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"For any who have the Power:" John Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) and the ideology of oligarchic republicanism in the English Revolution

In partial fulfillment of the degree
Master of Arts

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**"FOR ANY WHO HAVE THE POWER:" JOHN MILTON'S *THE TENURE OF KINGS
AND MAGISTRATES* (1649) AND THE IDEOLOGY OF OLIGARCHIC
REPUBLICANISM IN THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION**

BY

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ABSTRACT

John Milton's political philosophy, and its relation to the events and ideologies of the English Revolution (1640-1660), is the subject of fierce debate among literary scholars and students of political thought. In 1977 the great English social historian Christopher Hill published a monumental work, *Milton and the English Revolution*, which portrayed the epic poet as a political radical. This thesis challenges Hill's analysis of Milton based on a new socio-economic and political contextualization of Milton's regicide tract, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, published in 1649.

The thesis employs an Aristotelian theory of oligarchic government, an understanding of political ideology inspired by Marx, and Robert Brenner's study of the role of colonial interloping merchants in English politics during the Revolutionary period, to argue that *The Tenure* reflects the political consciousness of oligarchic republicanism. Milton wrote the tract to defend the execution of Charles I, an act carried out against the will of the political nation by an oligarchic revolutionary alliance. The *Tenure* evidences an ideology of aristocracy to justify the actions of this oligarchy, and makes its case in the political language of oligarchic republicanism. The thesis also outlines Milton's

personal affiliation with key members of the revolutionary alliance. The political ideology of Milton's regicide tract, his connection to revolutionaries, and his service on behalf of the oligarchic Commonwealth regime, point toward the conclusion that John Milton was a political oligarch.

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I must reserve my deepest thanks for my family: Michael, Christine and Kent, and my parents, Arnie and Trudi Neufeld. I could never have achieved this without their support and love.

For it often happens, owing to exceptional circumstances, that what is accustomed under ordinary circumstances to be considered morally wrong is found out not to be morally wrong...

Has expediency, then, prevailed over moral rectitude? Not at all, moral rectitude has gone hand in hand with expediency.

Cicero

De Officiis, III, iv

Not one in twenty of the people in England are yet satisfied whether the King did levy war against the Houses first, or the Houses first against him; and besides, if the King did levy war first, we have no law extant that can be produced to make it treason for him to do; and, for us, my Lords, to declare treason by an Ordinance when the matter of fact is not yet proved, nor any law to bring to judge it by, seems to me very unreasonable.

Algernon Percy, Earl of Northumberland

Reply in the House of Lords to an Ordinance to erect a High Court of Justice to try King Charles I for treason

2 January 1649

"For any who have the Power:" John Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) and the ideology of oligarchic republicanism in the English Revolution.

The English Revolution centres around a dramatic act played out on a scaffold set up in front of London's Whitehall palace on 30 January 1649. On that stage King Charles I was beheaded before a crowd of soldiers and subjects. Within a few weeks of the King's death, John Milton, the future epic poet, published a pamphlet justifying the regicide entitled *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*.¹ This essay concerns the political ideology of Milton's regicide tract.

Though John Milton's epic poems support the work (and livelihood) of literary scholars by the hundred, his contributions to political philosophy at this important moment are less widely studied.² Milton's prose works attract a formidable number of literary scholars and intellectual historians, often with a view to gaining greater insight into his epic poems. Two classic studies emerging in the 1940s were Arthur Barker's *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660*, and Don Wolfe's *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*.³ Barker believed Milton's prose aimed to bring about a holy community in England. The key to Milton's political thought was his Puritan theology, particularly his understanding of Christian liberty.

Barker thought Milton's *Tenure* reflected the Independents' problem of erecting a godly Commonwealth dedicated to liberty and the common good without undoing the work of the Army. The problem was, more precisely, using the doctrine of popular sovereignty to justify an unpopular government.⁴ Wolfe's book attempted to portray Milton as a democratic reformer who stood for liberty and had an affinity with the Levellers.⁵ The *Tenure* was Milton's attempt to reassert the basic political theory of the Independents, popular sovereignty. Milton wrote the tract to reconcile the minds of readers to a particular event, namely, the trial and execution of Charles I.⁶ These two seminal works made important connections between the poet's political theology and the constitutional aims of the Parliamentary alliance's left-wing.

The work of contextualizing Milton's political thought was carried forward in the two decades after the Second World War by Ernest Sirluck and Merrit Hughes, two editors of the Yale Edition of Milton's prose.⁷ For both Sirluck and Hughes the key to understanding the *Tenure* was Milton's use of the doctrine of popular sovereignty.⁸ Writing in the same decade as Hughes and Sirluck, Michael Fixler, in his study of Milton's apocalyptic consciousness, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*, emphasized the *Tenure's* aristocratic

leanings.⁹ Before 1970 Milton's regicide tract was thus treated as somewhat of a mixed bag: large nuggets of popular sovereignty spiced with aristocracy. The English social historian Christopher Hill noticed a third ingredient: radicalism.

Hill's provocative study on Milton and the English Revolution, published in 1977, set the poet in a permanent dialogue with the period's radical ideologues: Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, and Socinians.¹⁰ Hill's Milton, a radical Protestant heretic, a leisure-class intellectual, lived between two cultures: the Puritan-middling sort and the heterodox-lower sort. Milton's position between cultures helps explain the *Tenure's* frank acceptance of revolution, coupled with a desire for a "dictatorship on behalf of democracy."¹¹

Hill's Milton was subject to strident critique from historians and literary scholars. Marxist critic Andrew Milner found fault with Hill's cursory account of politics in the revolutionary period. For Milner it is more appropriate to understand Milton as a bourgeois intellectual rather than as a radical Protestant heretic with a few Digger-like notions. Milton was the spokesman for Revolutionary Independancy, the party of bourgeois individualism, which was politically ascendant in England

by 1688.¹² This party emphasized freedom for rational persons from external constraint, especially those imposed by tradition and privilege. Others, like Margaret Heinemann and Hugh Trevor-Roper, doubt Milton's participation in a plebian "coffee-house" culture; they suggest he could have got his radical ideas from other, more classical, sources.¹³ Trevor-Roper believes that Milton was caught between two incompatible traditions of philosophy: the tradition of ancient freedom (classical) and the tradition of theocratic monarchism (Jewish-Christian). The poet's work was a heroic attempt to fuse the two traditions together, as evidenced in the secular and biblical references that fill the *Tenure*.¹⁴ Yet despite the criticism, Hill's work remains the prime interlocutor for historians who wish to make a case around the poet and his politics. Hill's *opus* is the inspiration for this examination of Milton's political ideology.

Charles Geisst published a helpful, though not particularly engaging, study of Milton's political thought in the 1980s.¹⁵ Geisst built a case for Milton the Aristotelian thinker, who never developed a consistent political theory because of his fundamentally inconsistent anthropology. Simply stated, Milton believed all men and women were fallen because of sin, but some might overcome

sin to lead a virtuous life. Milton hoped for a good political life through a Christian Commonwealth, where the equality of the people who were regenerate and virtuous could be preserved. The distinction between the "people" and the "populace" becomes key to understanding Milton's notion of popular sovereignty in the *Tenure*.

John Sanderson argues that Milton's use of popular sovereignty in the *Tenure* is evidence for his adherence, like other Parliamentary apologists in the Civil War, to the Ascending Theory of Politics.¹⁶ For Perez Zagorin, the core of Milton's political thought is his evolving conception of aristocracy.¹⁷ According to Zagorin, the principle of aristocracy linked to virtue constituted a predominant element in the rebel Milton's politics. Zagorin is convinced of his thesis to the point of calling his monograph on the poet's politics, *Milton: aristocrat and rebel*.¹⁸ It is precisely this principle of aristocracy as it relates to Milton's regicide tract that this study seeks to critique. Zagorin applies a term—aristocrat—that does not, I shall argue, account for the full reality of the Revolution. His case is also weakened by an unwillingness to consider another important aspect of Milton's political thought, his republicanism.

The literature on republicanism in England owes a great deal to the work of two historians of Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century political theory, Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock. The latter's seminal work, *The Machiavellian Moment*, traced the growth and transmission of republican language from the Italian city-republics to England and pre-Revolutionary America.¹⁹ Early modern republicanism, according to Pocock, stresses citizenship, virtue, corruption, and liberty. While Milton does not figure in Pocock's survey of seventeenth-century English republicanism, others such as Skinner and Blair Worden, readily incorporate the poet into the republican tradition. Worden cites Milton's belief in original popular sovereignty and the people's right to resume that power, described in the *Tenure*, as strong evidence of republican sentiment. Skinner argues that Milton held to the "neo-roman" theory of liberty, wherein the polity's capacity for action in no way depends on the will of anyone other than the body of its own citizens.²⁰

Recently Skinner co-edited a collection of essays on the subject of *Milton and Republicanism*, in which historians and literary critics debate the poet's republican credentials.²¹ Milton's regicide tract is the subject of Victoria Kahn's essay "The metaphorical contract

in Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*." Kahn emphasizes Milton's conception of kingship as a conditional office or trust between the monarch and the people as a way of countering the Presbyterian adherence to kingship in the Solemn Oath and Covenant. This notion of the king's accountability to the people is a defining mark of English republicanism.²² Thomas Corns agrees with Kahn that the key to the *Tenure* is the idea of a social contract between the ruler and the ruled, but he thinks the tract is less an argument for an English republic and more a rehearsal of republican values. Otherwise, Corns follows Milner in identifying Milton with the party of Revolutionary Independency.²³

Another important Milton scholar contributing to *Milton and Republicanism* is Martin Dzelzainis. He follows Skinner and Worden in lining up Milton firmly within the classical republican tradition. Milton's concern for liberty as freedom from external constraint (Skinner's neo-roman idea of liberty) is evident in his early prose works as well as his pamphlets written in defense of the English Commonwealth.²⁴ Dzelzainis's earlier work showed how Milton used Shakespeare and the work of sixteenth-century Scottish political theorist George Buchanan in the *Tenure* to counter and embarrass the English Presbyterian opponents of the

regicide.²⁵ It is Milton's place within the tradition of Calvinist resistance theory that forms the base for Dzelzainis's "Introduction" to the most recent edition of the *Tenure* published in 1991.²⁶

Clearly, Milton's political thought as a whole and as expressed in specific works has proved intellectually stimulating and fruitful for many literary critics and historians. Milton's politics were not simply antecedents to his great poetry, but important contributions to the raucous political culture of England during the Civil War and Interregnum. This was a culture engaged in lively, indeed, life-and-death debate over questions of sovereignty and the relations between rulers and ruled in the English polity. A horizontal or comparative approach to Milton's politics, such as those carried out by Wolfe and Hill, shows the poet's similarities to provocative, if not progressive, groups like the Levellers and the Familists.²⁷ While there is not a firm consensus on whether these similarities, such as the notion of popular sovereignty and the accountability of kings, emerged from Milton's personal contact with elements of a radical "third culture," which Hill speculates about and Milner, Roper, Zagorin and Geisst doubt, or simply his own reading, it is certain that Milton must be read as a direct participant in the issues at the

heart of the drama that was the Revolution. It will be argued in this essay that Milton's *Tenure* must be understood also in light of the politics and the politicians at the centre of the Revolution.

Dzelzainis, in his Introduction to the *Tenure*, sets out well the issues surrounding the trial and execution of King Charles I in January 1649. Milton's interlocutors were political presbyterians, and Presbyterian divines, who could not stomach the extra-legal High Court established to try and punish the King as a tyrant. While understanding the position of Milton's opponents is crucial to interpreting the regicide tract, it is just as important to know *for whom* Milton took the position outlined in the *Tenure*. Although this tract was unsolicited, and represents Milton's last such independent contribution to the political culture of the Revolution, its ideology is consistent with a particular group of political actors; in fact, the actors who largely made the regicide and Rump regime. This is clear from the brilliant work on London merchants by Robert Brenner, published two years after the latest edition of the *Tenure*, and not taken into account by any subsequent study of Milton's regicide tract.²⁸ This essay aims to build on the previous excellent work on Milton and his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* by

incorporating Brenner's work, and by approaching the tract as an ideological act: the act of an oligarch thinking and speaking as an aristocrat.

This essay assumes Milton was a real person, a "self" with intention, will, and something original to say at a critical juncture in the political history of England. Saying this is to take a stand against post-modern critics, exemplified by the work of Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse.²⁹ Their Milton is not even "there;" instead, "Milton" is a self-evident character with a cloud of associations whose coherence resists analysis. The English Revolution is not a significant moment in the historical process, except as myth for the origin of the modern world.³⁰ This study takes the position that there is such a thing as a self, a self with coherence and continuity, a self that may be subject to critical examination.³¹ There are also important moments in the past, which, while subject to rival interpretations, contain the genesis of the present. The English Revolution, particularly the overthrow of the monarchy and the (brief) establishment of the Commonwealth (1648-1653) is significant for the subsequent development of England's unique constitution and political economy.

Authors, as Skinner argues, produce texts with an intention *to do something*. A printed text, like a pamphlet, is a written intention to communicate; it is an act.³² John Milton played a significant ideological role in the publicity and production of the Revolution: a political actor who played his part as an author. Pocock contends, along the same lines as Skinner, that texts are actions performed by authors in language contexts, contexts which condition or constrain them but which the texts may also modify. The language of political texts is an *act* of articulation and conceptualization performed by thinkers; the text is also an *event* that happens as a result of actions performed by authors, specifically, the act of writing.³³

The method for interpreting the political domain of language advocated by Skinner and Pocock grounds my contention that the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was an action delivered by the political actor John Milton.³⁴ As a political actor Milton spoke (wrote) a set of lines (the tract) that he intended to shape the action and the outcome of the drama that was the English Revolution. Milton's tract, like all good political theory, addresses a particular problem at a particular point in history: the problem of legitimate political action against a

constitutional monarch deemed by some members of the political nation to be a tyrant.³⁵ The tract (Milton's lines) was delivered in a particular political language, centred around the terms "virtue" and "fit" and "upright" and "few." Milton applied these concepts to the actions and actors of the revolutionary alliance so as to make them appear as "aristocratic Worthies." I intend to argue that it is most suitable for Milton's readers, his present-day audience, to interpret this political language as the ideological defense of a revolutionary oligarchy. Hugh Trevor-Roper first made the case for Milton as an advocate for an oligarchy of the elect.³⁶ I think the oligarchy on whose behalf Milton spoke was also grounded in temporal affairs: the commercial expansion of a Protestant republican oligarchy. To hear the *Tenure* as a defense of oligarchy we need the help of three co-adjudicators: Aristotle, Brenner, and Karl Marx.

My approach to Milton begins with Aristotle's constitutional schema outlined in his *Politics*.³⁷ The use of a classical political text to understand an Early Modern tract may seem peculiar, if not downright wrong. It seems clear, however, that when reading documents from the past, historians are liable to smuggle modern concepts and terms into their analysis. Conal Condren calls this the "Piltdown

method" of research: contemporary terms and political relationships are made to work on a very dissimilar structure of language, for example, the political language of England in the seventeenth century. Thus, a word like "radical," which to moderns means "innovative" and "progressive," to an early modern person meant what was important from the past (radix=roots) and worthy of conservation. The seventeenth-century was so tradition-centred that what was deemed objectionable was cast in terms of newness and innovation.³⁸ Whether or not one agrees with Condren (and J.C.D. Clark) that political terms and concepts originating in the French Revolution should be kept out (stopped at the border?) of the English Revolution, his critique has shown again how important it is to understand the past on its own terms. The two fundamental texts for seventeenth-century political thought before Hobbes and Locke were Aristotle and the Bible.³⁹ Milton and his contemporaries wrote within the language domain of Aristotle's *Politics*, and it is thus legitimate to criticize the poet's work from that antique starting point.

Aristotle believed that the state emerged to secure human life, and remained to secure for its members the good life. The state was thus an association to enable its

members to live well, and various constitutions developed over time to meet that end.⁴⁰ In the differently constituted states sovereignty, ultimate power, necessarily resided in the one, the few, or the many. Wherever the one, the few, or the many ruled with a view to the common good, Aristotle argued they ruled correctly. Whenever rulers looked to private advantage over the commonweal they deviated from the true end of the state.⁴¹

According to Aristotle, an aristocracy was a constitution ruled by a few men who were either the best in terms of virtue, or who ruled with an aim to do what was best for the whole state. Where a few governed a state with a view to their own interest, restricting entry to their number to the people they themselves chose, what was in place was an oligarchy.⁴² Where the few with sovereign power govern for their own benefit the state is an oligarchy. An aristocracy was thus defined by the virtue of its members and their virtuous aims for the state. The wealth and covetousness of its rulers, by contrast, marked an oligarchy.

Aristotle was willing to concede that an aristocracy was a type of oligarchy, in that it was the rule of a few, albeit the virtuous few who act for the commonweal.⁴³ He did not consider, however, that oligarchs might attempt to

justify their rule as a species of aristocracy. The leading actors in the English Revolution did exactly that. That we may rightly call the men at centre-stage of the Revolution oligarchs is bolstered by Robert Brenner's monumental work on the social history of London merchants from 1550-1653.

Brenner's account of the rise of colonial and interloping "new merchants" in London, and their critical role in City and national politics, deepens our understanding of the social and economic context of the English Revolution.⁴⁴ The triumph of the political independents, imposed on the nation by Parliament's victorious New Model Army in 1648-1649, carried the leadership of the colonial trades to unprecedented political influence. The new merchants used their power in the new English republic, the Commonwealth, to bring about a new program in commercial and foreign policy: a program that was in their collective interest as colonial traders.⁴⁵

A few men, the Army's General Council, London's political independents, among whom the colonial merchants figured prominently, and the Capital's Congregationalists and Baptists, seized power in 1648-1649 and ruled England as oligarchs, albeit for a short time. Brenner makes a convincing case that the men who made the Revolution of 1648-49 knew they wanted an oligarchic republic safe for

saints and conducive to colonial trade and development. England's oligarchic revolutionaries turned Rumpers (the Rump was the name given the Parliament governing England from 1649-1653) could not hope, however, to consolidate their rule without intellectual justification. Believing themselves best suited to rule the nation, the leaders of the Revolution and Rump regime legitimated their actions with an ideology of aristocracy.

"Ideology" is a word that covers a multitude of sins. In the Marxist tradition an ideology functions analogously to sin, in that it is rooted in false pride: that what one believes actually corresponds to reality, when in fact it does not. Marx argued that an ideology is a belief that masks the real conditions of life and the economic foundation of human existence.⁴⁶ A scientific understanding of the world, he believed, would dissolve the illusory happiness given to people by ideologies, especially through religion.

Marx's twentieth-century followers expanded his theory of ideology. A simple definition of ideology from Louis Dupre is "any interpretation of history which is based on a dialectic of ideas divorced from the socio-economic realities in which they originate."⁴⁷ Louis Althusser said an ideology "is a 'representation' of the Imaginary

Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence."⁴⁸ A more complex Marxist definition of ideology comes from Leszek Kolakowski, who argues that such beliefs "are characterized by the subjects' unawareness of their origin in social conditions and of the part they play in maintaining or altering those conditions."⁴⁹ An ideology is thus a sincere belief that one's ideas represent reality while simultaneously failing to notice the social origin, and social impact of those beliefs; in other words, false consciousness.

Merold Westphal contends that a false consciousness, especially the failure to notice the social impact of ideas rendered by ideology, leads to at least two illusions. The first is the Illusion of Neutrality, a useful illusion to those, such as the oligarchs in the English Revolution, whose interest politics serves at the expense of others. To the extent that the Illusion of Neutrality succeeds, the victims of political power feel less resentful and the perpetrators of political power feel less guilty.⁵⁰ The second is the Illusion of Overcoming the World, where those in power give an honorific account of controversial politics, such as staging an extra-legal trial and erecting an oligarchic Council of State, and so distract attention from the way in which power serves special interest. The

rulers' ideology serves to make special interest appear as the common good. I shall argue that the oligarchic leaders of the English Revolution and the Rump regime it produced employed an ideology of aristocracy to lessen their guilt and legitimate their unpopular, self-interested political acts. John Milton's *Tenure* was a crucial performance in this oligarchy's ideological production.

Milton's regicide tract was an ideological act delivered at the height of the English revolutionary drama. Milton, I shall argue, evidences an ideology of aristocracy, which makes the action of a self-interested few appear, to themselves and to others, as the deed of godly and virtuous aristocrats on behalf of and for the sake of the commonweal. The political schema of Aristotle, the political and economic context provided by Brenner, and the political theory of the Marxist tradition, enable Milton's modern audience to hear the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* as an act uttered in defense of a revolutionary oligarchy. This oligarchy, and the Republic it erected and imposed on the English polity, became Milton's first source of steady employment: it is the subject of the first chapter. Milton's pamphlet defending the trial and execution of Charles I, and his personal connections with members of the Rump Parliament's Commonwealth regime,

points to identifying Milton as an oligarchic republican. The argument and ideology of the tract are the focus of the second chapter; the case for Milton the oligarchic republican is made in the third chapter. Milton was a political actor who used aristocratic lines to laud a drama, at Whitehall and at Westminster, produced, staged, and executed by oligarchs. The conclusion of this paper will essay an application of its thesis to *Paradise Lost*.

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- ¹ John Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, London: 1649. I am using the edition published by Cambridge University Press in 1991, in *John Milton: Political Writings*, Martin Dzelzainis ed.
- ² The second edition of the *Cambridge Companion to Milton* notes some 6 000 studies published between 1968 and 1998; see R.G. Siemens, "Milton's works and life: selected studies and resources" in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton (Second Edition)*, Dennis Danielson ed. (New York: 1999), 268.
- ³ Arthur Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660* (Toronto: 1942); Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, (New York: 1941).
- ⁴ Barker, 156.
- ⁵ Wolfe, 336.
- ⁶ Wolfe, 216-17.
- ⁷ Don M. Wolfe (general editor) *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton (C.P.W.)*, (New Haven: 1953-1980). Sirluck introduced *Aeropagitica* in C.P.W. II, 1959; Hughes provided the background to the early Commonwealth tracts, including the *Tenure*, in C.P.W. III, 1962.
- ⁸ Ernest Sirluck, "Milton's Political Thought: The First Cycle" in *Modern Philology*, 61 (1964): 223.
- ⁹ Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*, (London: 1964).
- ¹⁰ Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: 1978).
- ¹¹ Hill, 168.
- ¹² Andrew Milner, *John Milton and the English Revolution: A Study in the Sociology of Literature*, (Totowa, NJ: 1981), 50-53.
- ¹³ Milner, 198; Margaret Heinemann, "How the words got on the page: Christopher Hill and Seventeenth-Century Literary Studies" in Geoff Eley and William Hunt eds. *Reviving the English Revolution: Reflections and Elaborations on the Work of Christopher Hill*, (New York: 1988), 91. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Milton in Politics" in *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-Century essays*, (London: 1989), 234.
- ¹⁴ Trevor-Roper, 236-37. See also Michael Wilding, *Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution*, (Oxford: 1987).
- ¹⁵ Charles Geisst, *The Political Thought of John Milton*, (London: 1984).

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- ¹⁶ John Sanderson, "But the People's Creatures:" *The Philosophical Basis of the English Civil War*, (Manchester: 1989), 131.
- ¹⁷ Perez Zagorin, *History of the Political Thought in the English Revolution*, (London: 1954), 111.
- ¹⁸ Perez Zagorin, *Milton: aristocrat and rebel: the poet and his politics*, (New York: 1992).
- ¹⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, (Princeton: 1975).
- ²⁰ Blair Worden, "Classical Republicanism and the English Revolution: in *History and Imagination: Essays in honour of Hugh Trevor-Roper*, H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and Blair Worden eds. (London: 1981): 182-200. See also Worden's "English Republicanism" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought: 1450-1700*, J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie eds. (London: 1994): 443-478. The first volume of Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: The Renaissance* (London: 1978) also has an excellent section on Italian/Florentine republican thought. On the neo-roman theory of liberty see Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, (New York: 1998).
- ²¹ An important essay for Milton's politics during the Interregnum is Blair Worden's "Milton and Marchamont Nedham" in *Milton and Republicanism*, David Armitage, Armand Himy and Quentin Skinner eds. (New York: 1995): 156-180. See also Worden's brilliant essay on Milton and the Rump "Milton's Republicanism and the tyranny of heaven" in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viruli eds. (Cambridge: 1990): 225-245.
- ²² Victoria Kahn, "The Metaphorical Contract in Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*," in *Milton and Republicanism*, David Armitage, Armand Himy and Quentin Skinner eds. (New York: 1995): 82-105. See also David Wootton's "Introduction" in *Divine Right and Democracy*, (Harmondsworth: 1986), 70.
- ²³ Thomas Corns, "Milton and the characteristics of a free commonwealth" in *Milton and Republicanism*, David Armitage, Armand Himy and Quentin Skinner eds. (New York: 1995): 25-42. Corns has written a short overview of Milton's prose *John Milton: The Prose Works* (New York: 1998), as well as contributing a chapter on "Milton's Prose" in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton (Second Edition)*, Dennis Danielson ed. (New York: 1999): 84-98. There is also material on the *Tenure* in Corns's *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640-1660*, (Oxford: 1992).

- ²⁴ Martin Dzelzainis, "Milton's classical republicanism" in *Milton and Republicanism*, David Armitage, Armand Himy and Quentin Skinner eds. (New York: 1995): 3-24. For further discussion of "Milton's Politics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton (Second Edition)*, Dennis Danielson ed. (New York: 1999): 70-83.
- ²⁵ Martin Dzelzainis, "Milton, Macbeth and Buchanan" in *Seventeenth Century* 4 (1989): 55-66.
- ²⁶ An earlier discussion of Milton's thought in relation to Calvinist resistance theory emerging out of the French civil wars is in J.H.M. Salmon, *The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought*, (Oxford: 1959), 103.
- ²⁷ For the progressive or radical elements in the Revolutionary period it is imperative to consult Christopher Hill's delightful *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, (London: 1972).
- ²⁸ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, (Princeton: 1993).
- ²⁹ Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor and the Origins of Personal Life*, (Berkeley: 1992).
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, 12-15; 42.
- ³¹ For a trenchant critique of the post-modern/geneological tradition see Alasdair MacIntyre's *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Geneology and Tradition*, (Notre Dame: 1990).
- ³² Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the history of ideas" in *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 49.
- ³³ J.G.A. Pocock, "The concept of a language and the 'metier d'historien:' some considerations on practice," in *The languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, Anthony Pagden ed. (Cambridge: 1987): 50. Also by Pocock, "Texts as Events: Reflections on the History of Political Thought" in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, (Berkeley: 1987): 21-34.
- ³⁴ On the idea of the political domain of language, see Conal Condren, *The language of politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, (New York: 1994), 4-5.
- ³⁵ For a helpful introduction, from a historical-materialist perspective, to the questions confronting political theorists, see Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neal Wood, *A Trumpet of Sedition: Political Theory and the Rise of Capitalism, 1509-1688*, (New York: 1997), 1-3.

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- ³⁶ Trevor-Roper, 265.
- ³⁷ Aristotle, *The Politics*, Translated by T.A. Sinclair, revised by Trevor J. Saunders. (London: 1981).
- ³⁸ Condren, 142; 153.
- ³⁹ Wootton, 16.
- ⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, ii (1252b27)
- ⁴¹ *Politics*, III, vii (1279a22)
- ⁴² *Politics*, III, vii (1279a32 and 1279b4)
- ⁴³ *Politics*, IV, vii (1293a35)
- ⁴⁴ Brenner, Part Two & Three, 199-493.
- ⁴⁵ Brenner, Chapter X, "The New Merchants Come to Power," 494-557; Chapter XI "Political Independents, New Merchants, and the Commonwealth," 558-576.
- ⁴⁶ Mark Goldie, "Ideology" in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, T. Ball, J. Farr, and R.L. Henson eds. (Cambridge: 1989): 281-2.
- ⁴⁷ Louis Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, 1966. Quoted in Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and FAITH: The religious uses of modern atheism*, (New York: 1998), 159.
- ⁴⁸ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, Translated by Ben Brewster, (New York: 1971), 152-154.
- ⁴⁹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 1978. Quoted in Westphal, 159.
- ⁵⁰ Westphal, 160.

I. England's Oligarchic Revolution:
September 1648-March 1649

The terms a historian employs to describe what happened in England between 1640 and 1660 are clues to his or her interpretation of those eventful decades. The great nineteenth-century Whig Samuel Gardiner wrote the history of the Puritan Revolution. Conservative and "revisionist" historians like Conrad Russell, Derek Hirst, John Morrill and J.C.D. Clark, prefer to talk about the English Civil Wars and the Interregnum, or, following Clarendon, the Great Rebellion or Revolt. Marxist historians like Christopher Hill and Brian Manning refer to the whole period, 1640 to 1660, as the English Revolution.¹

This essay follows Hill and Manning in regarding the era of the Long Parliament as revolutionary for England's political and cultural life. It follows the lead of Barry Coward, however, in limiting the phrase "The English Revolution" to the purge of Parliament, the regicide, and the erection of the Commonwealth regime in the autumn and winter of 1648-1649. The Revolution was made in the period 1640 to 1649; it was unmade from 1649 to 1660. The hinge of these revolutionary years was a political revolution that effected the most dramatic change ever to the English state and national politics: a sitting Parliament was purged, a

hereditary monarch was executed, and a new Executive in the form of the Rump's Council of State erected. The events leading directly to the creation of the English Commonwealth justly can be labeled a Revolution.²

It is the aim of this chapter to show that the Revolution was an oligarchic production. To this end, the Revolution's key events, its ideology, its consistency with the political aspirations of the population, and the identity of its major players, will be outlined.

The English Revolutionary drama began in the spring and summer of 1648. Charles I's Scots allies were preparing to march on England, provoking different responses from Parliament and Parliament's Army. Provincial uprisings against abuses of the Army and in support of the King, and the threat of invasion from the north, softened the Commons' stance toward the King. There were too many Members willing to settle with Charles to maintain a uniform and consistently hostile stance against him, such as in January with the Vote of No Addresses.³ While Parliament's armies were fighting the Scots and royalist-Presbyterians in the summer of 1648, M.P.s were voting not to alter the fundamental constitution of King, Lords and Commons (April), to re-open negotiations with the King (July), and to repeal the Vote of No Addresses (August).

Parliament's highest priority during the Second Civil War, indeed, the priority of the nation, was to make a settlement that would restore Charles to his throne, the sooner the better.⁴

While Parliament and the English people hoped for peace, the Army aimed at Justice. The security of the commonweal from its enemies was more important than the sanctity of the King's person. A three-day prayer meeting at Windsor in May 1648 ended as the Army, led by Lord Thomas Fairfax and Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell, agreed to bring Charles to trial for his crimes against the nation. Charles I, they charged, was responsible for the conflict between himself and Parliament and all the blood spilt in the previous six years' of war; according to fiery sermons based on Numbers 35.33 the land needed to be cleansed of Charles's blood-guilt.⁵

After the Army's victories over the Scots at Preston and the royalists at Colchester, the Council of Officers, inspired by Cromwell's son-in-law Henry Ireton, made plans to move against a Legislature hell-bent on appeasing a recalcitrant, obstinate, and dangerous monarch. The Parliament that had created the Army to defeat the King seemed determined to sacrifice victory for the sake of peace and order. On the 15th of November Parliament voted to

settle with the King with honour, which was interpreted in the Army as a virtual surrender.⁶ A Declaration issued by Fairfax and the Council of Officers in late November stated that the present Parliament was incompetent "in its present condition... to be sole judges of their own performance of breach of trust."⁷ The Council of Officers believed the House was acting contrary to the Army's stated war aims by refusing to move judicial proceedings against the twice-defeated King. It had to be stopped before a settlement with the King was reached. Acting in concert with leading Levellers, Colonel Ireton, who was also an M.P., wanted to dissolve Parliament and invite a minority of Members to advise the Army until new elections could be held. According to David Underdown, two radical M.P.s, Edmund Ludlow and Cornelius Holland convinced Ireton and other Army Grandees to purge rather than dissolve Parliament. A purged Parliament could still claim a measure of legality, which an advisory group serving after dissolution could not.⁸

In early December 1648, while the House of Commons debated whether or not the King's latest answer to their terms of treaty was satisfactory, troops marched from Army headquarters at Windsor to Westminster. In the early hours of 5 December, after a marathon debate, the House voted 129

to 83 in favour of the King's latest reply to the Newport negotiations as a basis for proceeding to a Treaty. The next day, members of the London City militia, en route to guard duty at Westminster, found their way blocked by a thousand men of the New Model Army. Major-General Philip Skippon, their old commander, appeared and persuaded them to return to the City. Meanwhile, Colonel Thomas Pride and a group of officers stood on the stairs leading into the Palace, arresting about forty-five M.P.s and preventing between ninety and one hundred and twenty from entering.⁹ In all around 325 Members were barred from Parliament because of Pride's Purge.

During December 1648 and January 1649, from the purge to the trial and execution of the King, Parliament marched to the Army's drum.¹⁰ The remaining M.P.s got down to undoing much of the previous six months' legislation. The House enacted measures to bring in the last assessment due the Army, already half a year over-due. The vote repealing the Vote of No Addresses, and the vote of 5 December authorizing the Treaty of Newport were revoked on 13 December.¹¹ On the 15th the Army's Council of Officers voted to bring Charles I up from the Isle of Wight to Windsor Castle to be secured before bringing him to justice. This act put the trial of the King at the centre of the

political agenda, ahead of new elections and a more democratic constitutional settlement, the second Agreement of the People.¹² The Levellers and Grandees like Ireton had believed a new constitutional settlement necessary to secure the Revolution against the day when the Army disbanded. The controversy surrounding the trial meant the Agreement, and the chance for permanent constitutional change, was lost. On the 4th of January 1649 the House of Commons declared the Present Parliament to be the supreme authority in the land. It established a High Court of Justice on the 6th, which, from the 20th to the 29th, prosecuted and condemned Charles I on the charge of treason. The King was beheaded on the 30th.

The King's death did not bring the ills inflicted upon the body politic by six years of war to an end. England was reeling from the shock of execution, royalists were active in Ireland, a poor harvest had produced soaring food prices, trade needed reviving, and the country was diplomatically isolated. The Army, powerful enough to push through a revolution, could not, nor would, attempt to govern the land without at least some of the people's representatives. In February and March 1649 the purged Parliament, or Rump, took the political lead away from the Army.

Nearly one hundred M.P.s who had stayed away from Westminster between the purge and the trial returned in February. People who despised the Revolution and all it represented were willing to support and work for the regime with the understanding that a disagreeable government was superior to no government at all.¹³ The post-regicide Rump Parliament was a schizophrenic body, some parts keen to undo the Revolution, others equally focussed on taking it further, nearly all determined to keep power in their hands and no one else's.¹⁴ The office of king and the House of Lords were abolished in March 1649, but that legislation marked the end of revolutionary political change. The Rump Parliament continued to function as its predecessors had during the Civil War, although it did establish one constitutional innovation, the Council of State. This Executive Committee hired John Milton as its Latin Secretary on 15th of March 1649.

The Revolution that produced the regicide and subsequent English Republic had its own particular ideology, which formed the immediate intellectual background to Milton's *Tenure*. The arguments the Army and its allies used to justify their actions provide insights into the revolutionaries' consciousness and sense of purpose. They also help us understand why the Army

especially believed England needed a revolution in spite of itself.

First, a revolution was required if Charles I was to be brought to justice. In May 1648, at the Windsor prayer-meeting, the Army made one of its war aims "to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed, and mischief he had done to his utmost, against the Lord's Cause and People in these poor nations."¹⁵ As the instigator of the conflict, King Charles was held responsible for all blood shed and destruction of 1642-1648. The land remained polluted, and the soldiers' hands and souls were stained with blood so long as Charles lived. They would not be cleansed until, as Henry Ireton demanded in his *Remonstrance* to Parliament in November 1648, justice was executed on "the capital authors of the late wars."¹⁶ The notion of Charles I's blood-guilt was prominent in the charge brought against him at trial. The King stood accused of being "the occasioner, author, and continuer of the said unnatural, cruel, and bloody wars; and therein guilty of all the treasons, murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damages, and mischiefs to this nation, acted and committed in the said wars."¹⁷ Charles's actions violated both God's law and the laws of England. Justice

demanded that Charles I, the nation's chief delinquent, be brought low and punished for his trespasses.

Not only was the King a notorious sinner and criminal, but also unfaithful in the execution of his duty: the person Charles had abused the office of king. Charles I was guilty of breach of trust, his oath to rule the nation according to law and to protect the rights and liberties of the people who entrusted to him the office of "king." This idea that the king was entrusted with limited power to govern by law for the good and benefit of the people appears in Ireton's *Remonstrance* (November 1648) and again in the High Court's Charge against Charles I.¹⁸ According to the Army's *Remonstrance*, the King, by "fly[ing] to the way of force upon his trusting people," forfeited all that trust and power.¹⁹ The King's breach of trust released the People from their covenant and peace with him, "and if he fall within their power to proceed in judgment against him."²⁰ As the plaintiff in a suit for breach of contract, the People, in the form of the Army, were within their rights to seek justice against the offending party.

Justice demanded a trial against the King because he was a delinquent monarch in breach of his office: in brief, to punish him for tyranny. Charles had waged war, especially in 1648, "merely to uphold the interest of his

will-power against the common interest of his people."²¹ These sentiments from the *Army Remonstrance* are echoed again in the Charge brought against the King at his trial. Charles's reign prior to 1640 was marked by his "wicked design totally to subvert the ancient and fundamental laws and liberties of this nation and in their place to introduce an arbitrary and tyrannical government." The monarch took up arms "out of a wicked design to erect and uphold in himself an unlimited and tyrannical power; to rule according to his will." Charles's wars were "carried on for the advancement and upholding of a personal interest of will, power, and pretend prerogative to himself and his family, against the public interest, common right, liberty, justice and peace of this nation."²² Charles's relentless pursuit of his self-interest had made him a tyrant. And by becoming a tyrant, Charles was guilty of the highest political crime, treason.

The rhetoric of the King's trial was punctuated by two key words: tyranny and treason, meaning his vicious self-interest and malicious intent against the nation. The Act for the erection of a High Court to try Charles argued that such a body was established "to the end [that] no Chief Officer or Magistrate whatsoever may hereafter presume, traitorously and maliciously, to imagine or contume the

enslaving or destroying of the English nation."²³ The sentence pronounced against the King rehearsed his culpability for "all the said wicked designs, wars, and evil practices...carried on for the advancement and upholding of the personal interest of will, power, and pretend prerogative." It was the judgment of the High Court, created by the purged Parliament, that Charles I was the "occasioner, author, and continuer of the said unnatural, cruel and bloody wars, and therein guilty of high treason." For all these treasons, the Court judged that Charles, "a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the good people of this nation, shall be put to death."²⁴ Justice required the King's death, which necessitated a trial, which could only come from a purged Parliament. In short, the satisfaction of Justice demanded an Army-led revolution.

Second, England needed revolution to ensure the safety of the People. *Salus populi* was a frequently used slogan by the Army and its allies in the weeks between the purge and the execution. It was a line the Army used consistently from the summer of 1647 when it began to debate within itself the nature of the settlement with the defeated King. The Army's stated concern was the advancement of the public good over private interest; as time went on the Army

increasingly identified the interests of the citizenry with its own.²⁵

The Army's petition to Parliament in January 1649 to consider the Second Agreement of the People included a denial that it had acted to set up "any particular party or interest by or with which to uphold ourselves in power and domination over the nation." The New Model had purged Parliament "to make way for the settlement of Peace and Government of the Kingdom upon grounds of common freedom and safety."²⁶ The good of the people was at the forefront of the Army's mind and justified its controversial actions. The clerical supporters of the Army, like Hugh Peter, reminded the political nation that what was ultimately crucial was not the popular will or desire for revolution, but the public safety which the revolution established. "It is not," Peter argued, "*vox but salus populi* that is the supreme law...If the common vote of the giddy multitude must rule the whole, how quickly would their own interest, peace, and safety be dashed."²⁷ The Independent preacher John Goodwin believed that the New Model acted with an authority derived not from the "laws of the land, [but] the law of nature, necessity, and love of Country and Nation." If the People did not understand how a purged Parliament and regicide was for the benefit of the commonweal, "it is

an act so much the more goodness and mercy in those, who, being fully capable of them, will engage themselves accordingly to make provision for them."²⁸ The Army's adherence to natural law, especially the *salus populi*, was the people's guarantee, regardless of their reservations, that its swords were wielded for their good.

The Army created by Parliament to wage war on the King thus became, in the mind of leaders like Ireton and Peter, the People's true Representative, especially as the majority of M.P.s moved toward a settlement with the tyrant Charles. Parliament's determination to negotiate with Charles after defeating him twice in war turned the legislature itself into a tyrannical body that had to be purged for the good of the People. The Army was a better judge of the public interest than Parliament or the People themselves. The New Model was, in the words of Baptist minister Samuel Richardson, "the wise and faithful" part of the nation. Indeed, millenarian preacher William Sedgwick saw the Army as "rightly and trully the people, not in gross heape, or in a heavy, dull body, but in a selected choice way: They are the people in virtue, spirit, and power, gathered up into heart and union, and so most able and fit for the work they have at hand."²⁹ Thus, in order to ensure the Safety of the People, the Army, virtually (in a

double sense) the People, made it solely competent to perceive and act for the common good. The Army was simply the better part of the nation: the virtuous and fit that were best able to do what God and nature demanded. The New Model could not be faulted for doing what had to be done to preserve the nation, that is, stage an unwanted revolution. In brief, the Army was filled with aristocrats, those of the better part, acting on behalf of, and for the good of, the commonwealth.

Not only did the Army act for the sake of Justice and Public Safety, it heard and obeyed the voice of the Lord from off-stage. England needed a revolution, thirdly, to carry out the will of God. The New Model's victories over the King in the First and Second Civil War were taken, by chaplains like Hugh Peter, as "clear evidence of the truth, righteousness, and equity of our cause." In the forces of the Army "the glorious majesty...of God doth most visibly appear."³⁰ In a letter to Robin Hammond not ten days before the purge, Cromwell asked his friend to consider "whether this Army be not a lawful power, called by God to oppose and fight against the King... What think you of Providence disposing the hearts of so many of God's people this way, especially in this poor Army, wherein the great God has vouchsafed to appear?"³¹ Ireton reminded Parliament in the

Remonstrance that a settlement with the King was contrary to Providence since "God hath given [Charles] so clearly unto your power to do justice."³² Numbers 35.33 plainly expressed God's command to execute judgment on the chief author of the wars that had polluted the land with blood.³³ The purge and regicide were thus acts performed by godly men to effect God's purposes and the cause of righteousness in England. The production of right and justice meant all fleshly obstacles, even the ancient constitution, were pushed off stage.

Acting under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, human laws and institutions might be overruled by regenerate men.³⁴ The saints in the Army and among its allies initially believed England *per se* was God's elect nation. It became clear to them by the autumn of 1648 however, that some of the nation's institutions, such as Parliament, were unworthy of their election. The saints' providential vocation freed them to restore, transform, reform, the laws of England, in order to bring liberty, naturally and spiritually, to the people.³⁵ Whether the majority of the population believed such transformations were required was not primarily important; obedience to God's voice was paramount. The Revolution was performed on

the basis of a Divine commission for the sake of justice, public safety, and peace.

England was in need of revolution, fourthly, for the land to rest in peace. The people were tired of the death, destruction, and taxation brought upon them by six years of civil war; they wanted harmony restored in the body politic and a return to normalcy. The King's reputation increased with the people's mounting war weariness, and many were supportive of Parliament's attempt to settle with Charles I in the autumn of 1648. The Army's leadership was aware of the King's growing reputation as "having long graciously sought Peace [and] as the only true Father of his People—the Restorer of their beloved Peace, Ease and Freedom—the Restorer of their Trade and Plenty."³⁶ In the Army's *Remonstrance*, Colonel Ireton speculated that if Charles were placed on the throne in London, and another conflict erupted with Parliament, the "Good Old Cause" was finished. The people would "surely be more apt to join unanimously with him, or let him have what he will, that there may be no more war, then to join with [Parliament] to maintain another war."³⁷ Restored and supported by the majority, Charles could, when he felt the time was right, renege on all the promises he had made to Parliament before his return to London: thereafter, "his monarchy and our slavery

[would] be absolute and probably for ever."³⁸ A restored king was a threat to the freedom of his enemies in Parliament, the Army, and the whole nation.

The King's reputation as a man for peace, concerned with the good of the people, stood clearly at odds with the Army's view of Charles as "that man of blood." The Grandees believed there could be no true or just peace for the three kingdoms so long as Charles lived. No matter what terms the King agreed to his during negotiations with Parliament, once back at Whitehall, to the joy of a war-sick nation, his ability to turn back the clock to 1639 would be unstoppable. Although people from all social classes hoped for peace at nearly any price, even absolute monarchy, the Army was not prepared to underwrite the performance of a restoration. Then it would be their heads on the block. True peace was to be got by mounting a revolutionary drama, a drama whose script called for regicide and republic.

The many who clamored for peace in 1648 represented the wishes of the majority of the English people: for them the English Revolution was an unwelcome drama, inconsistent with their political traditions and objectives.³⁹ The people of Cornwall, Wales, Yorkshire, and Kent who revolted against Parliament in 1648 yearned for a return to normalcy; they were tired of high taxes, centralization,

and the arbitrary rule of "low-born folk."⁴⁰ David Underdown argues that by late December 1648 most people, even the greater number of soldiers in the New Model Army, were opposed if not apathetic to the purge and regicide. This reactionary position can be explained in part by the prevalence of an ideology of order in England. The Army's incursion onto the political stage inevitably aroused fears, especially within the political classes, the peers, upper gentry, and urban elites, of social anarchy—a world turned upside-down—so that the upheaval of Revolution was profoundly alienating to them.⁴¹ Underdown counts only 15% (71) of M.P.s who supported the regicide, while 18% (83) returned to the Rump in February 1649 to help govern the new republic: up to 40% (186) of ex-M.P.s were excluded by the purge.⁴² The Revolution only attracted a narrow base of support within the Parliament that had waged war against the late King. The royalist and conservative Puritan wing of the political nation, by far the majority, opposed the Revolution.

Some scholars make the case that the Army was opposed by England's "natural rulers," it did represent the common people's wishes when it purged Parliament and put Charles on trial. The Army later ignored the masses when it failed to carry the revolution further. The English people were

less unsympathetic than disappointed with how the Revolution turned out.

In the autumn of 1648 the Levellers, the group that demanded the greatest degree of democratization, agreed to support the Army's designs against Parliament. Lilburne, Walwyn, and Overton hoped the New Model would lead the movement to erect a new English constitution, an Agreement of the People, based on an extension of the franchise.⁴³ In September 1648 the Levellers presented a petition to Parliament with 40 000 signatures against the prerogative, the House of Lords, and in favor of executing "justice upon the capital authors and promoters of the former or late wars." The town of Newcastle sent letters demanding Parliament break off negotiations with the King and make him submit to justice.⁴⁴ On the 10th of October Parliament received three mass petitions against a treaty with the King. And in November 1648 several regiments submitted petitions calling for justice against the man of blood.⁴⁵ But the Army Grandees, especially Ireton, simply used the Levellers and the common folk of the New Model to further their own selfish aims and ambitions.⁴⁶ The Army-led Revolution did not usher in a more democratic political order or undertake socio-economic reforms. Instead of a Parliament subordinate to the sovereign electorate, the

Revolution set up a sovereign Parliament: in other words, an oligarchy.

The calls for justice and a reformed franchise, although shrill, came from a vocal minority of the English people: the Army, and political and religious radicals in London, Somerset, Kent, and Buckinghamshire.⁴⁷ The Levellers' Agreement of the People, if implemented, would not necessarily have increased the Revolution's base of political support. The Agreement denied the franchise to all who had supported a Treaty with Charles in 1647, and granted political rights only to subscribers.⁴⁸ The ideology of order, and the political classes' ability to make their tenants feel dependent and deferential, made a fully democratic settlement unreasonable and, from the revolutionaries' perspective, suicidal. The influence of landlords and parsons, the absence of a secret ballot, and the relative immunity of agricultural labourers to a politics that assaulted the divine order, meant that an adult male free vote in January 1649 probably would have elected a Royalist Parliament.⁴⁹ Among the poor, the King's execution seems to have generated little popular excitement: they were concerned with simply staying alive. In contrast to 1603 and 1625, the death of the sovereign in

1649 did not spark a crime wave among those who believed the law died with the king.⁵⁰

The Revolution failed to live up to its advance billing because its producers knew the audience could not be trusted to appreciate it, nor understand how it might be to their benefit. Indeed, the people were less inclined to support the Revolution once the King was tried and executed. An extra-legal and unprecedented trial, authorized by a purged Parliament, conducted to a predetermined end, struck even the King's opponents as the epitome of injustice.⁵¹ In the uncertain and politically tense atmosphere of January 1649, Ireton's concern for peace, and success of the Revolution, made him abandon his support for the Agreement of the People.⁵² Ireton's "failure of nerve" allowed the Rump to take the initiative against the Army and to ignore the Agreement after it was presented to Parliament on 20th January 1649. There were no further attempts, even half-hearted, to democratize the English Revolution.

After the regicide and the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, the Rump did not go farther down the path of constitutional change. The establishment of the Rump's Council of State in February signaled the triumph of political actors indifferent to mass politics, preferring

to play the part of self-selected aristocrats.⁵³ They were content to rule as the "small part of the nation, but the better part." The Council of State, a self-directed and self-appointed ruling Executive, is better seen and heard as a revolutionary oligarchy, one that welcomed John Milton to England's political centre-stage.

The prime mover in the English Revolution, directing the other players, was the New Model Army. In the autumn of 1648 the Army marched toward London and revolution, motivated by an apocalyptic hatred of the King and a determination to prevent a settlement between Charles and Parliament. A treaty with the King, Colonel Thomas Harrison argued, would allow Parliament to disband the Army, and give Charles freedom to roll back all that was gained since 1640.⁵⁴ The leadership of the Army, notably Cromwell's son-in-law, Henry Ireton, was willing to dissolve Parliament to prevent a treaty and to pave the way to broader reforms. Underdown argues that Ireton was convinced to purge, rather than dissolve, the House by Edmund Ludlow, an M.P. with republican leanings whose father was friend to Henry Marten, a "War-Party" M.P. and "gentry republican." Ludlow's aim was to use the Army to place power in the hands of a select minority who would survive the purge.⁵⁵

The Army leaders agreed to exclude certain M.P.s from the House, and struck a committee of six, three officers and three civilians, to establish the criterion for the purge. The Committee was (most likely) composed of Ireton, Col. Thomas Harrison, Col. William Constable, Ludlow, Lord Grey of Groby, and Cornelius Holland; the three civilian members were all M.P.s.⁵⁶ Ireton, Harrison, and Cromwell, were the Army's point-men in the drive from purge to trial and execution. The three Grandees, along with Army chaplain Hugh Peter, met constantly in the latter part of December and early January to hash out the lines and blocking for their revolutionary drama.

The Army's bulk and power left no doubt to its playing the lead role, at least in the early acts of the revolution. The New Model did not, of course, act alone, but was supported by three radical social movements and groups: members of London's separate churches, the City independents and new merchant leadership, and republicans (commonwealthsmen). Each group participated in the Revolution for its own reasons and disagreed with its allies over ultimate objectives. Yet, their common desire to be rid of Charles I united their energies for the production of regicide and republic.

Members of London's gathered churches, Congregationalist and Baptist, were the Army's strongest base of support and the second major component of the revolutionary alliance.⁵⁷ The Congregationalists, sometimes called Independents, were Puritans who, to limit liturgical contact with the ungodly, partially or completely withdrew from their parish congregation to form a gathered church of saints. The title "Independents" was attached to these churches after five members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwin, Sydrach Simpson, and Phillip Nye, published an *Apologetical Narration* in the autumn of 1644 that asserted the principle of autonomous congregational government within a national church.⁵⁸ The *Apologetical Narration* also insisted that church membership not be restricted by parish boundaries, in other words, that the national church should tolerate the existence of gathered churches alongside parish congregations.⁵⁹ Congregationalists were prepared to work with other Puritans for national reformation, but would only participate if the independence of local churches from higher ecclesiastical authority was protected, and the liberty of tender consciences in separate churches was respected. Over the issues of toleration and local control the Congregationalists parted

company from the Presbyterians.⁶⁰ Murray Tolmie counts 13 Congregationalist churches in London in 1646, composed predominantly of small traders and craftsmen, along with some prosperous manufacturers and merchants.⁶¹

The Baptist congregations in London, sometimes called "sectarians," practiced believers' baptism and separated themselves completely from the parish congregation: they rejected the notion of a national church and the right of magistrates to exercise jurisdiction in matters of religion. The Baptists and Congregationalists were united in asserting the autonomy of local congregations, both separating and non-separating. The Levellers drew a great deal of support from Baptists in London and in the New Model Army prior to the regicide.⁶² By Tolmie's reckoning, there were 12 clergy-led Baptist churches in London in 1646, with another 9 under lay supervision.⁶³

The leaders of the Congregationalist and Baptist churches in the final months of 1648 were solidly behind the Grandees. These saints understood the purge as the only way for a godly minority to block an intolerant and nefarious settlement compassed by a corrupt majority.⁶⁴ Important Officers in the New Model had direct links to the gathered churches. Col. William Constable, member of the Committee for Criterion of the purge, was connected to the

Independent minister Thomas Goodwin from their time in exile in the Netherlands. Colonel Edmund Whalley was a member of Thomas Goodwin's congregation; so was the influential merchant Samuel Moyer. Colonel Pride had friends in the church of Rev. Duppa. Colonel John White and prominent London merchant Thomas Andrews were members of the Baptist church led by Sydrach Simpson. The saints in the Army and in London's gathered churches cooperated to lead the drive to regicide.⁶⁵

Congregationalist preachers, for their part, were among the strongest promoters of Charles's trial and execution. As early as April 1645 the Independent minister John Goodwin identified Charles I as one of the ten kings of Revelation 17 who align themselves with the Anti-Christ/the Papacy.⁶⁶ The trial and execution of the King was the saints' first major victory in the war to cast the Anti-Christ/the Papacy from the earth. In January 1649 Goodwin published a defense of the purge and trial, *Right and Might Well Met*, arguing the saint's case that they were performed according to the law of nature on behalf of the people's good.⁶⁷ Important revolutionary figures in Goodwin's St. Stephen's Coleman Street Independent congregation included Owen Rowe, Daniel Taylor, Mark Hildesely, and Richard Price.⁶⁸

The Independent minister John Owen, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and client of the merchant Samuel Moyer, asserted that the trial was in accordance with the Divine will. Owen openly acknowledged that "the erection of a court of Justice by the House of Commons without the Lords be contrary to the letter and outside the Law, yet a requisiteness of it is supposed in order to the people's good, it is of perfect compliance with the Spirit and soul of the Law."⁶⁹ Those who were in tune with the Spirit behind and above the law knew the Army's method and end was right and good.

The Spirit of the Law, according to the Independent and Baptist saints, would not suffer the King to escape God's judgment. On 29 November 1648 Rev. George Cokayn preached a fiery sermon before the House of Commons on God's justice falling upon all those guilty of "shedding innocent blood," kings and commoners alike.⁷⁰ Rowland Wilson, along with Colonel Robert Tichborn and Henry Ireton's brother John, a member of Cokayn's church, rose to extend Parliament's thanks for his words.⁷¹ Rowland Wilson was also connected to Maurice Thomson, a merchant with business interests in America, and a churchwarden at Rev. William Greenhill's church. The wife of Thomson's partner, William Pennoyer, was a member of Greenhill's congregation;

so was Thomson's brother and business associate, Edward Thomson, and Colonel John Okey.⁷² The godly revolutionaries in the Army, in Parliament, in London's gathered churches, were bound together by dissenting faith, politics, and economic interests.

The outstanding clerical proponent of the regicide, with ties to the Army, gathered churches, and London's new merchant leadership, was Hugh Peter. In the summer of 1646, Peter published a pamphlet, *Last Report of the English Wars*, intended to help political presbyterians and political independents reach a compromise on a national religious and constitutional settlement. Political Presbyterians were members of the Parliamentary party who favoured a settlement with the King, and opposed granting toleration of separate churches. The political independents were M.P.s and members of London's City elite who, while not necessarily members of Congregationalist churches, joined with the Army to oppose a treaty with Charles and demand greater religious freedom. For example Isaac Pennington, a brewer, remained part of the parish of St. Stephen's Coleman while John Goodwin gathered a group of saints from the church at his home. While not a Congregationalist, Pennington was prepared to tolerate the

existence of a gathered church within his parish: this made him a political independent.⁷³

A notable feature of Peter's *Last Report of the English Wars* is the prominence given to post-revolutionary foreign policy, including suggestions for an international Protestant alliance, a stronger English navy, an invasion of Ireland, and an imperial campaign in the West and East Indies. This was the type of program Peter's associates from the Massachusetts Bay fishing venture of the later 1630s, Maurice Thomson and William Pennoyer, wished for with all their hearts. "Let us remember," Peter wrote, "the support of trade is the strength of the island; discountenance the merchant and take beggary by the hand."⁷⁴ Peter had demonstrated his commitment to expansionist mercantile Protestantism by serving as chaplain to the Additional Sea Adventure to Ireland in 1642. The venture was a volunteer attempt to raise money and men to crush the Irish revolt: it compassed setting aside 2.5 million acres of land to repay the venture's financial backers. Along with John Goodwin, Peter gave political and ideological leadership to the Congregationalist and Baptist wing of the revolutionary alliance. The lead chaplain of the New Model Army was also closely associated with Ireton while the latter prepared his *Remonstrance* to Parliament in October-

November 1648, and may have influenced its final form.⁷⁵

Peter worked tirelessly with Ireton and Cromwell, in the latter part of December 1648 and January 1649, planning the regicide, and defending it from the pulpit.⁷⁶ The "Strenuous Puritan" incarnated the bond between sword and Spirit and mammon; between Independents, Baptists, and the Army, that enabled the Grandees to reconstruct the stage of the political nation with impunity.⁷⁷

The saints, Congregationalist and Baptist, who backed the Army during the critical months of December-January, also supported what Brenner calls the "mainstream of political independency" in the City of London. Within the Baptist and Congregationalist wing of the revolutionary alliance were colonial interlopers with links to City independents. London's colonial merchants and their independent associates were the third major component of the revolutionary alliance.⁷⁸

The great English commercial combines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as the Muscovy, Levant, and East India companies, and the Merchant Adventurers, looked to the Crown's authority to regulate and restrict access to their market in order to protect their earnings: the Crown granted monopolies to the chartered companies and then taxed their income.⁷⁹ These companies maximized their

profits by buying low and selling dear. In the first half of the seventeenth century a group of entrepreneurs in London, barred from overseas commerce by the monopoly trading firms, began to interlope in the Spanish trade with the Americas and the West Indies. Some also initiated trans-Atlantic colonizing ventures that combined, unlike the chartered companies, production and trade: tobacco in America and later sugar in the Caribbean.⁸⁰ These new merchants were from a different, less distinguished, social class than the members of the monopoly companies: City rentiers, artisans, shopkeepers, ship captains, the sons of minor gentry or prosperous yeomen.⁸¹ They did not look to the Crown to protect their capital investments or regulate their market share. The new merchants wanted their government to allow greater freedom to trade, to bolster the navy so as to take on the Spanish in the Atlantic and the Dutch in the Baltic and Mediterranean, and to leave in peace those who wished to separate themselves from the parish church. The colonial-interlopers and new merchants formed a crucial link between the Congregationalist/Baptist group and the City independents within the revolutionary alliance.

For example, the Committee formed to discuss the second Agreement of the People in December 1648 had

representation from the Army's Council of Officers, "honest" M.P.s, Levellers, and City independents. Sitting on the Committee on behalf of the political independents were Col. Robert Tichborn (from Cokayn's congregation), Col. John White (Simpson's church), Daniel Taylor and Richard Price (both members of John Goodwin's church). Later in December Col. White, Taylor, and Price, were appointed to serve on a Commission to secure subscription by appointment to the new Agreement, along with fellow Congregationalist Mark Hildesley (John Goodwin's church), Samuel Moyer (Thomas Goodwin's congregation), and William Hawkins.⁸²

According to Brenner, Robert Tichborn, Samuel Moyer, Col. White, Daniel Taylor, Richard Price, along with William Parker and Hugh Peter, represented the radical wing of London's political independents and Congregationalists, with associations going back to the critical winter of 1641-1642.⁸³ Moyer, a trader with an interest in the East Indies, had backed the Additional Irish Adventure of 1642, along with Daniel Taylor: Hugh Peter served as the expedition's chaplain. On the morning of Col. Pride's Purge the Commander of the City Militia, Major-General Philip Skippon intervened personally to prevent a confrontation in Westminster between the Trained Bands and the New Model

Army.⁸⁴ Skippon was another investor in the Additional Sea Adventure to Ireland in 1642; he later served as a member both of the High Court that tried the King and the Council of State.

The Army's presence in London in the winter of 1648-1649 allowed the City political independents to consolidate their power and reach the height of their influence. In December 1648 seven colonial and/or East Indian interloping merchants were voted to the London Common Council, thanks to a restrictive, anti-royalist franchise enacted by Parliament that month: Samuel Moyer, William Pennoyer, Owen Rowe, Richard Shute, James Rusell, Stephen Estwick, and Richard Hutchinson. All seven were religious Independents (Congregationalist), with the possible exception of Russell.⁸⁵ Also elected to the Common Council were Robert Tichborn, Daniel Taylor, Mark Hildesley, and two other notable political independents, Edward Parks and Nathaniel Lacy. The City's government was firmly in the independents' grip in the weeks leading up to the trial and execution of Charles I. On the 13th of January, Owen Rowe and Robert Tichborn presented a petition to Parliament for impartial justice against the King.⁸⁶ The drama of revolution could proceed with the blessing and encouragement of the City.

The New Model's leadership sought out the cooperation of new merchants, both to bring about the revolution and to re-structure the political stage. Hugh Peter wrote a tract entitled *A Word for the Army* in the autumn of 1647, which contained proposals for a settlement that were designed to appeal to the new merchant leadership, such as the demotion of the monarchy and non-extension of the franchise. The Kingdom would be saved, Peter claimed, not by good laws or adopting the Levellers' proposals, "but good men," men good enough to vote under the current franchise.⁸⁷ Peter might also have helped to shape Ireton's proposal in the *Remonstrance* for a Council of State "for the purpose and assisted with the addition of some merchants in relation to the balancing, security and advance of trade, so that the Parliament may be free to attend those aforesaid considerations of Public Justice and the settlement of the Kingdom."⁸⁸

Peter was connected to colonial new merchants Maurice Thomson and William Pennoyer through their Massachusetts Bay fishing venture in the late 1630s. Thomson was also a business partner with Rowland Wilson, M.P., and fought with him against royalists in Surrey in 1648.⁸⁹ Wilson, it will be remembered, was a member of Rev. George Cockayn's church along with Richard Tichborn, a Congregationalist and

political independent elected to the London Common Council in December 1648. Wilson was a member of the High Court that tried Charles I: he became a member of the Rump's Council of State in February 1649. Isaac Pennington, a former London alderman and Lord Mayor, and subsequently a recruited M.P., was a political independent with ties to Goodwin's St. Stephen's Coleman Street church. He was linked to Thomas Andrews, a prominent new merchant, and was politically active with Randall Mainwaring, a colonial trader and kinsman.⁹⁰ Both Andrews and Mainwaring were members of the High Court of Justice. Pennington joined Rowland Wilson on the Council of State in 1649.

Further evidence of the associations and connections between prominent revolutionary Parliamentarians and the new merchant leadership is found in the *Articles and Orders* of the Bahamas, the "Eleutheria" project for colonization presented to the House in July 1647. This document was no mere colonial charter, Brenner argues, but a tract for the moment, reflecting the ideological position of political independency.⁹¹ The *Articles and Orders* supported the principle of religious toleration, the separation of church and state, and envisioned a republican form of government for the islands, ruled by a senate, councilors, and governor. The charter envisioned the Bahamian settlement

as a self-perpetuating oligarchic republic, what in fact emerged in England after the Revolution under the Commonwealth. The backers of the Eleutheria project included Owen Rowe, who was a founder of the Massachusetts Bay Company, a backer of the New Haven Colony, an importer of Virginia tobacco, and linked to John Goodwin's Independent congregation at St. Stephen's Coleman Street. Rowe was elected to the London Common Council in 1648, served on the High Court of Justice, and signed the King's death warrant in January 1649.⁹² Two other prominent new merchant backers of the Eleutheria project were Gregory Clement, a close collaborator with Maurice Thomson in colonial trade, and commissioner for Thomson's Additional Sea Adventure to Ireland, and Thomas Smythe, who also worked with Maurice Thomson in ship-owning, privateering, and the Irish venture. Clement was elected to the House in 1648 and later became a regicide; Smythe became a commissioner of the navy under the Commonwealth.⁹³

The Eleutheria project is important because it shows a group of London-based colonial merchants cooperating with City, Army, and parliamentary figures in planning an explicitly oligarchic republic a year a half before the Revolution. Most of these men worked together to bring down the King and establish the Commonwealth on oligarchic

lines. Included among the non-merchant supporters of the project: John Rushworth, secretary to the New Model Army's generals; John Blackwell, a captain in Cromwell's regiment and treasurer of war for Parliament and later the Commonwealth; Colonel John Hutchinson, a Baptist and M.P. for Nottingham who became a regicide and a member of the Council of State; Gaulter Frost, a supporter of the New England ironworks project of the 1640s, who became secretary for the Council of State in 1649 and wrote propaganda against the Levellers; William Rowe, brother of Owen, scoutmaster general of the New Model Army and son-in-law of regicide ring-leader Thomas Chaloner; and Cornelius Holland M.P., an investor in the New England ironworks project and stockholder in the Bermuda Company.⁹⁴ Holland played a crucial role in the Army's drive for power in 1648, serving as Parliamentary representative on its Committee for purge criteria: he later joined the Rump's Council of State.

The connections between members of London's new merchant community, the Army, and Parliament were built up during the 1640s through common military, commercial, and especially religious activities, both domestic and colonial. The Eleutheria project is evidence for links that bound what Brenner calls the political independent alliance

that mounted the Revolution in 1648-1649. Another significant arena of cooperation, wherein the revolutionary actors rehearsed together, was Parliament's Committee on Plantations, concerned with settling the governance of the Caribbean islands and Virginia. The committee included backers of the Irish Sea Adventure, Sir Arthur Haselrig and Oliver Cromwell, along with Sir Henry Vane, Cornelius Holland and his close associate Miles Corbet, Richard Salway, Dennis Bond, William Purefoy, Francis Allein, George Snelling, and Alexander Rigby. Corbet, Purefoy, Rigby and Cromwell were all regicides. Holland, Cromwell, Haselrige, and Vane were elected to the Commonwealth's Council of State in February 1649. Indeed, according to Blair Worden, the latter three men, along with Thomas Scot, shared a common political strategy, exercised the greatest influence on the Parliament's program during the Revolution, and made up the Juncto of the Council of State.⁹⁵

The Long Parliament's Committee on Plantations is significant for demonstrating, along with the Irish Sea Adventure and the Eleutheria project, commercial connections between merchants like Maurice Thomson, Congregationalists like Hugh Peter, City political independents like Owen Rowe, Army Grandees such as John

Hutchinson, and a Parliamentary figure such as Cornelius Holland. The Committee on Plantations is also important in establishing a relationship between the political independent alliance and a group of Commons' politicians, including Heselrig and Vann, who worked throughout the Civil War period to delegitimize the King's authority and to erect a republican oligarchy in England.

The fourth component of the revolutionary alliance was the Commonwealthsmen, a small but vocal and organized collection of republicans in Parliament.⁹⁶ Thomas Scot, a Buckinghamshire attorney and recruited M.P., was an important liaison between the Army and the Commons throughout the revolutionary period. In the early autumn of 1648, Scot, along with Cornelius Holland, Sir Henry Mildmay, and Colonel George Thomson, brother of the new merchant Maurice, led the anti-settlement Members toward an alliance with the Army and a take-over of the state.⁹⁷ After the purge, Scot was in charge of collecting declarations from Members who wished to take their seats in the House by registering their dissent from the 5 December vote to accept the Kings' terms. In February 1649 the "bellwether of the king-killing committee" and signatory of the King's death warrant, Scot was appointed to the task force that nominated members to the first Council of State.⁹⁸ He

subsequently joined Mildmay and Holland as a Council member.

Members of the gentry like Edmund Ludlow, Henry Marten, Thomas Chaloner, and Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, were important republican actors during the Revolution. Groby and Ludlow played a large role in the preparations for and production of the Purge. Edmund Ludlow's father, Sir Henry, was friend to Henry Marten, a member of the mid-1640s "war-party" which bitterly opposed a negotiated settlement with the King. Marten was a regicide, wrote the declaration of Parliamentary supremacy in January 1649, and became a member of the Council of State.⁹⁹ Among Marten's "war-party" allies was Arthur Heselrig, a member of the Committee on Plantations, and Henry Vann, also on the plantation committee. During the Civil War Marten, Heselrig and Vann believed Parliament should fight for the total elimination of monarchical power, even of monarchy itself.¹⁰⁰ After the revolution, all three joined the republic's ruling body, the Council of State.

Thomas Chaloner was an M.P. from North Yorkshire whose family had a long-standing grievance with the Crown over a patent to manufacture alum around Guisborough.¹⁰¹ His daughter married William Rowe, a backer of the Eleutheria project and brother to London radical Owen Rowe. He was a

member of the committee that advised the House on a charge against the King, which also included Henry Marten and Thomas Scot. Like Marten and Scot, Chaloner signed the King's death warrant; unlike them, he was not elected to the Council of State. Chaloner's friend and fellow Yorkshire M.P., Luke Robinson, was on the task force formed in February 1649 to set up the Council of State. The task force also included Edmund Ludlow, John Lisle, Cornelius Holland, and Thomas Scot; all five were elected to the Council.¹⁰²

The gentry republicans believed they were Parliament's "honest party" dedicated to protecting the people of England from tyranny and oppression, whether from kings, lords, commons, or army. The republicans in Parliament, although few in number, believed they embodied "honesty" in politics, and, consequently, represented in their aspirations the public interest. Indeed, since they knew the public interest, it was sensible, to them, that although they were a minority, they could claim to speak and act on behalf of the whole people.¹⁰³ This is precisely what the republicans presumed to do after the Army removed most of their political opponents in the purge. Henry Marten, the war-party republican, composed the Act of Parliamentary Sovereignty, passed by the House (which

assumed the title of Parliament) on 4 January 1649. The Act declared "that the people are, under God, the original of all just power," and "that the Commons of England, in Parliament assembled, being chosen by and representing the people, have the supreme power in this nation."¹⁰⁴

The Declaration of Parliamentary Sovereignty can be read as a programmatic statement of oligarchic republicanism. The Act stressed the sovereignty of the people, yet lodged sovereign power in revolutionary representatives: those who survived the purge and supported the regicide. That the M.P.s remaining in the House after the purge were popular representatives is clearly an ideological position. They were elected at one point, yet after the purge the House became a self-appointing body, a few men whose program, policies, and ascent to power, were unacceptable to the majority of the traditional political nation and the plebian Levellers.¹⁰⁵ The Parliament that executed the King, abolished the House of Lords, abolished the monarchy, and declared England a "free state," was brought to power and supported by a coalition of gentry republicans, city independents and new merchants, saints in sects and the New Model Army. The members of this alliance were united by their desire to punish rather than to negotiate with Charles, and their refusal to accede to the

Levellers demands for greater popular participation in government.¹⁰⁶ This coalition of players from outside the traditional political cast planned, produced, directed, and acted out the drama of the English Revolution, and its sequel, the oligarchic republic known as the Commonwealth.¹⁰⁷ The Act of 4 January, while avowing the sovereignty of the people, installed a purged, self-regulated, self-ruling, sovereign Parliament, determined to govern according to its own lights; in other words, determined to rule as an oligarchy.

The Commonwealth was successor to the oligarchic Revolution of 1648-1649, yet its rulers were not altogether happy with acts and the players who created it. The Rump was prepared to live with, and live off, the Revolution's radical re-working of the constitutional balance of power; it was not prepared to embark on a program that threatened England's social hierarchy.¹⁰⁸ The Rump's governors, in the interest of security and moderation, gave conservative characters more prominence and radicals less, as they directed the new regime. Republicans like Scot and Ludlow were prepared to cooperate with political presbyterians if it improved the Commonwealth's chance of survival.¹⁰⁹ In February 1649 a number of M.P.s who had stayed away from Parliament after the purge were re-admitted, with the

proviso that they dissent from the 5 December vote agreeing to seek terms with the King. Men who did not support the regicide were persuaded to work for the nation's new government, whose chief concern was remaining in power. By the late spring of 1649 it is fair to say the Commonwealth was no longer a revolutionary regime. Its leaders were concerned less with turning their world upside down and more with stamping out threats from royalist and Leveller opponents. The Rump administration settled down to the business of all innovative governments: have, keep, hold.

The regime mounted in the aftermath of the regicide was a republic governed by a forty-one-member Council of State, established in February 1649.¹¹⁰ This small group of men exercised power and influence over the nation that could not possibly be justified by their real social and political weight in English society.¹¹¹ They were a conservative, connected, and self-interested faction who called themselves "the honest men...the only competent judges of the people's safety."¹¹² Commonwealthmen Thomas Scot, Henry Marten, Edmund Ludlow, and Henry Vane sat on the Council. Vane's associates from the parliamentary Committee on Plantations, Oliver Cromwell, Arthur Heselrig, and Cornelius Holland were also members. So were Holland's partner Sir Henry Mildmay, and his co-backer of the

Eleutheria project, Col. John Hutchinson. Included on the Council were Rowland Wilson and Isaac Pennington, London alderman with links to colonial merchants Maurice Thomson and Thomas Andrews; London militia Colonel Philip Skippon, and Col. William Constable of Thomas Goodwin's Independent congregation. These men represented part of a functioning network of political connections and common interests in religious toleration and colonial trade: a network that developed during the 1640s, made the Revolution, ruled the Commonwealth as an oligarchy, and hired John Milton as Latin Secretary to the Council of State in March 1649. The Councilors of State were not, in Perez Zagorin's phrase, "Miltonic aristocrats," but men who worked for the realization of the political and economic arrangements that would best serve their own interests.¹¹³ The Rump's policies were based on the idea that the main concern of government should be the aggressive furthering of England's commercial interests.¹¹⁴ The Commonwealth government's militant approach to foreign policy encouraged, on an unprecedented scale, the greatest possible commercial investment, expansion and innovation.¹¹⁵ These policies, such as the conquest of Ireland in 1649, the Navigation Acts of 1650-1651, could only help the colonial merchants and their backers, men who had risked much by opposing the King and

cutting off his head. The few who made the revolution and then ruled the republic did so with a view to their own good. John Milton wrote the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* to justify the actions of these few, who then subsequently, gratefully, received him into their midst.

- ¹ Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, 1642-1649*. (London: 1894). Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (London, 1961, 1980), Brian Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution*, (London: 1991) and *Aristocrats, Plebeians and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*, (East Haven, CT: 1996). For "revisionism" see Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, (Oxford: 1990); Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict, England 1603-1658*, (Cambridge, MA: 1986); John Morrill "The Religious Context of the English Civil War" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1984); and J.C.D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (New York: 1986). Also Ronald Hutton, "Revisionism in Britain" in *A Companion to Historiography*, Michael Bentley ed. (New York: 1997): 377-394. For "post-revisionist" approaches to the causes of the Civil War see Mary Fulbrook, "The English Revolution and the Revisionist Revolt" in *Social History* (1982): 249-264, and Norah Carlin, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford: 1999).
- ² See Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: A history of England, 1603-1714*, (New York: 1980), 200-201; also D.E. Kennedy, *The English Revolution, 1642-1649*, (New York: 2000); Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic, 1649-1660*, (New York: 1990), 6.
- ³ Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed, Britain, 1603-1714*, (London: 1996), 182. The Vote of No Addresses, which prohibited negotiations with Charles, was a reaction to the King's alliance with the Scots against Parliament.
- ⁴ G.E. Aylmer, *Rebellion or Revolution: England 1640-1660*, (New York: 1986), 94.
- ⁵ Sarah Barber, *Regicide and Republicanism: Politics and Ethics in the English Revolution*, (Edinburgh: 1998), 28.
- ⁶ Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1645-1653*, (Oxford: 1992), 272.
- ⁷ Robert W. Ramsey, *Henry Ireton*, (London: 1949), 125.
- ⁸ David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution*, (Oxford: 1971), 129.
- ⁹ Alymer, 97; Underdown, 143.
- ¹⁰ Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648-1653*, (New York: 1974), 79.
- ¹¹ Gentles, 297.
- ¹² Kennedy, 117.

- ¹³ On the political theory of "de factoism" see Quentin Skinner's "Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy" in *The Interregnum: The Quest for a Settlement, 1646-1660*, G.E. Alymer ed. (London: 1972): 79-98.
- ¹⁴ Worden, 1974, 23.
- ¹⁵ Kennedy, 99.
- ¹⁶ Henry Ireton, "Remonstrance Presented to the House of Commons from Lord Fairfax and the General Council of the Army, Demanding Justice upon the King" in *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England; From the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the Year 1803. Volume III: From the Battle of Edge-Hill in October 1642, to the Restoration of Charles II in April 1660*. (London: 1808): 1077-1128. Quote taken from Gentles, 267.
- ¹⁷ "The Charge against King Charles" in *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, Samuel R. Gardiner ed. (Oxford: 1906), 373-374.
- ¹⁸ Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 371 (hereafter CD: 371)
- ¹⁹ *Remonstrance of the Army*, quoted in Ramsey, 115.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid*, 116.
- ²² Gardiner, "Act for High Court" CD: 357; "Charge Against Charles I" CD: 372-73.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Gardiner, "The Sentence Against Charles I" CD: 378-80.
- ²⁵ Mark Kishlansky, "Ideology and Politics in the Parliamentary Armies, 1645-49" in *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649*, John Morrill ed. (London: 1982), 170-171.
- ²⁶ Quoted in Ramsey, 144.
- ²⁷ From the pamphlet "Salus Populi Solus Rex" attributed to Hugh Peter by H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, Christopher Hill ed. (Palo Alto, CA: 1961), 346.
- ²⁸ Selections from John Goodwin's "Right and Might Well Met," London: 1649, taken from Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints. The Separate Churches of London, 1616-1649*, (New York: 1977), 190, and Merritt Hughes's "Immediate Background" in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton; Volume III: 1648-1649*, (New Haven: 1962) 48.
- ²⁹ Quoted in Fixler, 151-2.
- ³⁰ From the tract *Salus Populi Solus Rex*, attributed to Peter, in Brailsford, 345-346.
- ³¹ Brailsford, 364.

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- ³² Quoted in Ramsey, 116.
- ³³ Kennedy, 122.
- ³⁴ For the religious orientation of many revolutionaries see Noel H. Mayfield, *Puritans and Regicide: Presbyterian-Independent differences over the Trial and Execution of Charles (I) Stuart*, (New York: 1988), 198.
- ³⁵ Pocock, 1975, 346 and 374.
- ³⁶ From the Army Remonstrance, November 1648, in Ramsey, 119.
- ³⁷ From the Army Remonstrance, November 1648, in Gentles, 273.
- ³⁸ From the Army Remonstrance, November 1648, in Ramsey, 120.
- ³⁹ Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government: 1572-1651*, (Cambridge: 1993), 221.
- ⁴⁰ Gentles, 94; Hirst, 283.
- ⁴¹ David Underdown, "The Common Culture of the Seventeenth Century Political Nation" in *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Oxford: 1996): 12-17.
- ⁴² Underdown, 1971, 210.
- ⁴³ See Alan Craig Houston, "A Way of Settlement" The Levellers, Monopolies and the Public Interest" in *History of Political Thought*, 14 (1993): 413.
- ⁴⁴ Manning, 1996, 106-110.
- ⁴⁵ Brenner, 535.
- ⁴⁶ Thus the myth of the Revolution Betrayed, from Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, (London: 1972), 69-71.
- ⁴⁷ Manning, 109.
- ⁴⁸ Barbara Taft, "The Council of Officers' Agreement of the People, 1648/9" *Historical Journal* 28 (1985): 184. On the exclusionary nature of the Agreement see Gentles, 292-293.
- ⁴⁹ Hill, 1977, 170; Brenner, 539; Kennedy, 137.
- ⁵⁰ Hirst, 280.
- ⁵¹ Kennedy, 121.
- ⁵² Taft, 183.
- ⁵³ Tuck, 251. Tuck argues that republicans like Edmund Ludlow, and Algernon Sydney, Milton's friend, believed the Revolution was only betrayed in 1653 with the closing of the Rump by Cromwell.
- ⁵⁴ Gentles, 273.
- ⁵⁵ Underdown, 1971, 142; the term "gentry republican" is from Sarah Barber.
- ⁵⁶ Underdown 1971, 141: He supposes that on 6 December 1648 it was Lord Grey standing beside Col. Pride on the steps of Westminster Palace, pointing out those to be purged.
- ⁵⁷ Manning, 75.

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- ⁵⁸ John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689*, (New York: 1998), 104.
- ⁵⁹ Tolmie, 118.
- ⁶⁰ R.J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England, 1550-1660*, (New York: 1990), 51-53.
- ⁶¹ Tolmie, 122; Manning, 1996, 75.
- ⁶² Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, (Oxford: 1978).
- ⁶³ Tolmie, 122.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 188.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 189.
- ⁶⁶ Mayfield, 64.
- ⁶⁷ Fixler, 153.
- ⁶⁸ Tolmie, 187.
- ⁶⁹ Mayfield, 171.
- ⁷⁰ Underdown, 1971, 132.
- ⁷¹ Tolmie, 187; Brenner, 521.
- ⁷² Ibid. See also Tolmie, 140-141.
- ⁷³ Spurr, 107; Tolmie, 116.
- ⁷⁴ Brenner, 507.
- ⁷⁵ Raymond P. Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter, 1598-1660*, (Urbana, IL: 1954), 323.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 331.
- ⁷⁷ Tolmie, 4.
- ⁷⁸ Brenner, 495.
- ⁷⁹ Alex Callinicos, "England's Transition to Capitalism" in *New Left Review*, 207 (1994): 125.
- ⁸⁰ Brenner, 113-114.
- ⁸¹ See Table 4.2: The New Merchant Leadership, Partnerships in the Colonial-Interloping Trades, 1616-1649, in Brenner, 184-193; and Table 4.3: Some Family and Apprenticeship Connections Among the New Merchants, *Ibid*, 194-195.
- ⁸² Taft, 171 and 176.
- ⁸³ Brenner, 537.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 530-31.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 543.
- ⁸⁶ Underdown, 1971, 180.
- ⁸⁷ Brenner, 518.
- ⁸⁸ Ramsey, 122.
- ⁸⁹ Brenner, 533.
- ⁹⁰ Worden, 1974, 30. Brenner, 453. Andrews and Mainwaring were leaders in the Salters Hall committee for volunteers in 1643.
- ⁹¹ Brenner, 524-525.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Ibid.

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- ⁹⁴ Brenner, 526-27.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 521. Worden, 1974, 36.
- ⁹⁶ Barber, 3-4.
- ⁹⁷ Brenner, 533.
- ⁹⁸ Worden, 1974, 35; Barber, 123
- ⁹⁹ Worden, 1974, 60; Barber 73.
- ¹⁰⁰ Underdown, 1971, 60-61.
- ¹⁰¹ Barber, 35, n. 69. Chaloner and his brother James were convinced the Crown's treatment of their father deprived them of considerable inheritance.
- ¹⁰² Worden, 1974, 177.
- ¹⁰³ Here I am following Barber, 85.
- ¹⁰⁴ Barber, 122. The section from the Act is taken from Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 290.
- ¹⁰⁵ Brenner, 563.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 558.
- ¹⁰⁷ Hutton, 6.
- ¹⁰⁸ Worden, 1974, 53.
- ¹⁰⁹ Underdown, 1971, 206.
- ¹¹⁰ Austin Woolrych, *England Without a King, 1649-1660*, (New York, 1983).
- ¹¹¹ Brenner, 708.
- ¹¹² The quotation is from Marchmont Nedham's *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, a royalist newspaper, dated 27 November 1648. In Underdown, 1971, 359. Nedham later became a propagandist on behalf of the Commonwealth.
- ¹¹³ Zagorin, 1954, 120.
- ¹¹⁴ Christopher Hill, "A Bourgeois Revolution?" in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill: Volume III: People and Ideas in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Amherst, MA: 1986), 133.
- ¹¹⁵ Brenner, 708.

II. Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*: Theory in defense of oligarchy.

John Milton, born in December 1609 to a London scrivener, believed Providence chose him to play a leading role in the historical and literary pageant of England; he was a "poet-prophet" destined to "speak his people" into a free and virtuous future.¹ As a young scholar at St. Paul's school in London, then as a student at Christ's College, Cambridge (1625-1632), and on through private study at his parent's home at Hammersmith and Horton in the 1630s, Milton toiled through Classical, Biblical, Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance writings, as the foundation for his great English epic.²

Milton was fortunate to have time and means to study, write, and teach as he wished. During the 1640s he lived in London and worked as a private tutor; he supported himself with the interest from his father's, and later his own, loans and investments. Milton's house in Barbican was a crowded and busy place—he shared his quarters with his wife's family after 1645—with the tutor-poet receiving pupils and many friends. The poet would distribute scribal and printed copies of his work with friends, soliciting their advice and comment. The social nature of Milton's early writing suggests that he was not a recluse nor

isolated artist, but an author with a wide circle of personal and professional relationships, comfortable in the courtly world of the Egerton family and the commercial culture of print.³

Milton's connections among members of the book trade helped him publish his early pamphlets. Yet, by the time Milton turned forty, in December 1648, his epic was still an inchoate idea; his published output seemed slight; "his literary ministry had been groping and ineffectual."⁴ Milton had been depressed for the past two years.⁵ That same month saw the beginning of the oligarchic revolution, and the prophet-poet strode out on stage to play the role of Jeremiah-Cicero, acting and speaking on behalf of God's anointed aristocrats who executed divine wrath upon tyrants.

The *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was written in January 1649, after William Prynne, a political presbyterian, published a scathing critique of the Army and the purge, *A Briefe Memento* (4 January), and after Parliament's establishment of the High Court of Justice (6 January). It is not clear from the text whether Charles was alive, under sentence or dead while Milton wrote; likely the King was before the High Court: 20-29 January.⁶ On or just before 13 February 1649, the date inscribed on

Thomson's copy, Matthew Simmons published the forty-two-page pamphlet.⁷ Simmons later became printer-in-chief to the Commonwealth's government.⁸ The tract was a written act by which the regicide, the tyrant Charles's punishment, was "textually committed" by Milton, and heralded the poet-prophet's triumphant return to the political stage as a polemical actor.⁹ This chapter examines the pamphlet's setting, argument, and employment of an ideology of aristocracy. It will close with an outline of Milton's affiliations to members of the Rump regime.

The *Tenure* was a written justification of the trial and execution of King Charles: a defense of the regicide. Most people did not share the revolutionary alliance's passion for justice upon the capital author of the Civil Wars, and were horrified to learn of Charles's trial and execution. Milton wanted to justify the actions of the coalition that had seized power by a military purge of the legislature, confirming its rule by the unprecedented trial of the former governor.¹⁰ His main interlocutors were political presbyterians like Prynne who were not only incensed by the Army's purge of Parliament, but also by its claim to be a legitimate power capable of punishing a king they deemed a tyrant.¹¹ The *Tenure* was thus a written defense of the Revolution against its presbyterian

opponents, aimed at building a new consensus among Parliament's former supporters who were alienated by the "traumatic revolution" of 1648-1649.¹²

According to political presbyterians, the New Model Army was a collection of private persons who derived their legitimacy from the peoples' representatives in Parliament.¹³ The Army had no authority to set itself up over its sovereign superior, the King-in-Parliament; the purge and trial were thus an unlawful usurpation of power, the execution the grossest miscarriage of justice.¹⁴ Milton believed the presbyterians' opposition to the trial was "a glaring falsehood," coming as it did from ministers and M.P.s "who had formerly been the most bitter enemies to Charles," but "jealous of the growth of the independents, and of their ascendancy in parliament, most tumultuously clamored against the sentence, and did all in their power to prevent the execution."¹⁵ The *Tenure* was Milton's denunciation of presbyterians' equivocal support of the revolution: their defense of the King's person and office was, in the aftermath of the Army's triumph over Charles and Parliament, no less than sedition.¹⁶ Now was not the time to draw back from the actions necessary for true liberty to exist; the regicide was incumbent upon all

honest men who took up arms against Charles and the clerics who would make an idol of his name.¹⁷

The *Tenure* was an occasional polemic directed at a specific audience. Milton's case against the presbyterians rested on his assertion that any with power, be they Parliament, inferior magistrate, or collection of private persons, may legitimately resist and punish a tyrant.¹⁸ Richard Tuck, a leading scholar of seventeenth-century political philosophy, warns historians against using short-term polemics as a source for determining political beliefs.¹⁹ The doctrine of a peoples' right to punish a tyrant (*ius gladii*), however, was one of Milton's basic political convictions, arising from his commitment to popular sovereignty.²⁰ The theory of popular sovereignty allowed Milton to argue that the best people with power may act above and outside the law to execute just punishment upon tyrants.

Milton affirmed the peoples' natural right and power to rule themselves, and punish their enemies. "No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself...born to command and not to obey."²¹ All men were by nature free, and possessed the power to execute punishment upon those who threatened life and freedom:

"This authoritie and power of self-defense and preservation [was] originally and naturally in every one of them, and unitedly in them all." The right to execute justice belonged to every man "by the bond of nature and of Covenant" from the beginning of human life on earth.²²

At some point in history, the people "saw it needful to some authoritie that might restrain by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right." So they "communicated and derived" the authority and power of self-defense and preservation "either to one, whom for the eminence of his wisdom and integritie they chose above the rest, or to more than one whom they thought of equal deserving."²³ The office and power of kings and magistrates—of all rulers—derived from a social bond made by the people: "they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement."²⁴ The people had elected and "intrusted" kings with governing power "to the good and profit" of the whole nation. Kings were the peoples' creatures "to the Common good of them all."²⁵

Central to Milton's argument in the *Tenure* was the idea that a king's office and power were a trust from the people that could be revoked. "It being thus manifest" he

wrote, "that the power of Kings and magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People." A king held his crown as usufruct; the royalist contention that the crown was a heritable possession was "to make the Subject no better than the Kings slave, his chattel."²⁶ Precedent validated the conditional nature of English kingship: various oaths required of kings "express[ed] warning, that if the King or Magistrate prov'd unfaithful to his trust, the people would be disengag'd."²⁷ Milton cited Gildas to prove that after the collapse of Roman rule in Britain, the English people "reinvested with thir original right, about the year 446, both elected them Kings, whom they thought best, and by the same right, where they apprehended cause, usually deposed and put them to death."²⁸ The power to depose a king who violated his trust was the "natural birthright" of free-born Englishmen. Not only did the people retain a natural right to depose a monarch and take back to themselves sovereign power when he violated the trust of his office, but *whenever*: "as oft as they shall judge it for the best."²⁹ Milton argued that "since the King or Magistrate holds his autoritie of the people, both originally and naturally for their good in the first place, and not his own," the people may "either choose him or

reject him, retain him or depose him *though no Tyrant*, merely by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be governed as seems to them best."³⁰

The natural right and liberty of free men to remove, whenever they saw fit, kings and magistrates from power was confirmed by God's own ordinances. Milton cited Deuteronomy 17.14, the selection of Saul as Israel's king in I Samuel 8, the story of David and the Elders of Israel in II Samuel 5, and the account in II Kings 11.17 of Jehoash's covenant with the people to confirm "the right of choosing, yea of changing thir own Government is by the grant of God himself in the People."³¹ Against those Presbyterians who used Paul's command in Romans 13, that Christians be subject to the powers, to denounce the purge and trial, Milton argued that the apostolic injunction only applied to lawful and just Magistrates: "such he means, as are, not a terror to the good but to evil."³² Those powers that work for the common peace and preservation should be obeyed, since God doubtless ordains them. Magistrates that do the contrary lay no obligation of obedience on God's people.

Milton's case on behalf of the Revolution centres on his conception of popular sovereignty, how "the power of Kings and Magistrates...[was] originally the peoples, and by them conferr'd in trust, onely to be imployed to the common

peace and benefit." The offices of king and magistrate were founded upon a trust, a common understanding that they ruled for the good of all and not themselves. Governors exercised power legitimately only so long as they recalled that the people retained freedom "to resume it to themselves...as they shall judge most conducing to the common good."³³ If the people judged their rulers to be acting in their own self-interest, in other words, like tyrants, it was their right, both by God's law and the law of nature, to pull down the mighty from their thrones and execute justice. "[I]t is Lawfull, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked KING, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death."³⁴ The right of revolution lay in the hands of the people: those with power to see tyrants and call them to account.

In the *Tenure's* confirmation Milton set out his theoretical case against tyrannical governors. A tyrant was a ruler who, wrongly or rightly coming to power, ignored the law, acted against the common good, and reigned only for his own interest. Milton meant this to be applied to Charles I, although in the exordium he demurred from laying out the particular charge against the King. That he left, so he claimed, "to Magistrates, at least to the uprighter

sort of them, and of the people, though in number less by many, in whom faction least hath prevailed above the Law of nature and right reason."³⁵ Milton did, however, note and hold the King responsible for the mass killings of Protestants in Ulster in 1641, the offer of English counties to the Irish and Scots for military assistance during the Civil War, and "the oppressing and bereaving of Religion." The King's anti-Puritan campaign was another sign "that tyrants by a kind of natural instinct both hate and feare none more than the true Church and Saints of God as the most dangerous enemies and subverters of Monarchy, though indeed of tyranny."³⁶ The King's wars left "many thousands of Christians destroy'd...polluting with their slaughtered carcasses all the Land over, and crying for vengeance."³⁷ Charles's religious policies, and later his religious pretensions, notably in the prayer-book attributed to him, *Eikon Basilike*, drew Milton's charge of "unbridl'd Potentate." The King was an enemy of true faith, a tyrant, and anti-Christ.

The fact that not all Englishmen shared Milton's (particular) Puritan faith, and concomitant condemnation of Charles's religious program, probably explains why he only trusted good Magistrates and reasonable men to set out the legal case against the King. Even so, he had confidence

that anyone guided "by the very principles of nature in him" would see that the people had as much right to cast down such a ruler and kill him "as against a common pest."³⁸ Whether the governor was a tyrant by usurpation, conquest, or practice, was not important: "if an Englishman, forgetting all Laws human, civil, and religious, offend against life and liberty, to him offended and to the Law in his behalf, though born in the same womb, he is no better than a Turk." The *ius gentiles* applied among neighbours and friends as much as between nations: "when any of these doe one to another, so as hostility could do no worse, what doth it warrant us to less then single defense, or civil warr?"³⁹ As the use of force to repel an invading enemy was justified (*vim repellere vi licet*), so were actions that subject a tyrant, as an enemy of the people, "to the reach of Justice and arraignment as any other transgressors."⁴⁰

Political presbyterians were unwilling to subject Charles to the "Sword of Justice" because such an action was outside English law. The ancient constitution, before the purged Parliament declared itself sovereign, did not allow for, let alone conceive, a High Court of Justice to hear a charge of treason and tyranny against a reigning monarch. To royalists and presbyterians, the independents were no better than common rebels for bringing "Delinquents

without exemption to a fair Tribunal."⁴¹ The presbyterians' attachment to law and the sanctity of the King's person during the revolutionary period struck Milton as peculiar and pernicious, given their record of homiletical and civil hostility during the first Civil War. The monarch who "erewhile in the[ir] Pulpits was a cursed Tyrant, an enemy to God and saints, lad'n with all the innocent blood split in three Kingdoms, and so to be fought against is now, though nothing penitent or alter'd from his first principles, a lawfull Magistrate, a Sovran Lord, the Lords annointed, not to be touched."⁴² The independents were hardly the only "rebels," for "the Presbyterians themselves, who now so much condemn deposing, were the men themselves that depos'd the King, and cannot with all thir shifting and relapsing, wash off the guiltiness from thir own hands." By taking up arms against the King in 1642 the presbyterians ceased to be true "subjects," since "obedience is the true essence of a subject, either to doe, if it be lawful, or if he hold the thing unlawful, to submitt to that penaltie which the Law imposes, so long as he intends to remaine a Subject."⁴³ Milton argued that the terms "King" and "Subject" are relatives, and that for the previous seven years the presbyterians took "away the relation, that is to say the Kings authority, and thir

subjection to it...therefore...have remov'd and extinguished the other relative, that is to say the King...in brief have depos'd him." As members and/or supporters of the Parliament that waged war against Charles, political presbyterians not only deposed him "but outlaw'd him, and defin'd him as an alien, a rebell to Law, and enemie to the state."⁴⁴ Although it was the purged Parliament that erected the High Court to execute justice upon Charles, the presbyterians "certainly by deposing him have long since taken from him the life of a King, his office and his dignity, they in the truest sense may be said to have killed the King."⁴⁵ The presbyterians' loud denunciation of the independent-led Revolution was a clumsy attempt to hide their role in its predecessor. During the Civil War's revolutionary sequel the presbyterians used the ancient constitution and common law to defend a tyrant, which showed them up as "bad men...naturally servile...always readiest with the falsifi'd names of *Loyalty* and *Obedience*, to colour over thir base compliances."⁴⁶ Good men, according to Milton, who love freedom heartily, cling instead to the clear principles of natural and divine justice.

Justice was for Milton the purpose of all authority and jurisdiction, the end of law and the constitution. The royalist assertion of divine right—that kings are

accountable not to the people or the law but to God alone—
"is the overturning of all Law and government." The laws of
the land, "either fram'd or consented to by all," existed
"to confine and limit the authority of whom they [the
people] chose to govern them." Kings swore at their
coronation "to doe impartial justice by Law."⁴⁷ But if
monarchs chose to ignore the law or not "to give account,
then all cov'nants made with them at Coronation, all Oathes
are in vain and meer mockeries, all lawes which they swear
to keep, made to no purpose." Kings who flouted the laws,
framed by and consented to by the people and acted against
their common interest, could be legitimately tried and
punished, even though the constitution did not compass nor
condone such an action. "Seeing that justice and Religion
are from the same God, and works of justice oftentimes more
acceptable," Milton argued, "the temporal Law both may and
ought, though without a special Text or precedent, extend
with like indifference to the civil Sword, to the cutting
off without exemption him that capitally offends."⁴⁸
Justice, "which is the Sword of God" was "superior to all
mortal things," including positive, human-made (carnal)
law. The purpose of the trial and execution of Charles was
"to teach lawless Kings, and all who so much adore them,

that not mortal man, or his imperious will but Justice is the onely true sovran and supreme majesty on earth."⁴⁹

The argument that the regicide demonstrated the sovereignty of Justice implied that the regicides themselves were just, good, and right. Not just anyone could execute justice, the Sword of God, on tyrants, only those "in whose hand soever by apparent signs his (God's) testified will is to put it."⁵⁰ The hand of Providence directed the revolutionary actions of the purged Parliament, supported by the Army and its allies among London's political independents. Milton expected those who read his tract "not to startle from the just and pious resolution of adhereing with all thir [strength &] assistance to the present Parliament and Army, in the glorious way wherein Justice and Victory hath set them; the only warrant through all ages, next under immediate Revelation, to exercise supreme power."⁵¹ Men whose military and political success revealed the righteousness of their cause were lawful in the execution of natural and divine justice upon tyrants, and wielding sovereign power over the unjust. Such men were the just, the good: the nation's aristocrats.

The Revolution was produced and staged by men "govern'd by reason," not given over to "a double tyrannie,

of Custom from without and blind affections within." Their actions exhibited that "vertue and true worth most eminent;" they were aristocrats.⁵² These "uprighter sort" of Magistrates and people, "though in number less by many," were fit to judge the King according to "the law of nature and right reason."⁵³ Although many were shocked and scandalized by the revolutionaries' purge of Parliament, so as to try and execute a reigning monarch, their opposition "argues the more wisdom, vertue, and magnanimity, that they [the Army and the Rump] know themselves able to be a precedent to others."⁵⁴ The Army and its allies were only exercising the common right of free men in a free nation, who "have in themselves the power to remove, or to abolish any governour supreme, or subordinate." Free men, according to Milton, knew that the power to remove and depose kings and magistrates was "the root and source of all liberty." And none can love freedom heartily but good men. Those who deny the power to depose rulers, "the natural and essential power of a free nation," can only "be thought no better than slaves and vassals born, in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting Lord."⁵⁵ By casting off their tyrannical and idolatrous master, the revolutionaries heeded the call of "our leader and supreme governour," Christ Jesus the Lord, "to liberty and the flourishing

deeds of a reformed Common-wealth."⁵⁶ The leading players of the revolution, both by nature and in deed, were reasonable, upright, virtuous, and free: aristocrats leading the pageant of English life to a new and glorious future under King Jesus.

Milton's aristocrats were also blessed with one other vital characteristic for revolution: power. The good may rise above the law to execute justice upon tyrants because they have the power to do so. "It is Lawfull," Milton argued on the title page of the tract, "for any, who have the power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King." Those into whose hand God gives his Sword must wield Justice. The offender against the nation, "be he King, or Tyrant, or Emperor, the Sword of Justice is above him; *in whose hands soever* is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion...of innocent blood." All human power to execute God's wrath upon evil was from God, and "that power, whether ordinary, or if that fail, extraordinary, so executing that intent of God, is lawfull, and not to be resisted." ⁵⁷ God ordained the Revolution of 1648-1649, which set up a new supreme authority in the English nation, through their execution of divine judgment upon Charles. The just exercise of power had rendered the Rump a justifiable power-that-be (Romans 13).

It was important for Milton's case to argue the Revolution was carried out by the virtuous though few; the just had executed justice upon an unjust ruler--aristocrats had saved the land from tyranny. Milton also recognized that such an unprecedented wielding of the Sword of Justice depended on the thousands of swords held by the New Model Army. Thus he claimed that the people were so justified in deposing and punishing a tyrant, and that the men who did this in the Revolution of 1648-1649, were in fact just. It appears, however, that by emphasizing that *whosoever* possesses the sword of justice may wield it, that *any with power* may rise up against the Law, Milton linked military victory to the righteousness of the revolutionaries' cause. The *Tenure* assumes an ontological identification between victory and justice: the Army's power proved the rightness of the Army's cause and the revolution it produced. Their authority was just because they were just; they were just because they were powerful; they were powerful because they had won the Wars; they won the Wars because they and their cause were just before God.

Milton's argument that any may rise against tyranny radicalized a central tenant of Calvinist resistance theory: that revolt is justified only when carried out by lawfully constituted inferior magistrates.⁵⁸ The careful

distinction drawn in the works of Hotman, Beza, and the author of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, between lesser rulers and private persons was obliterated by Milton's assertion that individual action against tyrants, whether by conquest or by practice, was warranted by natural reason.⁵⁹ Calvinist resistance theorists only authorized the right of private persons to punish a tyrant by conquest or usurpation: lawfully constituted lesser magistrates could resist a king who became a tyrant. Milton pushed the right of revolt against tyrants by practice down to anyone with the power to punish.

The application of Milton's "anarchic claim" in the context of civil conflict was politically tenuous. A problem arises over the identification of a particular ruler as a tyrant. The revolutionaries' over-whelming power in the English state in 1648 gave them the right, according to Milton, to settle for the whole people the question of whether or not Charles was in fact a tyrant. Most people were not convinced that the facts pointed to Charles as tyrant. Milton chose to align himself with the Army's case against the king and their interpretation of the facts of his case. He whole-heartedly supported their purge, their regicide, and the republican regime that followed.⁶⁰

The problem of what to do with the defeated monarch was not so simple as strutting out on stage and calling him a tyrant: a majority of M.P.s had voted to treat with him before Pride's Purge. But a few who believed they were good and just overturned that decision on behalf of the whole nation: for them there was no question that the King was an incorrigible tyrant unfit to rule. This few were only able to compel that decision by bringing the force of their arms to the capital and wielding them against the people's representatives in Parliament. The few who made the revolution were not aristocrats but oligarchs—the few who believed their might and character made them the best judges and natural rulers of the commonweal. Like Milton, the revolutionary actors acted according to an ideology of aristocracy.

The ideology of aristocracy justified the actions of the few who believed their goodness and virtue allowed them to over-ride the law and the peoples' will. Although Milton speaks often about "the people" in the *Tenure*, it is clear he is not referring to the whole of the political nation, let alone every adult person residing in England; mass politics was hardly his concern.⁶¹ Milton spoke on behalf of a small group that seized power against the opposition of most people.⁶² He believed that while sovereignty originated

in the people, sovereign power could be wielded justifiably on their behalf by a few who were good.⁶³ For Milton the revolutionaries were best qualified to exercise political authority and execute justice upon wicked kings on behalf of and in the interests of the people. This aristocratic standpoint removed the need to examine the revolutionaries' responsibility to the people for their actions; when the people as a whole neglected or ignored their right to rise up and punish a tyrant, an enlightened, just, and good few could lawfully act on behalf of the many.⁶⁴

The few could act on behalf of, and indeed in opposition to, the many people because they were godly. Milton's belief in the universality of Justice, and the place of God's elect, by definition a small group, in its execution, was fundamental to his politics.⁶⁵ Like the independent preachers, Milton argued that the Army's triumphs over the King on the field were a sign of God's blessing and favour upon them and their cause. The Lord's "testified will" had put the Sword of Justice in the Army's hands, leaving none to challenge its move to the center-stage of political power. As God's Elect, the Army and its allies were entitled to dictate terms to lesser men who dared oppose its providential mandate.⁶⁶ The Army and the "uprighter sort" of magistrates were also entitled to

decide for the nation who in particular was a tyrant. Since true religion was one of the proper ends of government, the security and lives of the elect, the true Church, took precedence over the person of the king and even the frame of Parliament.⁶⁷ In advocating what Woolrych calls an "aristocracy of grace," Milton's *Tenure* was consistent with, according to Mayfield, was the political theology of "spiritual-millennial independency:" that the godly had the right and the duty to bring Charles to justice even if it was done outside the constitution and against the will of the majority.⁶⁸ The godly must act for what is right and good, even if the law, the nation's political institutions, and the people, are opposed.

Milton's adherence to popular sovereignty was conditioned by his aristocratic standpoint. The peoples' natural right of deposing and punishing tyrannical rulers belonged properly to virtuous men.⁶⁹ Under the ideology of aristocracy, the virtuous though few, had a right to punish tyrants and exercise sovereign power because they were good. This natural right was confirmed through God's grace (election) and self-discipline. The people as a whole had the potential for virtue, but only a few persons actualized it in practice.⁷⁰ A virtuous life was achieved through rigorous discipline: the ordering of the self in accord

with right reason, and the restraint of the sensual, appetitive aspect of the soul.⁷¹ The few who practiced the virtues sustained, and were sustained by, a republican government.⁷²

Milton's contention in the *Tenure* that "all men were naturally born free, being the image and resemblance of God," implying a measure of equality, does not discount the notion of aristocracy. Not all those born free have the will and the discipline necessary to "be govern'd by reason."⁷³ The members of the Army's revolutionary alliance, unlike their royalist and presbyterian opponents, were portrayed in Milton's tract as wise men, magnanimous, governed by reason, in whom virtue and true worth were most eminent. Milton's argument in the *Tenure* rested largely on the Platonic and Puritan principal that just authority must be exercised by the just; good men should rule over the rest.⁷⁴

Goodness, or virtue, was married to godliness: the product of their perfect union was liberty. Only truly good men loved true freedom, and were themselves truly free. True freedom began, for Milton, when one's interior life was aligned with the cardinal virtues of temperance, wisdom, fortitude, and justice: a state of being achieved through self-discipline and God's regenerative grace.⁷⁵

Personal virtue produced free persons; men qualified to exercise the power of liberty in the commonwealth.⁷⁶

According to the ideology of aristocracy, liberty and virtue were mutually dependent: freedom was the property of good people who achieved a self-disciplined, virtuous, interior life.⁷⁷ Good men, no matter how few, were right and free to re-shape the commonwealth as they saw fit, even to rule as aristocrats against the wishes of the people.

The natural and essential power of the just was the freedom to remove and punish any governor supreme, especially a tyrant.⁷⁸ A bad ruler, clearly not in control of his selfish passions, should not be free to govern self-disciplined members of God's elect.⁷⁹ Neither should bad magistrates nor Members of Parliament hold sway over the good. People incapable of liberty, that is, of governing themselves according to the virtues, needed to be ruled by others who demonstrated their liberated capability.⁸⁰ Men worthy of freedom had a duty to create a free commonwealth.⁸¹ If by fulfilling that duty the few who were truly free acted above the law, or opposed the will of the majority of sinful people, then Amen to all that. "If the Parliament and Military Council do what they doe without precedent," Milton argued in the *Tenure*, "if it appeare thir duty, it argues the more wisdom, vertue, and

magnanimity, that they know themselves able to be a precedent to others." The consent and authority of the few good and free were all that was required to legitimate their innovative acts upon the political stage.⁸² God and nature called the Army and its allies to seize the opportunity for liberty in 1649. The lasting felicity of the English political nation and people could be secured once the revolution was consolidated.⁸³

The just and free few were called to rule over the many sinners; their virtue would direct them to govern for the good of the whole people. Like the Levellers, Milton's ideological aristocrats recognized that the public interest was not strictly the interest of the majority, but the community as a whole.⁸⁴ The just and free were quantitatively the lesser, but qualitatively the greater, part of the people, and were therefore better judges of what was best for the commonwealth. Public welfare could not be left to "the common vote of the giddy multitude," argued Army propagandist and Chaplain Hugh Peter, for soon "their own interest, peace and safety [would] be broken... It is not VOX but *salus populi* that is the supreme law."⁸⁵ The Army's action against Parliament in December 1648, although contrary to the law and public sentiment, was performed for the common welfare: to prevent a settlement with a

dangerous and unrepentant King. The Army, the virtuous few, exercised the peoples' right "as oft as they shall judge it for the best" to reject a magistrate, "though no Tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free born men, to be govern'd as seems to them best."⁸⁶ The sinful majority of the people opposed the revolutionary drama because they did not understand how the good actions of a virtuous Army and its allies were in the interest of the whole people; this did not make the performance less worthy or just. Indeed, the people's opposition was inverse testimony to the just cause of Milton's revolutionary aristocracy.

The virtuous few executed a revolution because they were interested in the good of the whole nation, and because of their vested interest in the nation's economic future: Milton's aristocrats were bourgeois. The mass of the population was not truly free in a double sense: they lacked the restraint and self-discipline of the virtuous, and they were constrained by the will of an employer or landlord. A person's natural freedom included a property in things; only men with property possessed the independence and competence necessary to participate legitimately on the political stage.⁸⁷ Milton's conception of liberty was consistent with the bourgeois desire to be unconstrained: the freedom to work, worship, trade, and make money without

interference. That which threatened the freedom of the bourgeois-popery, bishops, persecution, royal monopolies, chartered companies, unrestrained monarchy, and a greater level of political involvement by the multitude, that is, democratization—was denounced as tyrannical.⁸⁸ A people governed by an absolutist regime were “no better than slaves and vassals born, in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting Lord.”⁸⁹

Milton's greatest hope in 1648-1649 was to turn the middling sort, the source of most men of good sense and knowledge of affairs, against Charles in particular and monarchy in general.⁹⁰ The *Tenure* was his speech-act performed for the ears of the godly, the good, the free and the public-minded, who were also bourgeois, to stand behind their new aristocratic governors as they tore down monarchical props and reconstituted the political stage with republican sets. Milton urged his audience “not to startle from the just and pious resolution of adhering with all thir [strength &] assistance to the present Parliament and Army, in the glorious way wherin Justice and Victory hath set them.”⁹¹ It was a call to men very much like himself, who assumed that virtue in word means virtue in deed: an assumption based on an ideology of aristocracy.

Milton employs the ideology of aristocracy in the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, a political theory that justifies, for the sake of the common good, the action of a self-interested few that seize power and rule over the many. The *Tenure's* argument is built from the oak of popular sovereignty, laid over a stone foundation of aristocracy. Milton's regicide tract asserted that the people by right might depose a tyrant; the action his assertion defended was in fact brought off by a few that acted against the people and for their own interest. The people may do x by natural and divine right, but if they do not, then a few must do x on their behalf, since nature and God require it. The few act on the presumption of godliness and virtue, trusting in their own goodness and despising others.⁹² The few presume true freedom, since they possess the self-restraint, competence, and independence the mass lacks. The few presume to act on behalf of the whole people, equating what is good for them with what is good for all. The few presume to be the best people, whose moral and spiritual superiority justify rising above and against the law and the people. The presumptions of the few, the ideology of aristocracy, legitimate a confirmed oligarchy by sidestepping the origin of their authority, and the ends for which their power is employed.⁹³

The actors who made the English Revolution of 1648-1649 represented a small fraction of the political nation, an even smaller part of the populace as a whole. By their reckoning Charles was guilty at different points of blocking the religious, financial, and political aspirations of the saints, the political independents, new merchants, and commonwealthsmen: this showed his tyrannical nature. The King's compassed plan for absolute monarchy and religious uniformity threatened to trample their liberties. His willingness to negotiate with Parliament in the autumn of 1647 while simultaneously conspiring with the Scots to invade England showed him untrustworthy and treasonous. It was unconscionable to treat with such a wicked King. Charles was a tyrant pure and simple; anyone "govern'd by reason" could see he had to be brought to justice.

By reckoning Charles tyrannical and themselves as aristocratic worthies, the revolutionary alliance was able to sustain an illusion of neutrality and lessen their sense of guilt. Their own interest in getting rid of the King and the monarchy did not appear on stage during the revolutionary drama. Instead, the freedom and liberty of the people assumed centre-stage, along with their right to punish tyrants and traitors as ordinary criminals. The ideology of aristocracy, and Milton's regicide tract, made

them out to be champions of the common good, the execution of justice by the just. To suggest that the regicide was an act of vengeance upon the loser of a civil struggle by its victors made possible only by the strength of their arms, an act the majority of the English did not want, was evidence for natural servility and blind affection to custom. A conscience pricked by the obvious blood-lust propelling the revolutionaries could be dulled by the belief that Justice demanded such "cruel necessity." Feelings of guilt for forcing a purge, putting Charles on trial and then executing him while keeping London under military occupation were covered over and imputed with righteousness. The Revolution of 1648-1649 was lawful according to the laws of God and nature, Milton argued, so none of its players need feel regret. The illusion of neutrality thus made revolutionary oligarchs into aristocrats: what was bad became good—government of the few (who are good) over the many that are not.

The ideology of aristocracy functioned to sustain a second illusion among the revolutionary oligarchy, that of overcoming the world. An honourable account of the source and exercise of the revolutionaries' political power distracted attention from its irregularity and novelty. What happened in January 1649 was the resumption of the

"people's freedom," not the assumption of sovereign power by a forcibly truncated and military-cowed House of Commons. The revolutionary alliance was a godly blend of Right and Might, not might simply calling itself right. On the 30th of January 1649 a tyrant was executed; it was not (as most believed) the political assassination of an admittedly difficult, yet still revered and legitimate, monarch. The revolutionary oligarchs could stand on stage and proclaim their goodness as evidenced by their good actions.

The *Tenure* was a mighty seconding of the good actions of these good men, and contributed to the illusions of ideological aristocracy. Using a standard defense of legitimate resistance and punishment of tyrants, Milton's tract distracted attention from the purge. The Army's forcible extraction of its enemies from the House in December 1648 signaled in reality the triumph of the sword, not natural law or divine justice. Popular sovereignty, which Parliament claimed to champion during the Civil Wars, was reduced to military sovereignty. Without the Army's powerful presence in London, the curtain would never rise on the Revolution and Rump regime. Milton's *Tenure* also distracted attention from the quality of the Tribunal judging the King. His commitment to the universality of

Justice avoided the particularity of the High Court of Justice, and the question of what right such a body had to sit in judgment over a sovereign. In January 1649 the question "whose justice triumphed?" was ignored by the revolutionary alliance, and by the author of the *Tenure*. They both assumed the justice of their cause because of the New Model's victories on the field of battle. From Preston and Colchester they discerned the hand of Providence leading them to regicide and republic. Now was not the time to question the clear signs of the Almighty, now was the time to do the good work of God.

In Milton's tract a revolutionary drama brought off by oligarchs becomes a morality tale performed by the virtuous. The pamphlet justifies the action of a self-interested minority by placing their deeds in an account of popular sovereignty and the just punishment of a tyrant by good men. Milton's written act in defense of the revolution operates within an ideology of aristocracy, whereby self-interested oligarchic revolutionaries become the virtuous few fit for sovereign power. Milton's *Tenure* supports the action of this revolutionary body, making Milton himself a revolutionary oligarch. The poet acted alone on behalf of England's new oligarchic governors in January-February

1649; the next month he signed on as their official spokesman and rhetorical defender.

Milton's oligarchic politics were confirmed in deed when he accepted an appointment to the Rump's Council of State in March 1649 as Latin Secretary. The private tutor and pamphleteer received this sensitive civil position with the new republican regime because several key members of the Commonwealth's ruling body were his friends and acquaintances. Luke Robinson, an M.P. for York (Scarborough), was a student with Milton at Christ's College in Cambridge. He may have suggested Milton for the position in part because of the poet's skill in Latin prose.⁹⁴ Milton and the regicide from Yorkshire were both friends to the Member for Guisborough (York) who played a crucial role in the weeks between the purge and the execution, Thomas Chaloner.⁹⁵ Another important member of the Council who knew Milton well was the prosecuting attorney in Charles's trial, John Bradshaw. The lawyer with republican leanings had served as counsel to Milton as recently as 1648.⁹⁶ It is also probable that Milton knew Council Member Major-General Philip Skippon. The Commander of the London Militia, who averted a confrontation between the Trained Bands and the New Model outside Westminster on 6 December 1648, Skippon was evidently a witness to the

will of Dr. Theodore Diodati in June 1649. Dr. Diodati's late son Charles was Milton's closest friend during the 1630s, and through the Diodati family the young poet may have met the commander.⁹⁷ Skippon had connections with members of John Goodwin's Independent congregation at St. Stephen's Coleman Street. An M.P. for Barnstaple since 1647, Skippon moved successfully in the Commons on 18th December 1648 to exclude from election to the London Common Council any person who favored a settlement with the King. The subsequent election on 21st of December sent a radical majority to the Common Council, with men like Owen Rowe (whose brother was Chaloner's son-in-law), Samuel Moyer, William Pennoyer, Rowland Wilson, and Isaac Pennington, ensuring the peace of the City during the trial and execution.⁹⁸ Milton was not some solitary poet, cut off from the politics of revolutionary London in 1648-1649; he was well known among the radical actors who ousted the King and commenced the English republican pageant.

Milton was offered the post of Latin Secretary also because of the similarity of his ideological outlook with that of the Commonwealth's rulers. The Rump's leaders were obviously so impressed with what Milton wrote in the *Tenure* that they overlooked his lack of previous employment, to say nothing of his lack of political experience, inviting

him to serve as the state's persuader in foreign tongues.⁹⁹ John Bradshaw possessed a copy of the *Tenure* already in February 1649.¹⁰⁰ Although neither Bradshaw, nor Robinson nor Skippon, were part of the delegation sent by the Council to speak to Milton about the post of Latin Secretary, Bradshaw and Robinson were at the 13th March meeting which agreed to approach him. It may be that the Council did not think Milton needed to be asked by his friends to take the job; the delegation was chosen perhaps less for its familiarity and more for its prestige. It included Henry Vane and Henry Marten, two die-hard republicans, along with Bustrode Whitelock, Lord Lisle, John Lisle, and Basil Denbigh.¹⁰¹ We do not know whom exactly from the Council's suggested delegation went to Milton's home in the Barbican. We do know that two days later, on March 15th, the Council noted John Milton had accepted the position as Latin Secretary.

Five years later Milton claimed the Council's offer of employment was an unexpected surprise, "an event which never entered my thoughts."¹⁰² This reflection is consistent with Milton's tendency to portray himself as a lonely and isolated poet, dragged reluctantly into public service. He was, in fact, a social writer, aware that the position would enhance his reputation, expand his connections, and

provide additional income.¹⁰³ Milton, forty years old and friend of radicals, at last had a real job that would contribute concretely to the Good Old Cause.¹⁰⁴ It is no wonder that like calls to like, in nature and in oligarchic republics.

Milton was a consistent supporter of the oligarchic Commonwealth regime and the revolution that brought it to power.¹⁰⁵ The poet's support for the actions of the revolutionary oligarchy is evident when he exhorted the presbyterians and others put off by the purge and trial to "adhere with all thir [strength &] assistance to the present Parliament and Army, in the glorious way wherin Justice and Victory hath set them."¹⁰⁶ Dzelzainis argues Milton's use of the adjective "present" before Parliament is explained by his wish for a more thoroughgoing reform of the constitution, as envisioned by the Officers' Agreement of the People, submitted to the Commons on 20 January 1649.¹⁰⁷ Milton hoped, in other words, for a more democratic settlement, after the Revolution gained wider acceptance and support. The language of the revolutionary oligarchy tells against this suggestion.

The Rump's main concern after the regicide was to consolidate its power. This meant ensuring its servants were loyal, if not to the revolutionary acts that brought

it to the centre of the political stage, then at least to the on-going production of republican government. At Cromwell's suggestion, members of the Council of State were required to take an oath declaring their adherence "to this present parliament in defense of liberty and freedom;" republican Councilors Heselrig, Vane, and Sidney supported this motion.¹⁰⁸ The Lieutenant General's idea carried, and the "Engagement" taken by members of the Council of State after 22 February 1649 read, in part, as follows:

I, A.B. being nominated a member of the Council of State by this *present* Parliament, so testify that I adhere to this *present* Parliament, in the maintenance and defense of the public liberty and freedom of this nation, as it is now declared by *this* Parliament (by whose authority I am constituted a member of the said Council)... I will be faithful in the performances of the trust committed to me as aforesaid, and therein faithfully pursue the instruction give to the said Council by *this present Parliament* (all emphasis mine).¹⁰⁹

Two days after Milton accepted the position as the Council of State's Latin Secretary, 17 March 1649, the Rump passed an Act Abolishing Kingship, "enacted and ordained by *this present Parliament*, and by the authority of the same." The Act declared that supreme executive and legislative power resided "in this and the successive representatives of the people of this nation, and in them only."¹¹⁰ The phrase "this present Parliament" in these documents implies the House which brought about the trial and execution of

Charles I, and which was determined to rule the nation "in the future in the way of a Republic, without King or House of Lords." Councilors were required to adhere to a Parliament made by the Army and its allies, one they deemed worthy to carry out its revolutionary will and rule the land. The *present* Parliament of February-March 1649 was a self-constituted and self-regulating authority that invested supreme authority in itself as the people's representative. The language of "this present Parliament" did not hold out hope for Leveller-inspired reforms; reform of Parliament began and ended with the purge. Those willing to subscribe to the present Parliament's oligarchic republican script were welcome to join. When Milton called for his interlocutors to stand by the "present Parliament" in the *Tenure* he meant just that, the Army-purged, truncated House of Commons which invested sovereign power in itself on 4 January 1649, and for which he went to work two months later.

Milton was a dedicated and diligent worker for the present Parliament. He translated into Latin the Council of State's foreign correspondence, acted as an interpreter for ambassadors, and translated into English letters the Council received from abroad.¹¹¹ The poet was also called upon to act as a licenser and censor of publications,

investigator, and polemicist for the Commonwealth.¹¹²

Milton's job gave him an active and vigorous role in the drama of the English Free State, whose oligarchic government he defended with rhetorical aplomb and brilliance. His regicide tract had demonstrated his theoretical support of the actions of Army and its friends, while his employment in the regime that their revolutionary oligarchy produced confirmed his connection, both personal and ideological, to the new republic's oligarchic rulers.

- ¹Hill, 1977, 166. I am borrowing the phrase "speak his people" from OT Biblical scholar Walter Bruggemann, who uses it in reference to the Israelite prophet Jeremiah. It was Jeremiah's calling to "speak his people" into exile in Babylon.
- ²For an examination of the notes Milton took from his reading, see Ruth Mohl's *John Milton and His Commonplace Book*, (New York: 1969). *The Commonplace Book*, edited by Mohl, is the first volume of the Yale edition of Milton's prose (1953).
- ³Dobranski "Milton's social life" in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton (Second Edition)*, Dennis Danielson ed. (New York: 1999): 7. Milton was commissioned by the Egerton family (Earl of Bridgewater) to write a masque, *Comus*, to be performed at Ludlow Castle in 1634.
- ⁴W.R. Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (Oxford: 1968), Vol. I: 341.
- ⁵Trevor-Roper, 277.
- ⁶Hughes, *CPW*, III: 104-105.
- ⁷Parker, 347.
- ⁸Parker, Volume II, 955 n. 11. Also in Henry Grierson, *Milton and Woodsworth*, (Cambridge: 1937).
- ⁹David Lowenstein, "Milton and the poetics of Defence" in *Politics, poetics and hermeneutics in Milton's prose*, David Lowenstein and James Grantham Turner eds. (Cambridge: 1990): 184. Also Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*, (New Haven: 1994), 213.
- ¹⁰Barber, 134.
- ¹¹Dzelzainis, 1991, xii.
- ¹²David Lowenstein, *Representing Revolution in Milton and his contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism*, (New York: 2001), 180. Corns, 1995, 36; Barber, 133
- ¹³Dzelzainis, 1991, xii.
- ¹⁴Zagorin, 1992, 68-69.
- ¹⁵From Milton's *Defensio Secunda* of the English people, published in 1654. Quoted in Wolfe, 211.
- ¹⁶Lowenstein, 181-185.
- ¹⁷John T. Shawcross, "The Higher Wisdom of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*" in *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton*, Michael Lieb and J.T. Shawcross eds. (Amherst, MA: 1974): 145. Also Hughes, "Introduction" *CPW III*, 136. Parker, Vol. I: 356; Hill, 1977, 212.

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- ¹⁸ Shawcross, 130.
- ¹⁹ Tuck, 222.
- ²⁰ Zagorin, 1992, 65. On the "de facto" theorists defence of the regicide, see Quentin Skinner, "Conquest and Consent," 79.
- ²¹ Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (TKM)*, 8.
- ²² Milton, *TKM*, 9.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Milton, *TKM*, 8.
- ²⁵ Milton, *TKM*, 10.
- ²⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 11.
- ²⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 9.
- ²⁸ Milton, *TKM*, 22.
- ²⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 13.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Milton, *TKM*, 13-14.
- ³² Milton, *TKM*, 15.
- ³³ Milton, *TKM*, 16.
- ³⁴ Milton, *TKM*, 1.
- ³⁵ Milton, *TKM*, 7.
- ³⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 20.
- ³⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 18.
- ³⁸ Milton, *TKM*, 17.
- ³⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 18.
- ⁴⁰ Milton, *TKM*, 33.
- ⁴¹ Milton, *TKM*, 7.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Milton, *TKM*, 26-27.
- ⁴⁴ Milton, *TKM*, 28.
- ⁴⁵ Milton, *TKM*, 30.
- ⁴⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 3.
- ⁴⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 9.
- ⁴⁸ Milton, *TKM*, 22.
- ⁴⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 33.
- ⁵⁰ Milton, *TKM*, 5.
- ⁵¹ Milton, *TKM*, 6.
- ⁵² Milton, *TKM*, 3.
- ⁵³ Milton, *TKM*, 7.
- ⁵⁴ Milton, *TKM*, 33.
- ⁵⁵ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ⁵⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ⁵⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 8. All italics mine.
- ⁵⁸ Kingdon, 211-218.
- ⁵⁹ Dzelzainis, 1991, xv.
- ⁶⁰ Lowenstein, 2001, 185.
- ⁶¹ Tuck, 252-253.

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- ⁶² Milner, 106.
- ⁶³ Geisst, 72.
- ⁶⁴ Zagorin, 114; Parker, Vol. I, 347.
- ⁶⁵ Fixler, 155-158.
- ⁶⁶ Trevor-Roper, 235.
- ⁶⁷ Mayfield, 232.
- ⁶⁸ Austin Woolrych, "Political Theory and Political Practice" in *The Age of Milton: backgrounds to Seventeenth-century literature*, C.A. Patrides and R.B. Waddington eds, (Manchester: 1980): 65; Mayfield, 177.
- ⁶⁹ Mohl, 1969, 198.
- ⁷⁰ Giesst, 87.
- ⁷¹ Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic, 1623-1677*, (New York: 1988), 24; Zagorin, 1992, 154.
- ⁷² Dzelzainis, 1995, 21.
- ⁷³ Giesst, 89 and 103.
- ⁷⁴ Scott, 24.
- ⁷⁵ Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton: Political Beliefs and Polemical Methods, 1659-60" *PMLA* 74 (1959): 198.
- ⁷⁶ Zagorin, 1992, 153.
- ⁷⁷ Scott, 21.
- ⁷⁸ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ⁷⁹ Wolfe, 252.
- ⁸⁰ Scott, 21.
- ⁸¹ Trevor-Roper, 268.
- ⁸² Milner, 107-109.
- ⁸³ Blair Worden, "Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism, 1649-1656" in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, David Wootton ed. (Stanford: 1994): 58.
- ⁸⁴ Houston, 418.
- ⁸⁵ Hugh Peter, *Salus Populi Solus Rex*, October 1648; quoted in Brailsford, n. 8, 346.
- ⁸⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 13.
- ⁸⁷ C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (New York: 1962): 148-149; Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*.
- ⁸⁸ Hill, 1977, 203.
- ⁸⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ⁹⁰ Hill, 1977, 405.
- ⁹¹ Milton, *TKM*, 6.
- ⁹² So Jesus on the Pharisees, Luke 18.9.
- ⁹³ Lowenstein, 2001, 186.
- ⁹⁴ Parker, Vol. I: 353; Vol. II: n.13, 955.
- ⁹⁵ Worden, 1981.
- ⁹⁶ Parker, Vol. II: n.13, 955.

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- ⁹⁷ Hill, 1977, 30.
- ⁹⁸ S.v. "Phillip Skippon" in *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, Zaller ed. Volume III: 181.
- ⁹⁹ Robert Thomas Fallon, *Milton in Government*, (University Park, PN: 1993), 1. Barber, 133.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hill, 1977, 170.
- ¹⁰¹ Parker, Vol. II: n. 7, 954.
- ¹⁰² From Milton's *Defensio Secunda*, 1654, in Dobranski, 14.
- ¹⁰³ Dobranski, 16.
- ¹⁰⁴ Corns, 1998, 75.
- ¹⁰⁵ Worden, 1994, 456.
- ¹⁰⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 6.
- ¹⁰⁷ Dzelzainis, 1991, xviii.
- ¹⁰⁸ Worden, 1974,
- ¹⁰⁹ Gardiner, "Engagement taken by members of the Council of State" in *Constitutional Documents*, 384.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 385-386: the emphasis is mine.
- ¹¹¹ Dobranski, 14.
- ¹¹² Fallon, 3.

III. John Milton and Oligarchic Republicanism

Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* justified the actions of a revolutionary oligarchy with what I call the ideology of aristocracy: the few with power are and do right because they are just. This ideological position was cast using a particular political language and imagery, early modern republicanism. In the *Tenure* Milton spoke the part of an aristocratic republican to convince his audience that the leading men of the revolutionary oligarchy of January 1649, and its oligarchic republican successor the Commonwealth, were acting for the good of the many. Milton's adherence to the ideology of aristocracy was consistent with his republican principles. Milton played the aristocrat in England's oligarchic republican pageant.

After a millennium dominated by the chorus of Christian monarchism, the moral vocabulary of early modern republicanism found a new voice in the fifteenth century among civic humanists in the Italian city-states seeking to assert their independence.¹ Republicanism was a political language whose central tenets were citizenship, virtue, moral decadence, liberty, and the common good.² The highest concern of a republic was the interest, the common good, of the community.³ The virtuous acts performed by a virtuous

citizenry on behalf of the *res publica* guaranteed the survival and success of the commonwealth.⁴ All ruling power within a republic derived originally from the people, and any government was accountable to the people, or their representative institutions, for its actions.⁵ The people were free to resume sovereign power if they deemed it necessary, for the good of the commonwealth, for reasons of state, or the people's safety.

The basic value of republicanism was liberty. Citizens of a Renaissance republic were independent in two ways: their polity was free from external control, and their members were free to take an active role in running the commonwealth.⁶ A citizen was truly free under a government in which legislative power remained with the people or their accredited representatives. The self-government of virtuous persons, known as liberty, was best protected in a popular and self-governing regime: a free state.⁷ Machiavelli was willing to concede, however, that a prince might also rule a self-governing and well-ordered commonwealth.⁸

The conception of freedom articulated by avowed mid-seventeenth century English republicans was what Quentin Skinner calls a "neo-roman theory of civil liberty:" a person is free when he is not in danger of falling into a

condition of dependence on someone else's will.⁹ A citizen and his property are free in a polity—a republic— where all are equally subject to laws enacted by consent, not to a personal sovereign as in a monarchy.¹⁰ According to neo-roman republicans, the quality of non-interference, the absence of even the threat of falling under the will of another, was more important than the number of laws which might interfere with the citizen's opportunities for action.¹¹ Unlike the Renaissance republicans, the English neo-romans did not argue that the right of civic participation was a necessary mark of freedom and self-government: participation or representation, constitutes a necessary condition of maintaining individual liberty, but does not define the freedom of a free state. Civil liberty was only possible in self-governing republics.¹²

During the latter part of the 1640s and under the Rump regime, English republicans were determined to make their nation into a free state. Under a monarchy there was always the danger that persons could fall under the control of the king's will, reducing them to the status of slaves. King Charles had appeared determined to rule without the advice or consent of the people's representatives; to interfere in the conduct of trade and commerce; to suppress expressions of Protestant Christianity not in keeping with the Laudian

Church of England. Unlike his father, Charles did not separate his absolute prerogative from his ordinary prerogative, and so did not understand his power limited by common law.¹³ The King's policy of "Thorough" seemed the gravest threat to free born Englishmen. True liberty meant freedom from even the threat of constraint, so the person and office of king had to be banished from the political stage.¹⁴ A republic was imperative for the recovery of English liberty and its necessary correlative, English virtue.¹⁵ This understanding of liberty and virtue, what Skinner calls "neo-roman," was common among avowed English republicans, like Milton, and was crucial to their repudiation of monarchy.¹⁶

The *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was a clear repudiation of tyrannical monarchy. Some scholars, however, doubt both the tract's and its author's republican credentials. Thomas Corns believes there is little evidence from Milton's vernacular tracts of 1649 that the poet sought a republic in terms derived from antiquity or from Machiavelli's political thought. Milton's guarded endorsement of the official government line, Corns argues, tells against the *Tenure* as a republican manifesto. At best the tract is a rehearsal of republican values used to demystify the monarchy.¹⁷ Perez Zagorin questions Milton's

republican credentials because his political thought did not employ republican idioms developed by Machiavelli.¹⁸

There is, however, a strong case for the *Tenure* as an example of republican political theory employed in defense of an oligarchic republic. The *Tenure* evinces several key republican tropes: constitutional innovation, a critique of the office of monarch, advocacy for popular sovereignty, the people's liberty, and the actions of the virtuous.

The exponents of an English free state spoke an outlandish political language to a nation whose support for their revolution and the republic was never strong. The purged Parliament, on behalf of the peoples' safety, their liberty, and Justice, made a revolution and a republic over Charles's dead body. The people and the political nation were scandalised by the revolutionaries' presumption, putting a reigning monarch on trial and then executing him for treason, especially since the legal definition of treason was "to compass harm against the king." The English political classes' historical consciousness, their reverence for the common law and the ancient constitution, assumed the inviolability of the person and office of the king.¹⁹ Republicanism produced constitutional innovations not seen since the Romans left Britain in 410, and left many reeling from a sense of political dissonance.

Milton's embrace of constitutional innovation in the *Tenure* should be credited to his republicanism. English republican thought, and the republic itself, emerged from the implosion of the political nation and the common law language during the Civil War. As a political language republicanism was constitutionally innovative. The conflict of the 1640s broke the hegemony of common-law language in England. It was replaced by polemical and rhetorical discourse in which almost anything, including a parliamentary purge and regicide, could be justified as legal and right.²⁰ In 1642 Parliament claimed to act against the King, not for the law's sake, but for the ends for which the law existed: the liberty of the subject and true religion. The republican revolutionaries of 1648-1649 made the previously unthinkable argument that Parliament, which by then was *their* Parliament, was sovereign over the monarch and the laws embodied in the ancient constitution.²¹ Milton's *Tenure*, which called for Englishmen to adhere to "the present Parliament and Army, in the glorious way wherein Justice and Victory hath set them, the only warrants through all ages," was consistent with Parliament's rhetorical language of Right and the unprecedented, in England, republican doctrine of parliamentary supremacy.²² The poet showed himself ready and willing to stand outside

the common-law and ancient constitution to execute Justice and create a free state. He had nothing but scorn for those Presbyterians who clung desperately to "those Statutes and Lawes which they so impotently brandish against others," and their "contesting for previleges, customs, forms, and that old entanglement of Iniquity, thir gibrish Lawes, though the badge of ancient slavery."²³ This desire to liberate the truth of God out from ancient slavery testifies, according to Scott, to Milton's combination of classical Platonic republicanism and Puritan reforming zeal: a mixing of pure original Christianity with its pure classical antecedents that overturns all forms, including the ancient laws of England, which contribute to the bondage of man.²⁴

Milton's indictment of monarchs is a second piece of evidence for republicanism in the *Tenure*. In his critique of monarchy *de iure divino* Milton pointed out kingship's inherent threat of tyranny and slavery to citizens.²⁵ For Charles's defenders to argue that "Kings are accountable to none but God is the overturning of all Law and government...for if the King feare not God, as how many of them do not, we hold then our lives and estates by the tenure of his meer grace and mercy, as from a God, not a mortal magistrate."²⁶ The liberties of subjects depended

upon the goodwill of the monarch, which for republicans like Milton was demonstrably arbitrary and unpredictable. It was far too easy for a king to become a tyrant. The best way to remove the threat of tyranny was to establish "liberty and the flourishing deeds of a reformed Commonwealth...so that [God] will bless us and be propitious to us who reject a King to make him [Jesus Christ] onely our leader."²⁷

Milton's indictment of tyrants was thus also an underhanded critique of kingship. In the tract Milton did not distinguish between tyrants by practice and tyrants by usurpation.²⁸ According to the poet, "a Tyrant, whether by wrong or by right coming to the Crown, is he who regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction."²⁹ Standard Calvinist resistance theorists distinguished tyrants "by practice" from tyrants "by usurpation" by separating the person of king from the kingly office. One could revolt against a usurper or foreign tyrant while maintaining loyalty to monarchy.³⁰ Milton's Presbyterian interlocutors insisted their War against the person of Charles was not waged to abolish the office of king. Their pleas were unconvincing, since "they certainly by deposing him [Charles] have long since tak'n from him the life of a King, his office and his dignity,

they in the truest sense may be said to have killed the King."³¹ Milton asked his opponents to consider "how much right the King of Spaine hath to govern us at all, so much right hath the King of England to govern us tyrannically." His concern was not the origin of the monarch's power, but its use for selfish and destructive ends. Should "an Englishman forgetting all Laws, human, civil, and religious, offend against life and liberty...he is no better than a Turk, a Sarasin, a Heathen. This is Gospel, and this was ever Law among equals; how much rather then in force against any King whatever."³² Milton's contention that a legitimate English king turned tyrant was no different than an outlandish enemy, and so could be deposed, facilitated a critique of the kingly office. If the people "as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either chose him [the king] or reject him, retain him or depose him though no Tyrant," then it was a small step to eliminating the office of king and living under a republic. If the people could elect kings, they could elect to abolish the office and obviate future depositions.

The *Tenure* gives evidence of republicanism, thirdly, in its advocacy for popular sovereignty. The core of Milton's argument in the tract's exordium, narration, and confirmation, relates to the derivative nature of political

power.³³ Magistracy is the creation of people seeking their own welfare and is therefore limited and revocable. Government began when the people "agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves." The people then "saw it needful to ordain some autoritie" for "self-defense and preservation" whose power was "originally and naturally in every one of them." Kings and subjects did not relate as master to slave, since the former were the peoples' "Deputies and Commissioner, to execute, by vertue of thir entrusted power, that justice which else every man by the bond of nature and of Cov'nant must have executed for himself."³⁴ Milton insisted that laws made by or on behalf of the people limited the Kings' entrusted power. He declared it "manifest that the power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is derivative, transferr'd, and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally."³⁵ The fact that sovereign power remained, to the last, the peoples' possession, meant they retained the "liberty and right...to reassume it to themselves, if by Kings and Magistrates it be abused; or to dispose of it by any alteration, as they shall judge most conducing to the public good."³⁶

Milton was one of the first Englishmen publicly to defend the peoples' right to call their kings to account for exceeding the limits of authority, or acting against the common good; in other words, for breach of trust.³⁷ That a people, in calling an abusive king to account, have a moral right to resist his power and authority was a commonplace in Continental constitutionalist political thought by 1648.³⁸ Milton's advocacy of popular sovereignty owed more to republican ideals than constitutionalism. The latter only envisioned the peoples' constituted representatives taking up resistance to king or tyrant; while Milton was prepared to sanction political action-by individuals or collections of private persons, such as the Army-not envisioned in the constitution. Like a true republican, Milton was concerned that virtue and the common interest take precedence over the constitution. So he could claim that "when the people, or any part of them shall rise against the King and authority executing the Law in anything establish'd civil or Ecclesiastical, I doe not say it is rebellion, if the thing commanded though establish'd be unlawful."³⁹ A constitutionalist, such as Samuel Rutherford or William Prynne, determined to uphold the law, could never condone the Army's intrusion onto the centre of the political stage, on behalf of the people, for what it

claimed was the common good. The Army was an extra-constitutional and unlawful power. Milton the republican did precisely that in the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. "Any part of the people" clearly included the New Model Army and its purged Parliament, the self-appointed representatives of popular sovereignty, who acted to uphold the Right against those who remained enslaved to the Law.⁴⁰

Milton's regicide tract gives evidence of republicanism, fourthly, in its advocacy of the people's freedom. This was necessary for his over all argument, since Milton's purpose was to justify the freedom of the Army and its allies to override the constitution by purging Parliament and executing the King. It was lawful, "merely by the liberty and right of free born Men," for "the people as oft as they shall judge it best, either [to] choose him or reject him, retain him or depose him though no Tyrant."⁴¹ By assuming sovereign power for itself, the Army and purged Parliament were simply exercising their right as men "naturally borne free...to command and not to obey."⁴² Only men with a "ridiculous and painted freedom, fit to coz'n babies," men such as Milton's Presbyterian interlocutors, would deny citizens of "a free nation...the power to remove, or to abolish any governour supreme, or subordinat." The power to remove was "the root and source of all liberty, to

dispose and oeconomize in the Land which God hath giv'n them, as Maisters of Family in thir own house and free inheritance."⁴³ To forbid the people from exercising this power to remove was to make them "no better then slaves and vassals born, in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting Lord. Whose government, not illegal, or intolerable, hangs over them as a Lordly scourge, not as a free government."

This final passage clearly shows Milton's adherence to the neo-Roman conception of liberty: religiously, economically, or morally, freedom meant the absence of dependence upon the will of another. Independence implied resilient non-interference: guaranteed freedom from the will or power of another person.⁴⁴ Only when a person in no way is subject to someone else's discretionary power is he or she truly free.⁴⁵ Unless the people have the power to remove any governor, as they deem best-king or tyrant or misguided Parliament-the threat of falling under the power of another's will, and becoming slaves, remains. Absolute monarchs forced their will and, concomitantly, their sin upon dependent subjects, thus serving the Devil's corrupting ends.⁴⁶ Such threats to personal and political liberty were intolerable to republicans such as Algernon

Sidney, Henry Vane, and Milton: any government so constituted, the poet claimed, was "to be abrogated."⁴⁷

Milton's *Tenure* exhibits a final characteristic of republicanism in connection with whom among the people may exercise the right to abrogate an intolerable government: in Milton's political vocabulary "the people" truly means "the virtuous." It was to the "uprighter sort" of Magistrates, that is, those who had escaped the Army's purge and therefore proved their adherence "to the Law of nature and right reason," to whom Milton left the particular charge against Charles I.⁴⁸ People, "in whom vertue and true worth [was] most eminent," were the true lovers of freedom.⁴⁹ If, by exercising their right to remove and punish a reigning monarch, "the Parlament and Military Council doe what they doe without precedent, if it appeare thir duty, it argues the more wisdom, vertue, and magnanimity, that they know themselves able to be a precedent for others."⁵⁰ Willingness to compass constitutional innovation, another republican favourite, showed which people were truly virtuous.

Milton's republican-inspired argument in the *Tenure* is that God gave his Sword to the New Model Army and its allies, the virtuous few from among the people, to execute the people's natural and original right to Justice and

reformation. The "people," the men who claimed their rights as free-born Englishmen, were upright, reasonable, virtuous, lovers of liberty, and warranted in the exercise of supreme power by "Justice and Victory." In the autumn and winter of 1648-1649 victory lay clearly with the New Model Army, which decided to move its sphere of operations from the field of battle to the political stage. The makers of the Revolution of 1648-1649, though clearly a minority, and unrepresentative of the population, were virtuous and just: so were their deeds. The language of republicanism thus served an ideology of aristocracy: thanks to the revolution, England was made a Free State, and in 1649 the People enjoyed "the first year of Liberty" under a government of the uprighter sort.

Milton's regicide tract may be heard as a bold proclamation of a people's right to defend itself from bad government, and a powerful re-statement of the ascending theory of sovereignty. However, we must always keep in mind what was actually happening on the political stage when Milton stepped forward and acted the part of polemicist: a self-interested minority had assumed supreme power by proclaiming itself concerned with the common good, that is, by claiming to be good; to be aristocrats. Why then did Milton use the language of republicanism and popular

sovereignty and natural rights to defend the unpopular action and government of a few? Why did Milton go to work for an oligarchic republic after publicly defending a revolutionary oligarchy?

Milton may have argued on behalf of a revolutionary oligarchy in terms of popular sovereignty and natural rights because he was a political realist uncertain about the Revolution's future. Sharon Achinstein thinks the contradictions in Milton's political thought are not so much intellectual failings as "natural consequences" of an attempt to reconcile political thought to political events.⁵¹ Milton wanted a popular revolution, but time and circumstance compelled him to defend, in the people's name, the heroic Army and its oligarchic revolution. The poet, and the revolutionary alliance, faced a particular problem, as did others in France in 1789 and Russia in 1917: they were a minority acting in the name of the people.⁵² Dzelzainis thinks Milton said more in the *Tenure* about the people's consent and power than was necessary to justify the regicide, because he hoped for further constitutional changes, perhaps for the dissolution of Parliament and new elections based on a broader franchise.⁵³ Fixler believes Milton argued for popular sovereignty and the people, even though the Army and its allies did not act in response to

the people's will, because the Leveller's broader base of support was needed by the political independents from November 1648 to March 1649.⁵⁴ These arguments assume Milton genuinely hoped for broader popular participation in government at some point in the future. If this is true, Milton's consistent support for the Commonwealth indicates a setting aside of inchoate democratic principles. It is more likely that by "the people" Milton never implied the population, but rather the virtuous and free from among their midst: people like himself, from his social class.

Milton could sound like an eloquent Leveller talking about "the people" and government by consent but refusing to yield to the people's direction when it came to the Revolution's survival. Give the multitude a place and a voice on the political stage and they, not knowing any better, would restore the King and bring down the curtain on the republic. If the unruly multitude could not comprehend, let alone act to preserve, the interest of the commonweal, they should be excluded, and Milton and his associates in the revolutionary alliance, although a minority, would act for their good.⁵⁵ The revolutionary oligarchy, whose social and political interest Milton shared and defended, and whose cast he joined, dictated the

peoples' good from its unassailable position on the political stage.⁵⁶

Milton's republican political thought was founded upon his aristocratic principles.⁵⁷ His defense of a minority-led republic sprang from the poet's belief in the virtue and godliness of the revolutionary leaders.⁵⁸ The few who ruled the English nation in 1649 proclaimed their acts to be just and good; Milton shared their belief that, as the best people, they ruled for the peoples' good.⁵⁹ While perhaps hoping for a self-disciplined, virtuous populace to emerge in the future, Milton preferred in 1649 to rationalize to a captive audience the rule of an unpopular few with an aristocratic republicanism.⁶⁰ The fact that his aristocratic republicanism justified and defended a revolutionary oligarchy that became an oligarchic republic should make us question Milton's "aristocratic" credentials.

Milton is widely recognized as a social, spiritual, and political aristocrat because of his ethical orientation.⁶¹ A case can be made based on Milton's political actions in 1649, both written and vocational, that the poet was an oligarch who acted the part of an aristocrat. First, The English Revolution of 1648-1649 was made by an alliance of interests I called a revolutionary oligarchy, based on their personal, economic, and political

connections and interest. The revolutionary leaders, the Army, Congregationalists and Baptists in London, colonial interloping merchants, political independents, and commonwealthsmen, were in fact a self-interested group whose action and rule were warranted by the power of the sword. A few who usurp a sitting Parliament and execute an incorrigible king based on their particular understanding of Scriptural justice and the nation's economic interest should not be called an aristocracy: a few who rule in their own interest are, according to Aristotle's constitutional scheme, an oligarchy. Let them be called such no matter how convinced they were of their own virtue and justice.

Second, Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was a written defense, a political action, of that revolutionary oligarchy which installed itself in power in December 1648-January 1649. In the tract Milton argued that people with power are right to rise above law to execute just punishment upon tyrants. The people possess this right because they themselves are right, that is, they are godly, virtuous, free, concerned for the common good, and men of property. By application, Milton contended that those who acted against Parliament and the King were right and just, in a word, aristocrats. The *Tenure* thus seconded the

actions of a revolutionary oligarchy against a conservative, tradition-bound polity with an ideology of aristocracy: the few do justice because they are just, presuming all the while that justice in word equals justice in deed. That presumption did not hold for the majority of the populace opposed to the purge and the regicide. The *Tenure's* ideological structure offered the revolutionary oligarchy two useful illusions: the illusion of neutrality, whereby the guilt the self-interested few feel for taking power by force against the wish of the majority is dulled by the belief that they are the good who act for the good of the many; and the illusion of overcoming the world, so that the good performed obviates an analysis of the base of their power in the sword. The *Tenure* is thus theory in the service of oligarchy.

Third, Milton himself joined the revolutionary oligarchs in the production of their subsequent performance, the oligarchic Commonwealth regime. The poet, thanks to his public defense of the regicide in the *Tenure*, and his personal connections to members of the newly constituted executive body of the English Free State, the Council of State, was invited to serve as its Latin Secretary. Milton had known associations with two members of the Council, Luke Robinson and John Bradshaw. He was a

friend to Thomas Chaloner, who along with Thomas Scot and Henry Marten, both members of the Council, led Parliament during the months between the purge and regicide. It is likely that he knew Phillip Skippon, leader of the City Militia and friend of London radicals. It is possible that Milton, through either Robinson or Henry Vane, knew Cornelius Holland, a backer, along with Col. John Hutchinson, Col. William Constable, and Chaloner's client, William Rowe, of the Protestant/imperialist Eleutheria (Bahamas) project. Milton was the son of a scrivener and comfortable in the culture of print-capital: in Milner's terms, a bourgeois intellectual. A supporter of Protestant expansion around the world, Milton would have found much agreeable in the oligarchic imperial dreams of colonial inter-lopers like William and Owen Rowe, Thomas Andrews, Maurice Thomson, and their parliamentary backers like Arthur Heselrig, Holland, Henry Mildmay, and Oliver Cromwell.⁶² Milton's oligarchic politics, demonstrated in the *Tenure*, were confirmed by his reception into England's ruling oligarchy, the Council of State, one month after the tract's publication.

Milton's shared ideological outlook, similar social background, and personal connection with key members of the revolutionary alliance and the Rump's Council of State,

point to the conclusion that the poet was an oligarchic republican. Milton can be heard as a political actor whose aristocratic consciousness and republican political theory, exemplified in the *Tenure*, justified the actions of a revolutionary oligarchy, and the rule of an oligarchic republic. The poet stood with the few who spoke in terms of popular sovereignty but erected a supreme Parliament: a Parliament chosen less for its representative qualities and more for its ideological congruence with the revolutionary alliance and the Commonwealth's survival. England's new rulers, a minority dedicated to the expansion of trade and commerce and Puritan religion, in Ireland, the West Indies, and America, found in Milton an actor able to defend their oligarchy with aristocratic lines.⁶³ Milton could pull off the performance so successfully because, like his colleagues in England's republican pageant, he was an oligarch convinced of his own goodness.

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- ¹ Pocock, 1975, vii.
- ² Jeffrey C. Isaac "Republicanism versus Liberalism. A Reconsideration" *History of Political Thought* 9 (1988): 351.
- ³ Martin Van Geldern *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590* (Cambridge: 1992), 280; Tuck, 1993, 224-225.
- ⁴ Skinner, 1978, Vol. I: 71.
- ⁵ Worden, 1981, 193; Wood, 79.
- ⁶ Skinner, 1978, Vol. I: 157.
- ⁷ Ibid., 74; Also Van Geldern, 280.
- ⁸ Skinner, 1998, 55.
- ⁹ Knud Hakkonssen "Republicanism" in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit eds. (London: 1993): 572.
- ¹⁰ Skinner, 1998, 45.
- ¹¹ Philip Pettit "Liberalism and Republicanism" in *Australian Journal of Political Science* 28 (1993): 165-166. The liberal conception of negative liberty emphasises the quality of non-interference as the measure of freedom.
- ¹² Skinner, 1998, 55ff.
- ¹³ Glen Burgess *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642*, (London: 1992), 139ff.
- ¹⁴ Pettit, 166.
- ¹⁵ Worden, 1994, 46.
- ¹⁶ Skinner, 1998, n. 177, 55.
- ¹⁷ Corns, 1995, 26.
- ¹⁸ Zagorin, 1992, 156: he notes that J.G.A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* does not include Milton among English republicans. The work of Blair Worden, Skinner, and the discussion of the *Tenure* below tell against dismissing the poet's republican position.
- ¹⁹ W.M. Spellman *European Political Thought, 1600-1700* (New York: 1998), 112.
- ²⁰ Burgess, 220.
- ²¹ J.G.A. Pocock *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: 1957), 49.
- ²² Milton, *TKM*, 6.
- ²³ Milton, *TKM*, 4.
- ²⁴ Scott, 29. Trevor-Roper also sees Milton's republicanism as part of his "classical humanist inheritance," pg. 278.
- ²⁵ Mayfield, 106-109.

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- ²⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ²⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 32.
- ²⁸ Barber, 134.
- ²⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 16.
- ³⁰ The sharpest resistance tract emerging out of the French Wars of Religion, the anonymous *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, while permitting the use of force against a king who turned tyrant, did not advocate the abolition of monarchy. See Salmon, 185-191; and Julian H. Franklin ed. *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth century: Three Treatises by Hotman, Beza and Mornay* (New York: 1969).
- ³¹ Milton, *TKM*, 30.
- ³² Milton, *TKM*, 17; 18.
- ³³ Dzelzainis, 1991, x, and Hughes, 118 and 128; Sanderson, 7.
- ³⁴ Milton, *TKM*, 8-9.
- ³⁵ Milton, *TKM*, 10.
- ³⁶ Milton, *TKM*, 16.
- ³⁷ Hill, 1977, 167. On the lack of a consistently articulate English theory of resistance before the Civil War, see J.P. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640*, (New York: 1986): 69ff.
- ³⁸ On French constitutionalist thought, see J.H.M. Salmon *French Religious Wars*, and "An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance: Buchanan, Rossaeus and Locke" in *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early-Modern France* (New York: 1987), 108-109: Also Skinner, 1978, 336. On constitutionalism in general see H.A. Lloyd "Constitutionalism" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie eds. (Cambridge, 1991): 263-264; D.E. Luscombe "The state of nature and the origin of the state" in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg eds. (New York: 1982): 757-770. On resistance theory, Robert M. Kingdon "Calvinism and resistance theory, 1550-1580" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie eds. (Cambridge, 1991): 193-218, and Van Geldern, 163, for Dutch political thought on resistance.
- ³⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 27.
- ⁴⁰ Janel Mueller puts Milton at the forefront of nascent English republicanism for his advocacy of parliamentary supremacy in the tract *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline*, published in 1641. See "Contextualizing

Milton's Nascent Republicanism" in *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and his World*, (Binghamton, NY: 1995), 265.

⁴¹ Milton, *TKM*, 13.

⁴² Milton, *TKM*, 8.

⁴³ Milton, *TKM*, 32.

⁴⁴ Scott, 36.

⁴⁵ Dzelzainis, 1999, 81.

⁴⁶ Scott, 36.

⁴⁷ Milton, *TKM*, 32.

⁴⁸ Milton, *TKM*, 7.

⁴⁹ Milton, *TKM*, 3.

⁵⁰ Milton, *TKM*, 33.

⁵¹ Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*, (Princeton: 1994), 22.

⁵² Hill, 1977, 168. Christopher Hill cautions (strangely it seems) against equating the gap between Milton's "democratic" wish in the *Tenure*, and the reality of revolutionary dictatorship, with Stalinism.

⁵³ Dzelzainis, 1991, xviii; 1995, 20.

⁵⁴ Fixler, 148-150.

⁵⁵ Wootton, 70-71.

⁵⁶ Trevor-Roper, 233.

⁵⁷ Steven Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth" *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 712.

⁵⁸ Fixler, 166.

⁵⁹ Hill, 1977, 266.

⁶⁰ Achinstein claims Milton's singular goal in his pamphlet literature was "making his public fit to achieve self-governance through training in virtue." It is unlikely that Milton ever imagined this public to be co-extensive with the populace, at least not in his lifetime, and certainly not in 1649.

⁶¹ So Wolfe, 261, Hill, 1977, 266; Zagorin (1992, 22) says "the concern for moral and ethical action dominated Milton's work." Giesst claims the best way to understand Milton's political thought is as a synthesis of classical ethical theory and republicanism along with Christian individualism; pg. 34.

⁶² Steven Pincus argues that Milton was hostile to commercial society and the politics of "interest," and preferred instead a conservative, agrarian, political economy: Pincus, 707, 712, 724-728. Milton may have feared the growing pursuit of wealth in the rising commercial

market of the 1650s as potentially corruptive; as a person living off loans and investments, however, he must have appreciated the necessity, and benefit, of increasing the nation's wealth through trade and commerce. Milton's connections among London's printers, and the income he derived from his publications, surely showed him the virtue of the market: see Donbraski. On Protestant imperialism, Andrew Barnaby "Another Rome in the West?" Milton and the Imperial Republic, 1654-1670" in *Milton Studies* 30 (1993): 67-84.

⁶³See Brenner "New Merchants and Commercial Policy under the Commonwealth," 558-576; and Hill, 1986, pp. 95-100, on the consequences of the revolution and the development of capitalism. Hill uses the term "English Revolution" to include the Civil War period, the Commonwealth, and Protectorate.

Conclusion

J.G.A. Pocock, in an essay revisiting his classic work on republican thought, *The Machiavellian Moment*, warns against applying the "iron law of oligarchy" to the problem of social change and the English Revolution. Historians who believe "politics is never more than the sum of relationships existing among politicians" risk losing sight of long-term factors that help to explain why Charles I and his Parliament fought a civil war; why Charles lost the struggle and his head; and why the government erected over the monarch's dead body failed.¹ The English Civil War and Revolution were events with long-term and short-term causes, waged for religious, political, and economic reasons, with both unforeseen and hoped-for consequences. The upheaval of 1640-1660 cannot be understood simply as arising from conflicting personal agendas within a narrow circle of the Court and Parliament. The revolution was a drama writ-large on England's political stage, and no single actor or backdrop is sufficient to make sense of the structure and the meaning of its plot.

It is true, nonetheless, as argued in Chapter One, that the unprecedented events of autumn 1648 to spring 1649, in which a sitting Parliament was purged, the King

put on trial and executed, and an English Free State proclaimed, were carried off by a remarkably few people. This minority of the political nation, representing the views and position of an even smaller proportion of the populace, was able to set itself up as judge and lord over England thanks to an alliance of purpose between the New Model Army and the City's political independents, which included: executing the King, establishing parliamentary supremacy, religious reformation, and an aggressive expansion of trade. It is appropriate to understand this revolutionary alliance as an oligarchy: a few men determined to overturn England's ancient constitution for their interest and their view of the common good. It is even more apt to call the government set up by the revolutionaries an oligarchy, governed as it was by a post-purge, Rump-appointed Council of State, closed to persons not in agreement with its power and ruling ideology. I argue that it is right to call a man who defended the revolutionaries, shared a similar ideological position with them, and then accepted a position of employment with their republican government, an oligarchic republican.

A reading of Milton the oligarch, it is true, does rest in part on where one "hears" the accent in his political language. The *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates'*

front piece declares Milton's intent to prove: *That it is lawful, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant.* Martin Dzelzaines latches on to the importance of "any" in Milton's thesis. The poet is setting fire to the constitutionalist doctrine that only inferior magistrates may rise up against a wicked king. Milton claims an individual right, based on natural law, to punish a wicked ruler. The peoples' right, as free-born men, to remove any ruler "as oft as they shall judge it best," to be governed as they wish, was not revoked when they trusted the king and their magistrates with governing power. Milton's tract thus legitimated the action of individuals, the Army, against a Long Parliament bent on settling with a tyrannical king. For Dzelzainis, this is a doctrine for revolution, radical as anything written on the subject before John Locke.² Milton thus takes his place with Locke, John Toland, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson, as a defender of the peoples' rights against unjust and tyrannical government.

This essay places its emphasis on the phrase "who have the Power." A minority of the nation wished the king dead in 1648-1649: they got their way because they had the power to fulfill it. Milton's regicide tract did not defend an

individual act against a tyrant, but the machinations of an army seeking vengeance against its chief enemy. Confident in the warrant of Providence as demonstrated by its victories on the battlefield, the Army moved against a sitting Parliament to get at a legitimate sovereign, who by prayer and fasting they discerned to be a "man of blood." Charles was a tyrant, pure and simple, and Justice demanded he be punished for his acts. If the many did not agree with this summary verdict, be they Parliamentarians or People, still Right would be done. Right belonged to the mighty few that trusted in their own goodness, and possessed the power to do their good work on behalf of a disagreeable and fractious multitude. The assassin of Henry IV probably thought along the same lines; no doubt the Chilean generals of September 1973 did. In an unstable and uncertain political environment, to argue that "any with Power" may lawfully act against tyrants opens the door for an Oliver Cromwell, a George Washington, or an Augusto Pinochet, to reign supreme on the national stage. To some scholars, identifying Milton as an oligarch may be jarring and unwelcome. Given the social history of the revolution and the poet's own performance, both literary and clerical, on its behalf, I believe it is an appropriate label.

Postscript: A Godly Oligarchy

Perez Zagorin argued in his book on the political thought of the English Revolution that the best reason to study Milton's political thought is to understand better the mind of an epic poet.³ Milton's defense of oligarchy may help an interpretation of the dialogue between God the Father and the Son in Book III of *Paradise Lost*. The Book opens with the rulers of heaven watching Satan begin his approach to Eden (Line 70) where the Adversary hopes to turn the human pair to revolt. The Father foresees that

Man will harken to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole command,
Sole pledge of his obedience: so will fall,
He and his faithless progeny: whose fault?
Whose but his own?

Paradise Lost (PL), Book III, 93-97⁴

Providence bestowed humanity with resilient non-interference. The first human couple was not bound by or held under the will of Providence or Fate: they were free from constraint, freedom to decide whether or not to harken unto the voice of the Fiend.

The Deity was not culpable for man's fall, for he gave humanity the power to choose between good and evil:

I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. (III,
98-99)

Although the Creator sees that the human pair will use their freedom to join, however unwittingly, Satan's revolt, he makes plans for salvation.

Man therefore shall find grace,
The other none: in mercy and justice both,
Through heaven and earth, so shall my glory excel,
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine. (III, 131-134)

The Son now speaks. Having heard the Father's gracious promise toward mankind, the Son declares that the Creator "judgest only right," and could never allow Satan to "draw after him the whole race," or worse:

Abolish thy creation, and unmake,
For him, what for thy glory thou hast made? (III, 163-164)

The Father will not permit that which was created for his glory to be lost. Some will be saved, not of their own power, but *sola gratia dei*. The Elect shall hear His call, and know that

...to me owe
all his deliverance, and to none but me. (III, 181-182).

The Son proceeds to offer himself up as the vehicle of God's grace to humanity:

Behold me then, me for him, life for life
I offer, on me let thine anger fall;
Account me man; I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleased, on me let Death wreak all his rage;
(III, 236-241).

Death shall possess the Son for a time, but he will not be abandoned in the loathsome grave:

...by thee raised I ruin all my foes,
Death last,...
Then with the multitude of my redeemed
Shall enter heaven long absent, and return
Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud
Of anger shall remain, but peace assured,
And reconcilment; wrath shall be no more
Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire. (III,
258-265)

After hearing the Son's plan for substitutionary atonement, the Father announces the exaltation of his co-Equal to the highest place above:

Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt thou reign
Both God and man, Son both of God and man,
Anointed universal king; all power
I give thee, reign for ever, and assume
Thy merits: under thee as head supreme
Thrones, principedoms, powers, dominions I reduce: (III,
315-320).

In Book III of Milton's epic, before the Fall of Man occurs, God the Father and God the Son devise a scheme for the redemption of humanity, which will preserve the Father's glory (III, 133) and exalt the Son to the Father's throne (III, 314). The divine rulers of heaven create the world for their glory, allow it to Fall to sin to preserve their gift of freedom to its inhabitants, and set out a plan of salvation that will bring the Elect to heaven to offer up praise and glory for all eternity. *Paradise Lost*

defends a heavenly oligarchy, whose own glory is its highest end. The poet seeks to justify the ways and governance and power of a divine few to the many here on earth. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to God alone.

¹J.G.A. Pocock "The Machiavellian Moment Revisited: A Study in History and Ideology" *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981): 49-72.

²Dzelzainis, 1991, xvii-xviii.

³Zagorin, 1954, 107.

⁴All selections are taken from *Oxford's World's Classics: John Milton: Selected Poetry*, Jonathan Goldberg and Stephen Orgel eds. (New York: 1994): 95-103.

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