# *Introduction: Turmoil, Political and Otherwise*

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The early modern period in Britain is defined by tremendous upheaval – gradual transformations and sometimes sudden reversals – most notably during the civil war years. Admittedly, all time periods could be classified as transitional, as conditions, institutions, and individuals constantly effect and experience various types of change. But the specific sets of political and cultural transitions that distinguish the middle part of the seventeenth century are remarkable for their reach and preponderance. Change was the constant – the upending of monarchy, the unsettling of established doctrines within the English church, the burgeoning of the book trade, the rapid expansion of London's population, the increased interest in international commerce, the overturning of classical architecture for a baroque style, and the pursuit of a new method of inquiry based on an inductive experimental model. We should not be surprised that John Donne, who repeatedly describes the human condition as existing in a natural state of flux, would emerge as one of the period's most popular and influential writers. In his posthumously published *Poems* (1633, 1635), Donne explains that, "whilst you think you be / Constant, you'are hourly in inconstancy," and he celebrates "change" as "the nursery / Of music, joy, life and eternity."[1]

Donne's own writings illustrate how literary expression itself underwent various shifts and transformations in the seventeenth century. Both the marriage of the sacred and profane in his works, and the mix of Calvinist doctrine and Anglican ritual in his poetry and sermons, suggest the tensions and transitions that characterize much early modern literature. A royalist aesthetic of elegant lyricism celebrating the pleasures of food and fellowship was set against poems of intense longing and spiritual crisis; licentious poems from the 1620s and 1630s were answered by serious-

[1] Donne, "Of the Progress of the Soul," in *John Donne*, ed. John Carey (Oxford University Press, 1990), 218–31 (lines 399–400); and "Elegy 5: Change," in *John Donne*, 19–20 (lines 35–36).

minded religious and political works, sometimes copied in the same manuscript or printed in the same volume; and dramas and lyrics emphasizing holidays and rural pastimes were countered by the closing of the theaters in 1642 and by texts such as William Prynne's *Histriomastix* (1632), a more than 1,000-page polemic against all kinds of spectacles and ceremonies.

In terms of political and religious transformations, the decades covered by this collection naturally organize themselves around the execution of Charles I. Following the reign of James I with its emphasis on the monarch's divine authority, the trial and sentencing of Charles I represented a seismic shift in the nation's consciousness. Hearing news of the king's death, some supporters wept openly; others fell to their knees in the street. According to one contemporary account, "such a Grone" came from the crowd at the moment of the beheading "as I never heard before & desire I may never hear again."[2] The subsequent eleven years of the Interregnum – as England struggled and then failed to establish itself along the lines of a classical republic – are marked by a series of political ruptures. These years witnessed the appointment of a new executive branch of government, the soaring of Charles I's posthumous popularity, the flight or capture of the king's allies, the installation of Oliver Cromwell as the leader of Britain for life, and the restoration of monarchy with the ascension of Charles II.

The period's religious controversies necessarily informed these political events. Fueling the split between the king and the House of Commons at the outset of the war were grave concerns about changes within the English church. As archbishop of Canterbury and one of the king's most powerful advisers, William Laud put new emphasis on ceremonialism and the clerical hierarchy. He revived rituals associated with religious practices before the Reformation and restored a more elaborate style of ecclesiastical architecture. He also introduced innovations in the liturgical service that to Puritans smacked of popery, such as railing off the communion table and moving it to the east end of the nave.

Following Laud's arrest in 1640 and Parliament's convening of the Westminster Assembly three years later to restructure the church, the focus of the nation's theological debate shifted to toleration of sectarian differences and the proper form of religious governance. But the resulting move from Episcopacy to Presbyterianism ultimately proved a change without a difference. As John Milton complained in "On the New

[2] See *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry, M.A.*, ed. Matthew Henry Lee (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1882), 12.

Forcers of Conscience," probably written in late 1646, elected Presbyterian elders came to resemble Episcopal bishops in attempting "To force our consciences that Christ set free" and "rid[ing] us with a classic hierarchy" (lines 6–7). The poem's final line, "New *Presbyter* is but old *Priest* writ large" (line 20), captures a deep sense of disappointment, one that Milton and other supporters of republicanism would experience again as the nation slipped back to hereditary monarchy in the ensuing decade.

This book will pursue such political and religious transitions in order to address the "how" and "why" of aesthetic change. One of this series' underlying premises is that early modern literature actively engages with – expresses, shapes, subverts, questions, avoids, and is influenced by – the conditions in which it was composed and published. The three books in the series also begin with the premise that a grand narrative of stability or continuity fails to explain the origins and consequences of human action. On the contrary, as the contributors to this volume show, literary works and conventions can give meaning to cultural and political experience, which in turn can effect new aesthetic expressions and forms. This book attempts to piece together the often complex web of factors and events that contributed to seventeenth-century changes in literary matter, form, and genre – as well as the social, economic, and cultural changes that literary works sometimes helped to occasion. Some of the book's twenty writers accordingly examine the causes and consequences of the war and their relationship to poetic expression. But other contributors have uncovered overlapping, changing, local contexts that inform and were informed by poetry and prose from the middle of the seventeenth century.

Beginning the volume before the death of James I and extending its scope to 1660 allows for the analysis of contradictions and continuities across the reigns of two monarchs as well as the Interregnum. Scholarly discussions of early modern literature have long privileged the political over the literary and framed the period strictly in terms of monarchical succession. The contributors to this book – and the series as a whole – are trying to see beyond such traditional temporal markers to reveal the dynamics of change as well as relationships that defy neat political categories.

The specific starting point of 1623 thus spotlights a crucial literary event: the publication of Shakespeare's first folio. This prestigious collection of thirty-six plays – adorned with the late dramatist's portrait and a commendatory poem by the decade's preeminent playwright, Ben Jonson – went a long way to establishing Shakespeare's reputation as a great author. As an entry point for this volume, it helps to chart changes

in the transmission and configuration of literary texts. The circulation of mostly posthumous editions by individual writers began to give way to printed poetic collections – by, for example, Milton, Robert Herrick, and Margaret Cavendish – in which living writers appear to have actively participated.

Correspondingly, the volume's concluding date of 1660 marks not only the Restoration but also the founding of the Royal Society, an important event in the nation's intellectual history. The establishment of this group of physicians and scientists represents the culmination of new approaches to education and natural philosophy promulgated and practiced by, among others, Cavendish, Francis Bacon, and Robert Boyle.

And yet, the years 1623 and 1660, although they represent real and convenient dividing lines, will not be treated as such firm markers that they occlude important social and cultural continuities that also influenced – and were influenced by – literary developments. The volume's emphasis on transitions should not prevent the study of ongoing interests, traditions, and trends. In the case of changing authorial practices, Jonson in 1616 had already supervised the publication of his folio *Workes*, while the "new science" of the seventeenth century can trace its origins to, among other things, sixteenth-century enthusiasm for the material theories of Lucretius and Epicurus. Contributors to the volume will thus use its beginning and ending dates to focus their analyses but will also look for ways – in keeping with the spirit of the series as a whole – that the period's literary transitions sometimes transcended such temporal divisions.

Often, in terms of genre and literary modes, authors in the middle years of the seventeenth century embraced the potential for social and aesthetic change by developing relatively new types of writing. Interest in biography and memoir, for example, surged as individuals reflected on the personal impact of cultural and political transformations, while the war years in particular saw an outpouring of other relatively new forms – such as broadsides, newsbooks, and pamphlets – that helped to shape contemporary understanding of recent events. During the first years of the war, the publication of topical printed texts skyrocketed. The total number of English publications leapt from 625 in 1639 and 848 in 1640 to 2,034 in 1641 and 3,666 in 1642.[3]

[3] D. F. McKenzie, "The Economies of Print, 1550–1750: Scales of Production and Conditions of Constraint," in *Producione e commercio della carta e del libro secc. XIII–XVIII*, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica, "F. Datini" Prato, Serie II – Atti delle "Settimane di Studi" e altri Convegni 23 (Prato: Le Monnier, 1992), 389–425.

Other, older forms and genres also provided opportunity for experimentation: writers repurposed the sonnet, discovered new themes and topics in court drama, and reconfigured the epic in light of contemporary Continental texts and faltering military and colonial ventures. The pastoral, too, which influenced some performances at the court of Charles I in the 1620s, was later reinterpreted by writers such as Milton, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Carew.

So as to address effectively these and other tensions and transitions in seventeenth-century literature, the volume's twenty chapters – as with the other two books in the series – are divided into four equal sections, each one emphasizing a different kind of literary change. Following the introduction, the first section focuses on the three dominant literary modes – drama, poetry, and prose – while specifically examining innovations and continuities in the genres of life-writing, plays, masques, lyric poetry, and epic. All five chapters address the conditions that influenced the period's literary transformations and the traditions that writers inherited, adapted, and sometimes challenged. But in each case, the discussion is foundational: the emphasis in these chapters falls less on the works' cultural or political context and more on changes in genre, style, and form. Thus, Sharon Cadman Seelig examines how biography and memoir grew out of other categories of writing, as in Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) and Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643). Seelig dwells on women writers who were repeatedly prevented from speaking and writing, but who documented their own lives and the lives of their families as they tried to make sense of the dislocations and chaos caused by the civil wars.

Julie Sanders's subsequent chapter on plays and masques also interests itself in the political and social changes that took place during the reign of Charles I and the Protectorate. But instead of accepting a unique shift in dramatic genres in the middle of the seventeenth century, she demonstrates that the transformation of the theater took place more gradually over several decades. Sanders shows that, even after the closing of commercial theaters and the last full-scale Caroline masque – William Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia* (1639) – key elements of the dramatic form evolved in public entertainments by Davenant as well as James Shirley, Richard Brome, and Milton.

Lyric poetry also shows signs of both continuity and change during this period, but the outpouring of deeply personal verse by a wide range of writers defies an overarching narrative of cultural influence and poetic discipleship. While acknowledging that the sometimes frank expression of desire in the early seventeenth century paved the way for the more

shocking poetry of the Earl of Rochester, Stephen Guy-Bray focuses on the sometimes complex relation between erotic and devotional verse in the 1630s and 1640s. Individual poets moved away from but also built on sixteenth-century traditions of pastoral and *carpe diem* as they meditated on the efficacy of religious representation, romantic and spiritual longing, and a desire for nonexistence.

Anthony Welch tracks a similar variety in the development of the epic. The middle of the century finds British poets restlessly experimenting with genre and style, absorbing foreign literary influences, and reworking their ancient epic models to tell stories of civil war and religious conflict. Welch emphasizes the instability of the genre during these decades. Writers strived both to preserve and dismantle Europe's epic canon, grappling with not just the trauma of modern civil warfare, but also a weakened aristocracy, a dwindling system of patronage, and a thriving marketplace of print.

A final chapter on the collected edition expands the section's largely formalist concerns by looking more fully at the book trade and the increasingly important role that print publication played in changing conceptions of authorship and poetic meaning. Randall Ingram examines the self-consciousness and tremendous adaptability of poetic books in the context of seventeenth-century debates about material culture. Just as Guy-Bray considers a range of individual poets with discrete concerns and ideas, Ingram discusses how printed collected editions accommodated various motives and practices, which, he shows, opened up the system of manuscript transmission to new audiences with their own agendas and reading habits.

The volume's second section, "Literature and Ideological Transformation," focuses squarely on the civil wars and the ways that their causes and consequences played out in seventeenth-century literary culture. The section begins with Puritan reactions to Archbishop Laud's devotional aesthetics, one of the primary motives for opposition to the administration of Charles I. John Rumrich explores the ambiguous relation between the soteriological controversies of the 1620s and 1630s and expressions of religious symbolism, particularly in the works of Donne, Milton, and George Herbert. Jerome de Groot addresses instead the succeeding decades and the specific trope of imprisonment – especially, the prison poem – as it helped to articulate a royalist intellectual and political identity of duty, resistance, and loyalty. Nicholas McDowell examines the other side of the political divide during the war years: he analyzes writings that alternatively expressed and developed a republican

sensibility. Using Milton as a case study, McDowell traces the extent of a republican literary culture before the Restoration, in particular the way that writers used the works of Shakespeare to establish post-monarchical structures of literary activity and patronage.

The section's final two chapters focus on issues of representation. My chapter looks at a pivotal political moment in the war years – namely, the beheading of Charles I. Both royalists and the king's opponents tried to use the language and conventions of the theater to define and exploit the monarch's death. But both sides, perhaps confounded by such a momentous event, also found themselves meditating on the nature of interpretation and the relative authority of readers and authors. The final chapter then examines visual representations of Cromwell as they were influenced by both portraits of Charles I and the classical precursors of those images. Laura L. Knoppers balances her discussion of engravings and paintings with an analysis of poems by Marvell, Milton, and Payne Fisher. These literary texts help to reveal how the visual and verbal interacted and overlapped in creating both a Cromwellian aesthetic and a new, corresponding mode of power.

The next section, "Literature and Cultural Transformation," continues the trajectory laid out in the preceding five chapters by tracing various complex entanglements between text and context during the middle of the seventeenth century. But whereas the larger goal of the preceding section is to show how literary works directly engaged with the period's political and religious unrest, this set of chapters includes other changing circumstances that helped to shape and were sometimes shaped by literary culture. Themes from the previous sections are developed further: conceptions of authorial authority, approaches to changing gender roles, Continental influences, the expanding book trade, and innovations in poetic styles and forms.

Jason Peacey begins the section with a study of the ways that printed polemic evolved during the middle of the seventeenth century; he argues that various networks connecting England to the Continent significantly influenced cheap print – pamphlets, ballads, broadsides, and newsbooks – and threatened to revolutionize English public culture. Lara Dodds looks at another trend in printed publication during the same period: the tremendous increase in texts by women authors. Dodds examines how the culture conditioned women's relationships with print as well as the legitimizing strategies – such as dialogue, depictions of time, and the discourse of singularity – that women and Stationers deployed to establish the authors' poetic identities.

The next pair of chapters addresses the period's changing intellectual climate. Katherine Calloway explores a wide range of works that helped to form and respond to a new experimental method for gaining knowledge. She shows how imaginative literature and the so-called new science were sometimes at odds, sometimes in concert, and sometimes in a critical but productive dialogue. Todd Butler looks at related attempts to reform the humanist-influenced model of education in the middle of the seventeenth century. Radically revamping both grammar-school and university schooling – at times through imaginative writings such as Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1623) and Milton's *Lycidas* (1638) – was thought to be a way of promoting England's broader spiritual and civic revitalization.

In the subsequent chapter, Gregory Chaplin explores a shift in early modern attitudes toward friendship, a change that informed the social structures behind both the new science and efforts at educational reform. The revival of classically inspired relationships between men, which had allowed for displays of bodily intimacy, underwent a radical transition in manners and affect. The new form of friendship carried with it, Chaplin shows, the seeds of a new civic and political order, providing a discreet way of asserting a right to self-possession and agency in a political culture hostile to such concepts.

The volume's final section, "Literature and Local Transformation," follows the thread laid down in Parts II and III by examining how literary activities participated in and contributed to the period's wide-ranging cultural developments. These five chapters are unique, though, in foregrounding the significance of place. Simply put, the chapters in this section consider how the question of "where" affected the "how" and "why" of aesthetic, religious, and political transformations. This section thus allows for a fuller analysis of smaller but no less important literary and cultural transitions. Whereas the first chapters focused on formal and generic changes, and the second set of chapters emphasized literary engagement with religious and political transitions, this section, like the previous one, deals with cultural developments that influenced the everyday existence of individuals and the formation of their identities.

The paradox is that by examining changing local contexts and apparently smaller transformations – what we might call "micro-transitions" – this final set of chapters also opens up the discussion of literary culture beyond England to include the broader archipelago as well as the Continent, the Levant, and East India. Verena Olejniczak Lobsien begins by showing how, against the continuity of ancient generic modes, texts

addressing rural concerns retained some of the idealizing beauty and allegorizing potential of Renaissance pastoralism. But, in the midst of growing social discord, the pastoral also became more politically pointed, adapting a Lucretian sense of aloofness and embracing egalitarianism, anti-tyranny, and sometimes republican politics. Instead of offering visions of escape, country-house poems from the middle of the seventeenth century are often elegiac and critical, and sometimes accommodated even radical change.

Christopher D'Addario turns from the country to the city. Focusing specifically on the everyday life of Londoners, he analyzes transformations in quotidian experiences – such as in the keeping of time, the use of city buildings, and the frequency of debates and public gatherings – which inflected literary expression. Various poetic and polemic texts, as he shows, attempted to shape, to describe, and in some cases to resist the messiness of wartime.

James Loxley exchanges the urban/rural divide for a discussion of the literary culture of Scotland and Ireland. Developments and changes in social institutions and printing practices influenced literary production and consumption in the two nations. Loxley looks at the mutually reinforcing nationalisms of England, Ireland, and Scotland, and examines in particular how mythic histories interacted with the power relations that subsisted between nations and among the peoples of the archipelago.

Estelle Haan complements this discussion of nationalism by analyzing the ways that attitudes toward the Continent and foreign travel changed over the seventeenth century. As with McDowell's chapter on republican literary culture, Milton's experiences serve as a case study: Haan documents shifting views of suspicion and opportunity for the gentleman abroad. Largely through the shared linguistic medium of neo-Latin, travelers discovered that their writings possessed a transformative and enduring potential.

Stephen Deng also discusses England in international terms, but he focuses on significant shifts in commercial and colonial expansion. Beginning with two events that played important roles in the period's literary developments – the 1624 *Statute of Monopolies* and an economic downturn in the same decade – Deng charts a transition from topical concerns about merchant companies' controversial practices to more abstract representations of global commerce. Whereas under James the discourse of trade attempted to respond to critics and to justify monopolies and foreign investment, the concept of *colonialism* emerged as a unifying force for a country on the brink of civil war, and as a vital element for

a flourishing English nation once the trauma of military conflict had begun to diminish.

Collectively, all of the twenty chapters, by concentrating on instances of transformation and by reading across traditional periodization, demonstrate the significance of some lesser-known or wrongly overlooked seventeenth-century authors and texts. But the book also offers a new and nuanced engagement with some of the most highly regarded English writers and their most enduring and well-known literary works. So as to capture the range and depth of the period's various transitions, a diverse group of contributors has been assembled. Consisting of both seasoned scholars and up-and-coming, younger critics, the writers of these chapters are also geographically diverse; they represent Canada, England, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and the United States. In terms of critical method, they represent bibliographers, eco-critics, feminists, formalists, historians, Marxists, materialists, and queer theorists.

The overarching goal of *Political Turmoil* – as it contains narratives of interconnection, disruption, and reconfiguration – is to provide a crucial, fresh perspective on some of the most turbulent and important decades of English literary history. It is fitting that the foremost canonical text about change, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was first translated into English verse by George Sandys in 1626 and was republished several times in the period covered by this volume. Ovid's poem memorably concludes with the doctrines of Pythagoras, in which the poet reinforces the theme of mutability by cataloguing how everything exists in a state of inconstancy – language, love, desire, myth, nature, and humankind itself, as well as earth, fire, winds, water, seasons, nations, planets, and stars. Whereas Ovid in his epilogue ultimately holds out his art and fame as the exceptions – "my better Part transcend the skie; / And my immortall name shall never die"[4] – the contributors in the following chapters suggest instead that such aspirations are uncertain. Early modern literary works – when they were conceived, as they were created, and after they circulated – were, above all, engaged with and defined by various types of transitions.

[4] *Ovid's Metamorphosis*, trans. George Sandys, 2nd edn. (London, 1626), Ss3$^{v}$.