defence of a lover threatened by parliamentarian violence, sets up a kind of cavalier parody of the Leveller women's petition on behalf of their husbands and colleagues.[25] Marvell invokes conventional satirical codes of female unruliness ("in mutiny, though yet undressed"), yet he also sets up a conflict over who possesses the best claim to represent chivalric values. His own proffer of gallantry ("I | in your defence, or in his cause, would die") is merely notional. He acknowledges that Lovelace "above… mine aid doth climb" (48), hinting at a position outside of Lovelace's charmed circle. Both Lovelace's supposed status as a romance hero, and Marvell's supposed status as Lovelace's peer, become curiously punctured by the transferral of the language of military heroism to the women who "sallied, and would in his defence contest".

Mutinies, rebellions, and popular actions become a source of productive ambiguity for both Marvell and Cavendish. Both texts quoted above enforce a careful class restriction, referring to "Ladies" rather than "Women". Yet both also suggest a dangerous identification with the rebellious parties: Cavendish, with the "effeminate spirits", and Marvell in the uncomfortable moment when the lady assumes "that I too of the rout had been". This is one of several moments when Marvell's poetic activities are challenged by voices within the poems—again, foregrounding the slipperiness of representing the people. Although Marvell attempts to distance himself from the "rout" and the "swarm" of "book-scorpions", the lady's challenge ironically implicates Marvell in those forces. He, after all, had brought them into the poem in the first place, whereas the other dedicatory poems to

[25] The poem is likely to have been written in April 1649, the month of the petition, shortly before the volume's entry in the Stationers' Register in May; but it may equally draw on the pre-existing tradition of women's petitioning noted above. See Smith, ed., *Poems*, p. 18.

Lucasta strive to position the volume outside of public controversy.[26] Marvell's poem seems to complicate the implied separation of cavalier values from public politics. A useful parallel can be drawn with a pamphleteer, Albertus Warren, who sought to provoke royalists into engaging with the regime by ridiculing the cavalier "Gallants" who "goe slinking up and downe *London* in thredbare Coates, glorying in their sufferings". By contrast, Warren claims, "heroicall vertues are further'd more (not hinderd) under a Democraticall Government then under a Monarchicall".[27] This appropriation of "heroicall vertues" offers an intriguing context for Marvell's unsettling of cavalier values in his poem to Lovelace, or Cavendish's Amazonian heroics in her epistle to "writing ladies". It may also inform Marvell's declaration that the "forward youth" must "forsake his muses dear" and enter the world of public contention at the beginning of the "Horatian Ode".

3.

Marvell and Cavendish's politics in the early 1650s were shaped by an acceptance that England's form of government had been altered. As Marvell put it in the "Horatian Ode", the revolution had "cast the kingdom old | Into another mould" (35-6). From this view followed the claim that obligations to the old monarchy had been dissolved—a claim strenuously resisted by royalists, but obviously fundamental to the new republic's precarious authority. The central arguments advanced by defenders of the regime like Marchamont Nedham and Anthony Ascham were anti-formalist (i.e. denying that monarchy possessed any special legitimacy), and defactoist (asserting a duty to submit to *de facto* power). As Ascham put it: "every man in a state stands in a Relation, and must either command or obey; and owes something to him, by whose care he sleepes quietly in bed".[28] Marvell and Cavendish's responses to the revolution were clearly shaped by such ideas. But at the same time, both display a striking ambivalence towards one component of the argument, which in

[26] John Pinchbacke's effort praised Lovelace for "making us quite forget our seven yeeres paines" by supplying "calme and even" music when "the shrill noise of drums oppresse our ears": "Another, upon the Poems" in Richard Lovelace, *Lucasta* (London, 1649), sig. A5r-v.
[27] Albertus Warren, *The Royalist Reform'd* (London, 1649), p. 4. On Warren's democratic views, see Peltonen, *English Free State*, pp. 179, 186-90. McDowell discusses the comparable example of John Hall of Durham, *Poetry and Allegiance*, pp. 90-1, 198-200.
[28] Anthony Ascham, *The Bonds and Bounds of Publique Obedience* (London, 1650), p. 32; Peltonen, *Free State*, pp. 56-8.

January 1649 was propelled to the centre of parliament's official position, with the declaration that "the People are under God, the Original of all just Power". Defenders of the republic like Ascham carefully contained the people's sovereignty within their proper "representers" in parliament; but others, most obviously in the Leveller manifesto *An Agreement of the People*, framed the idea in more radically democratic forms.[29] Marvell and Cavendish generate charged ambiguities around this unresolved tension at the heart of the revolutionary regime. While *de facto* power looms large in their writings, they also open up spaces to imagine more public and participatory forms of politics.

In the first section of *The Worlds Olio*, Cavendish sets out her view of political society as fundamentally rooted in language, which makes intercommunication possible: "those marks" (i.e. words) "beget a soul in communitie" (p. 23). The complex term "communitie" is central to this initial iteration of her political views: "as society is the making of Common-wealths, which is a community amongst men, which community causeth contracts, and covenants, which makes one man live by another in peace" (p. 31). One meaning of "community" is a state of equality where all property is common (often perceived as a bad thing). In this light, Cavendish's axiom that "community causeth contracts" could be read as a brutal distillation of Thomas Hobbes's theory that the social contract is necessitated by the insecurity of private property in the state of nature. But Cavendish appears to use "community" in a more positive sense—a mainstay of republican arguments for popular sovereignty. As Samuel Eaton argued: "the People may be considered… a Community or Common-wealth collectively", in which case "the Root of al Civil Power is in them". These pamphlet materials circulated in the Cavendishes' circles, as Hobbes attests in *Leviathan* to having followed the debate. Eaton's pamphlet used this principle to argue that political obligations could be reassigned—the very point on which Margaret quarrelled with her brother-in-law.[30] For some radicals, this notion of "community" as popular sovereignty could even blend in a more positive sense with ideas of communal property—visible in the title of Gerrard Winstanley's pamphlet, *The True Levellers*

[29] *A Declaration of the House of Commons* (London, 1649), issued ca. 4th January 1649; Ascham, *Bonds and Bounds*, p. 30; Peltonen, *Free State*, pp. 25-6, 39-40.
[30] Samuel Eaton, *The Oath of Allegiance and the National Covenant proved to be non-obliging* (London, 1650), p. 40; and see Peltonen, *Free State*, pp. 63-7. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Noel Malcolm (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), "Review and Conclusion", p. 1141.

Standard Advanced, or the State of Community Opened (1649). We can read Cavendish's axiom that "community causeth contracts" as, in this sense, opposed to Hobbes: sociable association, for Cavendish, precedes and enables the social contract. A physical basis for Cavendish's view can be supplied from *Poems, and Fancies*' vitalist depiction of the universe composed from the free association of atoms.[31]

A long tradition of political theory (Hobbes included) agreed that a popular foundation for government is not necessarily incompatible with absolute sovereignty.[32] In a later section of *The Worlds Olio* (part 1.3), Cavendish moves to a more overtly Machiavellian understanding of power. The post-revolutionary context remains essential here, as she expresses scepticism towards hereditary or patriarchal models of monarchy, and suggests instead that "an Usurper grows most commonly the justest, and wisest Prince, when he is once settled in his possession" (p. 49). This idea had often been accepted in theory by absolutist writers, but in practice, following a real revolution, many came to strenuously oppose it.[33] Cavendish not only asserts it, but bolsters it with Machiavelli's advice on how princes can secure power. Here we can spot linguistic parallels with Marvell's contemporary "Horatian Ode": where Cavendish's usurper practises "industry for his safety" (p. 49), Marvell praises Cromwell's "industrious valour" (33), both drawing key vocabulary from the contemporary English translation of *The Prince*.[34] However, it is hard to see where this Machiavellian framework leaves Cavendish's earlier idea of "community". "Community" appears to have shrunk down to a fickler concept of popularity, a Machiavellian sense of how the people's "love may wipe out his ill title" (p. 49). This power of popularity led Cavendish to consider how political authority is an affective value, generated by irrational emotions. Here she was influenced by Hobbes's argument that "the Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear" in securing obedience to obligations. This is set within a wider Machiavellian tradition that highlighted the instrumental functions of civil religion—or, as Hobbes

[31] Rogers, *Matter of Revolution*, p. 189 and passim.
[32] Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 87-9.
[33] Filmer, "Directions for Obedience", in Sommerville, ed., *Patriarcha*, p. 282; see Sommerville, "Absolutism and Royalism", in J. H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 366.
[34] *Nicholas Machiavel's Prince*, tr. by Edward Dacres (London, 1640), pp. 2, 8; see Smith, ed., *Poems*, p. 275n.

put it, using "Rites and Ceremonies… that the feare of breaking faith might be the greater".[35] Cavendish expanded these ideas beyond Hobbes's cautious emphasis on fear, arguing that public ceremony could generate a rather more spectacular cocktail of psychological affect: "it strikes such a reverence and respect in the beholders, as it begets fear and wonder in so much as it amazes the spirits of men to humiliation and adoration" (p. 51). This idea of "ceremony" now directly displaces the term "community" from her vision of political society: "ceremony and order… make Common-wealths, which Common-wealths make contracts, which contracts make peace" (p. 52). This discrepancy can be explained partly by the structure of *The Worlds Olio*, which is organized by genre and theme rather than systematic progression. Cavendish's chapters shift abruptly from the natural community enabled by language, to the artificial organization through ceremony that characterizes political society.

Marvell's engagement with Machiavellianism and the broader Tacitist tradition of politic history has been closely studied. The comparison with Cavendish reflects how contemporaries used Machiavellian materials to develop anti-formalist understandings of the revolution in England.[36] Recent scholarship has fleshed out the impact of *de facto* theory on the argument of the "Horatian Ode", and its recognition that:

> 'Tis madness to resist or blame
> The force of angry heaven's flame;
> And, if we would speak true,
> Much to the man is due. (25-8)[37]

Defactoism was intended to bring stark clarity to questions of political allegiance—as the poem dramatically illustrates—yet Marvell also exposes its ambiguities. It is not made explicitly clear how the "force of angry heaven's frame" can be reconciled with parliament's official recognition, echoed by propagandists like Ascham (noted above), of "the present supreame power of the people".[38] The

[35] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter XIV, p. 216; Jeffrey Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), pp. 30-37.
[36] Summarized in Peltonen, *Free State*, pp. 7 and 133. See Annabel Brett's discussion in "The Post-Machiavellian Poetry of 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland'", in Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell* (Oxford, 2019), 425-42.
[37] See Alexander Garganigo, *Samson's Cords: Imposing Oaths in Milton, Marvell, and Butler* (Toronto, 2018), p. 79; and my *Poetry and Sovereignty in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 65-70.
[38] Ascham, *Bonds and Bounds*, pp. 30, 25.

people appear only fleetingly in the "Horatian Ode", but they produce the poem's most enduring ambiguity. Marvell prompts uncertainty about how far the image of Cromwell as a Machiavellian or Providential conqueror can truly cohere with republican institutions in which the people participate:

> Nor yet grown stiffer with command,
> But still in the Republic's hand:
> How fit he is to sway
> That can so well obey.
>
> He to the Common[s'] feet presents
> A kingdom for his first year's rents.
> And what he may, forbears
> His fame to make it theirs.
>
> And has his sword and spoils ungirt
> To lay them at the public's skirt. (81-90)

The body politic metaphor—conventional to the point of being hackneyed—is derailed here by Marvell's refusal to resolve it into a coherent shape. He confronts the central conceptual problem faced by pamphleteers like Ascham and Parker, of political representation: who exactly is embodied in "the Republic's hand", "the Common[s'] feet", "the public's skirt"? This question is notoriously muddied by the textual uncertainty between "Common", given in the printed *Miscellaneous Poems* of 1681, and "Commons", in the manuscript insertion in the Bodleian Library copy. Both alternatives have potential merit. "Commons", implying the House of Commons, would cohere with the "Republic" to make Cromwell answerable to the representative institution of Parliament. But "Common" would cohere with the broader sense of common weal gestured to in the "public's skirt"—suggesting a direct appeal to the people. The former makes Cromwell contractually obliged to Parliament, implied by his paying "rents"; the latter makes him a populist conqueror in the mould of Caesar, as the verb, "presents", implies his tribute is gifted out of free munificence. The context noted earlier, of efforts by republican pamphleteers like Albertus Warren to provoke royalists into engaging

with the new regime, is relevant again here. Having acknowledged that Charles cannot "vindicate his helpless right" (62), Marvell instead focuses readers' attention away from the regicide to the central unresolved tension in republican politics. Reading this passage alongside Marvell's pejorative allusions to the Levellers in "Upon Appleton House", written the following year—discussed in the next section—we might detect a warning to Republican MPs in the vision of Cromwell courting popularity with the "public". However, reading the passage alongside Marvell's commitment to civic activity expressed in his post-Restoration satires and constituency letters instead suggests a space in the "Horatian Ode" for a participatory politics, through which Cromwell's sublime power might be contained and legitimated.[39] This participatory context is glimpsed only briefly in the poem, but it remains an understated presence throughout—as when it shifts suggestively into the plural to argue that the ancient rights "do hold or break, | As men are strong or weak" (39-40).

Again, it is significant that Marvell framed this central dilemma around the slippery problem of representing the people. And Marvell's discomfort with the provisional framing in the "Horatian Ode" is suggested by the resistance that, again, emerges from within his poems. Later in 1650, he wrote the ostensibly royalist satire "Tom May's Death", in which the ghost of Ben Jonson lambasts the poet May for attempting to "obtrude" on the fledgling regime "some Roman-cast similitude" (43-4). Marvell knew full well that this also implicitly contested his own methods in the "Horatian Ode". The question of representing the people results in fraught tension and (in the latter case) outspoken resistance—yet he persists in making it the central question that would determine the scope of the revolutionary regime.

4.

Ideas of the "common" remained alive in Marvell's imagination in "Upon Appleton House", written the following summer, in 1651. In the estate poem tradition, the landscape is framed by the benign Protestant governance of the Fairfax dynasty; yet the episode in the meadows at the middle of

[39] Phil Withington, "Marvell's Citizenship", in Derek Hirst and Steven Zwicker, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102-21, pp. 105, 108-10.

the poem broadens out the social scope. A flattering allusion to Fairfax's role in suppressing Leveller mutinies re-introduces popular politics—and the question of the commons—as a central imaginative concern. The meadow is depicted as a "levelled space" (443) and a blank canvas, which reasserts the challenge of representing, or in the terminology here, *patterning* the people:

> For to this naked equal flat
> Which Levellers take pattern at,
> The villagers in common chase
> Their cattle, which it closer rase;
> And what below the scythe increased
> Is pinched yet nearer by the beast.
> Such, in the painted world, appeared
> Dav'nant with th'universal herd. (449-56)

"Common" is again a loaded term, suggesting collective action, the exercise of common grazing rights, but also invoking Digger ideas of communal property. Yet, paradoxically, the drove of cattle is also compared with an image of the Creation in Davenant's *Gondibert*, whose anti-populist and absolutist associations have been noted. Again, we have a dilemma between rival, incompatible models of political community—this provides the motivation for praising Fairfax's pious and moderate governance. Yet, as with the "Horatian Ode", this poem enforces the recognition that a revolutionary change of government has taken place—England now presents "a new and empty face of things" (442). Within this landscape, popular politics remains an unavoidable presence.

The most conspicuous embodiment of the people comes in the form of the mowers, who "seem like Israelites to be" (389). The Israelites were a commonplace symbol for the nation of England in general, and in particular the godly and politically militant troops of the New Model Army. Marvell draws attention to this symbolic application by foregrounding the language of simile ("seem like Israelites"), later pointing out that the women picking up hay with pitchforks "do represent the pillaging" of the civil wars (424). And, once again, the poem argues back against Marvell's figurative strategy, as the camp follower Thestylis cries, incredulously, "He called us Israelites" (406). Thestylis embodies a kind of popular agency in her mocking of Marvell's conceit—

as hackneyed, and as ripe for subverting, as the body politic in the "Horatian Ode". This moment of resistance expresses the confident supremacy which the mowers are granted: "the mower now commands the field" (418). This runs beyond the simple acknowledgement of the *de facto* outcome of the revolution. Whereas Marvell's earlier poem, "To his Noble Friend, Mr. Richard Lovelace" had climaxed with a moment of uneasy identification with the "rout", "Upon Appleton House", though recognizing the mowers' violence and unruliness, also discloses an unexpected attraction. Marvell brings us close enough to enjoy their "wholesome heat" which "Smells like an Alexander's sweat", and the "females fragrant as the mead" (425-9). The allusion to Plutarch here may echo propaganda on the astonishing rise of popular power—as the newsbook *Mercurius Politicus* declared: "How sweet the Air of a Commonwealth is beyond that of a Monarchy!"[40] Yet Marvell's fragrance here suggests a more intimate eroticism, granting to England's georgic conquerors an amatory pastoral language reminiscent of courtly entertainments—suggested by the masquing imagery that runs throughout this passage.

The georgic image of a conquering army of agricultural labourers also plays a striking role in one of Cavendish's *Orations*, given by a peasant-soldier after a war:

> all they that belong to the earth, as sowers, planters, reapers, threshers, hedgers, ditchers, diggers, delvers, are our infantry […] we are armed with our beast skins, and our arms of use are pikes, forks, cutting sickles, mowing scythes, pruning knives, threshing flails, ploughshares, shepherd's hooks, herdsmen's staves and the like[.][41]

This language is steeped in conventional imagery of popular protest.[42] Yet the peasant also claims that such a motley army (like the usurper in *The Worlds Olio*) will prove to be the wisest governor of the conquered country. In contrast to Marvell's fragrant mowers, Cavendish expresses ironic scepticism about the eroticization of agricultural labourers in pastoral literature. Her poem "A Description of a Shepherd's and a Shepherdesses's Life" highlights the bodily differences between courtiers and

[40] *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 5, 4th-11th July 1650, p. 1.
[41] *Orations* 145, in *Political Writings*, p. 256.
[42] See (e.g.) Maya Mathur, "An Attack of the Clowns: Comedy, Vagrancy, and the Elizabethan History Play", *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 7.1 (2007), 33-54.

labourers that provoke only aversion: “a fair white hand doth hate a dirty glove” (40). Yet however unattractive they may be, Cavendish sympathizes with the shepherds’ sufferings, turning her satire against the misrepresentations of courtly pastoral, in which “beauteous ladies” pretend to “follow flocks of sheep” (32). In this sense, Cavendish’s shepherds are more akin to Marvell’s mowers in being granted a certain dignity, and even a kind of supremacy, surmounting to and even comically surpassing the “crown”:

> Their feet are small, but strong each sinew’s string,
> Which makes them fast to rocks and mountains cling.
> The while the shepherd’s legs hang dangling down,
> He sets his breech upon the hill’s high crown. (11-14)

Cavendish persisted in aligning the lower orders with creative energy. As Marvell imagined his victorious mowers “dancing the triumphs of the hay” (426), so Cavendish associates that activity with the Lucretian motion of atoms that generates life: “Run in and out as we do dance the Hay” (“Motion Directs While Atoms Dance”, 50.3). Cavendish consistently represents lowly atoms as free and creative agents, as workmen, harvest dancers, or as small animals. This (selective) sympathy for underdogs has attracted eco-critical readings interested in her development of political arguments through portrayals of victimized animals.[43]

Cavendish develops the Aesopian fable to imagine the people in her compelling poem “A Dialogue of Birds” (121). The birds take it in turns to complain of their sufferings under humanity’s tyranny: sparrows are hunted with guns, pigeons roasted in pies, swallows crushed up to make oil. Their complaints are met by a preening pet parrot with a patronizing *carpe diem* truism, “while you’ve time, joy in yourselves you may” (132). This finally provokes the smallest bird of all, the titmouse (tit), to speak out, awakening the birds to a language of “publick” and “common”:

> My *Masters* all, what are you mad,
> Is no regard unto the *publick* had?
> Are private *Home-Affaires* cast all aside?

[43] Mihoko Suzuki, “Animals and the Political in Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish”, *Seventeenth Century*, 30 (2015), 229-47.

Your *young Ones* cry for meat, tis time to chide.
For shame disperse your selves, and some paines take,
Both for the *Common good*, and *young Chickes* sake:
And not sit murmuring here against great *Man*,
Unlesse for to revenge our selves we can.
Alas, alas, we want their *Shape*, which they
By it have power to make all obey. (137-46)

One available reading here is the commonplace argument that security depends on submission to sovereignty, as the titmouse concludes: "what we cannot help, submit unto" (158). Such an interpretation restricts the scope of "publick" by collapsing it into "private *Home-Affaires*", beyond which the birds should not meddle. Such submission, however, would not usually be thought to apply in cases of such obvious and ferocious threat to life as the birds describe (even Hobbes had conceded that this would be illogical). Hence the titmouse's concept of the "*Common good*" appears to have a scope considerably wider than mere submission. This was another phrase deleted from the revised 1664 text of the poem, replaced with a repetition of the blander phrase, "the public". Yet the broader sense of "Common good" runs through the remarkable final passage of the poem, in which the birds construct their own commonwealth, recalling the association of atoms with workers as they "gather sticks to build their nests" (160). They make love, sing hymns, and nest like "a troop of neighbours" (185), both terms, "troop" and "neighbours", offering complementary metaphors for co-ordinated associative action. This sense of "Common good" reaches back to that more capacious concept of "community" that appeared in the early chapters of *The Worlds Olio*. In the end, this poem leaves us with a paradox that we could compare with Marvell's use of the term "common" (or "Commons") in the "Horatian Ode". Both of these texts attempt—inconclusively—to reconcile a vision of participatory commonwealth with a realist recognition of insuperable power.

The parallels spotted between the poets in this essay are not meant to suggest that they read each other's work, but rather to illustrate how they are similarly adept at manipulating and problematizing the received languages in which the people were written about. Arguments from

ambiguity risk disappointment—and also risk reproducing misleading stereotypes of Cavendish as incorrigibly esoteric, or of Marvell as a repository of New Critical detachment, or proto-liberal squeamishness about power. Both, in fact, were clear-sighted and sometimes enthusiastic about brute power—understood in Machiavellian terms, in which the "popular" meant the people's love for an irresistible conqueror. Machiavellianism enabled their political flexibility in response to the revolution, but it also imbued them with a sceptical awareness of the slipperiness of the people, as a problem of rhetorical representation. Their very attention to slipperiness and ambivalence appears meaningful by contrast with the class contempt voiced by contemporaries like Davenant, Lovelace, or Milton. Marvell and Cavendish reproduce the conventional class-prejudices against the "rout" and their "uproar". But they also—I have conjectured, as a result of their perceived outsider status—treat the people as centres of sympathy, imagination, attraction, and even conflicted identification. Such moments offer grounds for considering their awareness of radical, democratic politics—even if they ultimately did not espouse such ideas. This engagement nevertheless left their writings with a palpable sense of the unruly power of the language of people, public, and common.