Poetry and the Cromwellian Protectorate

Culture, Politics, and Institutions

EDWARD HOLBERTON
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For my parents, Jane and David
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Preface

Few witnesses to the Protectorate’s improvised beginnings on 16 December 1653 could have thought that they promised the lively and innovative culture of poetry explored in this book. Oliver Cromwell had been persuaded by a group of army officers to rule as Lord Protector, under the constitution known as the Instrument of Government, parts of which were unfinished, and had to be mumbled at the inauguration ceremony. The constitution appeared to be a compromise between a monarchy and a republic, to govern a population seemingly unable to make either system work. Yet it is precisely from its entanglements with the compromises, instabilities, and contingencies of the settlement that Protectorate poetry draws its vitality. Between 1653 and 1659, Andrew Marvell, Edmund Waller, Marchamont Nedham, William Davenant, John Dryden, and other lesser-known poets exploited the potential of diverse poetic forms—panegyric, elegies, and other forms of occasional verse, even masques, pageants, and opera—to probe the fault-lines of Protectorate culture.

This poetry explores a shifting matrix of institutions within which the Protectors were obliged to rule and act, but which contested their powers ceaselessly. The verse of this period has often seemed one-dimensional when it has been interpreted as panegyric focused on Oliver Cromwell and his merits. This book seeks to bring Protectorate poetry out from Cromwell’s shadow, by locating its contexts in the Protectorate’s institutions and the crises that brought the roles and authority of those institutions into question. The Protectorate began whilst a crucial embassy to Sweden was in progress, which had been sent to win international support for a young republic, and was then required to represent the new regime. This book begins by discussing the dilemmas of ambassador Bulstrode Whitelocke, as he endeavoured on the one hand to demonstrate his cultivation and fluency in courtly decorum, and on the other to uphold a plainness in his behaviour which would befit the representative of a godly commonwealth. He presented Queen Christina with poems by Andrew Marvell, Sir Charles Wolseley, and Daniel Whistler. They represent the Protectorate in relation to the contingencies of international politics, as a regime turning to Sweden’s friendship and historical example after disappointments in Anglo–Dutch diplomacy. From the outset, the Protector counted on financial and political support from the City of London. Chapter 2 discusses the ways in which this relationship revitalized, but also exposed, the civic values discussed in City pageants, and how economic pressures caused London to re-imagine itself as a commonwealth within a commonwealth. The University of Oxford compiled an anthology of poetry in celebration of the Anglo–Dutch peace treaty signed in the spring of 1654. In Chapter 3 this anthology’s array of allusions and images
of rebirth is related to the university’s task of educating a post-war elite—a role which gave the university power and authority, but subjected it to external interference and pressures to reform.

The chapters forming the central section of this book concern two parliamentary crises. The first parliament of the Protectorate would not accept the powers allotted to it by the constitution, and refused to ratify the Instrument of Government. As the crisis undermined the state’s legitimacy, republican colonels in the army attempted a coup. I look closely at how Waller’s *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector* and Marvell’s *The First Anniversary* responded to these events, particularly at the force of circumstance in the rhetoric of these poems, and in their different perspectives on the Protectorate’s cultural possibilities. A chapter on the reform of Atlantic trade involves a second parliamentary crisis, which resulted in the revised constitution known as the Humble Petition and Advice. Waller’s interest in the development of the Commonwealth’s maritime power is discussed in relation to topical revisions of *Upon the Present War with Spain*, which urge merchants and landowners to grasp a common cause in civilianizing the state. After the constitution was settled, the project of an expansion of English trade and naval power in the Atlantic remained controversial. I look at the contributions made to these debates by William Davenant’s innovative operas, as the regime’s trade reforms drew protests from colonial settlers.

The poetry examined in the final two chapters of the book addresses institutions of marriage and death, and arrangements for the succession of a Cromwellian dynasty, including the new Protector. Entertainments for the 1657 weddings of Cromwell’s daughters express tense hopes for securing the Protectorate through dynastic unions. Chapter 6 discusses Marvell’s manipulation of irony in writing a masque for the wedding of Mary Cromwell into a family known for their royalism. The final chapter reads elegies for Cromwell against the disintegration of Richard Cromwell’s Protectorate and the staging of an elaborate, anachronistic, state funeral for his father. Works by Waller, Marvell, Sprat, and Dryden probe the hyperbole and scripted rites of mourning in search of Cromwell’s real cultural legacy: the institutional foundations on which a new Protectorate might be built, and the limitations that it must negotiate.
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In 1654, Ralph Bathurst, vice-president of Trinity College, Oxford, wrote this poem for a university verse anthology published in celebration of peace with the Dutch:

Though all are Statesmen now, and ’tis the guise
These times have taught, not to be Wits but Wise;
Though Playes be downe, and our more serious Age
Acts all in earnest on a wider Stage:
’Tis yet (we hope) no trespass that we dare
Usurpe a Verse, and sing the good we share:
So when Augustus with his Warlike hand
Had brought home Triumphs both from Sea and Land,
And (Janus Temple shut) now conquer’d more
By arts of Peace, then feats of Armes before;
Then swarmes of Poets came, and made him known
Deckt by Their Bayes, no lesse then by his owne.
As if one sacred heat did first incite
Him to Achieve great things; next, Them to Write.
And thus much we have done, only to show
We can be Poets when you make us so.¹

Bathurst’s poem raises problems of interpretation that are in many ways typical of Protectorate poetry. What is the argument of the first four lines, with their tense mix of irony and sobriety? How are we to understand the ambiguity in the final couplet, which ostensibly claims modest poetic ambition, but also suggests an edgily conditional endorsement of the Protector (who, it should be noted, had not yet had much of a chance to prove himself in the arts of peace)? Customarily, critics have sought to elucidate such texts by relating them to the overarching political conflicts of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms² and Interregnum. It could be asked how irony and ambiguity in this poem might encode a royalist’s

¹ Musarum Oxoniensium Elaiophoria (Oxford, 1654), 59.
² As argued by a number of historians, this term is preferable to ‘The Civil Wars’ when referring to the interlinked conflicts which were fought through the kingdoms of England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, between 1639 and 1651. See John Morrill, ‘The War(s) of the Three Kingdoms’, in Glenn Burgess (ed.), The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603–1715 (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1999), 65–91.
dissatisfaction with the engagement forced upon him. This text has been picked out to illustrate how an Augustan literary tradition emerged in support of the Protector in opposition to republican writing. Yet Bathurst’s poem implies that his praise has conditions, and inscribes relationships that resist polarized commitments and discourses: he speaks for himself, but also for the University of Oxford, and the comparison with Augustus focuses the university’s concerns on the ways by which Cromwell will consolidate a domestic peace. The poem witnesses a political sensibility informed by institutional interests and an eye for compromise; it calls for reading that is sensitive to the complex practicalities of its political moment.

Protectorate poetry has been caught up in a lively scholarly debate over the cultural stakes of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. This debate has brought the ends of literary and historical scholarship into question and nurtured innovative interdisciplinary approaches. Studies have revealed literature’s densely creative interaction with the visual arts, the symbolic and material cultures of authority, and a surge in print publication. A number of scholars have refined an incisive combination of close literary and historical analysis. Among these, Warren Chernaik, Martin Dzelzainis, and David Norbrook have developed theses that are particularly influential. Chernaik and Dzelzainis draw on Quentin Skinner’s historiography to argue that the political poetry of the later seventeenth century can be grouped in two rival traditions separated by different conceptions of political liberty, which were developed in the course of the political conflicts of the 1640s and 1650s: Marvell, Milton, Harrington, Locke, Shaftesbury, Sidney, and Neville constitute a ‘neo-roman’ literary-political tradition, while Hobbes, Parker, Filmer, and Dryden form a second, rival continuity. Norbrook contends that a healthy republican literary tradition pre-dated the wars and excited the seminal cultural debates of the 1640s and 1650s. His *Writing the English Republic* examines the attempts of authors including Fisher, Harrington, Marvell, May, Milton, and Wither to overturn the culture of monarchy with a republican social vision and aesthetic. These efforts to recover seventeenth-century republicanism have been a resounding success, exciting a lively, productive, and international scholarly discussion. There is a danger in this success, however, that the impress of republican thought on mid-century writing might be exaggerated into the defining contest of this literature, providing a schema by which to divide

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the period’s key texts and authors. The cost of that reduction would be to obscure a different kind of literary-political engagement, practised through innovative and ambitious poetry.

This book contends that Protectorate verse is animated by circumstantial commitments and perspectives. These poems explore contingencies and compromises arising from shifting cultural tensions, which have hitherto been distorted by a tendency to represent them as polarized controversies: republican against monarchist, Nonconformist against Anglican, or radical against conservative. The crux of this argument is that Protectorate poetry develops complex entanglements with the cultural institutions of the Protectorate, institutions that could no longer be taken for granted, yet which variously constrain, encourage, or complicate political beliefs. The poetry examined here was written for the occasions of embassies, universities, parliaments, mayoral elections, dynastic marriages, and state funerals. These were the building blocks with which a settlement had to be constructed after the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. They came under intense scrutiny from diverse political interests, which argued for their reform in parliamentary debates, sermons, and printed publications. Poets inherited rhetorical conventions and emblems of authority from the institutional occasions of pre-war culture. Ploughed over by the upheavals of the 1640s and 1650s, these literary materials now provided a language rich with historical and cultural associations, which could be used to explore the dilemmas of the Protectorate settlement, through semantic possibilities unavailable to other forms of writing.

The revival of interest in republicanism has led critics to read Protectorate poetry against the background of a regime gradually reverting to the institutions of monarchy. In this perspective, Protectorate poetic culture is a contest between republican literary activism and monarchist (or ‘Augustan’) writing, which encouraged the Protectorate’s apparent drift towards monarchy by praising the Cromwells with iconography and poetic forms derived from the culture of the old royal court. I argue that the Protectorate’s elite and its poets reused cultural materials that past kings had exploited, certainly, but they could not replicate the original ideological import of these materials any more than they could erase the regicide. Protectorate verse often engages with this problematic directly, as it seeks to define the settlement’s cultural possibilities. This contention entails another, that Protectorate poetry is not as preoccupied with the charisma of Cromwell as some critics have argued. For instance, in Laura Knoppers’s reading of *The First Anniversary*, Marvell’s account of Cromwell’s near-fatal coaching accident is the key to a poem that ‘foregrounds and problematizes the process itself of constructing a Cromwellian image’. It will be argued below that Marvell narrates this episode precisely to make his readers think about national life beyond Cromwell, and the coherence of the polity that will survive him. These

poems reveal a Protector who has influence, but by no means complete control, over the Protectorate’s infrastructure and matrix of cultural institutions. Even in the context of his daughters’ marriages, I find a Cromwell who is somewhat awkward and overwhelmed: a figure who impedes as well as encourages a cultural settlement. This begs the question of how most of the poems studied in this book came to be read—or dismissed—as panegyric to Cromwell, and the Epilogue seeks to tease apart some of the historiographic and literary processes that have induced this conflation.

The contextual approach taken in this book is influenced by methodologies developed in the work of J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner. Historians interested in Parliament’s conflict with the Crown have always studied institutions, but these scholars sought to disentangle the texts and political ideas of this period from the assumptions of ‘Whig’ history concerning the progressive development of English institutions. Broadly speaking, this view of history construed the wars in the middle of the seventeenth century as a crucial phase in the evolution of an unwritten constitution, which had safeguarded political liberty as empire expanded. To escape the conceptual anachronisms produced by these teleologies, Skinner and Pocock ask what an author or speaker was practically trying to achieve by writing a text in a particular moment. Skinner’s methodological essays urge close attention to the relationship between such a ‘speech act’ and the context of linguistic conventions with which it engages. He asks how an argument might extend shared vocabularies or methodologies, and how this act was intended to impact the ideological and political contests of its moment. The pertinence of these questions to different kinds of poetry has been made more apparent by a parallel interest in rhetoric among scholars of early modern literature, who have explored the pervasive influence of rhetorical education in seventeenth-century writing. Many kinds of poetry appear to have a rhetorical purpose, to move or persuade, and demand close attention to the rhetorical contexts in which they were deployed, and the effects that even ostensibly commonplace or naïve statements might have been intended to produce. This requires picking through the cultural baggage that lines of verse can carry: the historical associations that certain images or figures of speech might connote, the expectations that their deployment excites, satisfies, or finesses, or the different kinds of authority transmitted by particular topics and forms through conventional usage. To focus these concerns on an understanding of Protectoral panegyrics, elegies, or epithalamia, it is necessary to examine cultural institutions as both linguistic and political contexts: universities, weddings, or state occasions supplied conventions for poetic language, but they frequently became objects of rhetorical debate too.

This kind of close reading is not without its hazards. Many of the poems in the following pages would have been categorized as epideictic rhetoric, the branch of

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7 Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i. 103–27.
classical oratory concerned with praise. It is a difficult mode to interpret: covert or illocutionary messages are often key to a poem’s meaning within its political moment, and criticism can masquerade as compliment. These interpretative problems are exacerbated by the specific conditions of post-regicide culture, which inherited a language of praise freighted with problematic associations: when Marvell compares Cromwell to Amphion in *The First Anniversary*, did he expect readers to register that Waller had likened Charles I to Amphion too, in ‘Upon His Majesties Repairing of Pauls’? Marvell’s rhetorical facility with irony and allusion is well appreciated, and the case for this intention has been argued by some of his most convincing interpreters. But Protectorate verse was written by poets of differing abilities and sensitivities, and it is not always immediately clear when an image is awake or asleep to the ironies of its deployment. This poetry challenges today’s reader to think carefully about the kinds of circulation and reading that a poem anticipates. Leading Protectorate poets cultivated a readership that would be alert to topical nuances: Marvell and Waller drew heavily on news, and the latter’s variant texts bear witness to fine topical revisions over short intervals of time.

This is a selective reading of poetry written under the Protectorate. There are writers, including the would-be laureate Payne Fisher, who would receive more attention in a comprehensive study, but whose productions are not so responsive to the contexts outlined here. This is to acknowledge that the institutional perspective employed in this book does not claim to excavate the poetic attitude of the times, or forms of practice which sprang from the shared reading of an identifiable school. It will be seen that the Protectorate brought into dialogue poets with diverse cultural perspectives and literary resources. Their attention to circumstance and contingency may in some cases have been influenced by debates in political or epistemological philosophy, but to explore this context would be a substantial and multi-layered project in itself, which would perhaps have to take in the treatment of circumstance and necessity in moral and legal thought too. This book aims to show that what these poems share is rather an urgency that stemmed from a series of institutional crises, which moved their authors to discuss the potential of the Protectorate settlement.
Bulstrode Whitelocke’s Embassy to Sweden

In November 1653 Bulstrode Whitelocke set out on an embassy to Sweden. He was apprehensive, but he had been bullied into it by Cromwell, with whom his relations were frosty. Parliament’s choice had been Viscount Lisle after Whitelocke had declined its nomination, but L’Isle now withdrew on grounds of ill health and, notwithstanding Mrs Whitelocke’s pregnancy, Cromwell would not be refused.\(^1\) Whitelocke’s journal shows him nervous: the wartime voyage was hazardous enough, but hitherto the republic’s diplomacy had been disastrous.

Two of the republic’s diplomats had been assassinated: Isaac Dorislaus, an envoy to Holland, in May 1649, and Anthony Ascham, the agent in Spain, in June 1650. Foreign states had reopened diplomatic channels soon after the regicide, and the Rump Parliament quickly became adept at receiving representatives of rival powers and playing them against one another.\(^2\) Sean Kelsey argues that by reviving and adapting ceremonial forms the republic successfully ‘invented’ itself. However, Steven Pincus’s account of the diplomatic manoeuvres surrounding the Dutch war and peace offers a different view on republican diplomacy.\(^3\) Oliver St John and Walter Strickland set out on a grand embassy to the United Provinces in the spring of 1651, to develop an ‘intrinsical’ ideological alliance between the Commonwealth and its Protestant republican neighbour.\(^4\) The Dutch political system had previously allowed the House of Orange (which had close ties to the Stuarts) to exercise influence through the quasi-hereditary office of stadtholder, though William II had recently died, leaving an heir too young to take up this office. The English ambassadors were surprised to find that the Orangist–Stuart interest yet had power to obstruct their negotiations, and to affront and attack violently the English party many times.\(^5\)


\(^4\) See the ambassadors’ instructions quoted ibid. 25.

The republican pride expressed in the pomp of the Rump’s diplomatic ceremonies encouraged idealistic and unrealistic expectations of the Dutch. Marvell’s ‘In Legationem Domini Oliveri St John ad Provincias Foederatas’ mixes prophetic and republican allusions to offer the Dutch a stark choice between a treaty and war. The poem reads this choice in the name Oliver St John (an olive signifying peace, and St John the herald of war), and contrasts that bald message favourably with the dissemblances of conventional diplomacy.\(^6\) The newsbooks explained that the embassy of St John and Strickland had failed because Dutch republicanism was debased and materialistic, while the Rump heard emotive accounts of the Amboyna massacre (an incident in 1623, when Dutch officials in Indonesia executed ten English merchants) and passed the punitive Navigation Act.\(^7\) Subsequent attempts to negotiate a peace, both before and during the war, were overwhelmed by a combination of idealism and xenophobia that spread forcefully through English society.\(^8\) Dutch deputies came to London, but they met with a crescendo of unrealistic demands from Parliament’s commissioners, who, even though they did not go to the extremes of popular and radical belligerence, took the view that the Dutch must reform their society before war could cease. The negotiations were followed keenly in the courts of Europe: the French ambassador reported to his masters ‘unprecedented’ English demands.\(^9\) Dutch deputies were abaggasted when the English commissioners proposed a union of sovereignties, which, they reasoned, would guarantee Dutch social reform.\(^10\) The proposal enraged even the republican end of the Dutch political spectrum; it shows, Pincus argues, a complete failure by the English commissioners to understand the nature and culture of Dutch republicanism.\(^11\)

English diplomacy was also badly affected by conflicts and uncertainty in the republic’s administration, which played into the hands of royalists and Orangists, who sought to represent the republic as an illegitimate regime of rebellious zealots.\(^12\) Cromwell’s ambiguous authority complicated diplomatic relations: Mazarin’s representative Bordeaux took to loitering in St James’s Park in the hope of bumping into Cromwell on a walk.\(^13\) Their informal negotiations were conducted against the spirit of a protocol established by the Rump (and nominally continued under the Protectorate) that forbade diplomats from meeting

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\(^8\) This is to simplify changing tensions between the newsbooks, the increasingly unpopular Rump and then Barebone’s Parliament, and the commissioners, who sympathized with popular idealism in many respects, but in others were constrained by it. See Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, 51–148.

\(^9\) Ibid. 159.

\(^10\) Ibid. 140–3.

\(^11\) Ibid. 141.

\(^12\) *Journal*, ii. 135–6.

state officials other than those commissioned to treat with them; this rule was disregarded when it suited the English, and succeeded only in exasperating the quarantined foreign diplomats. The inception of the Protectorate in December 1653 made Cromwell’s status less ambiguous, but the change made English diplomacy, if anything, yet more irregular: diplomacy became the business of a small number of ‘grossly overworked’ ‘amateurs’ who infuriated visitors with their eccentricities and lapses in protocol.

Whitelocke’s instructions were issued by Parliament, but Cromwell met Whitelocke privately to discuss them. Cromwell’s foreign policy in the Baltic has been vindicated from the claim that it was dominated by a naïve and anachronistic nostalgia for the campaigns of Christina’s father, Gustavus Adolphus: Michael Roberts has shown how carefully Protectoral policy appeased and encouraged Sweden as a natural ally without further provoking the Dutch. Whitelocke’s alliance was similarly grounded in pragmatic strategy. Publicly, he was instructed to make sure that royalists were obstructed from access to Christina, and to challenge misrepresentations of the English, so that a ‘good understanding and correspondence’ might be kept between the states, which would at once protect trade and the interests of the Protestant church. Secretly, Parliament instructed him to see what preparations could be made for an alliance against the Dutch and the Danes to open the Sound. Cromwell agreed, but told Whitelocke that the priority was to make a public treaty quickly: Sweden was the only state disposed to make such a treaty, and Whitelocke had to move fast because the Dutch were ‘tampering’ with the Queen. An outline treaty, with the particulars and any aggressive alliance to be negotiated later, would make that tampering more difficult, but it would also grant the English government an international legitimacy that no other state had offered, and which peace negotiations with the Dutch had been doing little to promote.

In the course of Whitelocke’s negotiations in Sweden, he presented three Latin poems to Christina in manuscript, by Daniel Whistler, Charles Wolseley, and Andrew Marvell. These poems were written shortly after the inception of the Protectorate, the stability and legitimacy of which would to a large degree depend on the regime securing recognition and allies abroad. Whitelocke recorded the

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16 Ibid.; see also Timothy Venning, Cromwellian Foreign Policy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 138–52.
17 Journal, i. 84–92.
18 Ibid. i. 15.
embassy’s progress in a journal which provides a vivid context for these poems: it reveals Whitelocke’s struggle to impress with his civility and competence in courtly language and behaviour, yet maintain a distinctively English plainness, religiosity, and didactic vocation at Christina’s famously punctilious court. She had sent an envoy to England early in 1653 to solicit an alliance, but expected an ambassador of high rank to come to Sweden to negotiate terms. Whitelocke was one of the few men available to Parliament of adequate dignity and ‘abilities’: he was Commissioner of the Great Seal, but he was also a lawyer and a political survivor who had helped to organize the Inns of Court masque The Triumph of Peace for Charles I, negotiated with the King on behalf of Parliament, and sat as a Rump MP. The newsbook Mercurius Politicus had portrayed Sweden as the Commonwealth’s natural ally against the Dutch, but the Swedes were by no means unified by good intentions to the republic, and Whitelocke needed constantly to be alert to attempts to insult it. Whitelocke’s Diary and Journal record many instances of abusive and sometimes violent attacks on the ambassadorial ‘family’. Christina had at first been horrified by the regicide, and some of her servants continued to challenge Whitelocke. The ‘cavalier’ William Ballenden slighted Whitelocke openly. Points of tension between puritan or republican doctrine and Swedish culture presented opportunities for antagonistic courtiers to score points. Christina’s Master of Ceremonies embarrassed Whitelocke by proposing a series of healths to the Commonwealth and Cromwell in the knowledge that the English government disapproved of health drinking and that Whitelocke could not be seen to participate. The son of Milton’s opponent

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20 Whitelocke’s Journal exists in several manuscripts: the earliest version is a volume (Longleat House, Whitelocke Papers, MS 124a) into which he and his secretaries copied correspondence, official documents, and records of conversations and interviews, in French, English, Latin, and cipher. At some point in the period between the embassy’s return and the Restoration, Whitelocke reworked this manuscript, very probably using another source of memoirs, into a much larger didactic work in which records of correspondence and audiences are interspersed with lengthy meditations on moral and political topics (British Library, Additional MSS 37346–7). This version of the Journal was by stages cut and polished into a less prosaically didactic account of the embassy (British Library, Additional MS 4902), upon which the two printed editions are based. These manuscripts reveal the development of Whitelocke’s literary account of his behaviour (below, pp. 10–11, 13–14). Longleat MS 124a yielded the previously unknown presentation text of Marvell’s ‘A Letter to Doctor Ingelo’: see Edward Holberton, ‘The Textual Transmission of Marvell’s “A Letter to Doctor Ingelo”: The Longleat Manuscript’, English Manuscript Studies, 12 (2005), 233–53, where I also discuss the relationship between the journals in more detail. For ease of reference I will quote from the first printed edition of the Journal where it is not contradicted by Longleat MS 124a. Where these texts diverge significantly, I will refer to Longleat MS 124a by date instead of folio, because the folio numbers are illegible in the microfilm of this document available in some libraries: ‘Longleat MS 124a’, in The Whitelocke Papers from the Archives of the Marquess of Bath, 22 microfilm reels (East Ardsley: EP Microform, 1972), reel 22.


22 Journal, i. 14.


24 Diary, 336.

Salmasius attempted to take up his father’s arguments with Whitelocke, but Whitelocke tactfully replied that the matter was too high for their judgement.\textsuperscript{26} Christina herself asked Whitelocke provocative questions on occasion, including whether or not the English were hypocrites in their piety.\textsuperscript{27} She repeatedly tested how far Whitelocke’s principles would prevent him from participating in court social life. He refused an invitation to a Sunday ball because it was on the Lord’s Day, only to be invited to another on a different day soon afterwards; worrying that he might appear ‘too severe and morose’, he accepted this and a number of subsequent invitations.\textsuperscript{28}

In its later literary incarnations, the Journal proudly reports the success of his attendances at Christina’s masques: at the first, the Swedish ladies invited the English gentlemen to dance English country dances with them, and the gentlemen taught them some more; at the next masque Christina announced:

The Hollanders reported to me a great while since, that all the noblesse of England were of the king’s party, and none butt mechanicks of the parlement party, and not a gentleman among them; now I thought to trye you, and to shame you if you could not daunce: butt I see, that you are a gentleman, and have bin bred a gentleman . . . I take it as a favour, that you were willing to lay aside your gravity, and play the courtier upon my request; which I see you can doe so well when you please.\textsuperscript{29}

However, the first version of the Journal suggests that the earlier masque, at least, was more awkward. A lady took Whitelocke’s son James to dance a corranto, ‘at wch he is not very apt’; afterwards he and two other English gentlemen ‘daunced some English Country daunces wth the Queene and her Ladies and Caviliers’.\textsuperscript{30} This reads rather as if the court took up English country dances because the ambassador’s retinue could not dance anything else, which would not have helped dispel the impression that the parliamentarians were an ill-bred party.

Whitelocke’s task in dispelling detrimental impressions was not made any easier by the English tendencies towards idealism and lax protocol in the diplomacy outlined above. He needed considerable skills to answer the demands of those whom he was supposed to represent at the Swedish court without seeming rude. At one of his first private audiences, Whitelocke artfully presented a letter and a mastig dog on behalf of Hugh Peters.\textsuperscript{31} As Cromwell’s trusted chaplain and an enthusiastic campaigner for closer unity among Protestant states,

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. i. 203. Christina had patronized Salmasius, and his son was a captain in the Swedish army.  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. i. 297.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. i. 304.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. i. 304–5; ii. 155–7.  
\textsuperscript{30} Longleat MS 124a, 6 Jan.  
\textsuperscript{31} I have been unable to find this letter, but the Dutch agent Jongestall reported that it was written in defence of the regicide and Cromwell’s dissolution of the Rump: John Thurloe, \textit{A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe}, ed. Thomas Birch, 7 vols. (London, 1742), i. 583 (hereafter, \textit{Thurloe Papers}).
Hugh Peters had been using his ambiguous status to conduct Cromwell’s private diplomacy, to the annoyance of the Council of State.\(^{32}\) Whitelocke was conscious that it risked appearing presumptuous for a low-ranking official to address the Queen through the highest channels, irrespective of his closeness to Cromwell, so the ambassador arranged an elegant accident:

The great Mastiff dogge Lyon comming into the chamber after me where the Queene was, she made much of him, & asked me if he were a good conditioned dogge, I sayd yeas, butt I did not well knowe whose dogge it was, she asked me if it were not mine, I sayd I could not tell, for some of my people informed me that one Mr Peters had sent him for a present to her M, she asked who that Mr Peters was, I sayd he was a gentleman of a good family & had bin in all our Warres, & a Collonell, & was also an excellent preacher, she sayd that was much that he should be a preacher & a soldier, I tould her we had many who were so, then she sayd that Mr Peters had sent her a letter, I told her I heard so butt did not thinke it fitt to deliver either the letter or the Dogge from a private man to her M, she sayd that she had had many letters from private men & that the dogge and the letter did belong to her, and she would have them, I answeared that she might commaund in this place, & all must obey her & so I would also.\(^{33}\)

Even though Christina anticipated the letter, Whitelocke allows her to take the initiative for receiving the letter and gift, and so emphasizes his respect for protocol and social distinction in semi-serious scorn of Peters’s actions. Yet he praises Peters by criteria ordered for Christina’s ear: first, he is a gentleman, then a colonel (the Swedish court was still heavily militarized), and only lastly a preacher, although he defends the combination quite firmly when Christina all but scoffs at it (Whitelocke would later be questioned on this alien feature of English culture in greater detail).\(^{34}\) Whitelocke’s presentation involves a measure of daring which elicits playful responses from Christina, even to the point of flirtatiousness (‘she sayd that she had had many letters from private men’). He makes audacity charming, and so, by association, Peters’s boldness perhaps seems less uncouth. In a later version of the Journal, Whitelocke introduces the dog almost as if it represents the English character: ‘It is an English mastiffe… The more courage they have, the more gentle they are.’\(^{35}\) The episode shows Whitelocke beginning to transform a potentially disruptive English bluntness into something more creditable at Christina’s court.

Whitelocke’s attempts to displace hostile caricatures of the English polity often took the form of compliments and arguments aiming to persuade the Swedes of


\(^{33}\) Longleat MS 124a, 30 Dec. Peters sometimes seems to have lacked the judgement required of a diplomat: when he showed a party of Dutch diplomats his series of expensively commissioned, but apparently amateurish paintings of battles from the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the visitors strained not to laugh: Huygens, *English Journal*, 50–1.

\(^{34}\) Persson, ‘Courts of the Vasa’, 287.

homologies between English and Swedish cultures. On several occasions during his negotiations, Whitelocke was pressed to give an account of English authority. When Christina’s chancellor Axel Oxenstierna asked how Cromwell was declared Protector, Whitelocke understated the agency of the army officers:

By the generall consent of the people; of the governours of the citties of London and Westminster, of the magistrates, and of the parliament itself, who, by writing, did resign their power unto the lord protector, and agreed upon this forme of government. Besides, the officers and souldiers of the army and navy, in whose hands the strength of the nation is, freely consented hereunto.  

Whitelocke encouraged Christina’s speculations that Cromwell was on the verge of becoming a king by asserting continuities between the present regime and previous monarchies.  

To Oxenstierna he insisted: ‘we hold the governement of England, as to the fundamentalls of it, to be the same now, as when we had a king; the same lawes, the same supreame power, and the same magistrates’.  

Whitelocke not only played down the constitutional significance of the regicide, but his legalistic definition of the continuing ‘fundamentalls’ of government fitted them to a perspective that can be shared by the two lawyers. In numerous subtle ways, Whitelocke misrepresented the structure of English government to make it appear more like the Swedish court. Foreign policy matters were usually discussed by the Council of State, but Whitelocke allowed both Christina and an exiled Danish courtier to believe that information would be passed confidentially to Cromwell alone.  

At one point he showed Christina a secret ink, which he claimed made his letters unreadable by any but Cromwell and Thurloe; only one letter written in this ink survives.  

Diminishing the apparent difference between the English government and the Swedish monarchy was necessary to win the sympathies of the Swedish court, but it answered more pressing needs too. A battle for diplomatic precedence developed between Whitelocke and the Danish ambassador, who argued that the English should be demoted in the ceremonial pecking order because Cromwell was not an anointed king. Whitelocke contended: ‘I understand no di

...erence of power between king and protector, or anointed, or not anointed, and ambassadors are the same publique ministers to a protector or common-wealth as to a prince or sultan.’  

Whitelocke also pointed to broader kinships between the two states. When Christina commended the New Model Army, Whitelocke replied that it learnt its piety

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36 Thurloe Papers, ii. 42. Contrast the account of the Protectorate’s genesis given in Austin Woolrych, Commonwealth to Protectorate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 352–90.  
37 Journal, i. 296.  
38 Ibid. i. 320.  
39 Ibid. i. 265, 268–74; ii. 34; Venning, Cromwellian Foreign Policy, 16–18.  
41 Journal, ii. 48.
from Gustavus Adolphus’s army.\textsuperscript{42} A draft of a speech survives for the presentation to Christina of an English grammar (Christina was famed for being a prodigious linguist): Whitelocke promised that ‘it will be the lesse troublesome to your Mty because many of our wordes are the same with yours of Sweden’.\textsuperscript{43} In conversation with commissioner Eric Oxenstierna, Whitelocke proposed English equivalents of Swedish customs and encouraged his speculations that English and Swedish customs developed from a common ancient root.\textsuperscript{44} Whitelocke even encouraged Eric’s father, Chancellor Oxenstierna, to identify the two states’ legal constitutions: ‘Your lawes are founded uppon great reason and prudence; and in these, and most other main parts and particulars of them, our’s are the same in England.’\textsuperscript{45}

Whitelocke had to be sufficiently truthful about English politics to preserve his credit at a well-intelligeneced court (itself no easy task during the shift between the republic and the Protectorate), but he shaded these truths, dropped hints, and intimated that in more fundamental respects Cromwell sat atop a monarchy in all but name. The later versions of his Journal feature several conversations with Christina about Cromwell’s likelihood of becoming king, which do not appear in the first version of the Journal. This does not indicate that they are fictions. The Journal is a product of the embassy chancery and is written by several hands.\textsuperscript{46} Whitelocke was wary that members of his retinue might be spying for different interests in England, so details of more sensitive discussions may have been reserved for his pocketbook. Blair Worden has written that Whitelocke’s revisions tend not to transform, but to ‘heighten and improve’, his recollections, and Whitelocke wrote up his private conversations in French with Christina as polished rhetorical dialogues in English.\textsuperscript{47} He creates a literary drama around Christina’s attempt to understand the Instrument of Government. Before news of the change reaches Sweden, they discuss Cromwell presciently:

Qu[een]: Much of the story of your generall hath some parallell with that of my auncestor Gustavus the first, who, from a private gentleman of a noble family, was advanced to the title of marshall of Sweden, because he had risen up and rescued his country from the bondage and oppression which the king of Denmarke had putt upon them, and expelled that king; and for his reward, he was att last elected king of Sweden; and I believe that your generall will be king of England in conclusion.

Wh[itelocke]: Pardon me, madame, that cannot be, because England is resolved into a common-wealth; and my generall hath already sufficient power and greatnes, as generall of all their forces both by sea and land, which may content him.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. i. 253–4. There were, of course, great differences between the two armies, in organization and supply. See Whitelocke’s representation of the Swedish army: \textit{Journal}, ii. 135; and the account in Michael Roberts (ed.), \textit{Swedish Diplomats at Cromwell’s Court, 1655–1656: The Missions of Peter Julius Coyet and Christer Bonde} (London: Royal Historical Society, 1988), 9.
\textsuperscript{43} Longleat House, Whitelocke Papers, XV, fo. 43’.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Journal}, ii. 194. \textsuperscript{45} Ibid. ii. 227.
\textsuperscript{46} See Holberton, ‘Textual Transmission of Marvell’s “A Letter to Doctor Ingelo”’. 
Queen: Resolve what you will, I believe he resolves to be king; and hardly can any power or greatness be called sufficient, when the nature of man is so prone (as in these days) to all ambition.

Whitelocke: I find no such nature in my generall.

Queen: It may easily be concealed till an opportunity serve, and then it will show itselfe.

Whitelocke: All are mortall men, subject to affections.48

Christina develops the parallel between Cromwell and heroes of the house of Vasa that Whitelocke pointed up repeatedly during the embassy.49 Whitelocke responds in a plain rhetorical style. First he uses the figure of parrhesia (begging pardon in advance for necessary candour), hard upon which follows his stark contradiction.50 Then he contradicts the Queen a second time, and, asked a third time, he gives a reply that sounds similarly plain, being pithy and aphoristic, but is more ambiguous, and hints that he might secretly agree with Christina. After news of the Protectorate arrives, they resume their discussion.

Queen: Why is the title, Protector, when the power is kingly?

Whitelocke: I cannot satisfy your majesty of the reasons of this title, being att so great a distance from the inventors of it . . .

Queen: Is your protector sacred as other kings are?

Whitelocke: He is not anointed and crowned; those ceremonies were not used to him.

Queen: His power is the same with that of king, and why should not his title have bin the same?

Whitelocke: It is the power which makes the title, and not the title the power; our protector thinkes he hath enough of both.

Queen: He is hardly a mortall man then; butt he hath brought his busines notable to passe, and hath done great things: I give you my hand for it, that I have a great value of him.51

Whitelocke evades the question at first, but after a series of provocative questions from Christina, he gives a fuller reply. Again he endeavours to make ambiguous sound plain, abruptly paring down a chiasmus (inverting the order of repeated words or phrases) with zeugma (where one word is used to govern several congruent words or clauses), before gathering the terms into an economic final clause.

In the above dialogues, Whitelocke may well have heightened his flair for negotiating the tensions of his interviews with Christina, but in his efforts to speak plainly, yet suggest cultural homologies that might be conducive to an alliance, his strategy is consistent with the persona that Whitelocke adopted in better-documented speeches, including his first public speech at court. After presenting his credentials, this address was read in English by Whitelocke, with

48 Journal, i. 296.

49 See, e.g., Whitelocke’s first speech to the court, discussed below, pp. 15–16.

50 Here and throughout I use definitions of rhetorical figures derived from Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

51 Journal, i. 328–30.
his chaplain Charles de la Marche translating it into French (the language imposed on the court by Christina) clause by clause. The speech is subtly reticent with names. The English parliament is mentioned only twice, as the victorious party in Whitelocke’s mini-narrative of the Civil War and as the origin of Whitelocke’s proposal of friendship, thus blurring the Long Parliament and Barebone’s Parliament. Whitelocke refers three times to ‘the common-wealth of England’, which he identifies at the beginning as ‘his superiors’, and afterwards refers to the wishes of his superiors and the responsibilities of their servant. Similarly, the Stuart kings are identified only as ‘those who followed queen Elizabeth’, the royalists are called ‘our adversaries’, the phrase used twice to mean the royalists of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and the present regime’s enemies, and the regicide is referred to obliquely as a change in government. Whitelocke’s use of the first person plural is similarly blurred: it slips between meaning the English, the British, the parliamentarians, and his ambassadorial ‘family’. The combined effect of these blurs is to simplify the present English body politic, its evolution, and its enemies. It is remarkable, therefore, that the first person plural is at no point used to refer to the English and the Swedish together, who are repeatedly called ‘the two nations’. One should not make too much of this, but it is part of a different tendency in this speech, of affected confrontation with Whitelocke’s auditors. Thus, halfway through his opening speech Whitelocke plunges into a narrative of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, which is surprising given that until very recently Christina had sympathized with the royalists. This surprise is combined with a series of rhetorical figures of brevity: the first four sentences each feature a form of *zeugma*; three periods begin with an *occultatio* (emphasizing something by pointedly seeming to pass over it). The first of these identifies the plain style as a national characteristic, and particularly with the new English government:

> I shall not weary [your majesty] with many wordes, or expressions, bejond meaning. I am not sent hither for that cause, and it is as different from my own spirit, as contrary to the practice and commaunds of my superiors; from whom, and from their servant, (according to the english reality) your majesty will find all manner of plainness and truth in our transactions.

The repetition of *occultatio* at the beginning of three out of four consecutive periods emphasizes the figure cumulatively. In the third instance the figure becomes more self-consciously rhetorical:

> I shall not inlarge my discourse with observations concerning both nations, of their likeness in language, lawes, manners, and warlike dispositions, arguments more natural, then artificiall, for a neerer union: butt this I may not omit (the fruits whereof I have tasted) the present happy governement under your majesty, which remembers unto us,

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52 The speech is reprinted in *Journal*, i. 235–42.
those blessed days of our virgin queen Elizabeth, under whom, above forty years, the people enjoyed all protection and justice from their prince, and she, all obedience and affection from her people.

Whitelocke animates this occultatio with a distinction derived from Aristotle’s Rhetoric. The rhetorician would divide arguments into artificial arguments, points needing discovery, and unartificial, directly observable persuasions needing no discovery: the textbooks’ usual example of unartificial arguments is the testimony of witnesses.\(^{53}\) The allusion to a stage in the composition of rhetoric is itself a gesture of openness. Yet the occultatio undercuts this and its own profession of the plain style with a subtle irony: by claiming to pass over these similarities because they are manifest, Whitelocke is presenting them to the audience as artfully, if not more artfully, than the ‘discovered’ arguments that an alliance will benefit Anglo–Swedish trade and the Protestant religion. The irony is clearly intentional and draws attention to the rhetorical sophistication of Whitelocke’s speech. The auditor is primed to listen for alliance-inducing similarities between England and Sweden, notwithstanding Whitelocke’s promise to leave them out of his argument. The attentive auditor will hear plenty. Whitelocke’s subsequent narrative of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the telling of which, as noted above, is an act of plain speaking, dates the origin of the troubles to the accession of James I. The peace was lost through the ill government of the followers of Elizabeth I. The Stuarts attempted ‘to ravish from us our highest interest, the orthodoxe religion and just liberty’, and Whitelocke cites Gustavus Adolphus as a defender of these values. Thus Whitelocke synchronizes the Wars of the Three Kingdoms with the Thirty Years War, and Cromwell appears to follow Adolphus’s example in fighting for the same ‘just liberty’. The two soldiers are ‘crowned alike, with gratious successe by the Almighty’, a metaphor that harmonizes with Christina’s views on the divine origins of monarchical authority. By placing Cromwell and Gustavus Adolphus on the same trajectory, Whitelocke invites speculation that Cromwell’s career will follow a similar path to consolidating a royal dynasty.

Thus Whitelocke’s plainness is supple and rhetorical, and in these respects it is an idiom adjusted to the milieu of Christina’s court. Even by the standards of early modern princes, she was immoderately fond of theatrum mundi (the world is a stage) commonplaces, littering letters with theatrical metaphors and composing maxims such as ‘to be unable to dissimulate is to be unable to live’.\(^{54}\) A good performance pleased Christina, as the presentation of Peters’s letter demonstrated. Whitelocke observed a more extreme example at the departure

54 See Monica Setterwall, ‘Queen Christina and Role-Playing in Maxim Form’, Scandinavian Studies, 57 (1985), 162–73 (162).
of the favoured Spanish ambassador, who made himself pale and shake to please the Queen.\textsuperscript{55} Christina sought a similar response from Whitelocke at his first audience, ‘coming up close to him, [and] by her looks and gestures (as was supposed) would have daunted him’, but she seems not to have been displeased that he instead assumed a posture and rhetorical style that seems all but defiant compared to the behaviour of the Spanish ambassador.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, Whitelocke’s sternness seems to have excited her as a guise that could be put on and off as occasions demanded: hence her compliment that Whitelocke could ‘lay aside [his] gravity, and play the courtier upon my request’.\textsuperscript{57}

Whitelocke also had to answer to the expectations of the English government, which received reports of Whitelocke’s progress from various sources, and English newsbook readers. His speech was published in \textit{Mercurius Politicus} along with frequent newsletters from a member of his entourage.\textsuperscript{58} One of these proudly reports how Christina had tried to intimidate Whitelocke; yet ‘those that have been used in Affairs of the Commonwealth of England, are not so soon put out of countenance, as some other publick Ministers have been by her Majesty’.\textsuperscript{59} A member of a London congregation wrote to Whitelocke in response to reports of his refusal to drink healths or masque on a Sunday:

My soul and many more have bin sett a praysing God on your behalfe, for that noble christian testimony and dislike of that wicked custome of cup-health pledging; wheras a christian’s health is God, and his cup, salvation. And blessed be the Lord, that did give you to dislike the balle of pleasure; and that the Lord of that day was so pretious. Goe on nobly for the Lord; give your testimony against the wicked customes of a strange countrie, or dying world; beare his image in all your transactions, and follow his steppes, who was the most glorious ambassador that ever was.\textsuperscript{60}

He transcribed this letter with words of approval in the first version of the Journal and read it to his retinue, which is one of many indications that he tacked between these different sets of cultural expectations not by dispassionate calculation, but with anxious reference to his beliefs. The later versions of the Journal represent more of this reflection. Shortly before departing from England, he meditated on ‘the buisines and duety of ambassadors’ by consulting Genesis 24 and its expositions.\textsuperscript{61} His notes on the duties of an ambassador (probably written after the embassy) are dominated by questions of the place of moral precepts in determining an ambassador’s actions:

As he is not to publish every thing that he knows, so he is not to declare any thing contrary to his knowledge, but all things in plainness and clearness of truth, which cannot be contradicted, nor is liable to shame and penitence.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Journal}, ii. 8. \hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{56} Ibid. i. 235. \hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{57} Ibid. ii. 157.
\textsuperscript{58} Perhaps Whitelocke’s Master of the Horse, Robert Stapleton, who seems to have been corresponding with Marchamont Nedham during the embassy: see Nedham’s letter reprinted in \textit{Spalding, Contemporaries of Bulstrode Whitelocke}, 218.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Mercurius Politicus}, 26 Jan. 1654, 3243.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. 19 Jan. 1654, 3026; \textit{Journal}, i. 507–8. \hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{61} Ibid. i. 61. \hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{62} Ibid. ii. 460.