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0521496950 - Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought,

1570-1640

Markku Peltonen

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Markku Peltonen examines humanist and republican themes in English political thinking between the mid sixteenth century and the Civil War. He challenges the dominant view that humanism fizzled out in the middle of the sixteenth century only to reemerge during the 1650s in the writings of such classical republicans as James Harrington and John Milton. The English never lost sight of humanism as a political discourse. They continued to use such deeply entrenched notions of the humanist tradition as the virtuous civic life and *vera nobilitas* throughout the period to portray themselves as citizens and to characterize their life as one of active participation rather than subjection.

In addition, early modern Englishmen resorted to more openly republican themes. They often argued that a republican form of government implemented in a highly successful manner the idea of meritocracy. The classical idea of a mixed constitution also exerted a profound influence on English political thought. Most importantly, some theorists felt no qualms about employing the central notion of republicanism – that governors should be elected rather than hereditary. As well as excavating humanist and republican themes, the study aims at locating their uses in their proper historical circumstances.

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IDEAS IN CONTEXT

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#### IDEAS IN CONTEXT

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### *Note on text*

Original spelling has been retained throughout (except i/j and u/v in quotations), with the exception of those editions I have used where spelling has been modernized.

The year is taken to begin on 1 January.

The absence of any reference to women is, of course, due to the fact there were no such references: all treatises cited were written by and for an audience of men.

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Bacon, <i>Essayes</i>	Francis Bacon, <i>Essayes</i> (1625), ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford English Texts, 1985).
Bacon, <i>Letters</i>	Francis Bacon, <i>The letters and life</i> , 7 vols., ed. James Spedding (London: Longman & Co., 1862–74).
Bacon, <i>Works</i>	Francis Bacon, <i>The works</i> , 7 vols., ed. James Spedding et al. (London: Longman & Co, 1857–9).
CD1628	<i>Commons debates 1628</i> , 4 vols., ed. Robert C. Johnson et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977–8).
CSPI	<i>Calendar of state papers relating to Ireland, 1586–96</i> (London, 1877–85).
Greville, <i>The prose works</i>	Fulke Greville, <i>The prose works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke</i> , ed. John Gouws (Oxford English Texts, 1986).
Greville, <i>The remains</i>	Fulke Greville, <i>The remains of Fulke Greville</i> , ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Zondervan, 1965).
PD1610	<i>Parliamentary debates in 1610</i> , ed. S. R. Gardiner, Camden Society, LXXXI (1862).
PPEI	<i>Proceedings in the parliaments of Elizabeth I</i> , vol. 1 1558–1581, ed. T. E. Hartley (Leicester University Press, 1981).
PP1610	<i>Proceedings in parliament 1610</i> , 2 vols., ed. E. R. Foster (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).
PP1626	<i>Proceedings in parliament 1626</i> , vol. 1 House of Lords, ed. William B. Bidwell and Maija Jansson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

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*List of abbreviations*Raleigh, *Works*Walter Raleigh, *Works*, 8 vols., ed. W. Oldys (Oxford University Press, 1829).*Somers tracts*Walter Scott (ed.), *A collection of scarce and valuable tracts*, 13 vols. (London, 1809–15).Spenser, *Poetical works*Edmund Spenser, *Poetical works*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (Oxford University Press, 1912).*State trials**A complete collection of State trials*, vol. II, ed. T. B. Howell (London, 1816).

TGKB

Francis Bacon, 'Of the true greatness of the kingdom of Britain', in *Works*, VII, pp. 45–64.