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978-1-107-06643-4 - Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics

Lisa Walters

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[More information](#)

## Introduction

But this Age hath produced many effeminate Writers, as well as Preachers, and many effeminate Rulers, as well as Actors. And if it be an Age when the effeminate spirits rule, as most visible they doe in every Kingdome, let us take the advantage, and make the best of our time, for feare their reigne should not last long; whether it be in the Amazonian Government, or in the Politick Common-wealth, or in flourishing Monarchy, or in Schooles of Divinity, or in Lectures of Philosophy, or in witty Poetry, or any thing that may bring honour to our Sex.

Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, 1653, Aarv<sup>1</sup>

In *Poems and Fancies*, Margaret Cavendish's first publication, she claims that she was living in an era where 'effeminate spirits rule'; that she was experiencing an age where women actively engaged in politics, philosophy and theology. Cavendish has been described by scholars as an absolutist and a royalist,<sup>2</sup> yet she lists female 'Preachers', the radical puritans of the English civil war, as honorary and exemplary women who also

<sup>1</sup> This quotation can be found in the signature pages after page 160 in *Poems and Fancies*.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of the common assertion that Cavendish was a royalist or absolutist, see Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, 'Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle', in *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 215; Deborah Boyle, 'Fame, Virtue, and Government: Margaret Cavendish on Ethics and Politics', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.2 (2006): 282; Gary Schneider, 'Royalist Approaches to the Civil War and Commonwealth in Familiar Letter Collections', *Renaissance Studies* 24.4 (2009): 561–2; and Sujata Iyengar, 'Royalist, Romancist, Racialist: Rank, Gender, and Race in the Science and Fiction of Margaret Cavendish', *English Literary History* 69.3 (2002): 649–72. Cavendish's writings have also been compared with *Eikon Basilike*, a text claimed to be authored by Charles I, which defended the King's actions and the royalist cause. See Anne Elizabeth Carson, 'The Hunted Stag and the Beheaded King', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 45.3 (2005): 544, and Holly Faith Nelson and Sharon Alker 'Memory, Monuments, and Melancholic Genius in Margaret Cavendish's *Bell in Campo*', *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 21.1 (2008): 35. Critics now refer less often to Cavendish as an absolutist. However, in the 1980s and 1990s important, groundbreaking criticism did define Cavendish as a proponent of absolutism. See Catherine Gallagher, 'Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England', *Gender* 1 (1988): 24–39, and Kate Lilley, 'Introduction', in *Margaret Cavendish: 'The Blazing World' and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin Books, 1994), xiv.

Cambridge University Press

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[More information](#)

'bring honour to our Sex'.<sup>3</sup> What does it mean that the 'royalist' Margaret Cavendish considers puritans to be honorary and exemplary women? This study aims to reconsider claims of scholars who consider Cavendish a royalist or a hierarchical thinker, by exploring the interconnections among her ideas about gender, science and politics which emerge in her prose fiction, poetry and scientific treatises. Cavendish suggests that women can excel in 'the Politick Common-wealth' and 'Lectures in Philosophy'; these were topics that Renaissance people would have known as science. Hence, Cavendish argues here that the masculine world of science and politics can provide honourable pursuits for women whether they are 'effeminate rulers' or puritan 'Preachers'.

The 'royalist' Cavendish's praise of radical puritan women is paralleled by admiration expressed for Cavendish from across the political spectrum by Sarah Jinner, who referred to the Restoration of the English monarchy as an 'Evill'.<sup>4</sup> In her 'Almanack', Jinner provides medical recipes, astrology and advice to a popular audience, and assuages what she believes will be her readers' anxiety on seeing 'one of our Sex in print especially in the Celestial Sciences' by invoking prominent women, including her contemporary Margaret Cavendish, to justify her own entrance into print culture and her own intellectual authority. She argues: 'What rare Poets of our sex were of old? and now of late the Countess of Newcastle.' We are thus presented with the question: why would the middle-class Jinner, who believed the Restoration 'Evill', choose to identify with the supposedly royalist and aristocratic Cavendish? Cavendish herself contends in *Sociable Letters* that women are not 'bound to State or Crown': since women are 'not Citizens in the Commonwealth', they should not be deemed 'Subjects to the Commonwealth'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Cavendish argues, remarkably, that women need not bear loyalty to their monarch, to their kingdom or to a political party, although later she does concede that women are, at times, subject to their husbands.<sup>7</sup> Mihoko Suzuki reminds us that early modern women were

<sup>3</sup> Cavendish does not always portray puritan women as exemplary, complaining elsewhere in *Poems and Fancies* that they 'Preach false Doctrine in a Tub'. PF A4r2.

<sup>4</sup> Jinner 'heartily wish[es]' in 1660, the year of the Restoration, 'that the Evill that is threatned may be turned from us by Prayer' and claims that 'Much of our evill that will befall us, is like to be occasioned by the evill minds of some in Power.' The evil minds of those in power are presumably those associated with the newly restored King, Charles II. Sarah Jinner, *An Almanack or Prognostication for the year of our Lord 1660* (London, 1660), A2r8.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Jinner, 'An Almanack or Prognostication for the year of our Lord 1658', in Alan S. Weber (ed.), *Almanacs* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *CCXI Sociable Letters* (London, 1664), 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-06643-4 - Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

expected to share the political affiliations of their husbands and fathers.<sup>8</sup> Cavendish turns this notion on its head, to suggest that if women are not full political subjects, then they are not obliged to maintain loyalty to the state and sovereign. This claim of Cavendish's, that women are not morally or politically obligated to have allegiance to their monarch, certainly challenges common assumptions about Cavendish's alleged royalism and the depth of her commitment to monarchy.

In the Renaissance, the feminine ideals of silence, obedience and chastity were perceived as intrinsically linked, and in theory women were meant to subscribe to them. Except in the case of female monarchs, that is, queens, women were not expected to have complete political subjectivity. The everyday lives of women, however, were much more complex than this strictly proscriptive rubric. Sarah Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have demonstrated that in reality, middle- and lower-class women performed a range of paid and unpaid work from manual labour, crafts, service, teaching and running businesses, to prostitution and theft.<sup>9</sup> Early modern women, however, were understood to be much more sexual, carnal, unruly and inconstant than men. Hence, women were believed to be in need of male governance and authority. But gender was only one facet of a complex nexus of hierarchical relations during the Renaissance, and men also were expected to demonstrate obedience to their superiors. Ann Hughes has argued that during the early modern period, 'all hierarchical relationships were seen as inextricably connected': fathers, kings and God were comparable in their authority, 'and each type of rule was a model for, and helped to justify, the others'.<sup>10</sup> Further chapters in this book will describe ways in which Cavendish's science challenges such suppositions.

Cavendish was one of the most fascinating and extraordinary intellectual figures in the seventeenth century. She is most remarkable for being a woman who published an extensive oeuvre on natural science, yet she was also the first woman to attend a meeting of the Royal Society, and she corresponded with and sometimes influenced contemporary intellectuals and philosophers.<sup>11</sup> While aristocratic women in the seventeenth century were

<sup>8</sup> Mihoko Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588–1688* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). Suzuki further argues that both apprentices and wives 'were excluded from being political "subjects" because they were supposedly represented by their masters and husbands'. *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford University Press, 2003, 256–344). Even aristocratic women managed large estates, supervising and organizing servants and children.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 65.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Cavendish participated in epistolary debates with Constantijn Huygens. The elevation of other female intellectuals, such as Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–78) and Princess

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

indeed expected to read and write, this expectation did not quite extend to the act of publication, which presumably would have violated the feminine ideal regarding silence. Hence Sarah Jinner's expression of concern over women's writing appearing in print manifests the anxiety surrounding female publication itself, and its 'immodesty'. An aristocratic culture also generally preferred manuscript circulation over print as a means to circulate ideas and thoughts. Nevertheless, Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, was one of the more prolific authors in early modern print. Over nearly twenty years, she published twenty-three volumes, writing in almost every available genre of her time: scientific treatises, poetry, prose fiction, plays, orations, romance, fictional letters and science fiction. It is important to put this effort into its cultural context: although during the civil war women increasingly appeared more in print, before the civil war of 1640, only half of one per cent of all published books were by women.<sup>12</sup>

Cavendish's work also demonstrates a profound engagement with, and radical critique of, her intellectual and cultural milieu. Scholars have often presented Cavendish as a conservative royalist figure, in the sense of a person who supported monarchy and social hierarchy, and who was engaged with royalist politics and culture. However, Hilda L. Smith has noticed that even though Cavendish sometimes espoused statements entirely in line with her husband's royalist politics and the royalist circle connected to their household, there is still a greater divide between their views than has been traditionally understood in criticism.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, qualifications are necessary before one categorizes her as a conventional royalist. Smith contends that Cavendish is 'clearly a royalist', and yet she 'seems unfairly characterized by that label alone', and that 'she does not display the immediate loyalty to the Crown that her husband does or identify with policies that would protect the king's authority'.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Smith notes that

Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618–80), 'is primarily established by their epistolary debates with other male philosophers'. Moreover, Katie Whitaker notes that some of 'Glanvill's books were replies to Margaret's views'. See Nadine Akkerman and Margu rite Corporaal, 'Mad Science beyond Flattery: The Correspondence of Margaret Cavendish and Constantijn Huygens', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14 (2004): 3, and Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by Her Pen* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 319.

<sup>12</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Hilda L. Smith, "'A General War amongst the Men ... But None amongst the Women': Political Differences between Margaret and William Cavendish', in Howard Nenner (ed.), *Politics and the Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain: Essays Presented to Lois Green Schwoerer* (University of Rochester Press, 1997), 143–60.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 156, 151.

some of Cavendish's statements critique the abuse of animals, and defend peasantry and women. In Smith's view, it is these intriguing moments, in which Cavendish contradicts and breaks away from royalist viewpoints, that merit more attention.<sup>15</sup> For example, in *Orations*, Cavendish provides opposing perspectives on numerous political issues including the merits of monarchy, democracy and war. Some of the arguments are classically royalist, such as when one voice in the text claims 'Monarchy is the Best and Safest Government', and she also echoes the conservative tenets of patriarchalism – the belief that kingly authority is fatherly in origin – with another voice arguing that 'a King is the Common Father of his People'.<sup>16</sup> But occasionally the arguments are startlingly radical. One voice reads more like a declaration from a Leveller pamphlet; it claims that:

Nature, who made all things in Common, She made not some men to be Rich, and other men Poor, some to Surfeit with overmuch Plenty, and others to be Starved for Want: for when she made the World and the Creatures in it, She did not divide the Earth, nor the rest of the Elements, but gave the use generally amongst them all.<sup>17</sup>

This passage not only argues against hierarchy and inequality, it goes so far as to suggest that an unequal distribution of wealth or power is completely unnatural.

What are we to make of these surprisingly contradictory political views in Cavendish's writings, and why would she be interested in exploring opposing viewpoints? Although Smith suggests that we may never be able to know Cavendish's 'real' politics, in so far as she characteristically portrays multiple perspectives upon the same topic, the present study proposes that we *can* answer this question of Cavendish's political views. As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to reconsider assumptions that Cavendish was a royalist. One way this can be done is through an examination of what plurality in opinion meant for her culture, and how this concept can be applied to her scientific and political ideologies, particularly since diversity and contradiction are recurring motifs in her oeuvre. In doing so, this study will demonstrate how Cavendish's interrelated

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Orations* (London, 1662), 279, 130.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. Nature is also the great equalizer that justifies all people to having equal property and freedom in Richard Overton's Leveller pamphlet: 'every Individuall in nature, is given an individuall property by nature, not to be invaded or usurped by any ... For by naturall birth, all men are equally and alike borne to like propriety, liberty and freedom', where everyone is 'to live, every one equally and alike to enjoy his Birthright and priviledge.' Richard Overton, *An Arrow against all Tyrants and Tyranny* (1646), 3.

Cambridge University Press

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

deconstruction of gender and political hierarchies generates a view of the natural world that is more sympathetic to republican than to royalist ideology.

Some scholars have suggested that Cavendish's portrayals of gender, science and politics are unconnected modes of inquiry which contradict one another.<sup>18</sup> However, John Rogers, Emma Rees and Jonathan Sawday have shown that Cavendish's science is political in nature, although they interpret her scientific endeavours as expressions of her royalist ideology.<sup>19</sup> Later chapters of this book will show the correspondence between Cavendish's natural science and her interest in plurality: these reveal a set of important and overlapping concerns that cohere into an epistemology which questions hierarchical modes of thinking. Plurality in this study means the recognition of numerous perspectives in natural philosophy and politics which, to some extent, can be deemed valid or true. Though Cavendish sometimes repeats the ideas of the royalist circle on which she was dependent and in which she was immersed, she simultaneously undermines these very ideas and advances political theories that support neither a monarchist government nor royalist conceptions of the natural world.

The term royalism was first coined in the 1640s by William Prynne, supporter of the parliamentary cause,<sup>20</sup> who asserted that 'his Majesty and all Royalists must necessarily yeeld'.<sup>21</sup> However, the word came to encompass a wide variety of attitudes and ideals during the seventeenth century. DeGroot defines 'royalism' as a 'loose affiliation of those who supported the King and who condemned his enemies. They were first and foremost monarchists, before any ambiguity of internal debate regarding the rela-

<sup>18</sup> Londa Schiebinger argues that the democratic implications of Cavendish's physiology were never extrapolated to her political philosophy, while Eve Keller posits that at times Cavendish's 'gender critique vanishes before a non-critical engagement with the privileges and pleasures of her class'. Likewise, Rachel Trubowitz argues that Cavendish is 'driven by the competing demands of the Duchess's radical feminism and social conservatism'. Londa Schiebinger, 'Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle', in Mary Ellen Waithe (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. III, 1600–1900 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 15; Eve Keller, 'Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science', *English Literary History* 64.2 (1997): 466; and Rachel Trubowitz 'The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self: Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11.2 (1992): 229.

<sup>19</sup> John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton*, 2nd edn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester University Press, 2003); and Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Jerome DeGroot, *Royalist Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1. However, the word was rarely used during the civil war except occasionally as a term of abuse. *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> William Prynne, *The Sovereign Power of Parliaments and Kingdoms. Or Second Part* (London, 1643), 12.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-06643-4 - Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics

Lisa Walters

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

7

tionship with the parliament.<sup>22</sup> Although royalists were not a monolithic group, he posits that they nevertheless shared some similar assumptions:

‘Royalism’ was concerned with the construction of a set of binary roles and behavioural models designed to perpetrate a certain paradigm of social stability. It attempted to impose a structure of social identity that rejected the transgressions of Parliament and was premised upon obedience and a hierarchy of ‘normality’. It was perceived that violation of these codes led to instability, social inversion, anarchy and dissolution. The conflict challenged and questioned the structure of society and politics. ‘Royalism’ desired a social order dependent on preordained and fixed roles of the obedient subject.<sup>23</sup>

DeGroot posits that royalism, reacting to the turbulence of the civil-war period and to the social and political transgressions it provoked, was seeking to re-establish social order and hence ‘was desperately trying to confirm the centrality of a divine or royal presence’.<sup>24</sup>

Other scholars have interpreted the word ‘royalist’ somewhat differently. Unlike DeGroot’s definition, which did not situate the monarch’s relationship with parliament as the foremost issue of royalism, Robert Wilcher explains that royalists were ‘those who wanted to preserve the ancient prerogatives of the crown’ rather than making the monarch ‘answerable to a parliament which had executive as well as merely legislative authority’.<sup>25</sup> He claims the civil war disrupted the medieval political doctrine of the king’s two bodies: the notion that the individual monarch and the mystical office of kingship were two bodies in one. The revolutionary period upset the balance between these two bodies since ‘[r]oyalist rhetoric tended to move to one extreme’, referring mostly to the divine qualities of kingship.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, Jason McElligott emphasizes the heterogeneous nature and diversity of the category, arguing that ‘royalists could (and did) hold a wide variety of political or theological opinions but they were united by a concern to see the Stuarts return to power on their own terms or, failing that, the best possible terms available’.<sup>27</sup> He further argues ‘that not every expression of antipathy to Parliament or sympathy for the plight of the king is evidence of royalism’, particularly since there was much more overlap between royalist and parliamentary ideals than is usually recognized.<sup>28</sup> John Miller

<sup>22</sup> DeGroot, *Royalist Identities*, 2.   <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.   <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism, 1628–1660* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-06643-4 - Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics

Lisa Walters

Excerpt

[More information](#)

also provides a more moderate picture of royalism, as he explains that even though modern readers often find absolutism and moderation contradictory, these attitudes were often perfectly compatible for many seventeenth-century royalists:

[The] emphasis on divine right was quite compatible with belief in the ancient constitution, itself a part of God's creation. Most Royalists and Tories believed firmly in the common law and expected the king to respect it. They differed from Parliamentarians and Whigs in seeing the main threat to the constitution and the law as coming from revolution from below, rather than from the crown. The 'constitutionalist revolution' was born of the perception that, within the ancient constitution, the crown was becoming too strong; the Royalists and Tories believed that it had become too weak.<sup>29</sup>

According to Miller, most royalists believed the civil war and its resulting social turmoil had been brought about because parliament exerted too much power, in a way that weakened the monarch's power to maintain order, as well as his or her ability to preserve the established legal structure.

Indeed royalists were much more moderate than has hereto been assumed. McElligott and Smith contend that 'almost every royalist was a constitutional royalist', at least to some extent.<sup>30</sup> David L. Smith defines constitutional royalists as moderates who believed

the monarch's powers were sovereign yet legally limited; that episcopacy should be retained as an integral part of the existing Church 'by law established'; and that constitutional monarchy protected the property and freedom of the subjects and the privileges of Parliament ... The common law was perceived as an expression of natural and divine law, and armed resistance to the monarch was deemed contrary to both. Monarchy, Church and the law were thus taken to be interdependent structures. This web of interlocking beliefs coloured the idiom in which each was expressed, and it is therefore impossible to separate them, or to assign a prior importance to any one, without doing violence to their intrinsic nature.<sup>31</sup>

Although constitutional royalists believed in a limited monarchy which respected laws and the parliament, Smith contends that for most of these, 'mixed monarchy did not imply shared sovereignty; and second,

<sup>29</sup> John Miller, *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 115.

<sup>30</sup> Jason McElligott and David L. Smith, 'Introduction', in Jason McElligott and David L. Smith (eds.), *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>31</sup> David L. Smith, *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c. 1640-1649* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 243.



*Introduction*

9

that the concept of legally limited monarchy involved a regulation rather than a restriction of the monarch's powers'.<sup>32</sup> Nor did constitutional royalism assume that there should be limitations on the monarch's power to choose military commanders or advisers.<sup>33</sup> Hence, on one extreme end of the category of royalism, there were theorists of divine right and absolute monarchy that advanced a notion of royal authority that placed little or no restraint upon sovereignty. On the other end of the spectrum was the belief that the monarch's sovereignty could be regulated to work harmoniously with established laws and the constitution. Yet, McElligott claims that only 'a relatively small number of royalists could ever have experienced the Civil Wars without borrowing bits and pieces of ideological baggage from the theoretical extremes of "absolutism" and "moderation" at different times, or perhaps even at the same time'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, this study will make note of how Cavendish's political thought is complementary neither to absolutism, nor to more moderate forms of royalism.

Proponents of absolutism, such as Thomas Hobbes, Robert Filmer and John Maxwell, demonstrate the variety of approaches among theories of royal authority that existed on this end of the royalist spectrum. Whereas Filmer contended that kings were originally fathers, and hence had patriarchal infallibility over their subjects, Maxwell proposed a theory of divine right wherein the monarch's power was derived directly from God, who 'investeth the Sovereigne with entire Sovereignty, so hath he set the bounds of it, [and] defined it'.<sup>35</sup> Thomas Hobbes, in contrast, used an essentially secular contract theory to contend that the sovereign's power should be undivided and absolute, even though (or *because*) sovereignty is derived from the consent of the governed in the body politic. Chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate how Cavendish's political theory does not coincide with these models of politics. Though her ideas are more conducive to moderate constitutional royalism, the doctrines that shaped the policies of the Restoration,<sup>36</sup> the present study will show how those principles cannot adequately characterize her political leanings.

For the purposes of this study, I define royalism as a set of beliefs that advance the view that monarchy is the ideal form of government, that obedience to social hierarchy is necessary to avoid disorder, as well as that a monarch's sovereignty is undivided even if limited, that subjects

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.    <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> McElligott and Smith, 'Introduction', II.

<sup>35</sup> John Maxwell, *Sacro-sancta Regum Magestas* (Oxford, 1644), 125.

<sup>36</sup> David L. Smith contends that the 'official position of the Restoration regime was based on Constitutional Royalist principles'. Smith, *Constitutional Royalism*, 297.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-06643-4 - Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

do not have the right to rebel against their monarch and that power does not derive from the common people. This definition is purposely broad enough to account for the various types of seventeenth-century royalism, from absolutists to constitutional royalists. It should, however, exclude those ‘republicans’ who may not have wished to abolish monarchy entirely, but nevertheless believed that subjects had the right to resist tyrannical monarchs or that a monarch’s political power derived from the populace. In order to account for the nuances and complexities of royalist thought, this study will make note of the specific forms of royalist ideology that Cavendish engages with and challenges.

It must be admitted that republicanism itself was not a coherent or consistent body of thought, and its definition remains contested today.<sup>37</sup> Some scholars, such as Blair Worden, maintain that the theory of English republicanism can be defined as ideas drawn from ancient republics as well as from a preoccupation with liberty and a ‘politics of virtue’.<sup>38</sup> Quentin Skinner, meanwhile, argues that republicanism should be understood more broadly, as a theory that defines *liberty* as the absence of arbitrary power.<sup>39</sup> However, he reasons that a republican in the strict sense is one who is an opponent of monarchy.<sup>40</sup> This study will define republicanism in accordance with Skinner’s understanding of republican political theory.

While Chapters 1–3 of the present study are more concerned to indicate how Cavendish’s political theory does *not* conform to royalist assumptions about monarchy and social order, Chapter 4 will, more specifically, explore how the politics of Cavendish’s romances may closely resemble attitudes common among parliamentary critics of the Crown following the execution of Charles I. It should be noted, however, that in her

<sup>37</sup> For example, the ideological differences between republicans and royalists are not always distinct, considering that many republican theorists were prepared to accept a compromise with people who endorsed the monarchy in 1660 and 1688, providing firm barriers were erected to prevent royal absolutism. For more details see David Wooton, ‘Introduction’, in David Wooton (ed.), *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649–1776* (Stanford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Blair Worden, ‘Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism, 1649–1656’, in Wooton, *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Skinner explains that it was the view of English republicans that, if you are ‘subject to arbitrary power, then you are a slave; but if you are a slave, then *ex hypothesi* you are no longer in possession of your liberty’. Even if a slave has a master who permits them to pursue whatever their will desires, the slave still lacks liberty, since their actions and desires are still contingent on another’s arbitrary will. Skinner explains that ‘Slaves are never free, because they are never free of their master’s will.’ Quentin Skinner, ‘Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power’, in Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 88, 96.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 83–101.