

“A Coffin for King Charles, A Crowne
for Cromwell”: royalist satire
and the regicide

During the past decade, scholars have done much to elucidate change and transformation in print, literary genre, and readership in England in the once-neglected 1640s.¹ Yet Cromwell figures only obliquely in these studies. Putting together a broad spectrum of high and low texts – newsbooks, broadsheets, playlets, prose pamphlets, ballads, and engravings – reveals the striking centrality of satire on Cromwell early in the civil wars, before he was in fact a key military or political power. Paradoxically, Cromwell was produced as public figure not by parliamentarians but by royalists, who set out to demonize and personalize opposition to Charles I.

The extent to which royalists created satiric images of Cromwell has been little explored. Scholars have tended to take at face value royalist disavowal of popular forms and attack on print as a subversive force that helped bring down the monarchy. But royalists used popular print as widely and aggressively as did parliamentarians during the period of the civil wars and Interregnum. Indeed, royalists took the initiative in constructing a negative image of the enemies of Charles I, particularly of Oliver Cromwell.

In royalist satire, the antimasque figures of Stuart court drama moved into the world of popular print, no longer expelled by the appearance of the king and queen, but presumably to be run off the public stage by popular derision and laughter. Royalists attempted to mediate the tension between the desacralizing publicity of popular print and the heightened sanctity of majesty under siege by exposing to print not Charles himself, but his enemies. But in so doing royalists paradoxically undermined their own cause by creating Cromwell as a populist figure. Although held up for derision as an iconoclast, Machiavel, mock-king, monster, and big-nosed brewer, an energetic and scheming Cromwell threatened in print – as he later would in real life – to steal the show.

In this chapter, I trace royalist texts that gave life to a populist figure of Cromwell, from John Cleveland's *The Character of a London Diurnal* in 1645 to the post-regicide dramas *New Market Fayre* and *The Second Part of New Market Fayre*. Early texts including Bruno Ryves's account of Cromwellian iconoclasm in *Mercurius Rusticus*, the playlets *Craftie Cromwell* and *The Second Part of Craftie Cromwell*, and *A Case for Nol's Nose* gave Cromwell more prominence in print than he had in political actuality. As royalists increasingly resorted to dramatic forms, they constructed an entertaining and comic character who dominated the stage/page. The literary nature of royalist satire made it paradoxically unstable; comedy failed to contain but rather unleashed Cromwell as an important figure in an emergent public sphere.

“So perfect a hater of images”: constructing Cromwell in early royalist satire

With the explosion of print in the 1640s and the proliferation of domestic news, the newsbook became the first important genre to construct an image of Cromwell.² At the opening of the Long Parliament in November 1640, Cromwell was an obscure back-bencher, although he was from the gentry class, a country squire.³ Cromwell became increasingly active in opposition to the king, supporting the Root and Branch Petition, the Triennial Act, and the Grand Remonstrance of November 1641.⁴ Yet only with the outbreak of the civil wars did Cromwell, in Bulstrode Whitelocke's later words, “begin to appear in the world.”

Parliamentary newsbooks praised the military Cromwell, as he raised a troop of horse from his native Cambridgeshire and served with the Earl of Essex at the battle of Edgehill in October 1642. Skillful at commanding men and winning engagements, by February 1644 Cromwell had been promoted to lieutenant-general of the newly reorganized army of the Eastern Association under the Earl of Manchester.⁵ His role in the parliamentary victory at Marston Moor on 2 July 1644 was widely recounted.⁶ Newsbooks also reported on Cromwell's public quarrel in December 1644 with the Earl of Manchester, his superior in the Eastern Association, over the ends and means of waging war.⁷ But Cromwell was not yet a leading commander, and there was no sustained effort to develop his full portrait.

Nonetheless, royalist texts seized upon the publicly pious Cromwell, giving him a greater role in print than he had in political reality. Cromwell's first extended appearance in print comes not in parliamentary texts, but in a royalist satire, John Cleveland's 1645 *The Character of a London Diurnall*.⁸

Cleveland (1613–58), who had joined the king in Oxford as an active royalist, was popular as a poet of extravagant conceit, wit that carried over into his biting satire on contemporaries. *The Character of a London Diurnall* ridicules both the form and content of the parliamentary newsbooks, including their spurious heroes. Cleveland's Cromwell is an absurd, comic figure. But, significantly, even such derision leaves the king and his royalist supporters in the shadows and puts Cromwell (and other parliamentary figures) center-stage.

The Character of a London Diurnall opens with a frontal attack on the parliamentary newsbook or diurnal: "A *Diurnall* is a puny Chronicle, scarce pin-feather'd with the wings of time: It is an History in *Sippets*, the English *Iliads* in a Nut-shell; the *Apocryphal* Parliaments booke of *Maccabees* in single sheets."⁹ Through exaggeration and paradox, Cleveland calls attention to the incongruity between the inflated content and the modest form of the newsbooks. The diurnal, Cleveland asserts, is miscalled "the *Urinnall*" by the "Country-Carryer," yet properly enough: "for it casts the water of the State, ever since it staled blood" (p. 2). Cleveland's vernacular language lampoons the vernacular language of the diurnal; he draws upon domestic affairs to object to the diurnal's doing precisely the same thing. But Cleveland uses his main verbal artillery against the heroes of the newsbooks, including Cromwell.

In his portrait of Cromwell, Cleveland first mocks the sectarian makeup of his army: "But the *Diurnall* is weary of the Arme of flesh, and now begins an *Hosanna* to *Cromwell*, one that hath beate up his Drummes cleane through the Old Testament: you may learne the Genealogy of our Saviour, by the names in his Regiment: The Muster-Master uses no other List, then the first Chapter of *Matthew*" (p. 5). He then counters and attacks Cromwell's public piety by transforming him into a canting Puritan: "This *Cromwell* is never so valorous, as when he is making Speeches for the Association, which neverthelesse he doth somewhat ominously, with his Neck awry, holding up his Eare, as if he expected *Mahomets Pidgeon* to come, and prompt him" (pp. 5–6). Cromwell's incongruous physical stance points to his moral and religious waywardness: associated here with the then archetypal form of irreligion, Islam.

In seeming to report upon Cromwell's speech, Cleveland's text is in fact performative, constructing an image of Cromwell that is important and influential in itself. Cleveland introduces what was perhaps the first in a long-running series of jokes about Cromwell's large, red nose: "He should be a Bird of Prey too, by his bloody Beake: his Nose is able to try a young

Eagle, whether she be lawfully begotten" (p. 6). Aligning his satiric target with a bird of prey – or, more accurately, aligning nose with beak – Cleveland is playful but pointed: Cromwell's oversized and protruding body part emblemizes his predatory, excessive nature.

Heightening the satiric attack, Cleveland goes on to portray Cromwell's alleged military victories as simple and destructive iconoclasm:

But all is not Gold that glisters: What we wonder at in the rest of them,
is naturall to him; to kill without Bloodshed: For most of his Trophees
are in a Church-Window: when a Looking Glasse would shew him more
superstition: He is so perfect a hater of Images that he hath defaced
Gods in his owne Countenance. (p. 6)

Deploying irony and overstatement, Cleveland undercuts the heroic image. With witty exaggeration, he builds up to the ludicrous figure of Cromwell defacing images in his own unsightly countenance. Cleveland goes on to reduce Cromwell's battles to encounters with church memorials: "if he deale with Men, it is when he takes them napping in an old Monument: Then downe goes Dust and Ashes . . . Oh brave *Oliver!*" (p. 6).

Finally, Cleveland satirizes Cromwell as a holy man run amok: "But Holy men (like the *Holy language*) must be read backwards. They rifle Colledges, to promote Learning; and pull down Churches for Edification. But Sacriledge is entailed upon him: There must be a *Cromwell* for Cathedralls, as well as Abbyes" (p. 6). The paradoxes of satire purport to explain and legitimate Cromwell's actions: if Hebrew must be read backwards (from right to left), then all the actions of holy men will seem similarly paradoxical. The knowing reader, however, would recognize the irony.

In the very process of attacking parliamentarians for their use of popular forms and images, Cleveland creates a popular satiric image of the big-nosed canting Cromwell. Cleveland's Cromwell is ridiculous, a kind of Don Quixote tilting at windows rather than windmills. Cleveland's ironic narration maintains a distance between the reader and the object of satire. Nonetheless, the very prominence that he gives to the targets of satire makes them overshadow their royalist counterparts in the text. As we shall see, when produced in dramatic form the figure of Cromwell complicated and to some extent undermined the royalist assumptions it was meant to confirm.

Whereas royalists actively employed print to satirize military and parliamentary figures, parliamentarians tended to be, in contrast, defensive. Several texts answered Cleveland by praising the parliament diurnals and their subjects, including the heroic and devout Cromwell. But they were no

verbal match for the nimble Cleveland. *The Oxford Character of the London Diurnall Examined and Answered* indignantly labels Cleveland “a very Jack-sauce, who loves eating better than fighting; and because he hath not a heart fit for his stomack, and dares not fight, knowes that this trade of lying, slandering, and blaspheming, is counted a vertue parallel to valour among the Cavaliers.”¹⁰ But the refined detail of its defense of Cromwell comes precariously close to sounding like caricature: “In *Cromwells* Regiments there is no *God-dam-me* named, no *Sink-me*, no *Confound-me*, no *Devil nip me by the back*, no *Rot me alive* named among them, no *Devil sucke me through a Tobacco-pipe*” (p. 6). *A Full Answer to a Scandalous Pamphlet* more adeptly picks up and transforms Cleveland’s own terms into praise of Cromwell as the hero of Marston Moor: “It is true that [either] his complexion, or his Valour, so dazled their young Eagle, that he durst not looke him in the face at *Long-Marston*, but it was his bloody Sword, not his bloody Beake, which made them run almost toward every point of the Compasse.”¹¹ The author reconnects military prowess and piety: “Sacriledge is not entailed upon him, but Religion, Vertue, and the Spirit of Reformation runs in his blood: For as his noble Ancestor overthrew those Houses of Superstition, Sloth, and Sensualitie, so he labours to purge Cathedrals of those abuses which threaten ruine to true Religion” (p. 10). Verbal devices such as alliteration (“Superstition, Sloth, and Sensualitie”) are now turned against not Cromwell but the forces that he opposes. Revising and correcting Cleveland, the text transforms Cromwell from iconoclast to pious reformer.

Yet royalist texts kept alive the figure of Cromwell as iconoclast. Some of these texts eschew the humor and irony of satire to denounce directly alleged abuses. Cromwell makes an appearance, along with a number of other parliamentarians, in Bruno Ryves’s *Mercurius Rusticus* (1647). Ryves offers an extended account of Cromwellian iconoclasm: “The Cathedrall Church of *Peterborough* robb’d, defac’d, and spoyl’d by *Cromwel*, and his Schismaticall Adherents.”¹² Ryves compares Oliver with his ancestor, Thomas Cromwell, noting, however, that “this *Cromwel* hath so farre outvied in acts of Pietie his Precedent, that *Cromwel* in Henry the eighth’s time, this place hath now suffered in so great a manner for its Loyaltie, as that we know not where to enter upon the narration of the same” (p. 245). Inverting the classical *imitatio*, Ryves’s Cromwell goes beyond his predecessor in being not better, but remarkably worse.

Ryves’s tale of Cromwell’s troops begins with their destruction of the “great West-window” in Peterborough. Here, “his Souldiers made their first breach and entrance . . . as will evidence them to be deformers of that

thorough Reformation in our blessed Queenes time of happy memory, whom notwithstanding they so highly cryed up” (pp. 245–46). From the window, the soldiers turn to demolishing the choir-loft, the books of divine service, the seats of the auditors, and even the pulpit. At last, some bystanders attempt to intercede, being moved to “request Cromwell, that he would please to stay his Souldiers from further defacing and ruining the place” (p. 246). Yet Cromwell’s attitude is “but a provocation to further mischief, replying, That his gods were a pulling down, and when the other answered, *That the God he served was beyond the reach of Souldiers*, Cromwel told them, *That they did God good service in that action*” (p. 246). Although he is only one of a number of parliamentary iconoclasts represented, Cromwell stands out in Ryves’s account not for his actual participation in physical violence, but for his canting hypocrisy.

Indeed, the incident demonstrates a kind of providential rebuke to such pious humbug, as Ryves explains: “but observe the wages that Divine Justice repayed one of them for their worke, which may testifie how he accepted of the same”; one soldier, “espying in the roof right over the *Communion Table*, our *Saviour* pourtrayed, comming in glory with his holy Angels . . . he charged his Musket to shatter them down, but by the rebound of his own shot was struck blind” (pp. 246–47). Ryves concludes sardonically that “if he did his God good thereby, he did himselfe an ill turne, his wickednesse falling on his own pate” (p. 247). The unexpected outcome utterly deflates Cromwell’s pious sentiments.

Historians have been concerned primarily with determining whether the Peterborough account is factually correct. Geoffrey Nuttall and, more recently, Margaret Aston have quite plausibly argued that Cromwell could not possibly have been guilty of all the iconoclasm attributed to him.¹³ Yet to focus on precisely what aspects of the account are true is to miss its symbolic and political impact. Even in their mockery and derision, royalist texts create Cromwell as a public figure, evoking the kind of populism that transforms their own cause.

The Machiavellian Cromwell: parliament and politics, 1646–48

In the cessation of actual fighting after the first civil war, royalist satire continued to take the lead in constructing a popular image of Oliver Cromwell.¹⁴ Indeed, rather than simply including him as only one target among many, such texts began increasingly to single Cromwell out, as he actively mediated between the army and the Presbyterian-dominated

parliament in an attempt to reach a settlement with the king. Charges of Machiavellianism originated with the Levellers, but soon became a central mode of royalist attack in various forms of popular print.¹⁵ Such texts constructed Cromwell as a stage Machiavel who envied rather than genuinely opposed kingship. Literary discourse became increasingly politicized as the figure of Machiavel moved from the theater into closet drama as a means of exposing an allegedly hypocritical and ambitious Oliver Cromwell.¹⁶ But, as in a long history of stage Vices and Machiavels, there was an increasing danger that, once given the stage, the comic and devious Cromwell would run away with the show.

Ironically, it was again royalist satire, rather than parliamentary print, that publicized the figure of Cromwell. The tragicomedy *Craftie Cromwell* (1648) opens with a mock-encomium: "Shall *Cromwell* not be famous made / Unto the after-times, / Who durst a THRONE for to invade, / And Act the worst of Crimes?" But the lilting verse itself makes Cromwell "famous": "Shall not his Nose DOMINICALL, / In Verse be celebrated?"¹⁷ In moving from the irony of the opening address to the personifications of drama, the text constructs an enterprising and ebullient, if also scheming and ambitious, figure in Cromwell the Machiavel.

While it does not focus exclusively on Cromwell, *Craftie Cromwell* gives him a central, dynamic role. Although "doom'd for evermore to frie in flames," John Pym, early leader of the Commons' opposition to Charles I, returns to survey the sleeping Cromwell and pronounce him "*borne to be / His Countries Bane, the Fate of Monarchie*" (p. 6). Awakened by Pym, a newly energized Cromwell immediately reveals his impiety and singular ambition to "ascend a throne" (p. 7), beginning with the iconoclastic destruction of law and monarchy:

So please yee, yee all-powerfull *Destinies*, that my Heart faile not, nor my Sinewes shrink till I have brought to passe what I intend, til I have made my selfe Lord *Paramount*, and quite eradicated all those Lawes which many Ages past have beene ador'd, till I have quite dissolved all *Monarchy*, and topsi-turvey turn'd all *Regall Power*. (pp. 6–7)

Cromwell's very language, an accumulative list of dire deeds, embodies the forcefulness of his actions and plots. No longer Cleveland's warrior against church windows, this Cromwell more dangerously aims at the monarchy itself. Yet the very text that attacks Cromwell also allows him to dominate, to address and to draw in a broad audience.

The final act of *Craftie Cromwell* similarly puts forth a potent and effective Cromwell. The play evokes the recent parliamentary debate over the Vote

of No Addresses, but here it is Cromwell alone who breaks off negotiations with the king: "Ile have no more *Proposalls* sent to the King and so let them at *Westminster* be told" (p. 13). And he does so solely to further his own ambition: "What Law is there that can obstruct our hopes now, we have *conquered* our *Conqueror*? And if none have a true and legall right to the outward benefits of this life (save *Saints*) then none ought to enjoy their Sweets, *BUT WEE*" (p. 13). Cromwell aims directly at the crown: "*And then, though Heaven and Earth say no such thing, / Yet spight of FATES and MEN, I will be KING*" (p. 14). The wily, ambitious Cromwell implicitly contrasts with the true king, Charles, saint-like and imprisoned on the Isle of Wight. But Charles remains in the shadows and through this very means of attack Cromwell replaces him as a central figure in the public sphere.

A sequel to *Craftie Cromwell*, *The Second Part of Crafty Crumwell* (1648) again places an ambitious Cromwell center-stage. Although a guilt-ridden Fairfax appears, pursued by Furies, and the Leveller Rainsborough stages a mock-triumph, the play presents Cromwell, "Metamorphiz'd, to a King," as the main antagonist to Charles.¹⁸ But once again the energetic figure of Cromwell complicates the play's royalism, and its popular form exists in tension with its anti-republican message.

Paradoxically, this satire employs a popular form to advance the most extreme form of divine-right ideology. Focusing on Charles's enemies, *The Second Part of Crafty Crumwell* both conveys and mystifies divine-right kingship. The drama opens with a dialogue between Ismeno, an Independent, and Solon, a Royalist, the latter of whom argues that Charles "is the head, and we the members be, he is our Father, and wee are his Children, Kings of their Kingdomes as the Centers are" (p. 4). Center and origin, Charles grounds all meaning.

And yet the text represents not the king at the center, but the people at the margins. The very form of the text itself reveals the fragility of this alleged origin. To represent Charles directly would be to open him up to interpretation, to bring the sacred icon into the world of history and change, print and the public. Finding direct representation too dangerous, the text defines Charles through difference from his opposite, Oliver Cromwell. But in so doing the text also moves Charles to the background and sets Cromwell loose in the unpredictable medium of popular print.

Pointing to true royalty through the image of the mock-king, much of *The Second Part of Crafty Crumwell* focuses on Oliver's parodic kingship. In the final scene, Cromwell's accomplices crown him in a burlesque ceremony, accompanied by this song:

Now OLIVR Ascend the throne
 Feare not to tumble downe
 Come all you Furies every one
 And bring the burning Crowne.
 But look how ore thy head doth hang
 A sharp and threatning sword
 Denouncing terror to thy gang
 And thee their perjurd Lord. (p. 15)

The satire incorporates inverted ceremony, evoking the contrast with the sacred true rites of Stuart kingship. The mock-king over whose head the sword of Damocles hangs defines by contrast the true king Charles, of whose presence the song reminds us: "What follie prompts you, yee prophane / To usurp CHARLES his Right / But thus you tamper with your bane, / And play with acconite" (p. 15). Yet Cromwell, not Charles, is onstage.

In the dialogue with which *The Second Part of Crafty Cromwell* concludes, Cromwell shows the high spirits and inventiveness of a Richard III. Again, the dramatic form presents an energetic if self-incriminating figure. Thanking his accomplices for "this glorious wreath, that circles now my temples," Cromwell readily acknowledges the hypocrisy of his appeal to the people:

And if wee can the peoples pleasures gaine,
 Wee may perchance, in peace and quiet Reigne,
 Else wee are lost, and O I greatly dread,
 At once to loose my Kingdome, and my head. (pp. 15–16)

The Chorus again explicitly contrasts Cromwell and Charles: "Kings do admit no fellowes if thou Reigne, / CHARLES must surrender, but I surely hope / To see him Rule, thou Ruled in a Rope" (p. 16). Satirizing Cromwell, then, by contrast elevates Charles. Charles's legitimacy and piety are not simply contrasted to, but dependent upon, the represented impiety of his dissembling foes. Yet by placing Cromwell on the public page / stage, such royalist texts keep Charles in the shadows and make Cromwell into the very populist figure they distrust and fear.

While oppositional print in the late 1640s has received most of the attention of historians and literary critics, royalist satires such as the *Crafty Cromwell* plays complicate assumptions about the democratizing role of print and the public. Such texts turned drama and the figure of the Machiavel to new political uses for the king rather than for the parliament. Anonymous and cheap, they could be dispersed to a wide audience. Royalist satire mediated the contradictions between divine-right ideology and the

form of popular appeal to the people by circulating the image not of the king, but of his enemies. Yet this very construction of Cromwell fixed him in the public imagination as a key military and political player long before he had such power in actuality. Royalist propagandists may well have contributed to the demise of their own cause.

“Is Cromwell dead?”: images in the second civil war

In the spring of 1648, as the parliamentary army moved against new uprisings in England, Scotland, and Wales, royalists continued to employ the weapon of popular satire, with complex effects. As Cromwell left London and parliamentary politics to put down opposition in Wales, newsbooks ridiculed him as a mock-king. *Mercurius Elencticus* (15–22 March), for example, wishes: “Now you K. Noll, with your *Bacon-flicht-face* need not make more hast then good speed Northward: The *Fire* will burne there without the helpe of your Nose.”¹⁹ The following issue of *Mercurius Elencticus* (22–29 March) derides Cromwell as about to lose his usurped crown: “How now King NOL? is’t so indeed, / that you *Depos’d* must be, / And none of all your *Barmy-seed*, / enjoy the *Soveraignty*?”²⁰ Royalists tried to show in print the differences between Cromwell and the true king, imprisoned on the Isle of Wight. The inverted forms of satire sought to redress the topsy-turvy world of Westminster, a world turned upside-down by civil war.

A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose, and the Cure of Tom Fairfax’s Gout (June 1648) more extensively deploys mock-elegy, burlesque epitaph, and caricature to hold up Charles’s enemies for widespread ridicule. By eschewing dramatic form, the tract avoids the danger of having the lively Vice / villain figures run away with the show. Rather, the tract diminishes its subjects through coarse material satire.²¹ Nonetheless its very focus and mode of attack enhanced and publicized the figure of Cromwell.

Although Cromwell remained second-in-command to Sir Thomas Fairfax, *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose* takes him to be the real power, with Fairfax as “Prince and head of all the rout, / Who honour’d *Cromwell* and his Snout.”²² Entertaining, albeit with a bite, the text dwells on everything that is not regal about Fairfax and Cromwell. Unlike the timeless body of the sacred monarch, their bodies are pointedly mortal. *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose* opens with a Cryer searching for the bodies of Fairfax and Cromwell, the latter of whom is to be found “by his refulgent copper nose, which he ever kept well burnisht, that so he might not be constrained to trouble the devill to light him, or grope out his way to hell” (p. 2). The tract goes on to

contrast Cromwell, Fairfax, and the mock-saints with “Christs beloved, and his fathers Anointed our most deare and dread Sovereigne” (p. 2).

But Charles himself does not appear. Rather, *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose* defines true kingship by contrast with the moral, spiritual, and physical excesses of Cromwell on which it elaborates. Since Cromwell, “that great nos’d Champion,” has died upon the rumor of a counter-rebellion, the writer prepares an elegy in suitably colloquial language and doggerel verse: “Am I awake or dreame? can it be sed, / Englands Arch Traytor thus to hell is fled?” (p. 3). The writer professes amazement that Cromwell’s nose did not frighten off Death itself:

Is Cromwell Dead, durst Death his eyes to close,
Did he not tremble, to behold his nose,
Whose radiant splendour, (if Fame) doth not lie,
Shone brighter, than a Comet in the Skie. (p. 3)

The satire again reaches the fantastic dimensions of the grotesque as Cromwell’s nose, reflecting his copper brewing-pots and his lower-class origins, shines more brightly than a comet. Yet the excesses of his body merely emblemize his moral excess. The writer wonders ironically: “Who now shall rob the Church, pull windows down, / Who now shall dare to trample on a Crowne?” (p. 4). Cleveland’s warrior against church windows now dangerously turns his attack on an even more sacred icon: the crown itself.

The final image of Cromwell in this tract places him in a history of iconoclasm, reminding readers of the history of reformation that Cromwell claims to follow but actually perverts:

Farewell *Olliver Cromwell* a name that hath been ever ominous to the Church; for in *Henry* the eights daies (you may remember) that a *Cromwell* was the hammer that beat downe the monasteries, and religious Houses, and in the raigne of our most pious Sovereigne Lord, unfortunate King CHARLES, this *Cromwell* hath been chiefly active in defacing, demolishing, and levelling Churches, in persecuting, robbing and imprisoning all learned and knowing men: but enough of him whose infamie will ever last. (pp. 4–5)

The long periodic sentence with its triple verbs (defacing, demolishing, levelling; persecuting, robbing, imprisoning) imitates the cumulative force of the destruction dealt by the two Cromwells. Yet while *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose* clearly endorses a royalist perspective, the figure of Cromwell takes over the text much as he dominates the dramas that we

have been exploring. The author reminds us that Cromwell's iconoclasm occurs during the reign of the pious and unfortunate Charles. But the king seems a distant and pallid figure in contrast to the active (albeit destructively active) Cromwell, as he defaces, demolishes, and levels. Satire preserves the mystique of divine-right kingship, keeping Charles from the public stage / page. But it does so at the cost of giving vitality and recognition to his enemies.

The Machiavel and the martyr-king: regicide

On 30 January 1649, Charles Stuart, having been convicted of high treason and other high crimes, was put to death "by the severing of his head from his body."²³ His body was staged in a graphic display of punishment and justice. Recent scholars have linked such a display with theatrical monarchy and the politics of tragedy. Franco Moretti argues that the regicide completed theatrical tragedy: monarchy, desacralized by tragedy, came to its logical conclusion.²⁴ Nancy Klein Maguire shows how the regicide was understood and assimilated as tragedy, making comprehensible the traumatic event.²⁵ The king's courage enhanced the theater of regicide, and his speech on the scaffold affirmed his faith in the Anglican church for which he died.

Yet in emphasizing spectacle and the tragic theater of monarchy, scholars have neglected the supplementary role of print. Although the display was witnessed by a large crowd, printed texts including elegies, sermons, and engravings brought the event to a much larger audience. Charles's scaffold speech, heard by few, was more widely dispersed in print. Other private events, such as the king's poignant parting from his children, took public form only in print.²⁶ Both parliamentarians and royalists appealed to the people at the point of regicide, culminating in the printing sensation of the century, *Eikon Basilike*.²⁷ Transformed into the martyr of *Eikon Basilike* and dozens of accompanying elegies and sermons, Charles I became more powerful in death than in life.

Charles I, at least before 1640, was by no means a man of the people. Recent scholars have sharply debated the issue of Charles I and public relations. In response to early arguments, Kevin Sharpe and others have shown that Caroline masques, panegyric, and paintings were not as insular, inward-looking, and escapist as once had been thought; that they were intended to hold up a model of virtue to the nation.²⁸ Nonetheless the

image of the king before 1640 was largely court-centered, hierarchical, and mystical, in keeping with divine-right kingship and Charles's own sense of order and decorum.²⁹ The events of the 1640s and the regicide itself decentered the image of the king in elegy and newsbook, engraving, woodcut, ballad, and pamphlet.³⁰ *Eikon Basilike* transferred the virtues of the masque into the world of popular print.

At the same time, royalists continued to construct satiric images of Charles's enemies. Both visual and verbal satiric texts juxtaposed Cromwell to the martyr-king. Visual satire on the regicide, for the most part printed on the continent (especially in Holland) rather than in England, quite literally foregrounded the duplicitous Cromwell and shielded Charles from the full glare of public scrutiny. A Dutch satire by Romeyn de Hooghe, *The Coronation of Oliver Cromwell* (1649), reveals Cromwell's guileful and self-serving actions since the death of Charles I, and his overall designs for securing the crown of England for himself (fig. 1). Cromwell, crowned and wearing regal ermine, stands in the foreground of the execution of Charles I. Signifying his usurpation, he holds the sword of justice in his right hand and the orb of sovereignty in his left.

Cromwell stands in the foreground of a complex and active iconographical scene. Behind him is a miniature rendition of the execution of Charles before Whitehall: two executioners stand on the scaffold: one wields the axe, while the other holds up the the bleeding head of the king. Based on a painting by Weesop (that I shall discuss later), this background scene shows the people crowded around the scaffold, on the ground, in windows, and on the roof of the Banqueting House. In the upper corner, showing the unsanctioned appropriation of forms, two winged devils hold an escutcheon, on which is a mitred dog with a sword in his mouth.

Cromwell not only quite literally overshadows the regicide, but he also seizes upon another monarchical ceremony: the coronation. Inset engravings depict the various stages of an illicit Cromwellian coronation: the processional to Westminster Abbey, presentation to the people, the oath, the anointing, receiving the sword, and the actual crowning. A subsequent image represents the ensuing coronation feast. The various vignettes show the (deluded) people acclaiming and rejoicing in their new, false ruler.

Yet the satiric print also offers a moral judgment absent in the dramas. On the right of the print, blind Justice holds the sword and balance in which Charles's head outweighs the orb of sovereignty. The pair of figures seated on the cloud above Justice's head in the upper right have an important iconographic function. The figure on the left personifies Virtue, whom we rec-

ognize from her simple mantle and the palm frond in her right hand. The figure on the right personifies Time, with a scythe in his left hand and a winged hourglass upon his head. These two figures, the image they frame – a crowned book bearing the words “Vreest Godt / Eert den Coning” (“Fear God / Honor the King”) – and the light that connects that book to the head of Justice relate the central moral of the entire engraving: in time, God will reward the virtuous (those who fear Him and honor the memory of their king) by restoring the balance of Justice.³¹ Yet for the moment the wicked have center-stage.

Cromwell also thrives in a ballad juxtaposing the Machiavel and the martyr-king.³² *A Coffin for King Charles, A Crowne for Cromwell: A Pit for the People* (April 1649) sets a boastful and unrepentant Cromwell against the pious martyr Charles. Juxtaposed in the text, Cromwell gets the best lines. As the ballad opens, he is in high spirits:

So, so, the deed is done,
 the Royall head is severd
 As I meant, when I first begunne
 and strongly have indeavord.
 Now Charles the I. is tumbled down,
 the second, I [do] not feare:
 I graspe the Scepter, weare the Crown,
 nor for Jehovah care.³³

The language is that of a plain-spoken villain, evoking both public drama and irreverent figures (Momus, for instance) from the Caroline masques. The forceful villain for the moment takes over in print, as he also (allegedly) controls the political scene. Hence, Cromwell’s boast to the people: “In vaine (*fond people*) doe you *grutch*, / and *tacitely repine*. / For why, my *skill* and *strength* is such, / both *Poles* of heaven are mine.” Yet at the time the ballad was written Cromwell did not have the senior military, much less civil, position. The ballad wholly ignores the new republican government, using a royalist lens to focus on single-person plotting. But such satire gives visibility and new life to the very person it derides.

That the ballad includes a speaking part for Charles is somewhat of an innovation – and a risk. The danger comes in putting the king on the same level as Cromwell and the people. Charles initially does seem pallid in comparison to the energetic Cromwell: “Thinkst thou, base slave, though in my grave, / Like other men I lie: / my sparkling fame and Royall Name / can (as thou wishest) die.” Nonetheless, Charles expresses resentment for his wrongs:

Thrice perjur'd Villaine, didst not thou
 and thy degenerate traine,
 By mankind's saviours body, vow
 to me thy Sovereigne,
 To make me the most glorious King
 that ere ore England raignd.

Yet even such complaints attribute great power and influence to Cromwell (more, undoubtedly, than he had in reality). Cromwell lords it over the people, warning them: "You *must be props* unto our *pride*, / and *Slaves* to our command." Demonizing Cromwell made him central in a popular medium that was, at best, unpredictable and difficult to control.

Exposing the hypocrisy of Cromwell's pandering to the people, *A Coffin for King Charles, A Crowne for Cromwell* is itself a "low" form designed for oral circulation and consumption. Further, such a text popularizes Charles, radically departing from the mystique and distance of the elegant Van Dyck portraits, the masques of Davenant, Shirley, and Townshend, and the civic and ecclesiastical ceremonies. As such, *A Coffin for King Charles, A Crowne for Cromwell* and other satires transform royalism through the very means by which it is communicated and preserved.

Texts that focused on Cromwell without representing the king avoided making Charles into a construction of popular print. The playlet *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649) stages only the king's enemies.³⁴ This drama alludes to Charles only as an absence, the true icon standing behind the parodic images of Cromwell and his associates who plot and carry out his murder. Much of the text exposes Cromwell, who evinces irreligion to the point of being an arch-Machiavel: "A King and Kingdome is my valours prize, / By both their ruines, I intend to rise."³⁵ Nonetheless, the place of center-stage mattered, and again a lively and comic Cromwell complicates the play's royalism.

Surprisingly, given its title, *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* contains farce and sexual high-jinks, scheming and various shenanigans presented in a comic manner. The play opens with a tried and true formula of the comic pair: Cromwell and his accomplice, the Independent preacher Hugh Peters. Their conspiracy undercuts the justification for regicide, reduced here to a Machiavellian plot. Like a Vice figure, Cromwell exudes high spirits and energy: "My fine *facetious Devill*, who wear'st the *Liverie of the Stygian God*, as the white *Embleme* of thy *innocence*; Hast thou *prepar'd* a pithie *formall Speech* against the *essence* and the *Power* of *KINGS*?" (p. 1). Peters in turn praises his "Most valiant, and invincible Commander" in terms that make evident (to

the reader) Cromwell's vices and moral flaws. Peters's long panegyric, includes, for instance, a comic tribute to Cromwell's large red nose: "thy Nose, like a bright Beacon, sparkling still (the *Aetna*, that doth fame our English world) hangs like a Comet o're thy dreadfull face, denouncing death and vengeance" (p. 2). Alliteration underscores the increasingly hyperbolic praise: Cromwell's nose, red from drinking and reflecting the copper pots of his former profession of brewing, becomes a source of light, then a volcano famous through the land, as Etna is in Italy; finally, the nose expands beyond national to cosmic significance, metamorphosing into the celestial form of a comet, and portending danger to the king.

At once outrageous and entertaining, Cromwell and Peters simultaneously plot the seduction of Mrs. Lambert and the murder of the king. As Peters dubs Cromwell "*Englands* best Patriot, and my noble Patron" (p. 2), Cromwell in turn lauds his accomplice in evil: "Thou art that Load-stone, which shall draw my sense to any part of policy i'the Machiavilian world" (p. 4). Cromwell believes none of the republican arguments against kingship, but schemes solely so that "thee and I, and those whom we create / Will Reigne like Princes, and the Lords of Fate" (p. 4).

The comic character of Cromwell takes a more central role in *The Famous Tragedie* than in the pre-regicide satire sometimes bearing his name in the title. Having revealed his Machiavellianism in an earlier soliloquy, Cromwell boasts to his new love, Mrs. Lambert, of his plot to kill the king:

As for the Man (they call the KING) He hath not foure and twenty howers to live, I've hyr'd a dapper Lad, a neat-tongu'd (but inexorable Fellow) for fiftene hundred pounds, to ease Him of the burthen of His cares, good King, he's fitter farre for to converse with Saints and Seraphims, than with erronious and ambitious Mortalls, and 'twere a sinne (a grand one) for to deferre the hopes Celestialls have for to enjoy his presence. (p. 33)

Cromwell admits that he hopes simply to replace the king with himself: "once perform'd, then I am Lord alone, though not a King by Title, yet by Power" (p. 34). As Cromwell schemes against the king, the play itself indeed removes Charles to the celestial realm, allowing the energetic and diabolically clever Cromwell to supplant him.

By focusing only on Cromwell, *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* sustains the mystique of kingship in a text designed for a popular audience. Charles himself remains at a distance, adumbrated in the other royalist martyrs and shown only in death, in an interpretive framework provided by the Chorus. Yet bawdy, comic, and lively, the play concentrates its energy

not on the absent king but on his diverting if diabolical substitute. In the aftermath of regicide, such royalist satire paradoxically contributed to the republicanism it abhorred by relegating the king to the heavenly shadows and offering up a populist figure of Oliver Cromwell.

In a similar vein, John Crouch's *A Tragi-Comedy called New-Market Fayre* (June 1649) meditated on the regicide by lampooning Charles's enemies, who nonetheless to some extent run away with the show. Taking the popular form of the marketplace or fairground, with its hawkers of goods and buyers of wares, *New-Market Fayre* satirizes the dispersal and sale of the king's goods. Such a sale had indeed taken place. As early as February 1649, *Mercurius Elencticus* reported that "the Commons (as they call themselves) assembled in Parliament [ordered] That it be referred to the Committee of the Navy, to raise money by the sale of the late King's Crown, Jewells, Hangings (they might have reserv'd the Hangings for themselves), and all his other goods." The newsbook then trains its sights specifically on the brewer Cromwell:

Nor is the malice of that bloody Brewer *Cromwell* yet half satisfied with the last Gyle of Blood Royall, drawn off from the Father, but is now a *Brewing* more mischief towards his Royall Sonne King CHARLES the *Second*, who (in spight of all the Brewers and Bakers, Coblers, Pedlers, and Tinkers in the Parliament and Army) is rightfull King of *Great Brittain, France, and Ireland*.³⁶

Brewing imagery and the language of grotesque materiality mirror social upheaval: when the "proudest Rebell in the pack, (even Crumwell himself)," reads the titles of the new king, "his black perjur'd soul should make way through the very Bung-hole of his Hoggs-head, to its double Damnation, for Fear and Shame."³⁷ The text degrades Cromwell in material, sometimes scatological, terms. Like the passing of the malt through the opening at the bottom of a barrel, or the passing of excrement through the "bung-hole" of the body, Cromwell's soul makes its way downward to damnation. Cromwell's very material body contrasts with the ethereality of the martyr-king and his son.

A Tragi-Comedy called New-Market Fayre extends to Cromwell and Fairfax the money-grubbing proclivities of the soldiers said to have made money by displaying the dead body of the king. But once again the form of the drama complicates the play's royalism. As an adept and flourishing schemer, Cromwell engages the audience, even while they (presumably) disapprove of his character and actions.

While the First Cryer's wares recall the martyred king, the spotlight soon

moves to the Grandees who fight over the symbols of kingship. The First Cryer enters “with a Crowne and Scepter, a Cabinet of Jewells, Suites and Roabes belonging to the late King.”³⁸ The sale goes beyond these emblems of royalty to include relics that poignantly recall the royal martyr, Charles’s “bloody handkerchers,” his “*Meditations and Prayer-Booke*,” and his “*Haire, and royall blood*” (p. 85). The Cryer is confident in his sale of kingship: “Here you may all things *buy* / That belong to *Monarchy*” (p. 85). Entering with the other Army Grandees, Cromwell and Fairfax fight over the trappings of royalty, above all the crown. The Cryer assures Cromwell that the crown, which he has seized and tried on, has transformed him: “So, now ‘tis sure, / And makes you look more like a *King*, then *Brewer*” (p. 86).

Yet the ensuing squabble over the crown highlights not the absent king (who disappears from view) but his comic and entertaining replacements. Cromwell takes full control of the crown – and the dramatic action – as he avers: “A Crowne admits no Rivall; Ile *all* or none, / He sits unsafe that doth divide his Throne” (p. 86). His quarrel with Fairfax escalates as Lady Fairfax and Mistress Crumwell join in, engaging in a lively verbal skirmish. Lady Fairfax, for instance, scorns the former brewer’s wife:

What wood ye Mistris yest and graynes;
Marry foh, come up *small-beer*:
You’d make your nose as red hot as your husbands,
And thrust it into his *fizzling-place*,
Woo’d ye not, mistris *Brazen-face*? (p. 87)

Mistress Crumwell’s defence – “Call me Mistris brazen-face; thou *Rotterdam* slut, thou; call me brazen-face? Thou look’st more liker a *Mistris fools-face*, or like thy *Husbands-face*” (p. 87) – reveals her lack of class in contrast to the true absent monarch. Nonetheless the brawling ladies upstage the monarch, who moves even further into the shadows.

Building upon the success of *New Market Fayre*, Crouch’s sequel, *The Second Part of New Market Fayre* (July 1649), makes Cromwell more Machiavellian and further idealizes – and distances – the absent Charles. The play opens with a reminder of the martyred king by the character Constantius, who professes astonishment at “what they have done by Butchering Sacred Majesty.”³⁹ A necromantic scene in which a Faustus-like Hugh Peters calls up the ghost of Isaac Dorislaus, the murdered English envoy to the Netherlands, underscores the contrast between England’s old and new rulers. When Peters naively inquires whether “the late King be in these lower Regions,” Dorislaus eulogizes the king and blackens by contrast his opponents:

No, thou Viper, he reigns in Heaven; in Hell there are new torments providing answerable for that damn'd Crime without all presidents but *Bradshaw, Cook, and Steel*, and such as those have forg'd:

Knives hired by *Cromwel* to corrupt the Laws:

Now all made food for *Hells* devouring jawes. (p. 220)

Indeed, a special place has been reserved in hell for "*Fairfax, Cromwel, Ireton, Pride*," and Dorislaus looks forward to the day when they too, like him, will "rue their damn'd *Regicide*" (p. 220). With straightforward invective, the play embodies and conveys royalist ideology.

Yet if damnation awaits Cromwell, in the play itself he is very much alive and well, diverting the audience and duping the naive and gullible Fairfax. Cromwell's profession of loyalty – "Wee're now at Amity, and made both one; I hope there will remain no Jealousies or Fears each of other?" – utterly deceives Fairfax, who embraces Cromwell as "my second Self" and admires his wit and policy: "Oh that I could by this embrace beget a wit like thine; the State wants *Policy* as well as *Money*; and mine's but little, thine a full *Magazine*" (p. 217). Although the play turns dark and tragic for Fairfax, betrayed to the people and taken off to be hanged, Cromwell himself remains the conniving Vice figure, whose double-entendre lets the audience enjoy and appreciate his dissembling. As with the earlier playlets we have explored, the satire of the two parts of *New-Market Fayre* does not so much contain Cromwell as unleash him as a popular comic figure in print.

The public execution of the king was a traumatic event that brought to culmination all the upheaval of the civil war years. Along with the (now) more familiar elegies, the higher literary forms that grappled with the execution of Charles I through the paradigms of the theater, tragedy, and sacred martyrdom, royalists deployed "lower" and more popular printed forms of satire. Such forms transformed Cromwell the pious military victor into an iconoclast who attacked church windows and tombs, defacing God's image with his own unsightly appearance. By making Cromwell a Machiavel, royalist satire defused principled opposition to monarchy: in these texts, Cromwell did not oppose, but simply envied, kingship.

What would be the purpose of such satire once the king was dead? Royalist satire attempted to stem what Barry Coward has called the "functional radicalism" of civil war, to keep *de facto* regicide from becoming doctrinaire republicanism.⁴⁰ Popular royalist print constructed an ambitious and duplicitous Cromwell to explain why the regicide had occurred without giving any legitimacy to the arguments of *either* regicides or republicans. Rather than literature reflecting life, here life borrowed from

literature the stock type of the Machiavel to explain and manage the unpredictability of contemporary events.

How effective were such paper bullets? Readers undoubtedly appropriated texts for their own purposes, and it is difficult precisely to align popular print with political thought or action. But by tracing the ambiguities and complexities of a range of cultural texts, we have seen that royalist representations of Cromwell may paradoxically have helped to undermine their own position. As the success of *Eikon Basilike* suggests, the impulse to insulate the figure of the king from the demystifying effects of popular print may have backfired. At the same time, the image of a powerful Cromwell with royal pretensions served to create a common conception of Cromwell as a key military and political figure long before that was actually the case in reality. Royalists created their own worst enemy.