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Edited by Derek Hirst and Richard Strier

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Introduction

Derek Hirst and Richard Strier

Festschrifts are suspect. They are often motivated more by personal affection than by intellectual kinship, and they are therefore often mere miscellanies. This volume is and is not a tribute to John Wallace. Although the contributors were all friends of Wallace's, their intention is to pay tribute to work they continue to admire rather than to the man whose loss they have mourned. There is accordingly a true intellectual kinship among the contributors in their sense of kinship with Wallace's work, especially his book, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (1968).¹ That book demonstrated the inadequacy of the (mostly) discipline-bound scholarship that then flourished in Departments of History and English on both sides of the Atlantic; it represented a virtuoso integration of texts and contexts. These features will inevitably seem less remarkable now that a whole generation since has added rich examples and approaches to contextual and historical reading. Even more important, however, than an interdisciplinary method that showed how the timeless and the time-bound could be held in balance and made to illuminate each other is the example of Wallace's reconstruction of an intellectual and political world from the point of view of a recognizable person. Wallace took as his subject a poet and a polemicist, Andrew Marvell, who had the fortune to live through interesting times. By dint of broad imaginative sympathy – together with broad and thoughtful reading in the pamphlet literature of the time – Wallace was able to show with rigor and plausibility how Marvell had coped with questions of value and allegiance in a revolution. Wallace's Marvell was neither a martyr nor a timeserver. He was an engaged and deeply thoughtful observer and participant in his times, one who maintained his principles (and his head) from the days of army radicalism and regicide through the period of restoration and reaction. Thoughtful historical engagement was both the topic and the mode of Wallace's book.

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The essays in this volume are united by a shared concern with the relationship between ideas and events, and by a shared geographical and chronological focus: England in the seventeenth century. Their authors may take some encouragement from recent developments in ethical and political theory that have resurrected a case for a life of virtue that seemed lost in the 1980s, with that decade's exaltation of the market.² They are certainly convinced that such a case has merit for seventeenth-century England, for in that time and place, perhaps more than most others, the relationship of virtue and principle to public life became an issue of particular urgency.

The claims of seventeenth-century public life on individual virtue are perhaps easiest to demonstrate by contrast with what came after. The rise of politeness and the cult of domesticity by the end of the century were accompanied by the novelists' assertions of a purely private virtue inconceivable a century earlier; indeed, Bernard Mandeville was soon to argue the irrelevance of virtue, conventionally measured, to the public weal.³ The development of a prudential, and even probabilistic, moral calculus in the same period may have made more widespread, and certainly more respectable, the kind of guarded public commitment that an earlier age dismissed as "politique," or questioned as "trimming."⁴ And on the other hand, the growth of party encouraged public commitments that were not necessarily or largely principled.

The seventeenth century stands out for the sensitivity and complexity of its scruples and commitments against the period that preceded as well as that followed it. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Ciceronian civic humanism that had a brief heyday in the England of Sir Thomas Elyot, Roger Ascham, and Sir Thomas Smith had been complicated and challenged by the rise of a darker Tacitean vision.⁵ But though the Tacitists' fascination with reason of state and self-preservation might argue the submergence of conscience, in fact it is clear that Tacitism did not triumph over Ciceronianism, either within individuals – Francis Bacon, for example, has been characterized as engaged in a life-long interrogation of Tacitean principles⁶ – or in the wider polity, where Milton's *Of Education* provides a reminder of the vitality of the civic humanist tradition of education for moral involvement in the world. Hobbes's pupil and patron, William Cavendish, the second Earl of Devonshire, was an heir to that tradition, as was Algernon Sidney.⁷ What was characteristic of the seventeenth century was a heightened awareness of the complexities of the relation of virtue and the public life as a result of the divergence of the two main strands of humanism; we

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might turn for a typically thoughtful and provocative example to the deep disagreements in 1659 between Milton and James Harrington over the potential of individuals versus institutions as vehicles for reform.⁸

The seventeenth century brought other pressures, both on the polity and the individual. Not only did increasing political, and ultimately constitutional, dissension require the attention of and even redress from superiors and inferiors alike, but religious controversy subjected ordinary consciences to a call to action in defense of God's truths. But of course the religious history of the period cannot be told only as a story of confrontation. The long-term transition from the Seven Deadly Sins to the Ten Commandments may have been at its height in this period of deep and widespread awareness of the Calvinists' God. That shift may have made the application of doctrine to daily life more urgent; it also made it more complicated. Both complexity and urgency are evident in the godly moralism that arose at the end of Elizabeth's reign, overlying an increasingly rigid predestinarian orthodoxy, and bringing to the fore the troubling subject of the relation of the individual to God's purposes.⁹ Further, the development of an overtly contestatory Arminianism gave additional polemical charge to the role of human will and human actions. The determination to expunge the self in George Herbert reflects, no less than does Oliver Cromwell's famous hostility to "self-ends," the pressure of the dilemma of selfhood in this culture.¹⁰

It was for such reasons that the probity of the individual became the qualification for participation in public life in a way that it had not been before and perhaps was not to be again until the modern age of the media blitz and its attendant cult of personality.¹¹ Indeed, this volume helps us to see how little the "private/public" distinction captures of the texts and (as far as we can reconstruct it) the experience of persons in seventeenth-century England. The denial of the "private/public" distinction is insisted on by contemporary theoretically informed scholars, by Althusserian Marxists and Foucauldian new historicists who find common ground with feminist scholars and queer theorists in an insistence that all relations are structured by power, and that all human life is in an important sense political. Such structuring and such politicization did not go unremarked in early modern England. In this period, with its governing metaphor of the "body politic," it was difficult to ignore the politics of the body, physical and sexual as well as civic. Recent work has reminded us of the interconnectedness of the political, conventionally understood, and the personal: royal favorites, local worthies, and unruly women alike were often the targets of prodigious, and unfailingly sexual,

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slander and ridicule.¹² Many of the figures and texts that have long held the interest of seventeenth-century scholars reinforce and embody the perception that the personal is also political. The preoccupations of satire, that seventeenth-century delight, are not far from those of the charivari. The vivid characterization of the rogues gallery in *Absalom and Achitophel* helps to explain why that poem should have been the most successful of all seventeenth-century political writings after that other literary masterpiece, *Eikon Basilike*. Conversely, the *Eikon*'s construction of the king as the Virtuous Man was surely more central to its success than were its historical reflections.

The pressure to vindicate the uprightness of the self could extract some surprisingly revelatory and sustained performances from those who would engage in public life in seventeenth-century England. John Milton often appears singular in the insistence with which he trails the intimate and the sexual before the reader in a progress that took him to some quite radical religious and political places. Yet others were moved by similar assumptions about the relation of the personal and the political. To Milton's fury, Charles I's happy marriage became part of the political argument of *Eikon Basilike*.¹³ In our non-theoretical moments, we tend to conceive of and experience sexuality, like conscience, as an intensely private matter, but the "fantasies" of a major Caroline courtier, revolving around his own and his wife's sexuality, were a consciously contrived rhetorical work meant as an act of public vindication and self-representation.¹⁴ Such vindication may have been particularly necessary in a court whose rather prudish tone was set by the extravagantly married king and queen, yet Sir Kenelm Digby's readiness to circulate his manuscript account, a form (as Jackson I. Cope insists) of "publication," speaks to Digby's concern to establish the "inner" self on a wider stage. Digby's use of the form of the "meditation," moreover, itself points us to the ways in which the most intense and private emotional experiences were, and were seen to be, guided by and part of public norms.

No less self-consciously, another "gentleman" later in the century, Algernon Sidney, was to hold out personal virtue as his defense in the court of Judge Jeffreys as well as in the court of opinion when he was charged with treason. But, as Victoria Silver shows, Sidney's business with virtue went further than simple self-representation. He manifested and theorized a highly developed ideology of the politics of reason, volition, and character, and an equally developed critique of a contrary politics. Proper judgment of political structures hinged on how one

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conceived and represented oneself as a person. Like Milton in 1659, Sidney was intrigued by the relation of political forms to personality types – what sort of person does a particular political structure or theory imply or create? Algernon Sidney saw the tyrant and the courtier as precisely the figures that Sir Robert Filmer’s patriarchal absolutism created, in theory and in practice; and he saw implicit in his own existence as English gentleman, rational agent, and user of a properly demythologized language the need for a very different civic polity.

Sidney’s republican critique obviously took him further than most of his contemporaries (other than, for instance, John Milton and Sir Henry Vane, Jr.) would have gone in the predication of public life on personally embodied virtue. This political distance serves to alert us to how easily the “organic” world of the “body politic,” with its apparent implications of hierarchy and place, could give way to something much less stable when the overlap of personal and public was tested. Yet however unusual the outcome, the means by which Sidney constructed his self-representation were not uncommon. The ancient model of republican virtue was for him not a “rhetorical flourish” but part of the self, for which he lived and died.

That models are not foreign to the self, not pieces of costume which the actor manipulates at will, is a lesson of both the Cope and the Silver essays. But this is not to go to the other analytic extreme, to the claim that models of behavior, or, to put it another way, particular discourses, actually molded, even constructed, the individual. We are beginning to learn, through close study of the best-documented cases, of the complexity of the relations between language or models and agency.¹⁵ A full appreciation of that complexity is essential to an understanding of almost any aspect of Renaissance selfhood. Again, our post-modern situation puts us in closer touch with the seventeenth century than with the nineteenth. We are prepared to see models as parts of the self, as constitutive of it, in a way that Romantic conceptions of the “true self,” independent of social constructions, would scarcely allow. But as the study of particular cases ineluctably demonstrates, the self’s relation to its models cannot plausibly be seen as a merely passive one.

The project of consciously fashioning a moral and political agent in seventeenth-century England has rarely been more fully unfolded than in Quentin Skinner’s account of Thomas Hobbes’s program for William Cavendish. We may be tempted to dismiss the strenuous course Milton lays out in his *Of Education* as simply Miltonic, an idealistic eccentricity. But Hobbes put into practice something that appears likely to have been

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fully as demanding – with a significant difference. No less devoted than Milton or Algernon Sidney to classical models of thought and style, the young Hobbes seized on Thucydides as exemplar. Hobbes was not merely showing off his Greek and demonstrating his humanist credentials in translating Thucydides from (as he insisted) the best available text; it mattered that his main labor of scholarship was on the most analytical and cold-eyed of classical historians, and one who, as Hobbes noted, “least of all liked the democracy.” Milton may have come to an equal distaste for democracy, but Thucydides’ dispassionate dissection of the political motives and stratagems of his countrymen was not Milton’s primary mode – though it was Hobbes’s.

Hobbes may seem to have lived out the injunctions to self-preservation issued by his other mentor, Tacitus; but we should not conclude that the choice of classical models was necessarily predictive of political alignment. J. G. A. Pocock observes in Thomas May the historian a commitment to Thucydides equal to that of Hobbes, and perhaps more passionate.¹⁶ Yet May, who turned to Thucydides as a model for understanding the calamities of a civil war through which the historian himself was living, was a loyal servant of the Long Parliament. Thucydides may have helped to carry both Hobbes and May to thoughtful positions, but certainly not to the same one.

Of course, classical models did not stand alone as guides to writers and readers in the period. We have long known that preachers, on both sides of the political divide, urged their auditors into battle. They sought to bring their congregations and their readers to the point of resolution and political engagement, presenting both the duty of absolute obedience and the duty of resistance as addresses to the conscience.¹⁷ “Conscience” was the great term that, for all but the most purely prudential individuals, spanned as it were the space between the inner life of the individual and the life of action in the public arena. Barbara Donagan demonstrates that in the early 1640s, men heard from some pulpits that their consciences “knew” that the king was “not only not to be resisted, but also to be actively obeyed,” regardless of what in particular he commanded, while they also heard from (other) pulpits that “for the defense of religion and the reformation of the church, it was lawful to take up arms against the king” – indeed, that it was a conscientious duty to do so. By which set of duties one felt one’s conscience to be bound defined one as a person in that historical crisis. But perhaps, for some at least, only in that crisis. A remarkable finding of Pocock’s essay is May’s profound sense of the difficulty of understanding, let alone explaining,

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events of which one has been a witness. May's perplexities of conscience and allegiance in time of civil war were not, he realized, the same as his perplexities as "author," for the fullness of the meaning of the past was lost. It seems likely that he recognized that there had been, for many, the moment of choice that Donagan's casuists tried to argue away; indeed, May came close to a recognition that there had been an existential moment to whose content and meaning even Thucydides could give no guide.

The pulpit, the press, and the classics – as imparted through formal and informal schooling – were great sources of influence on seventeenth-century persons. Yet there was another such locus to which both the pulpit and academia were ambivalent to the point of hostility: the public theater. Yet pulpit-preaching was itself a form of public performance, and this did not escape contemporaries' notice. Stanley Fish teases out the complex relation between the ideal of self-abnegation in George Herbert's poetry and the ideal of "showing holy" in Herbert's advice to fellow clergy in *The Country Parson*. The determination to bring the world to Christian selflessness generated a double paradox. The enactment of holiness and selflessness was envisioned by Herbert as generating an extraordinary power over the lives and selves of others; the loving and selfless scrutiny of the parson over his congregation aspired to something like tyranny. It was, and was known to be, the aspiration of clerical opinion-shapers throughout the period, and it helps explain some of the intensity of anti-clericalism in the 1640s and 1650s. A more visible paradox lay in the way Herbert, the poet of the spirit, offered as advice to his colleagues his own keen awareness of the need to manifest "the holy" in public in concrete, bodily, and well-rehearsed ways.

In a post-Restoration controversy over conformity and conscience, an establishment divine accused non-conformists of treating the pulpit like a "puppet-play" for their use of exactly such devices as George Herbert recommended to the conformists themselves. A non-conforming respondent then threw back the taunt of theatricality at the establishment – "Who so mimical, so theatrical in a pulpit, as some amongst your selves?"¹⁸ An insistence on the importance of public performance, of enacting oneself and one's part, co-existed in this culture with a deep suspicion of hypocrisy. Not surprisingly, when virtue and its representation were so central to public life, the seventeenth century manifested both of these impulses with a remarkable, and unusual, vigor. The world of the stage, and of literature in general, could not be kept separate from the world of the pulpit and politics. As Derek Hirst shows, Marvell's use

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of the figure of “Mr. Bayes” to attack the hypocrisy as well as the religious intolerance of the established church involved a whole complex in which “literary” and “political” considerations cannot (and should not) be disentangled.

The end of the century brought a solution of a kind to the grand dilemma of the relation of the self to public life. By then each was beginning to acquire its own distinctive calculus, in the emerging science of interest theory and in politeness. But it is ironic that what is perhaps the most skeptical note was uttered near the beginning of the century. The greatest figure of the public theater in the English Renaissance was fully aware of the claims for the transformative power of education, of the pulpit, and of the theater; *The Tempest* can be seen as interrogating those claims. The figure of Prospero is at once that of the humanist schoolmaster, that of the minister who means to stir and afflict the consciences of the guilty, that of the dramatist who wishes to affect his audiences through his presentations, and, if Richard Strier is right, that of the colonial administrator.¹⁹ Here Strier’s argument intersects with Fish’s, for the aim of both their central figures, Prospero and Herbert’s Country Parson, is the exercise of power, whether through “virtue” and learning, or self-abnegation. Strier’s reading of *The Tempest* suggests that Shakespeare, perhaps unlike George Herbert and the pulpit orators of the early 1640s studied by Donagan, was profoundly uncertain about the extent to which individuals could wield power transformatively in any guise. And *The Tempest* can also be seen as mediating the public and the “private” since, if its skepticism about the transforming capacity of power extends to the “power” of theater as well, then all those readers and playgoers from the eighteenth century on who have wanted to see Prospero as a stand-in for Shakespeare may well have a point after all.

The essays in this volume represent a number of different ways of approaching their shared concerns. There is, of course, no one preferred or “right” way to read or to write about texts from the past. Some of the essays in the volume seem plainly the work of their disciplines – Donagan’s essay could perhaps only have been written by a historian, and Strier’s and Fish’s perhaps only by literary scholars – whereas other essays in the volume, those by Hirst and Silver, for instance, have no obvious disciplinary marks. We feel that this is as it should be. Shared concerns need not be reflected in set approaches. One of the advantages of a collection like this is the way in which the essays, pursuing their own tasks in their own ways, cross-pollinate each other and suggest connections that a more discipline-bound collection might not. No one could

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have predicted the confluences between Fish's essay and those of Strier and Hirst, nor known in advance or been able to plan the prominence of Thucydides or of the critique of "romance" politics in this volume. Such connections are themselves truer to the non-discipline-bound realities of the past than any set of merely historical or literary essays are likely to be, however broad their range of reference.

No less instructive than the conclusions are the potentials suggested by the different approaches. For instance, while Fish does not himself extensively contextualize, he discerns a set of structures in his texts that are important data for historical analysis. "Formalism" and "historicism" need not be at odds, though of course they can be and often have been. "Close reading" can be a tool for historians as well as for literary critics, as can awareness of literary allusions and rhetorical modes.²⁰ Single texts can be profitably studied; multiple texts by single authors can be profitably studied; selected texts by multiple authors can be profitably studied; so can large cross-sections of the discourse of a particular moment. What is important is that scholars attend, sensitively, knowledgeably, and (as far as possible) with their preconceptions suspended, to the multiple ways in which the texts of the past speak to each other and to us; and, as well, that scholars seize and create opportunities, formal or informal, to transcend their disciplinary training by examining shared concerns from their different perspectives, and then communicating with one another. As this volume testifies, some rich and – best of all – surprising convergences occur when such collocations take place.

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CHAPTER I

“I am Power”: normal and magical politics
in *The Tempest*

Richard Strier

*Je suis la Puissance.*Prospero, in Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*

No play of Shakespeare's is more strongly focused on the matter of service and on the master–servant relationship than is *The Tempest*. Service interested Shakespeare throughout his career, but from the period of *Hamlet* on, the aspect of this topic that most concerned him was the need for servants, subjects, and subordinates of all kinds to resist immoral commands. *King Lear* can be seen as culminating this development, and in the three Romances prior to *The Tempest*, it is taken as axiomatic that “Every good servant does not all commands” (*Cymbeline*, v.i.6). *The Tempest*, however, does not seem to fit into this picture. Its focus seems to be on proper obedience rather than on proper disobedience, and it seems to be much more conservative than the plays that precede it. In earlier work, I opined that the explanation for the conservatism of *The Tempest* “was probably to be found in its colonial context.”¹ The chapter that follows tries to sort out these puzzlements. It will show that while the “virtuous disobedience” theme does not entirely disappear from *The Tempest*, the focus of the play with regard to masters and servants is on the extent and possibilities of human power – of power conceived of as pure coercion, as the capacity to force the bodies and, as far as it turns out to be possible, the minds of rational beings. *The Tempest*, in other words, will be seen to be about the practical or existential rather than the moral limits of authority. To this exploration, the “colonial context” will indeed be relevant.

The chapter falls into two parts. The first examines what can be called (by analogy with Thomas Kuhn's “normal science”) “normal politics” in the play.² This is the politics in which Shakespeare's “axioms” about proper and improper obedience do apply, in which conspiracy and usurpation are familiar, and in which various other topoi