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LITERATURE AND THE POLITICS OF FAMILY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

A common literary language linked royal absolutism to radical religion and republicanism in seventeenth-century England. Authors from both sides of the civil wars, including Milton, Hobbes, Margaret Cavendish, and the Quakers, adapted the analogy between family and state to support radically different visions of political community. They used family metaphors to debate the limits of political authority, rethink gender roles, and imagine community in a period of social and political upheaval. While critical attention has focused on how the common analogy linking father and king, family and state, bolstered royal and paternal claims to authority and obedience, its meaning was in fact intensely contested. In this wide-ranging study, Su Fang Ng analyzes the language and metaphors used to describe the relationship between politics and the family in both literary and political writings and offers a new perspective on how seventeenth-century literature reflected as well as influenced political thought.

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