

The Influence of Dutch and Venetian
Political Thought on Seventeenth-Century
English Republicanism

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Abstract

This thesis explores the engagement of seventeenth-century English republican thinkers, namely John Milton, James Harrington, Marchamont Nedham, Henry Neville and Algernon Sidney, with Dutch and Venetian models, theories, and experiences of republicanism. It challenges J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner's approach of tracing the origins of political ideas back to the ancient world and instead develops Franco Venturi's emphasis on the significance of contemporary models to the development of early-modern republicanism. Chronologically the focus is c. 1640-1683 when republican ideas were at their height in England. In spatial terms, however, the approach is broader than traditional accounts of English republicanism, which tend to tell a purely national story. By adopting a transnational perspective this thesis promises to highlight the continuities and points of conflict between different republican thinkers, and in doing so challenges the idea of a coherent republican tradition. It suggests that narrowly defined and distinct definitions of republicanism do not capture the nuances in English republican thought, and that these thinkers engaged with various understandings of republicanism depending upon contextual political circumstances.

The thesis looks at three significant themes. The first is the role of single person rule, an issue which has come to dominate discussions of English republicanism. By examining the ways in which English republicans understood the Dutch and Venetian models, both of which included an individual figurehead within a republican constitution, this thesis suggests that existing historiography places too much emphasis on 1649 as a turning point in English republican thought. Building on this discussion of non-monarchical government, the thesis then explores the constitutional proposals advocated by English republicans. It demonstrates that Venice was actually much less broadly admired and utilised for its constitutional model than has previously been assumed, and that in fact it was the Dutch Republic with which comparisons were more readily drawn. Finally, the thesis delineates a shift towards the end of this period. Post-Restoration, constitutional modelling was largely rejected in favour the practical experiences of the Dutch and Venetian Republics; the strengths, wealth and successes of which demonstrated, to these writers at least, the superiority of republican government over the existing form of monarchy in England.

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Introduction

‘An English Man should be shewn the Misery of the enslaved Parts of the World’ asserted Robert Molesworth in his 1692 book *An Account of Denmark*, which sought to explain that nation's loss of its liberty. The difference between liberty and slavery, Molesworth argued, ‘may be seen written in the very Faces of the several People...and when we find nothing but Misery in the fruitfulest Countries subject to Arbitrary Power, but always a face of plenty and Chearfulness in Countries naturally unfruitful, which have preserv’d their Liberties, there is no further Argument’. In short, ‘all our Gentry should go abroad...to make him in Love with the happiness of his own Country’.¹ Molesworth evidently considered travel essential to coming to a full understanding of the difference between liberty and slavery, and particularly in order to teach men the importance of maintaining liberty within England. But Molesworth’s political approach was also more nuanced than a simple dichotomy between good and bad governments, for he also believed that ‘few governments are so ill constituted, as not to have some good Customs’. There were, he believed, ‘admirable Regulations in Denmark’, a country miserable under its recent enslavement; even ‘among the Savage Americans’ customs could be found ‘to serve for Models to the most civilized Europeans’.² He used the metaphor of trade to illustrate his point, arguing that our ‘Merchants bring every day from barren Countries many useful things, which our own good one does not produce’. Why then, asked Molesworth, should we not learn of ‘the Constitutions, Manners, and Condition of other Nations, as we might without doubt find out many things to our purpose, which now out of mere Ignorance keeps us from being sensible that we want’.³

Although writing after the key constitutional crises of the seventeenth century, Molesworth’s tract highlights some important themes that have been overlooked in the scholarship of early modern republicanism. In emphasising the educational value of travel, Molesworth indicated that valuable political lessons could be learned from contemporary nations, and not just as was more conventionally advocated, from the ancient world. Nor did he just look to those countries that could be idealised as representing the ‘best’ form of government. Instead, he perceived that even in flawed nations or those with very different political arrangements,

¹ Robert Molesworth, *An Account of Denmark* (1693), in Justin Champion, ed., *An Account of Denmark with Francogallia and Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture and Employing the Poor* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2011), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

history and customs from England, there might still be valuable lessons the English could learn or ideas that could be borrowed. Finally, Molesworth emphasised how travel was the best way to teach Englishmen the value of liberty, and for them to learn about foreign forms of government. Again this emphasised the value of modern examples of government, and it reminds us that Englishmen were not living in a vacuum in the seventeenth century. Travel to and around the continent was entirely possible, and was in fact undertaken by many of the English republicans who feature in this thesis.

Each of these aspects has remained somewhat overlooked in the wealth of scholarship on seventeenth-century English republican thought. Traditionally, that scholarship has placed considerable emphasis on the influence of ancient and classical models, with a particular focus on the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero and Livy. By analysing the thought of five key English republicans – James Harrington, John Milton, Marchamont Nedham, Henry Neville, and Algernon Sidney – through their engagement with the modern, contemporary republics of Venice and the United Provinces, this thesis goes some way to rectifying this imbalance. It will be shown that rarely did they idealise these commonwealths, instead picking them apart for both their good lessons as well as the ways in which an English republic could improve on their continental cousins. Furthermore, this approach will demonstrate that constitutional modelling did not always stay at the forefront of English republican writing; in certain contexts the historical functioning of republicanism, particularly with regards to the Dutch Republic, took centre stage. In approaching these English republicans through their understandings of, and interactions with, these two continental commonwealths, this thesis will shed new light on the connections between these individual figures. It will highlight the similarities, but more importantly, the nuanced differences between them and in doing so undermine the idea that there was one single coherent ‘English republican tradition’. It will demonstrate that narrow definitions of republicanism, particularly those of classical republicanism and the exclusivist republic, have obscured our vision of these English thinkers. Instead, this thesis will show that they were flexible with their republican languages, responding not just to the given political context, but to the political languages of one another. In this way, English republicanism in the mid-seventeenth century was a constantly shifting dialogue between key political thinkers.

The Historiography of Republicanism and Republican Exchanges

The examination of republicanism as an independent field of study began in the mid-twentieth century with Zera Fink's book *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth-Century England*.⁴ Fink identified a group of men, primarily John Milton, James Harrington, Henry Neville, and Algernon Sidney, whom he defined as 'classical republicans', and who would become the cornerstone of the English republican tradition. He termed these men 'classical republicans' because he saw them as a political counterpart to a similar revival in the seventeenth century of other kinds of ancient ideas. Fink argued that these English republicans invoked a very specific classical source, that of Polybian mixed government, itself an adaptation of the Aristotelian concept of the cyclical rise of good and bad forms of government. Moreover, Fink argued that the Venetian republic best exemplified the superiority of mixed government, and that as a result it became the most significant constitutional model for English republicans. Fink's book influenced numerous scholars over the course of the next few decades, with important and seminal works that expanded upon Fink's thesis being produced.⁵

The zenith of this development was J.G.A. Pocock's magisterial book *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Pocock emphasised the Aristotelian foundation of what he termed the 'Atlantic republican tradition', tracing ancient ideas of republicanism from their origins in the classical world, through Renaissance Italy - where Machiavelli was a crucial point of transmission - and via seventeenth-century England through to eighteenth-century America.⁶ Like Fink before him, Pocock emphasised the theory of mixed government, but he added a deeper level of analysis, setting the constitutional approach in the context of more abstract notions regarding the nature of humanity and politics. Pocock analysed the early modern republican tradition as a mode of discourse that was ultimately rooted in classical conceptions of politics, more specifically in the Aristotelian notion of man as a political animal. He argued that republicanism was not primarily concerned with rights but was a language of active citizenship and virtue. It was a language that was more about positive than about negative liberty; if virtue, as expressed

⁴ Zera Fink, *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth-Century England* (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1945).

⁵ See, in particular, Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, 2004); Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1964).

⁶ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

through citizen participation, was indeed the highest human goal, it followed that a classically inspired republic composed of self-ruling citizens was to be regarded as the most desirable form of government. Quentin Skinner has challenged Pocock's conclusions, suggesting instead that Roman moral philosophy was more influential than Greek to early modern republicanism, and as such the focus ought not to rest exclusively on active participation and virtue but instead on the importance of liberty.⁷ Moreover, Skinner offered an innovative understanding of the concept of liberty, one that he eventually termed 'neo-Roman liberty', which was defined by the distinction between freemen and slaves, and characterised by a lack of dependence on the will of any other man. Like Pocock, Skinner's account still placed Machiavelli at its heart, but he was innovative in emphasising the importance of a negative concept of liberty within the republican tradition.⁸

In response to Skinner's work, Eric Nelson has challenged the very idea of a single 'classical republicanism'. He questioned the understanding of 'classical' as denoting a coherent Greco-Roman inheritance, arguing that Fink and Pocock too easily connect Aristotelian and Ciceronian philosophies, whereas in fact Roman political philosophy cannot be considered merely an off-shoot of the Aristotelian-Polybian tradition.⁹ He argues that the Greek and Roman traditions posed different questions that yielded different answers. Roman authors assumed the goal of life was civic glory whereas the Greeks concentrated on the pursuit of happiness; Romans were concerned with property-owning citizenship whereas the Greeks were more concerned with abolishing private property.¹⁰ On this basis Nelson offers a more nuanced assessment of various figures within the republican canon, including Machiavelli and Harrington.¹¹

Despite their disagreements, all the authors discussed so far agree on the predominance of ancient influences (whether Greek or Roman) on modern republicanism. Yet this assumption too has come under attack in recent years. Seminal in challenging this generally accepted position was Paul Rahe, who has sent the scholarship in a new direction by arguing that

⁷ Quentin Skinner, 'The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty' in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, eds., Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 293-309; Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁸ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

⁹ Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-4.

¹⁰ Andrew Hadfield, 'Review: The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought (Ideas in Context) by Eric Nelson', *Renaissance Studies*, 19, 4 (2005), 561-563.

¹¹ Nelson has also written about the influence of the Hebrew republic on early modern republicans, whereby he challenges the assumed secularism of the traditional narrative of early modern republicanism, suggesting instead that political theology was in fact dominant by the seventeenth century. See Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Anglophone republicanism was not necessarily classical in character.¹² Rather, he places Machiavelli at the start of a modern republicanism, rejecting the common late twentieth century presentation of him as ‘the admirer of classical antiquity’.¹³ Rahe’s Machiavelli rejected classical, particularly Aristotelian, republicanism and a politics of virtue in favour of a populist republicanism whereby people are inherently self-seeking. In order to service this self-interest, Rahe’s modern republicanism is more institution-oriented, with laws and orders allowing the multitude to participate in government; in turn this rejected the classical view of the selfless public service by the virtuous few. Examining English republicanism from this perspective offers new ways in which to interpret each political thinker. So Milton transforms into a figure at odds with his contemporaries, since he remained the only ‘genuine classical republican’ of the age because of his dismissal of Machiavellian ideals, whereas Nedham and Harrington to various degrees favoured Machiavellian ideals.¹⁴

What all of these scholars have in common is that they all sought out the origins of the early-modern republican tradition, indicating that they all worked within the same parameters. However, one book that had often been overlooked until recently proposed a very different approach. Franco Venturi’s *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*, published in 1971 and almost immediately overshadowed by the publication and success of *The Machiavellian Moment*, argued that attempting to trace ideas back to their origins was not necessarily beneficial as it could actually distort the history of ideas to suit a particular purpose. While Pocock sought to offer an overarching synthesis of republicanism, Venturi rejected this ‘quest for origins’ by limiting the temporal boundaries of his study but broadening the geographical perspective.¹⁵ So in Venturi’s analysis, Pocock’s attempt to explain eighteenth-century political thought in terms of Aristotelian and Polybian influences on Machiavelli was essentially flawed.¹⁶ Rather than looking right back to the classical world, Venturi proposed looking at more recent influences, particularly the republics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although this approach faltered before it really had a chance to begin, some scholars did attempt to follow through on Venturi’s proposals. David Wootton, for example, presents his edited collection *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776* as

¹² Paul Rahe, ‘Antiquity Surpassed: The Repudiation of Classical Republicanism’, in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society 1649-1776*, ed. by David Wootton, (California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 242.

¹³ Paul Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.

¹⁴ Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar*, 105; Paul Rahe, ‘The Classical Republicanism of John Milton’, *Journal of Political Thought*, 25, 2 (2004), 243–75.

¹⁵ Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

¹⁶ David Wootton, ‘The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense’, in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 20.

an attempt to answer the question ‘what were the lessons to be drawn from actually existing republicanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ by looking at the cases of Holland, Geneva and Venice. However, Wootton quickly concludes that Venturi’s approach ‘substitutes for a myth of origins what one might term a myth of contemporaneity’, rejecting the idea that ‘because Holland and Venice were contemporary examples of republicanism they must have influenced the radical Enlightenment.’¹⁷

Though not doing so explicitly, Skinner and Martin van Gelderen have also pursued Venturi's approach by offering the most comprehensive attempt to date to examine republicanism within a European context.¹⁸ Republican ideas from a vast range of republican nations are explored in these two volumes, from Italy, the Netherlands and England, to the more under examined Berne, Poland, and Spain. Moreover, the contributors have explored six key themes; anti-monarchy, republican citizenship, republican constitutions, and the relationship between republicanism and political values, women, and commerce. Skinner and Van Gelderen were clearly ambitious when they set about examining the shared heritage of republicanism in Europe, and as a result this is a deeply useful resource for scholars. It is not, however, without its problems and critics. One important flaw is that the books do not actually examine the way in which ideas were shared between nations. Instead, most chapters look at the ways in which native republican traditions developed within their own national boundaries.¹⁹ Consequently, it is difficult to understand the usage of the term ‘shared’ in the title, and neither Skinner nor Van Gelderen offer any explanation or justification for its use. As Wootton expresses it, the volumes give very helpful accounts of individual trees in the forest, but are incapable of giving a sensible overview of the woods.²⁰

A different approach was followed by Ann Thomson and Simon Burrows, who utilise the concept of ‘cultural transfers’ in their collection of essays examining France and Britain in the long eighteenth century.²¹ Developed in Germany in the 1980s as a means through which German national identity could be studied while simultaneously rejecting the national framework that still dominated German analyses of itself, the concept of cultural transfers

¹⁷ Ibid., 21-22.

¹⁸ Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, Volumes One and Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ There are, of course, exceptions, most notably the chapters by Van Gelderen, Jonathan Scott and Hans Bödeker.

²⁰ David Wootton, ‘Review: Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage by Martin van Gelderen: Quentin Skinner’, *The English Historical Review* 120, 485 (2005), 136.

²¹ Ann Thomson and Simon Burrows, eds., *Cultural Transfers: France and Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010).

coincided with the development of comparative history.²² However, Thomson and Burrows argue that for their purposes, cultural transfers is superior since the emphasis is on the integration inherent within its concept thereby providing a more in-depth analysis, whereas comparative history can offer only a 'series of snapshots of particular individuals or cases'.²³ Because the idea of cultural transfers is relatively new, scholars have predominantly focused on building individual 'egocentric' networks, which centre on particular figures and their immediate contacts and correspondents.²⁴ In building up these networks across national boundaries, scholars have sought to break up the picture of homogenous and internally stable national cultures, and to demonstrate the extent to which such national cultures depend on a dialectical process through which indigenous and foreign elements are selectively appropriated.²⁵ With regard to the history of the seventeenth century, cultural transfers is now more focussed on the investigation of how circumstances and channels of communication favoured the appropriation of certain aspects of the others' culture, and how these aspects were adapted, contributing to the development of common learning and intellectual practice which was not confined to a particular national culture.²⁶

Rachel Hammersley offers an example of how this approach may work in practise in her examination of the English republican tradition and eighteenth-century France. She demonstrates that at least some French republicans were influenced by English republican ideas, as well as by ancient or American political texts. She looks at the way in which English republican works were disseminated within France and the ways in which the ideas were put to use by French republicans.²⁷ Gaby Mahlberg and Dirk Wiemann also demonstrate the way in which the European nature of ideas can be examined by studying the period after 1649 and looking at the ways in which English republican ideas were disseminated, moulded, adapted and utilised on the continent. They seek to correct the overemphasis on the Atlantic tradition by examining the European inter-connections being established in the seventeenth century. In *European Contexts for English Republicanism* they seek to do this by highlighting the complexities inherent in the process of writing, dissemination and reception. Writing, they

²² See for instance Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, 'The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22, 2 (1980), 174-197.

²³ Thomson and Burrows, *Cultural Transfers*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵ Stefan Berger and Peter Lambert, 'Intellectual Transfers and Mental Blockades: Anglo-German Dialogues in Historiography', in *Historikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos, und Gedächtnis in deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch, 1750-2000*, ed. by Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert and Peter Schumann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 12.

²⁶ Thomson and Burrows, *Cultural Transfers*, 4.

²⁷ Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

argue, is a cooperative endeavour that traverses spatial, temporal and political boundaries; moreover, every reading is also a rewriting, and as such meanings shift and alter upon each discovery of a text. Their collection of articles demonstrates that not only did English republican writers respond to continental authors, but that their ideas in turn were subjected to unexpected rewritings in a multitude of continental contexts.²⁸ This is an important step in understanding the cultural transfer of ideas across national boundaries.

This concept sits at the centre of this thesis. Each of the English republican figures examined here engaged with European places, ideas, texts, and concepts. With the exception of Nedham, they all visited at least one of the two featured republics. They interacted with the cultures of these commonwealths, and gained an understanding of the ways in which these countries functioned simply by visiting them. Beyond this, they each had access to lengthy tracts outlining the constitutions and histories of these republics. Some of these tracts were written by those native to the Dutch or Venetian republics, some were by outsiders, some were subsequent translations of these books, some were Englishmen, some were royalists and others were not. There were manifold ways in which English republicans could engage with the political ideas of these European republics. Moreover, these ideas could shift and alter with each adaptation and reinterpretation. This thesis therefore builds on the work of Hammersley, Mahlberg and Wiemann in engaging with the way in which specifically Dutch or Venetian republicanism became incorporated in and influenced representations of the English republican tradition.

English Republican Tradition

The narrative of the English republican tradition has long been connected to, but also complicated by, the execution of Charles I on 30th January 1649. This event has caused English republicanism to be consistently tied to the issue of individual rulers within a republican constitution. This is true to such an extent that the regicide is seen by some as a significant turning point, as the origin of republican thought in England. Thus, if republicanism is defined as ‘a doctrinaire antagonism to all forms of kingship’, then those ‘who created the revolutionary government were not, for the most part, republicans’.²⁹ English republican theory was, therefore, ‘far more the effect than the cause of the execution

²⁸ Gaby Mahlberg and Dirk Wiemann, ‘Introduction’, in *European Contexts for English Republicanism*, eds. Mahlberg and Wiemann, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1-9.

²⁹ Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 146-48.

of the king in 1649'.³⁰ Historians of the English republican tradition have subsequently understood 'republic' as the antonym of 'monarchy'. Both Skinner and Blair Worden, for instance, only consider those who were committed to non-monarchical government as genuine republicans, although Worden also stipulates that an attempt to construct republican architecture must also be present alongside the rejection of monarchy. Many, including Worden himself have commented that with such a narrow definition, most of those traditionally considered 'English republicans' would have to be excluded from the canon.³¹

Narrowly defining English republicanism in such a way has limited the scope of research. However, in recent years, David Wootton and James Hankins have reassessed this understanding of English republicanism, which has come to be understood as 'exclusivist republicanism'. Both scholars have demonstrated that the binary distinction between republic and monarchy only developed in fifteenth-century Florence, only becoming the dominant definition in the eighteenth century; so in the seventeenth century, more than one understanding of republicanism would likely have been present.³² The events of 1649 whereby England executed its monarch and established a commonwealth in its place has been argued to represent the institutional manifestation of the linguistic transformation of the term *res publica* which had taken place during the fifteenth century. Prior to that point, the term was taken to simply denote good government in the public interest; however, in the fifteenth century the Florentines introduced the idea that monarchy was completely distinct from a republic. Wootton and Hankins have both highlighted this shift, and although they disagree as to the exact point at which this change began, they both agree that the idea was popularised in the works of Machiavelli and the English republicans of the 1650s. Nonetheless Wootton still considers the regicide to be a crucial stage in the development of this modern understanding of republicanism.³³ Similarly, James Hankins argued that 'republican exclusivism', defined as government based on the will of the people as the only legitimate form of government combined with a complete rejection of any non-elective monarchy and all hereditary political

³⁰ J.G.A. Pocock and Gordon J. Schochet, 'Interregnum and Restoration', in *The Varieties of British Political Thought*, ed. by J.G.A. Pocock, G.J. Schochet and L.G. Schworer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 147; Blair Worden, 'English Republicanism', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. by J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 443-75.

³¹ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Worden, 'English Republicanism', 443-75; Blair Worden, 'Republicanism, Regicide and Republic', in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, Vol. 1*, 307-27.

³² Wootton, 'The Republican Tradition', 19; Wootton, 'The True Origins of Republicanism: The Disciples of Baron and the Counter-Example of Venturi', in *Il Repubblicanesimo Moderno: L'idea Di Repubblica Nella Riflessione Storica Di Franco Venturi*, ed. by Manuela Alebertone (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2006), 271-304; James Hankins, 'Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic', *Political Theory*, 38, 4 (2012), 452-82.

³³ Wootton, 'The Republican Tradition', 19.

privileges, is a modern invention³⁴ Hankins makes the distinction between pre-modern and modern republicanism, arguing that the shift from *res publica* being applied to a variety of political regimes to very specifically exclusivist regimes occurred in the fifteenth century during the Italian Renaissance.

On the other hand, not all scholars have centred their understanding of republicanism on constitutional forms. Pocock spoke of a form of ‘civic republicanism’ which he argued existed prior to the outbreak of the English Civil War.³⁵ Pocock's ‘civic republicanism’ was an Anglicised Machiavellianism which called for political action and civic virtue, rather than specifying a particular constitutional structure. Nonetheless, like Skinner, Pocock perceives a change after the regicide, when these principles were united with a commitment to non-monarchical rule. For Pocock, then, principle *and* form only became relevant after the execution of the king. Established historiography has therefore highlighted the significance of practical events to ideas.

Both Markku Peltonen and David Norbrook, however, have been critical of the distinction drawn between pre- and post-civil war republicanism, arguing that ‘civic republicanism’ is a nascent form of ‘constitutional republicanism’, thus emphasising continuity rather than change.³⁶ They argue that an anticipatory form of constitutional republicanism can be demonstrated by the evidence of political ideas derived from the republics of antiquity and the Renaissance, often found in pre-seventeenth-century literary sources. However, the use of classical allusions in literature would not have been uncommon in a society educationally steeped in that culture, and to suggest that all these writers were nascent republicans is to force too many people under the overarching term ‘republican’.³⁷

This thesis builds on the pluralist understanding of English republicanism. It will consider the engagement of English republicans not just with the republican elements of the Dutch and Venetian constitutions, but also with their monarchical components, and consider how this influenced or mirrored their ideas for an English constitution. Similarly, it will look at the way in which they interpreted the balance of power in these contemporary republics, and look at what this can tell us about their understanding of good government.

³⁴ Hankins, ‘Exclusivist Republicanism’, 452-82.

³⁵ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

³⁶ For their key works, see David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁷ Worden, ‘Republicanism, Regicide and Republic’, 307-27.

Dutch Republicanism

Dutch republicanism has proved somewhat tricky to pin down. It has long been considered to stand apart from the paradigm of the Atlantic republican tradition, and as a result was overlooked for far too long. Indeed Pocock has posited that there may in fact have been two “republican traditions”, which he refers to in metaphor as the elephant and the whale, which share a common evolutionary history with some comparable outcomes, but that ultimately they are entirely different organisms.³⁸

Historians have largely agreed that political thought during the Dutch Revolt remained largely traditional and pragmatic, focused more on their native history rather than abstract philosophy.³⁹ During the course of the Revolt and after the abjuration of Philip II, the Dutch continued to seek a new king or queen to act as their sovereign or figurehead. This indicates that the Revolt was not a rejection of monarchs or monarchy in general, but rather a demonstration of their discontent with one specific tyrant. The Dutch were concerned with the ways in which the Spanish king had overstepped his powers by violating traditional Dutch rights and customs. The traditional rights were broadly conceived as independence, provincial autonomy and religious toleration. The revolt was therefore an attempt to restore the status quo, rather than to establish a radical new form of government. This therefore connects back to debates within the English republican historiography on the role of a single person or monarch within a republican constitution. Recent research into Orangism, royalism and the Dutch Republic has mirrored English studies whereby a more nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of monarchy and republicanism has been developed.⁴⁰

A specifically Dutch republicanism took many years to develop, and is generally considered to have only become clearly defined and systematic in the United Provinces after 1650.⁴¹ Eco Haitsma Mulier demonstrates that the first unequivocal expression of republicanism only appeared from the 1650s in the works of the brothers De la Court and Spinoza, and that prior to this political theory consisted of unsystematic ideas of sovereignty and a focus on the

³⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘The Atlantic Republican Tradition: The Republic of the Seven Provinces’, *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts*, 2, 1 (2010), 1-10.

³⁹ Thomas Maissen, ‘Liberty and Liberties in Europe’s Federal Republics’, in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe, Vol 1*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 235-55.

⁴⁰ Particularly prominent are the works of Jill Stern and Helmer J. Helmers: See Jill Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image, 1650-75* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Sphere, 1639-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴¹ Maissen, ‘Liberty and Liberties in Europe’s Federal Republics’, 235-255.

advantages and disadvantages of monarchy.⁴² In recent years, innovative new research has moved studies of Dutch republicanism beyond the traditional discussions of political theory. Arthur Weststeijn has brought two themes, often studied independently of one another, together to create a new strand to republicanism in the Dutch Republic. In *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age* he argues that political thinkers in the mid-seventeenth century, particularly the brothers De la Court, proposed an ideal republic in which self-interested commerce was the fundamental political principle.⁴³

There have been some attempts to connect Dutch republicanism to a broader European tradition. Martin van Gelderen and Wyger Velema have both explored Dutch republicanism in greater depth and have explored its connections with wider European political thought, focusing particularly on themes such as liberty and mixed government.⁴⁴ Particularly important for the purposes of this thesis is Haitsma Mulier's study, which focused more specifically on the influence of the Venetian republic on key republican writers, including the De la Courts and Spinoza, in the Dutch Republic, leading him to conclude that the Dutch combined the uniqueness of their history and political situation with influence from Europe to create a distinct republican tradition.⁴⁵ Although Venice and its myth was not universally accepted or utilised by Dutch thinkers, it was used selectively or as an admonitory example. This stands in opposition to the work of Ernst Kossmann who argued for the distinctly Dutch nature of Dutch Republicanism.⁴⁶

The scholar who has done the most to draw connections and comparisons between the experiences of the Dutch and the English has been Jonathan Scott. Scott has paid close attention to the many connections between English and Dutch republicanism.⁴⁷ He argues that republican practice and theory arose in both England and the United Provinces as a result of

⁴² Eco Haitsma Mulier, 'The Language of Seventeenth-Century Republicanism in the United Provinces: Dutch or European?', in *The Language of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 179, 188-89.

⁴³ Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan and Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Also see Arthur Weststeijn, 'Republican Empire: Colonialism, Commerce, and Corruption in the Dutch Golden Age', *Renaissance Studies*, 26, 4 (2012), 491-509.

⁴⁴ Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Martin van Gelderen, 'Aristotelians, Monarchomachs and Republicans: Sovereignty and *respublica mixta* in Dutch and German Political Thought, 1580-1650' in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, Vol 1*, 195-217; Wyger Velema, "'That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy': Anti-Monarchism in Early Modern Dutch Political Thought' in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, Vol.1*, 9-25.

⁴⁵ Eco Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1980).

⁴⁶ Ernst Kossmann, 1960, quoted from Martin van Gelderen, 'Aristotelians, Monarchomachs and Republicans', 196.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth Century English Political Instability in a European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

specific ‘troubles’; thus English and Dutch republicanism arose from connected practical circumstances, specifically relating to the abolition of monarchy, the establishment of liberty of conscience and the debated importance of maritime and mercantile economic policies.⁴⁸ Dutch and English republicanism therefore had distinctive connections that support the approach of this thesis, and there is certainly more to be said on the role of the Dutch Republic on English republican thinkers.

Venetian Republicanism

Compared to the Dutch Republic, Venice has received less attention in recent years when it comes to its connections to English republicanism. This may be due to the fact that Venice was so strongly tied to Fink’s initial sense of the classical republican tradition, and as a result, historians have perhaps been keen to explore new terrain and push the Venetian Republic from the forefront of the historiography. However, Venice did influence English understandings of republicanism, and to overlook it because of its connection with an outmoded understanding would be an error.

The history of the Venetian republic is largely told in relation to the ‘myth of Venice’. As Venice lost economic and political power in the aftermath of the Italian Renaissance, its apologists – mainly fellow Venetians or Florentines – began to formulate a mythical image of its history, constitution and government that sought to portray Venice as a unique polity, and that as a successfully functioning commonwealth it was the natural heir to the great republics of classical antiquity.⁴⁹ This process began in the sixteenth century and became universally pervasive, with Venice being lauded across Europe for its polity and heritage. It was able to achieve such success because it supported, and more importantly exaggerated, a set of beliefs that were pre-existent in the consciousness of the Venetian patriciate and people.⁵⁰ However, with the passage of time and the continual decline of Venetian fortunes, the divide between myth and reality grew ever starker.

As a historiographical tool, the ‘myth of Venice’ became prominent from the mid-twentieth century, most notably in the works of Oliver Logan, Myron Gilmore, Felix Gilbert, J.G.A. Pocock, and Eco Haitzma Mulier.⁵¹ In particular, James Grubb has offered the best overview

⁴⁸ Jonathan Scott, ‘Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth Century England and the Netherlands’, in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, Vol. 1*, 62; Jonathan Scott, ‘From English to British Liberty, 1550-1800’, *European Review of History*, 21, 1 (2014), 59-72.

⁴⁹ Tim Carter, ‘Myths of Venice’, *Early Music*, 30, 1 (2002), 141.

⁵⁰ Haitzma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 4.

⁵¹ For early uses see Oliver Logan, *Culture and Society in Venice 1470-1790: The Renaissance and its Heritage* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972); Myron Gilmore, ‘Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory’, in J.R. Hale,

of the conceptualisation of the myth of Venice in twentieth-century historiography.⁵² There is disagreement as to the precise content of the myth, with different scholars favouring one aspect of the myth above another; for instance, Pocock emphasised the mechanised virtue engendered in Venetian institutions, whereas Gilmore emphasised the importance of the aristocratic ruling class within the broadly conceived mixed constitution. However, the very lack of consensus among modern scholars regarding the exact specifics of the myth simply serves to highlight its complex and multifaceted nature. However, at least one scholar has suggested that the choice of terminology employed by historians is unfortunate. James Orlo Hancey has found the phrase ‘myth of Venice’ problematic since the term ‘myth’ frequently tends to lead scholars to seek the relationship between myth and reality, and in doing so scholars lose sight of the value of the myth in its own right.⁵³

Certainly, scholars have fallen into this trap. John Julius Norwich has offered an excellent chronological history of the Venetian republic, but at the very outset he bemoans that ‘one of the most infuriating aspects of early Venetian history is the regularity with which truth and legend pursue separate courses’.⁵⁴ Indeed, outlining the reality of Venetian history helps to explain the challenges that threatened the myth, and sets out the context of the increasing influence of the anti-myth. As Venice’s power and influence waned and the city’s reputation was increasingly marred by its portrayal as Europe’s pleasure garden, the counter-myth of Venice, as a country of corruption, immorality and licentiousness became the dominant narrative. There had, of course, always been those who viewed Venice in a negative light; but as a pervasive concept, the anti-myth only came to fruition much later. In fact, this is generally associated with the eighteenth century and beyond, but some scholarship has traced its origins into the seventeenth century. Wootton in particular has traced the anti-myth as a genuine challenge to the predominant narrative into the mid to late seventeenth century.⁵⁵

This is not to suggest, however, that the historiography of Venice has been entirely dominated by the debates surrounding myth, anti-myth and reality. Building on the work of earlier historians such as Frederic Lane, M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale, who were particularly

ed., *Renaissance Venice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 431-44; Felix Gilbert, ‘The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought’, in *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, ed. by Nicolai Rubenstein (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 463–500; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*.

⁵² James S. Grubb, ‘When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography’, *Journal of Modern History*, 58.1 (1986), 43–94.

⁵³ James Orlo Hancey, ‘Alternative Conceptions of Politics within the Myth of Venice’, PhD Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1978, 7.

⁵⁴ John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 13.

⁵⁵ David Wootton, ‘Ulysses Unbound’, in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 352-67.

interested in the military and naval power of Venice, recent work by Maria Fusaro has focused on empire, trade and territory, which importantly, compares Venetian fortunes in this arena to those of England across the early modern period.⁵⁶ There has also been recent work on sociability and public life; Peter Miller, for instance, has examined the political role of friendship and how in Venice the concept and language of community developed out of its older republican inheritance.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, even where the mythical narrative is not at the forefront of scholarly intention, it often makes its presence felt. In the edited collection *Venice Reconsidered* topics as diverse as slavery, women, and material culture form the main basis of the work, but these chapters are sandwiched between an introduction and epilogue that assess the myth of Venice.⁵⁸ The historiography of the Venetian republic is therefore intimately connected with the mythologies surrounding it.

Scope and Rationale

The cast of characters at the heart of this thesis form part of the traditional canon of English republican thinkers. While most have already been well examined, the approach adopted here necessitates consideration of lesser known works alongside those central to the canon. This is particularly the case for Algernon Sidney and Henry Neville. Mahlberg's important study of Neville has highlighted the previously underappreciated political messages of Neville's lesser known pamphlets.⁵⁹ This study builds on this assumption. Similarly, the manuscript of Sidney's *Court Maxims* was only discovered in the 1970s, meaning that it remains a rather understudied tract. Moreover, my approach casts new light on these relatively well known figures and their political works. Looking at them from the perspective of the Dutch and Venetian republics allows us to draw innovative connections between the thought of these English republicans.

The Dutch and the Venetian Republics were chosen as the focus points of this thesis because they both feature significantly in the works of several English republicans. The influence of Venice on Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* has often been commented on but not

⁵⁶ Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale, *The Military Organisation of a Renaissance State: Venice, c.1400-1617* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁷ Peter Miller, 'Friendship and Conversation in Seventeenth-Century Venice', *Journal of Modern History*, 73, 1 (2001), 1–31.

⁵⁸ John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano, eds., *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilisation of an Italian City-State 1297-1797*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

⁵⁹ Gaby Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republican Culture in the Seventeenth Century: Dreaming of Another Game* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

sufficiently explored in depth. Moreover, the myth of Venice was itself perhaps at the very peak of its influence by the 1650s. As the seventeenth century progressed and the power of Venice declined as a trading superpower, the perception of the most Serene Republic began to shift in favour of an anti-myth which espoused the more negative aspects of the Venetian polity. The Dutch Republic features heavily in both *The Isle of Pines* and *Court Maxims*. It was England's closest republican neighbour and they shared a commitment to the Protestant faith. However, despite their political and religious similarities, the naval and commercial ambition of both nations brought them into conflict three times over the course of the period upon which I am focusing here.⁶⁰ Moreover, the geographic closeness of the Dutch Republic meant that it was within easy reach for the English to visit, and it meant too that news and information was regularly, frequently, and quickly transferred between the two nations.

The structure of this thesis is for the most part chronological, and is split into three sections. The first outlines the political and historical world surrounding the Dutch and Venetian republics. There are then two main sections, which take 1660 as the dividing point. The first of these deals with the 1640s and 1650s, during which time there was considerable political, social, and economic instability, which gave rise to a wave of new ideas. The final section considers the concept of republicanism under a monarchical regime, both in the years following the Restoration and also during the Exclusion Crisis, when republicans saw another opportunity to influence the form of government. Taking a look at the way in which republicanism was conceptualised, and more particularly the way in which contemporary examples of European republics were put to use and manipulated, highlights the way in which English republicanism adapted and shifted according to circumstance and context. It also highlights the intellectual flexibility of the English republicans, who could adapt the Dutch and Venetian examples of republican government to serve different purposes at different times. Nor is this to suggest that it was just different republicans portraying these republics in distinctive ways; any given republican could and often did, over time, adapt the way in which a given republic was utilised or portrayed in their political works.

Within the chronological sections, the chapters take a thematic approach. Chapter 1 provides the important contextual information underpinning the thesis. It outlines the ways in which English republicans were influenced by the immediate world around them through both their

⁶⁰ The causes of the outbreaks of these wars cannot, of course, simply be attributed to naval and commercial rivalries. Steven Pincus, for instance, has argued that ideology and religious tensions within and between the two republics was the predominant factor in the outbreak of the Anglo-Dutch wars. Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

own personal experiences on the continent as well as the political and historical tracts available to them on the Dutch and Venetian republics. It sets these against the histories of these nations, and a brief outline of each republic's respective republican institutions in order to provide the readers with a sound understanding of how these English republican figures gained their knowledge about contemporary commonwealths.

Chapter 2 explores the issue of single person government in the 1640s and 1650s, and in doing so, contributes to the debate surrounding the definition of republicanism. While Milton has generally been understood as accepting some form of single person rule right through the 1650s, this has less often been the case for Nedham and particularly for Harrington. There were, however, individual figureheads in both the Dutch and Venetian Republics, and this chapter will explore how these three thinkers understood these individual figureheads as functioning within a republican constitution, and will consider how this informs our understanding of their republican thinking more generally.

Chapter 3 follows much of the traditional scholarship on the English republican tradition by placing Harrington front and centre. It explores the way in which he engaged with the myth of Venice, demonstrating the various ways in which he diverged from and adapted the myth to better serve his own political agenda. It also looks at how and why Harrington incorporated the Dutch Republic into his political writings. In exploring these two aspects of Harrington's writings, it becomes possible to contribute further to the growing body of work portraying Harrington as a democratic republican. This leads to a wider discussion in Chapter 4 concerning Harrington's distinctiveness within the republican canon, and challenges the initial sense of him, reflected in the works of Fink and Pocock, as the archetypal English republican. In juxtaposing Harrington's use of the Venetian and Dutch Republics with that of his immediate contemporaries, particularly Milton and Nedham, it becomes clear that his commitment to Venetian constitutional models was divisive and ill favoured, thereby shifting the central English republican narrative further away from Harrington.

Chapter 5 moves into the post-Restoration years and considers how the use of contemporary European republican examples shifted in accordance with the altered political circumstances within England. In particular, there was a notable move away from the Venetian constitutional model to the republican experiences and successes of the Dutch Republic. In noting this new dynamic, the chapter also draws a previously under-considered parallel between two lesser known English republican works, namely Sidney's *Court Maxims* and Neville's *The Isle of Pines*. Chapter 6 continues to examine these two figures, exploring the ways in which their political writings, republican ideas, and utilisation of contemporary

republics shifted under the auspices of the Exclusion Crisis. In particular, it considers the role and purpose of the Noble Venetian in Neville's *Plato Redivivus* in order to assess how far this tract can be considered 'neo-Harringtonian'.

Section 1

Europe: Travel and Tracts

Chapter 1: English Knowledge of Europe

Travelling the Continent

Robert Molesworth's position regarding the importance of travel in imparting valuable political lessons did not come from nowhere. It was built on earlier ideas, particularly those found in a key political tract of 1656. In *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, James Harrington set out the means of educating men 'in the womb of the commonwealth' in order to remould them as 'citizens'. His proposal was a six-stage educational process 'at the school, in the mechanics, at the universities, at the inns of court or chancery, in travels, and in military discipline'.¹ Travel was therefore an essential aspect of Harrington's formation of the politicised citizen, and its significance extended to his approach to formulating his ideal constitution. This is important in two key ways. Firstly, he outlined the idea of 'a commonwealth which will herself be a traveller'.² Travel to different commonwealths was useful for the political man, since it provided the material for the formulation of a good polity. Indeed Harrington's own ideal commonwealth, Oceana, was made up of elements of existing commonwealths past and present, a process which was explicitly dramatised by Harrington in 'The Council of Legislators'. The Lord Archon gathers his council of legislators around him, and requests 'an urn to be brought' so that each man may draw lots to decide which model of government each should investigate. The models included ancient governments such as Athens, Rome, and Carthage, but also modern ones, such as the Swiss Cantons, United Provinces and Venice. These governments, Archon claims, contain 'in them all those excellencies whereof a commonwealth is capable (so that to have added more had been to no purpose)'.³ The councillors were to study the government assigned to them, and based on their findings, the orders and constitution of the commonwealth of Oceana were to be modelled. Harrington, therefore, placed equal value on ancient and modern republics in providing useful material for legislators. In this way, Harrington's commonwealth itself was a traveller - an amalgamated commonwealth made up of elements of other European republics past and present.

The second point of significance regarding the commonwealth as traveller is that it clearly outlined that travel was not recreational, but a key element in the formation of politically

¹ James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), in *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics*, ed. by J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 197.

² *Ibid.*, 197, 205.

³ *Ibid.*, 69.

engaged citizens. Harrington further emphasised this point when he declared that ‘no man can be a politician, except he be first an historian or a traveller; for except he can see what must be, or what may be, he is no politician’.⁴ Harrington therefore placed equal emphasis on the value of historical republics and contemporary ones, on the reading of ancient texts and on travel. Moreover, as well as insisting on the importance of travel as part of a citizen's political education, he also suggested that:

every youth at his return from his travels is to present the censors with a paper of his own writing, containing the interests of state or form of government of the countries or some one of the countries where he hath been; and if it be good, the censors shall cause it to be printed and published.⁵

Acknowledging that not all men had the luxury of being able to travel across Europe, Harrington encouraged those who could to document their accounts, giving these travel narratives a distinctly political purpose. This served a dual purpose: to encourage those who could travel to reflect deeply on what they encountered and observed, and in creating these additional travel narratives, the result was more opportunities to learn for those who could not leave the country. Indeed, over the last half century, historians have recognised that travel and the written accounts emerging out of it could possess a political purpose. John Stoye and Jeremy Black have both argued that the early conception of the Grand Tour and much of the didactic writing on travel chiefly justified it as a means to create educated servants for the state, who were well informed of the politics and governments of Europe.⁶ Similarly, Andrew Hadfield has demonstrated that some of ‘the most vociferous expressions of republican sentiment were contained in the representations of other countries and cultures’.⁷

Travel, politics, and education demonstrably shared intimate connections. In their quest for the origins of republican thought in England, many historians have overlooked this fact and have focused too exclusively on the ancient world. However, the ancient world was not a place one could actively visit or experience. On the other hand, many of the key figures of the English republican tradition spent time on the continent. The time they spent in Europe took different forms: Harrington and Milton undertook relatively traditional ‘grand tour’ style trips, as did Neville, but the latter was also later exiled on the continent with Sidney after the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Despite the fact that some of the key texts in the English

⁴ Ibid., 205.

⁵ Ibid., 191-2.

⁶ John Walter Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad 1604-1667: Their Influence in English Society and Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 17; Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 216.

⁷ Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance 1545-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 6.

republican canon were written on the continent – namely *The Isle of Pines* and *Court Maxims* – historians have failed to address the influence that contemporary republics might have had on English republican thought. In operating as a corrective in this respect, this thesis will demonstrate not only that the Dutch and Venetian republics really did impact upon English thinkers, but also that in approaching this subject from a different angle, new light can be shed on our understanding of these important thinkers.

Considering the importance of travel, it is worth outlining briefly here the experiences in Europe of each of the English republican figures whose works are explored in this thesis. As I indicated above, Harrington and Milton undertook the most conventional travel on the continent. Our knowledge of Harrington's travels comes not from his own pen (despite his encouragement that others ought to document their journeys) but from those of his contemporary biographers. John Toland edited and published the works of Harrington in 1700, including within that volume an account of Harrington's life. Toland also had access to a manuscript collection of papers relating to the author, which had been compiled by one of Harrington's sisters. Based on the contents of these papers, Toland wrote his account of Harrington's life. The basic content of what Toland writes about Harrington is reinforced by other contemporary sources, although Toland's account contains significantly more detail.⁸ Any original manuscripts have since disappeared, and as a result it is impossible to know how much of the detail is accurate.⁹ We must therefore approach Toland's account with a healthy degree of scepticism, but I believe that comparing his account with the ideas relating to travel in *Oceana* lends authenticity to Toland's biography.

Toland emphasised the key role that his visit to Holland played in the development of Harrington's political thought. He tells us how his 'first step was into Holland, then the principal School of Martial Disciplin, and (what toucht him more sensibly) a place wonderfully flourishing under the influence of their Liberty which they had so lately asserted,

⁸ Those contemporaries were John Aubrey and Anthony Wood. However, Toland appears to have largely relied on the account of Aubrey, and Aubrey on Wood's account, so the similarities between the three are not too surprising. See John Aubrey, *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949), 282-86; Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses, Volume II* (London, 1721), 588-595.

⁹ Historians have debated the accuracy of Toland's account. Blair Worden is more sceptical of Toland's editorial motivations, whereas J. G.A. Pocock and Justin Champion have concluded that Toland was overall fair and unobtrusive in his editorship of Harrington's works. See Blair Worden, 'Whig History and Puritan Politics: The *Memoirs* of Edmund Ludlow Revisited', *Historical Research*, 75, 188 (2002), 209-37; J.G.A Pocock, 'Editorial Introduction' and 'Historical Introduction', *The Political Works of James Harrington*, ed. by J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), xi-5; Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696-1722* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 100.

by breaking the Yoke of a severe Master, the Spanish Tyrant'.¹⁰ Toland's suggestion that Harrington was influenced by the remarkable prosperity and success of the United Provinces since they had overthrown Philip II, was advanced further when he asserted that Harrington's experiences and time spent in Holland was absolutely crucial in the formative development of his political thought:

Here, no doubt it was, that he begun to make Government the Subject of his Meditations: for he was often heard to say that, before he left *England*, he knew no more of Monarchy, Anarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy, Oligarchy, or the like than as hard words whereof he learnt the signification in his Dictionary.¹¹

It seems that Toland wanted to imply that Harrington was only truly inspired to the study of politics during his time on the continent, and more particularly in the Dutch Republic. We can only offer conjecture as to why Toland emphasised this particular facet of Harrington's experience in Holland. It may be that the sheer diversity of types of government across the seven United Provinces awoke Harrington to the array of polities that existed, and how they could work alongside or against one another.¹² It may also have been the uniqueness of the Dutch constitutional system that piqued his interest, or perhaps the struggles of the Dutch people to throw off the Spanish yoke and establish their own form of government. Regardless, what was clearly important was that the experience of another country, and likely an observation of its customs and constitution, appears to have influenced his understanding of politics in a way that could not have been achieved simply through reading 'his Dictionary'.

Of the rest of Harrington's travels we glean very little from Toland, barely finding out the cities he visited along the way. There is no account of the sights he saw, or experiences he had during his journey. Rather we learn that in France Harrington saw the things that deserved his curiosity, before making 'such remarks on their government as will best appear in his Works'. He then appears to have moved on to Italy, of which we only learn that: 'He prefer'd *Venice* to all other places in *Italy*, as he did its Government to all those of the whole World'.¹³ Both of these small comments continue to support the assertion that Harrington was primarily interested in the specifics of the governments of each of these nations. Beyond this, we can

¹⁰ John Toland, 'The Life of James Harrington' in *The Oceana of James Harrington, and His Other Works: Some wherof are now Publish'd from his own Manuscripts*, ed. by John Toland (London: 1700), xiv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹² Champion has argued that the iconography added by Toland to his edition of *Oceana* was a means by which to 'remodel Harrington's thought for the 1700s,' by suggesting that the monarchy of William III represented a form of republican government. Following this argument, it could perhaps be suggested that Toland's emphasis of the importance of Holland was a further method of ingratiation. See Champion, *Republican Learning*, 106.

¹³ Toland, 'The Life of James Harrington', xv.

only speculate about the impact travel had on Harrington – if only he had followed his own advice, and published an account of his travels for the education of his fellow countrymen.

Although hardly amounting to a travel narrative in the traditional sense of the term, we do at least have an account of Milton's time in Europe from the pen of Milton himself.¹⁴ After his mother's death in 1637, Milton declared that he developed a desire to travel, which he acted upon when he left England in May 1638 for a tour of the continent.¹⁵ Prior to leaving England, he sought out the advice of Sir Henry Wotton, who had previously been ambassador to Venice, although he did not follow Wotton's suggestions to the letter.¹⁶ He travelled first to France, meeting while he was in Paris the Dutch thinker Hugo Grotius, before heading to Italy, where he visited Genoa and Pisa and then Florence, where he stayed 'for about two months'. This city, he declared, he had 'always admired above all others because of the elegance, not just of its tongue, but also of its wit'.¹⁷ He particularly enjoyed interacting with the learned men of the private academies of Florence, but eventually he moved on to Siena, Rome and Naples, from whence he 'desired also to cross to Sicily and Greece, but 'the sad tidings of civil war from England summoned me back'.¹⁸ He hardly rushed home, though, returning again to Rome and Florence first, and 'gladly lingering there for as many months as before'. He subsequently visited Venice, Bologna, Geneva and Milan, before finally 'by the same route as before, through France, I returned home after a year and three months, more or less, at almost the same time as Charles broke the peace and renewed the war with the Scots'.¹⁹

The purpose of travel, for Milton, was 'the cultivation of my mind', a further aspect of his tireless pursuit of knowledge.²⁰ In his third Prolusion, Milton declared 'how much better were it...now to let your eyes wander as it were over all the lands depicted on the map...then to spy

¹⁴ For biographies of Milton see for instance Anna Beer, *Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer, and Patriot* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008); Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gordon Campbell, 'The Life Records' in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. by Thomas Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 483-97.

¹⁵ Whether Milton had a desire to travel prior to his mother's death is uncertain; however, in *A Second Defence of the English People* he himself declares this to be the catalyst. See *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. 4, 1*, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 614.

¹⁶ Letter from Henry Wotton to Milton, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. 1*, ed. by Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 341-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 615.

¹⁸ These sad tidings probably refer to the First Bishops War (March 1639). See Milton, *A Second Defence*, 619.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 619-20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 619. This assertion, that his journey served a primarily educational purpose is supported by Rose Clavering and John T. Shawcross in 'Milton's European Itinerary and his Return Home' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 5, 1 (1965), 50.

out the customs of mankind and those states which are well-ordered'.²¹ Education, Milton argued, was richer and more beneficial, when all countries of the world were studied, not just those that were considered 'well-ordered'. He therefore prefigured Molesworth's argument that one should be just as open to learning about governments that were poorly constituted as those that had an admirable constitution. Having said this, however, while Milton did visit Venice, little is known for certain of his time there, or of his feelings towards it, other than what Milton himself outlines in *A Second Defence*. All he says of Venice is that 'when I had spent one month exploring that city and had seen to the shopping of the books which I had acquired throughout Italy, I proceeded to Geneva'.²² The reason for Milton's short stay is uncertain. It may have been that Milton had heard of the 'the sad tidings of civil war from England', which he claimed summoned him home, and thus decided not to linger in Venice.²³ However, this is pure speculation, and perhaps there was simply little of interest to keep him there for long. After all, at this particular time, Milton was yet to demonstrate any particular interest in constitutional, or even broader political, issues, and the fact that he did not stop to discover the specifics of the Venetian constitution should perhaps not surprise us.

There is, however, another way that Milton may have gained knowledge on the Venetian Republic. John Aubrey says of Milton that 'foreigners came much to see him...and much admired him' while Anthony Wood states that 'he was more admired abroad, and by Foreigners, than at home; and was much visited by them'.²⁴ Having made a positive impression among scholars and the literati during his time in Europe, and having further heightened it through his Latin *Defences*, he seems to have maintained a level of fame as a scholar that encouraged substantial visitation. Milton's connections with Sir Henry Wotton, for instance, might have served as one such source of political knowledge.

Like Harrington and Milton, Neville also took a Grand Tour style journey around Europe. After taking an oath of allegiance to the existing regime, he began his journey in May 1641.²⁵ He went first to France and then Italy, spending most of his time in Florence. He appears to have had a real love of Italy and developed a strong command of the language.²⁶ He returned

²¹ Milton, 'An Attack on Scholastic Philosophy', Third Prolusion, CPW, Vol. 1, 246.

²² Milton, *A Second Defence*, 619.

²³ *Ibid.*, 619.

²⁴ Quoted from Cedric C. Brown, 'Europe Comes to Mr Milton's Door, and Other Kinds of Visitation', *The European Legacy*, 17, 3 (2012), 291.

²⁵ For an outline of Neville's life, see Caroline Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 5-20. Also see Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republican Culture*.

²⁶ Gaby Mahlberg, "'All the conscientious and honest papists': Exile and Belief Formation of an English Republican', in *Exiles Emigrés and Intermediaries: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, ed. by Barbara Schaff (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 161-162.

to England around 1645, having missed the first few years of the civil war.²⁷ But Neville also had another, different experience on the continent. In 1663, Neville was arrested for his alleged involvement in the so called Yorkshire or Northern Plot. After fourteen weeks in the Tower, he petitioned Charles II for 'his liberty' and a pass 'to Transport himself beyond the Sea'. This was granted, and Neville left England for Italy. He initially settled in Florence, before travelling to Pisa, Venice and Rome.²⁸ There are debates surrounding whether Neville obtained some form of court employment in Tuscany, or whether he was actually sent to Italy to serve the English government there.²⁹ In support of the latter theory, a letter from the Earl of Clarendon to Neville of December 1664 asks Neville to reproach the Venetians for 'not having a constant ambassador' in London, which was to the disadvantage of English trade with the republic.³⁰ He does not appear to have undertaken this duty with any relish, and his letters back to Clarendon lack any useful information. He returned back to England in 1668, apparently without any objection from the government.

Algernon Sidney spent more time in Europe than his fellow republicans.³¹ During his youth he travelled with his father, Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester, on embassies to Denmark in 1632 and France from 1636. He remained in France for five years, where he continued his education, before returning to England in 1641. Sidney played a small role in the English Civil War before focusing on politics. He entered the House of Commons in 1645 and remained there until Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump in April 1653, returning when the Rump was briefly restored in 1659. Under this restored Rump, Sidney was appointed as an English ambassador and was sent to the Baltic to mediate between Denmark and Sweden. Sidney's approach to diplomacy has been described as 'at the very least unorthodox', and when word of his behaviour, combined with his strident republicanism, reached the ears of the newly restored Charles II, Sidney realised that returning to England would risk his life.³² Thus began seventeen years in exile on the continent, during which time he narrowly avoided two assassination attempts. In the early years of his exile, he moved around regularly, initially heading towards Italy from northern Europe, travelling through Hamburg, Frankfurt and Augsburg. In Italy, he largely stayed in Rome, although he certainly visited the Republic of

²⁷ Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republican Culture*, 33-40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

²⁹ Caroline Robbins suggests the former, whereas Mahlberg argues the latter position. Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts*, 13; Mahlberg, "All the conscientious and honest papists", 164-65.

³⁰ Mahlberg, "All the conscientious and honest papists", 164-165.

³¹ For an outline of Sidney's life and family see Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic, 1623-1677* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13-72.

³² Jonathan Scott, 'Algernon Sidney's Life and Works (1623-1683)' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys, 1500-1700, Volume I*, ed. by Margaret P. Hannay, Michael G. Brennan and Mary Ellen Lamb, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 151-167.

Venice. For the most part, this was Sidney's period of political retirement. However, by mid-1663 events in England were pulling him back to action; religious persecution had begun and the regicides, including Sidney's friend Henry Vane, had been executed. He left Italy and headed through Switzerland towards Flanders and Holland, visiting fellow exiles and attempting to rile them up and unite them in political action against the English monarchy. He visited the United Provinces briefly in 1664, before returning for approximately eighteen months from mid-1665. Sidney's aim was to continue to unite English exiles and to encourage the Dutch government to support their attempts to overthrow Charles. Support was not forthcoming, and Sidney eventually settled down to a quiet life in France, before finally returning to England in 1677.

The only figure who did not travel abroad was Marchamont Nedham. Born in Burford in approximately 1620, he attended Oxford University and then obtained a place at Gray's Inn, where he developed the legal knowledge that would inform his later political thought. Perhaps he intended to go abroad, but the onset of political turbulence in England in 1641 led him to become editor of a parliamentary newsbook, *Mercurius Britannicus*, and it was through this career that Nedham became notorious for his numerous newsbooks of differing allegiances.³³ What is particularly surprising was that unlike Neville and Sidney who were both forced into exile, Nedham managed to play the game well enough to avoid banishment from England. Thus, he never visited Europe either willingly or by force. However, at least during the period of his editorship of the government sponsored newsbook *Mercurius Politicus*, Nedham had at hand the resources of spymaster John Thurloe, which provided an excellent network for reporting on foreign affairs. Moreover, Nedham supplemented this intelligence network with correspondents of his own distributed across continental Europe. So while he may not have visited these nations first hand, he certainly had a very strong second-hand knowledge of the affairs of countries across Europe, and particularly the Dutch Republic.³⁴

Each of these men therefore had knowledge of the Venetian and Dutch Republics without reading lengthy histories or political tracts. Harrington, Milton, Neville and Sidney all visited Venice, while Harrington and Sidney both spent significant time in the United Provinces. Moreover there are good reasons for thinking that their experiences on the continent helped shape their political understandings. Though, of course, the specific ways in which these experiences influenced their thought are much more difficult to pin down than the tracing of

³³ For an outline of Nedham's life and the development of his political thought, see Blair Worden, 'Introduction' in Marchamont Nedham, *The Excellencie of a Free-State; Or, The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth*, ed. by Blair Worden (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2011), xv-lvii.

³⁴ Joad Raymond, 'Marchamont Nedham', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online edition.

influences through contemporary literature. It is to these books and pamphlets that recounted the histories and politics of Venice and the Dutch Republic that we must turn next.

Literature on Venice

The myth of Venice was well documented in English, as was its subsequent counter-myth which began to permeate into English language tracts in the 1670s. Both the myth and the counter-myth will be examined here, but both must be preceded by a brief narrative of the history of Venice in order to set the myth against the historical context of the republic. The intention here is not to pull out every theme of the myth and counter-myth, but rather to pick out the elements that were most frequently utilised or conceptualised by English republican writers. However, it is also worth remembering William Bouwsma's reminder that 'these books did not by themselves create an interest in Venice; they are significant because they nourished, and can therefore help us understand more deeply, a taste that had deeper sources'.³⁵ So although these texts remain crucial for examining exactly which aspects of the Venetian myth, history or government English republicans utilised, it is important to remember that Venice as a republic was likely already part of the cultural zeitgeist.

Venice was made up of a collection of islands that were slowly populated in the fifth century, when men and women fleeing the onslaught of the Goths, Huns, and later the Lombards, sought refuge in the lagoon. Initially these islands provided only a temporary base, but eventually these refugees realised returning to their homes permanently was not an option, and they began to build a rudimentary form of communal self-government, initiating the slow constitutional process towards the creation of the Republic of Venice.³⁶ Although they started out governing as tribunes, continued internal instability led to the need, in the early eighth century, for a single leader, and the first Doge, or Duke of Venice, was chosen. The Doge was held accountable to the tribunes and the people by virtue of his elected position; however, these checks proved insufficient, and continued political turmoil and the increasing threat of the dogeship becoming a hereditary monarchy meant that additional checks had to be imposed upon ducal authority. The appointment of the doge's sons as co-regents, which risked the introduction of a hereditary aspect to the dogeship, was forbidden; a ducal oath called the *promissione* was introduced; and an increasingly complex system of election was established. This complex system of checks and balances spread to all aspects of the constitution until there was hardly an aspect of government that was not held accountable to another.

³⁵ William Bouwsma, 'Venice and the Political Education of Europe', in *Renaissance Venice*, 451.

³⁶ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 3-14.

Besides the doge, the other main elements of the constitution were the Great Council and the Senate. The Great Council had been established in 1171 and from the start had been self-electing. Although this naturally tended towards a closed system, for over a century it remained possible for anyone to sit on the Council regardless of their position in the country. However, from 1286 it was proposed that eligibility for the Council should be restricted to those whose fathers or more distant paternal ancestors had themselves been members. After initial resistance, the proposal was passed in 1297 and the *Libro d'Oro* – the Golden Book – which listed all Venetian citizens eligible for election was created. This event has traditionally been referred to as the *Serrata*, or closing of the great council. The next level of government was the Senate, which was a body of around three hundred men, predominantly elected by the Great Council for terms of one year. The senators, known as the *Pregadi*, exercised a general supervisory authority over the various other bodies of government.³⁷ There were various other small councils, and predominant among them, but still standing somewhat apart, was the Council of Ten. The Ten was established in 1310 as a temporary institution with wide emergency powers in order to deal with the rebellion of Bajamonte Tiepolo and the continued subsequent unrest.³⁸ However, by 1334 the Venetians recognised that the Ten acted as the efficient executive the republic lacked, and was able to respond quickly to potential dangers to the state. It was, therefore, made a permanent body, which although subject to characteristic checks and balances, was able to issue decrees with the same force as those from the Great Council itself. Over the centuries the Council of Ten became increasingly powerful – for instance, it began unconstitutionally appointing subcommittees that were responsible only to itself – and it became widely unpopular.

The *modus operandi* of Venice was trade. With a central geographic location between East and West, the state was ideally positioned as a key global trade link. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Venice was reaching its “Golden Age”. She was a European power in her own right, possessing a huge trading empire, and resplendent with the riches that position had wrought. She had established herself on the *terrafirma*, coming into possession of considerable mainland territories, although she had also learnt that defending these land territories, which often had imprecise boundaries and numerous powers interested in them, could prove inconvenient and expensive, especially because of Venice's dependence on mercenary soldiers.³⁹ For these reasons, the Venetians favoured peace; war was expensive in

³⁷ William Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 61.

³⁸ For Tiepolo's rebellion see Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 115-116.

³⁹ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 268-279.

that it threatened trade and they were forced to pay for mercenaries. Venice's location and its policies meant that they were frequently pulled into wars against their will, not just as a buttress between east and west, but also as one of a multitude of city states in northern Italy. In the sixteenth century, numerous European powers entered into the League of Cambrai and declared war on Venice, as a means of curbing Venetian expansion and influence in northern Italy. The war threatened to subsume the tiny republic state, and in 1509 French forces defeated the Venetian's mercenary army at the Battle of Agnadello, leading to the wholesale collapse of their *terrafirma* empire, a defeat that was summed up by Machiavelli: 'in one day's engagement, they lost what it had taken them eight hundred years' exertion to conquer'.⁴⁰ Although the city of Venice itself never actually fell, and the republic managed to regain all of their mainland territories, the memory of Agnadello lived on for the Venetians.⁴¹ Although Agnadello was a disaster for Venice, its ability to recover quickly allowed the republic to continue to conceptualise itself as a significant European player, but in reality Venice never truly recovered.⁴² The War of the League of Cambrai represents the symbolic end of Venetian expansion and its position as a significant European power.⁴³ She survived the war largely through good diplomacy, statesmanship and luck rather than military strength, and the resultant shift in the European order deprived Venice of the commercial hegemony and mastery of the seas. She was no longer a powerful player in European politics, and became unique more for her history and government than her exceptional power.

It was in the years after Cambrai that the myth of Venice began to be formally and extensively conceptualised. After the shock of near defeat and its new position within Europe, Venice had to rethink how it portrayed itself to the world. Venetian apologists sought to formulate a vision of the commonwealth, its politics, and its history to present to the world, and transmitted it through a few key texts to a wide European audience. This self-representation elevated Venice to one of the greatest and revered republics in both ancient and modern times, since it saw itself as:

a city founded in liberty and never thereafter subject to foreign domination; a maritime, commercial economy; a unified and civic-minded patriciate, guardian of the common good; a society intensely pious yet ecclesiastically independent; a loyal and contented populace; a

⁴⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 43.

⁴¹ See Edward Muir, 'Was there Republicanism in the Renaissance Republics? Venice after Agnadello', in *Venice Reconsidered*, 137-67; M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale, *The Military Organisation of a Renaissance State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 221-224.

⁴² Elizabeth G. Gleason, 'Confronting New Realities: Venice and the Peace of Bologna, 1530', in *Venice Reconsidered*, 169.

⁴³ See for instance Felix Gilbert, 'Venice in the Crisis of the League of Cambrai', in *Renaissance Venice*, 274-92.

constitution constraining disruptive forces in a thousand-year harmony and constancy of purpose; a republic of wisdom and benevolence, provider of fair justice and a high degree of toleration.⁴⁴

With such a portrayal of itself being diffused across Europe, it is hardly surprising that the Venetian Republic continued to be revered over the subsequent decades and even centuries. The myth and Venice's reputation were also bolstered by Venice's victory over Rome after the 1606 Interdict, as it reinforced across Europe the idea of Venice as powerfully independent.⁴⁵ For the Venetians, the myth served a dual purpose. Not only did it unify the citizens of Venice, increasing their loyalty to the republic and ensuring their willingness to make sacrifices for its continued survival, it also allowed external observers to view the Venetian republic as a model for emulation and envy. It allowed them to paper over internal cracks that were perhaps visible to those within Venice, ensuring that from the outside the Venetian republic continued to appear as a paragon of virtue and prudence; a city that had never been, and perhaps never could be, invaded. As a tool, the myth became a means of protection from external forces that might otherwise have sought out Venetian weaknesses and utilised them to undermine the state.

The myth was set out in several key texts, the two most influential of which were written by Gasparo Contarini and Donato Giannotti. Contarini's *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* was written in the mid-1520s but it was only published posthumously in 1543.⁴⁶ It was widely printed outside Italy, in both the original Latin and translated Italian forms; these were in addition to the versions translated into French in 1544 and English in 1599 by Lewes Lewkenor.⁴⁷ Contarini was a Venetian and came from a well-respected patrician family, while Lewkenor was an English courtier who was particularly noted for his translations of European literature.⁴⁸ So while the former was very familiar with the Venetian Republic, the latter was not.⁴⁹ Contarini's book has become famous for being the first to fully articulate the idealisation of Venetian institutions and the republican style of life.⁵⁰

Lewkenor's translation also included eighty pages of translated material from other sources that provided supplementary historical and political context, among them extracts from

⁴⁴ Grubb, 'When Myths Lose Power', 43-4.

⁴⁵ Bouwsma, 'Venice and the Political Education of Europe', 452.

⁴⁶ Felix Gilbert, 'The Date of the Composition of Contarini's and Giannotti's Books on Venice', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 14 (1967), 184.

⁴⁷ Bouwsma, 'Venice and the Political Education of Europe', 450.

⁴⁸ For more on Lewkenor see David McPherson, 'Lewkenor's Venice and Its Sources', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 41, 3 (1988), 459-66.

⁴⁹ Lewkenor tells us that he has not visited Venice in his prefatory material 'To the Reader' in Gasparo Contarini, *The Common-Wealth and Government of Venice*, ed. by Lewes Lewkenor (London: 1599), A2.

⁵⁰ Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 20.

Donato Giannotti and Bernardo Giustiniani. Giannotti's classic text *Libro della repubblica de'Viniziani* appeared in 1540, around the same time as Contarini's work, although it had been circulating freely in manuscript form in Florence in 1527-8.⁵¹ Giannotti's background and the immediate context of the composition of the tract are of particular importance in understanding his work. Giannotti was a Florentine and had grown up when that city was a republic. However, after Florence fell to Charles V in 1530, he was forced to flee his home city and lived the remaining forty-three years of his life in exile, largely in Venice. Giannotti desired a Restoration of republican government in Florence that could be free from internal and external enemies, and achieve stability. Venice, with its longevity and stability, proved to be a useful tool for Giannotti and he therefore focused primarily on the way in which the Venetian constitution achieved such stability, where his native government had so evidently failed. His account also includes detailed descriptions of the political bodies, the powers of government, and the electoral systems.⁵² The purpose of Giustiniani's writing was a little different. His work *De Origine Urbis Venetiarum Rebusque ab Ipsa Gestis Historia* was published posthumously in 1493, thus before Contarini and Giannotti wrote, and before the War of the League of Cambrai.⁵³ The purpose of his writing was to reflect on the previous greatness of Venice to warn its inhabitants about the future of the republic, which he believed (with remarkable foresight) was endangered. He focused specifically on the decline in civic virtue among his compatriots, and what he perceived to be the increasing value placed on personal wealth.⁵⁴ So while Giustiniani did not set out the myth in the specific terms that would come slightly later with Contarini and Giannotti, his work demonstrates that certain aspects of the myth – the exceptional virtue of the founders of Venice and its longevity in particular - were prevalent in the cultural understanding of Venetian history. Moreover, he used these aspects to demonstrate that the Venetian ideal had been deviated from; in understanding and explicating this, the corruption could be halted and Venice could continue as a strong, sturdy republic.

⁵¹ Gilbert, 'The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought', 490. For composition details see Gilbert, 'The Date of the Composition of Contarini's and Giannotti's Books on Venice', 172-184.

⁵² Myron Gilmore, 'Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory, in *Renaissance Venice*, 434-36.

⁵³ Justinianus Bernardus (Bernardo Giustiniani), *De Origine Urbis Venetiarum Rebusque ab Ipsa Gestis Historia* (Venice, 1492). Italian translations appeared in 1545 and 1608.

⁵⁴ Patricia H. Labalme, *Bernardo Giustiniani: A Venetian of the Quattrocento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969), 272.

There are a few other thinkers that ought to be considered in any discussion of the myth of Venice.⁵⁵ Two other Italian thinkers are to be considered in relation to the myth of Venice, although their significance is less than those outlined above. Francesco Guicciardini was born into a Florentine merchant family in 1483.⁵⁶ During his lifetime, Florence saw considerable tumults, with the fall of the republican regime and the rise of the Medici. Many of his political writings commented on these upheavals within Florence, in an attempt to restore stability and prevent continual tumults. Thus in many ways his motivation was similar to that of his fellow countryman Giannotti. Like Giannotti, his model of republican government was Venice because of its stability. He favoured aristocratic government, and considered the Senate the most important element of the Venetian constitution, and that which was most in need in Florence. It would also be remiss not to at least mention Machiavelli here. Although far from mythologizing Venice as possessing an ideal pattern of government, even he could not help but praise them for the continuity of their government and ability promptly to resolve emergency situations.⁵⁷ But his main objection was that the constitution, even though it suited people who lived in peaceful isolation, was unsuited for expansion or conquest of an empire, which Machiavelli held as fundamental political objectives.⁵⁸

One of the key themes of the myth of Venice was the fact that it had stood as an exceptional example of republican government ‘from the first building thereof, even until this time, being now a thousand and one hundred yeares, it hath preserved itself free and untouched’.⁵⁹ This longevity was put down to two key factors: its liberty and its untouched, or unchanged, nature. The reason for this apparent unchanging nature was partly assigned to the Venetian use of the Polybian concept of mixed government, which could transcend the inevitable cyclical decline from one constitutional form to another. It achieved this by combining the three Aristotelian forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) in a perfect combination. In Venice, theoretically the doge represented the monarchical element, the Senate the aristocracy, and the Great Council the democratic element. The idea that the Venetian government formed a mixed constitution was only systematised in the work of

⁵⁵ James Howell’s *S.P.Q.V. A Survey of the Signorie of Venice* (London: 1651) appears to be the only English portrayal of the myth of Venice that was written and published during the Interregnum. I discuss this further in Chapter Four, where Howell’s utilisation of the myth of Venice becomes particularly relevant.

⁵⁶ Alison Brown, ‘Introduction’ in Guicciardini, *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*, ed. by Alison Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), vii-xxviii.

⁵⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourse upon Livy*, ed. by Julia Conway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapters 50 and 34 respectively.

⁵⁸ Gilbert, ‘The Venetian Constitution’, 489.

⁵⁹ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 5.

Contarini; it had however been abstractly theorised nearly a hundred years prior to this.⁶⁰ Both Giannotti and Guicciardini alluded to it, without explicitly defining Venice as a mixed government; Guicciardini described it as ‘the most beautiful and best government that any city, not only in our times but also in the classical world, ever possessed; the reason is that it embodies all three forms of government: those of the one, of a few, and of many’.⁶¹ It was Contarini who explicitly described it as such and therefore established it as part of the myth of Venice: ‘there is in this cittie of ours an excellent contrived mixture of the best and justest governments’.⁶² More specifically, he stated that in Venice ‘there is a mixture of the three governments royall, popular, & noble’.⁶³ Although, the constitution is largely portrayed as immutable, in setting out the early history of Venice above, it is clear that the constitution of the young republic changed and developed in response to continued internal instability. However, since the closing of the Great Council it was generally perceived that the government of Venice had changed so little as to form an unchanging and stable form of government, contributing significantly to its longevity.

This longevity was also achieved through the insistence that Venice offered a perfect and ‘long-lasting liberty’.⁶⁴ In the Venetian conception, liberty possessed several meanings.⁶⁵ Liberty could relate to the position of a state in relation to another state; in other words, whether or not a state was independent from the dominion of an external ruler. Core to the Venetian myth was the idea that it had never once been subject to external dominion.⁶⁶ Giustiniani stressed the original and perpetual liberty of Venice, denying that they had ever been subject to the empire of any other power, as did Contarini: ‘from the first beginning till this time of ours it hath remained safe and free...from the domination of Straungers’.⁶⁷ The liberty of Venice was therefore intimately connected to her origins.⁶⁸ After the miraculous turn of events after Agnadello, with Venice regaining all her land territory without the city itself ever being penetrated by external enemies, this idea was further reinforced. Venice seemed to be indestructible and immune from foreign attack, adding to the understanding that the Venetian republic was immortal.

⁶⁰ Gilbert, ‘The Venetian Constitution’, 468-50.

⁶¹ Ibid., 487.

⁶² Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 33.

⁶³ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁴ Labalme, *Bernardo Giustiniani*, 256, 262.

⁶⁵ Skinner offers succinct analysis on the differing interpretations of liberty. Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (2010).

⁶⁶ Historians have since suggested this was not true. For instance, Norwich takes pains to emphasise that the early Venetian settlers were very much subject to the Byzantine Empire, and that Venetian independence was not present from the city’s birth, but rather grew slowly. See Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 9.

⁶⁷ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 146.

⁶⁸ Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty*, 54.

But liberty could also refer to the political regime within a nation, indicating that a regime was not tyrannical. In Venice, they protected themselves from the danger of internal tyranny by establishing a complex system of checks and balances, including rotation of office, election, and a secret ballot. For Giannotti the complicated procedures were crucial since they formed the firm basis of Venetian liberty. By ensuring that each patrician in the Great Council reached his decision independently and in complete isolation, a government came about which united all the inhabitants in perfect harmony. Free from external pressures, patricians were able to make the most rational choice for the general welfare and in doing so raised the exercise of citizenship in Venice to unparalleled heights.⁶⁹ Contarini too emphasized that the idea of collective administration, rotation and complex systems of election were key to the Venetian conception of liberty, since it ensured they were free from the tyranny of other people's passions.⁷⁰

These checks and balances were also a means by which the Venetians could ensure internal political stability, which again would ensure the longevity of the republic. By rapidly rotating offices and having a secret ballot, the Venetians could prevent too much power building up in any given hands. In theory, this would prevent any faction or corruption from entering the system. Thus these constitutional systems ensured that the public interest was being served at all times and prevented any private or factional interests from influencing governmental policy. Moreover, by ensuring that every citizen had a vote in government, any accusations of faction could be prevented. Thus Contarini declared that by establishing a government of laws, the people could not 'in reason blame any man' and so would no longer live in fear of 'any sedition or rancour growne among the citizens'.⁷¹ Protecting the republic against internal sedition was therefore crucial to the republic's continued survival. The fact it was still standing a millennium after its establishment suggested to its supporters that the electoral system was more than serving its purpose.

A final aspect relating to Venetian stability concerns how Venice interacted with the world around it. Unlike the citizens of other great republics, particularly Rome, the Venetians 'alwaies with greater regard and reckoning applied their minds to the maintenance of peace then to the glorie of warres: tending alwaies their chiefest care and studie to the preservation of civill concorde and agreement of themselves'.⁷² War was neither practical for Venice, nor sought after. As a small island republic it did not have the capacity for great land wars, and

⁶⁹ Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 24.

⁷⁰ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* 19-38.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

when war did descend, it relied heavily on mercenaries, because ‘our ancestors held it a better course to defend their dominions upon the continent, with foreign mercenarie soldiers, then with their homeborn citizen’.⁷³ This connects back to the Venetians insisting on checks and balances on its government; it prevented ambition from dictating policy. Similarly, by preventing Venetian citizens from bearing arms, there was no danger of them pursuing their ambitions and seeking power through the military. However, because of its island lagoon location, the Venetians did build up a great naval force, which it put to use with trade. Trade had been a cornerstone of Venetian policy from its earliest days, allowing Venice to grow from a collection of stranded refugees into an established and influential republic. When it was necessary to use these ships for war not trade – a key reason why they preferred peace, since war directly impacted on trade – the republic’s location also protected them. Moreover, the shallow sea and lakes surrounding Venice meant that any arriving enemy ships were denied an easy, efficient entrance, giving the Venetians sufficient warning of any approaching danger.⁷⁴ The republic therefore almost seemed positioned in such a way that it could never be penetrated by enemies, and the distrustful nature of the Venetians meant that internal instability caused by ambition, faction, or private interests was next to impossible.

Yet representations of Venice were not homogenous, and by the end of the seventeenth century the mythical conception of Venice was being counterbalanced by the rise of negative depictions of the republic. Though negative accounts began appearing as early as the fifteenth century,⁷⁵ many historians have argued that the anti-myth of Venice as a coherent concept was not properly developed until the eighteenth century.⁷⁶ Yet, Wootton has convincingly argued that a cohesive anti-myth began to be recognised as having ‘flourished’ from the mid-1670s.⁷⁷ On the basis of an examination of the mid to late-seventeenth-century texts that present a vilified version of the Venetian republic, I will suggest that there were already clear and distinct themes which created a coherent anti-myth of Venice.

In the 1670s there was a sudden spurt of tracts published which encapsulate the key themes of the anti-myth of Venice. These texts largely came from the pens of French authors, but many of them were translated into English and were read on both sides of the Channel. The influx of criticisms of Venice by French authors at this time may be related to the increasing

⁷³ Ibid., 131.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

⁷⁵ Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, both used negative stereotypes surrounding Venice. See Maurice Hunt, ‘Shakespeare’s Venetian Paradigm: Stereotyping and Sadism in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*’, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 39, 2 (2003), 162-84.

⁷⁶ John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano, ‘Reconsidering Venice’, in *Venice Reconsidered*, 3.

⁷⁷ David Wootton, ‘Ulysses Bound?’, 341.

absolutism of the French monarch Louis XIV. Censorship and orthodoxy were strictly enforced, so directly criticising the monarch was not an option. As a means of circumventing this censorship, they may well have turned to studies of other states, for ‘historical studies allowed them [critics of absolutism] to comment on contemporary circumstances through parallel or contrasts...elements of criticism could be scattered throughout their writing so that points taken separately were anodyne but became sharp and destructive if the reader linked them in a pattern’. Criticism of Venice was therefore used to condemn the absolutism of the French king.⁷⁸ We might speculate as to why these tracts were subsequently published in English: who was translating them, and why? Although the ‘who’ is largely lost to history, we can suggest that Englishmen still sympathetic to republican thought and critical of the rule of Charles II similarly sought to use the Venetian anti-myth to criticise the English king. It is therefore worth setting out the key texts available to the English, as well as tracing the themes of the counter-myth.

There were several texts initially published in French that outlined the anti-myth of Venice. Perhaps most popular and widely accessible was that of Abraham Nicolas Amelot de la Houssaie. Amelot spent time in Venice undertaking documentary research in the state archives.⁷⁹ He therefore had both first-hand experience of the republic and unprecedented access to important historical texts. His first publication, *The History of the Government of Venice*, appeared in 1675 and took Gasparo Contarini’s *History* as its basis. Amelot framed his criticism around Contarini’s account of the constitution, and in doing so sought to tear down the celebrated Venetian myth. This method, ‘for the first time’ ‘offered to unveil the secrets of Venetian government and distill them into easy-to-use political maxims’.⁸⁰ The text was incredibly popular, and in fewer than three years it appeared in at least twenty-two editions in Dutch, Italian, Spanish and English (into which it was translated in 1677 by an unknown author).⁸¹ A second tract published in France (in 1669) but promptly translated and published in English was De la Haye’s *The Policy and Government of the Venetians* (1671). It is unclear exactly who the author was, and all we learn of him is that the account is first-hand; he has both travelled in Venice and served in their militia.⁸² Alexandre Toussaint Limojon Saint-Didier’s work *La Ville et la République de Venise* was written in 1680 and translated

⁷⁸ Terence Allott, ‘Undermining ‘Absolutism’: The Disguised Critique of Amelot de la Houssaye (1634-1706)’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 7, 1 (1992), 71-81.

⁷⁹ Jacob Soll, *Publishing the Prince: History, Reading and the Birth of Political Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸² Sieur de la Haye, *The Policy and Government of the Venetians, Both in Civil and Military Affairs* (London, 1671), 7-8.

into English in 1699; it too outlined key themes in the anti-myth of Venice.⁸³ Finally, César Vischard de Saint-Réal's *A Conspiracy of the Spaniards Against the State of Venice* was originally published in French in 1674 but was translated and published in English in 1675. It provides an account of the 1618 conspiracy against the Venetians. The tract portrays the conspirators, of whom the leader was the Spanish ambassador to Venice the marquis of Bedmar, in a positive light and suggests that the professional soldiers who agreed to participate were undertaking a noble enterprise against a cruel, tyrannical republic that revelled in secrecy and oppression.⁸⁴ This collection of tracts demonstrates that the anti-myth of Venice was an accessible part of a wider dialogue within England and beyond from as early as the 1670s.

One earlier, English text is also worth including here. Although Robert Filmer is best known for *Patriarcha*, this was not published until after his death.⁸⁵ During his lifetime he did, however, publish *Observations upon Aristotle's Politiques Touching Forms of Government* in which he engaged with both the Dutch and Venetian republics. Given his strong support of divine right government, his rejection of these republics comes as no surprise. The text combined an avowed vision of absolutist government that simultaneously condemned the concept of mixed government.⁸⁶ Filmer was obviously writing for a different reasons from the later French authors. As a committed royalist, Filmer simply sought to discredit the contemporary European models of republican government. The fact that he felt the need to do so perhaps suggests just how large these republics loomed in the wider political consciousness. It also demonstrates that the republic of Venice could serve many purposes; while the French used Venice to attack absolutism within their own country, Filmer used the same example to argue that an English republic could also be considered a form of absolutism.

The myth of Venice argued that the constitution of its republic represented the ideal in mixed government. Advocates of the anti-myth, however, did not see it in these terms. Saint-Réal declared that 'the World never had a Monarchy so absolute as is the Empire by which the Senate of Venice governs the Republic'.⁸⁷ He implied that although the Senate may have appeared to others as one benign element of a mixed constitution, it was in fact the source of

⁸³ First published in Paris in 1680.

⁸⁴ Wootton, 'Ulysses Bound', 352.

⁸⁵ Glenn Burgess, 'Robert Filmer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online edition.

⁸⁶ Cesare Cuttica, 'Anti-republican Cries under Cromwell: The Vehement Attacks of Robert Filmer against Republican Practise and Republican Theory in the Early 1650s', in Gaby Malberg and Dirk Wiemann, eds., *Perspectives on English Revolutionary Republicanism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 38.

⁸⁷ César Vischard de Saint-Réal, *A Conspiracy of the Spaniards Against the State of Venice* (London, 1675), 14.

absolute power in Venice, creating a narrow and tyrannical oligarchy rather than a virtuous aristocracy. Filmer also rejected the idea that Venice was a mixed government. He suggested that there was nothing of the monarchy in the Doge, nor anything popular in the Great Council. Filmer specifically calls out the myth of Venice, referencing one of its most prominent authors:

That which exceeds admiration is that Contarini hath the confidence to affirm that present government of Venice to be a mixed form of monarchy, democracy and aristocracy. For whereas he makes the duke to have the person and show of a king, he after confesseth that the duke can do nothing at all alone...As little reason is there to think a popular estate is to be found in the great council of Venice... For the commons neither by themselves nor by any chosen by them for their representaters, are admitted to any part of the great council. And if the gentlemen of Venice have any right to keep the government in their own hands and to exclude the commons, they never had it given to them by the people, but at first were beholden to monarchy for their nobility.⁸⁸

Filmer stated that ‘though Venice and the Low Countries are the only remarkable places in this age that reject monarchy, yet neither of them pretend their government to be founded upon any right of the people, or have the common people any power amongst them, or any chosen by them’.⁸⁹ The general theme of each of these writers’ criticisms is that in fact liberty in Venice was nothing more than a sham. The constitution of Venice afforded only a handful of patrician families liberty, while the rest of the population was condemned to slavery and oppression.

The anti-myth also rejected the idea that the complicated voting systems of the Venetian republic acted as a means to preserve liberty. Instead, many of these authors argued that the natural jealousy and suspicion of the Venetians forced them to implement such designs. For instance, De la Haye considered the Venetian people to be particularly ambitious and jealous of the power of others. This, he suggests, is why they chose to create a head to their body of government. The first was that it would ‘frustrate the hopes of the ambitious’, the second ‘to cool and assuage that heat of dominion which reigns in the breast of most of the Gentry, by giving every man hopes of arriving one day at the Supremacy’, and the third ‘to satisfie and fix the volatil spirit of the Commons, giving them an appearance of liberty in their Republic’.⁹⁰ De la Haye therefore presented the electoral system as a means of ensuring people thought they had a say in government, whilst in reality it was simply a means of neutralising the citizenry. Amelot argued along similar lines; his tract provided an account of the voting method in order to demonstrate that the Venetians were obsessed with frustrating

⁸⁸ Robert Filmer, *Observations upon Aristotles Politiques, Touching the Forms of Government. Together with Directions for Obedience for Governours in Dangerous and Doubtful Times* (London, 1652), 273.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 272-3.

⁹⁰ De la Hay, *The Policy and Government of the Venetians*, 10-11.

any personal ambitions. He also argued that the selling of votes, which was once forbidden, was a common and accepted form of corruption in their system. Filmer perhaps summed it up best when he stated that ‘no people in the world live in such jealousy one of another’.⁹¹

These authors also argued that the Venetian population was deliberately corrupted as part of a political campaign to ensure their continued compliance. Of course, Venice as a den of vice was not necessarily new; travellers to Venice were frequently warned against the courtesans who were so prevalent there. The difference was that these new tracts identified an alleged conspiracy to remove the liberty of the Venetians by debasing them morally. So Amelot argued that ‘the Senat cajoles the People by suffering them to live idly and debauch’d, having no better way to debase them, and to render them obedient, than to indulge them their pleasures, and licentiousness of life’.⁹² This, the Venetian people believed, was how their liberty was defined. Amelot on the other hand asserted that this misguided belief and deliberate manipulation of the understanding of liberty was the ‘the greatest occasion of their slavery’.⁹³ Saint-Didier also criticised the Venetian republic expressing similar concerns to those voiced by Amelot. He accused Venice of distracting the oppressed population from their unfortunate situation with ‘food and circuses’, or in other words, surrogate pleasures.⁹⁴ He argued that the patriciate tolerated moral and sexual depravity for a similar purpose: to absorb their energies and direct them away from political concerns and as such to neutralise any threat they posed to the republic. This theme is again repeated by De la Hay:

they never discourage their youth in their debauches, they seem rather to excite them by the permission of the Curtezans have to keene publick houses without being disturb’d...by this means these grave Senators suffer the inextinguishable flames of their youth, to evaporate betwixt the arms of these Idols, and with this sweet poison correct the boyling of those spirits, which uncajol’d might endanger, at least attempt the subversion of the State.⁹⁵

In arguing thus, each of these authors suggested that the republic could make no great claims to liberty. They accused the Venetian patriciate of actively enslaving the people by allowing them to follow their base passions and in so doing they undermine the very foundations upon which good government ought to rest. Worse, the oppressed people are satisfied with their false vision of liberty as it fulfilled their most superficial desires; as such they were blind to the very idea that they could be enslaved.

⁹¹ Filmer, *Observations upon Aristotles Politiques*, 271.

⁹² Amelot de la Houssaie, *The History of the Government of Venice. Wherein the Policies, Councils, Magistrates, and Laws of that State are fully related; and the use of the Balloting Box exactly described* (London, 1677), 41.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁴ Alexandre Toussaint Limojon de Saint-Didier, *The City and Republic of Venice, Third Part* (1680) trans., by anon., (1699), 42-47.

⁹⁵ De la Hay, *The Policy and Government of the Venetians*, 64-65.

Not only were the people of Venice blind to their own complete lack of liberty, but they were also tyrannised over by another aspect of the government. The ruthlessness and repression of the increasingly maligned Council of Ten was one of the anti-myth advocates' favourite themes, drawing their most creative and condemnatory criticism. Although the Ten was initially held accountable to the Great Council, by the mid to late seventeenth century it was considered 'more sovereign, than their Sovereign himself'.⁹⁶ The Ten were also compared to 'the Roman Dictator, who in times of publick calamity, had all the Power of the State in his hand'. The Council was now so powerful that 'they stretched their Authority so far as to revoke and null the Decrees of the Grand Council; and to negotiate Leagues offensive and Defensive with Forreign Princes unknown to the Senat'.⁹⁷ Indeed, 'the great Power which they exercise makes them not only venerable, but dreadful, and their Prince himself not daring to contradict their Decrees, they have gotten such an Empire upon the spirits of all people, that the very name of the Counsel of Ten well make one tremble'.⁹⁸ They also condemned the severity and speed with which the Ten acted against anyone it deemed to be a threat. Indeed Amelot asserted that 'there is no Court in the World where the Judges proceed with more severity against Persons accused...for this Council is so inclinable to severity, the least offence in matter of State is unpardonable, and very appearance passes for a crime'.⁹⁹ By 'unpardonable', Amelot meant that a multitude of alleged crimes against the state resulted in the death penalty: 'tis said that in Athens, Draco writ all this Laws in Blood; the same may be said as justly of this council, in which Clemency and Mercy are Virtues unknown, where jealousy is incurable, distrust eternal; where great reputation dangerous; great services odious, and commonly requited with banishment, or death'.¹⁰⁰ Indeed 'the Rigour of the Council of Ten has been so great, there is scarce a Noble Family but produces us instances of it, and many of them written in Blood'.¹⁰¹ It was therefore hardly surprising that Amelot concluded that 'this Council has become so odious to the Nobles, that they have tried all ways imaginable to supplant them'. This however was proving impossible as 'this council it is, upon which depends the whole Oeconomy of that Government' so that 'this Council is the Corner-stone of the State, not to be stirred without destruction to the whole Fabrick'.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁷ Amelot, *The History of the Government of Venice*, 154.

⁹⁸ De la Hay, *The Policy and Government of the Venetians*, 28-29.

⁹⁹ Amelot, *The History of the Government of Venice*, 155-6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 158.

The suggestion here is that the Venetian state could only survive as a repressive, reactive state that tricked people out of their liberty, maintained order through fear, and violently punished any who stepped out of line. The Council of Ten probably attracted such vitriol from Venice's detractors because it represented key themes of the myth they sought to undermine, namely stability and liberty. By critiquing the Ten, they demonstrated that both of these aspects were a sham, since both were only maintained in appearance by a tyrannical, unaccountable minority tricking, oppressing and enslaving the nation. The myth and the anti-myth are intimately connected in the themes that they chose to engage with; of stability, liberty and forms of government; and yet they remain opposite sides of the same coin.

The History and Political Theory of the Dutch Republic

While Englishmen were presented with the myth and counter-myth through the available textual resources, their understanding of the Dutch Republic was informed in a somewhat different manner. In his *Memoirs*, Sir John Reresby wrote that since the Dutch Republic was 'so near our own country, as to be known to most persons, either by sight or relation' that a 'particular and long description' of it was not necessary.¹⁰³ In 1615 a French political writer Guez de Balzac stated that the Dutch Revolt had provided 'all peoples with a memorable example of what they can do against their Rulers'.¹⁰⁴ Later, Hobbes made a similar point:

Oftentimes the example of different Government in a neighbouring nation, disposeth men to alteration of the form [of their own]... I doubt not, but many men have been contented to see the late troubles in England, out of imitation of the Low Countries; supposing there needed no more to grow rich, than to change, as they have done, their form of government.¹⁰⁵

These quotes highlight two important distinctions between the way in which the English learned about the Dutch and Venetian republics. The first demonstrates that the affairs of the Dutch Republic were widely understood throughout England, and that this knowledge did not come from reading political tracts or lengthy histories, but by first or second hand experience of visiting the Dutch Republic. It was, after all, much more accessible to the English, being just a short boat trip away, and the considerable trade connections meant that people and knowledge could easily transfer between the two countries.¹⁰⁶ Thus, whilst the English

¹⁰³ Sir John Reresby, *The Travels and Memoir of Sir John Reresby* (London:1813), 144.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Hugh Dunthorne, 'The Dutch Revolt in English Political Culture 1585-1660', in *From Revolt to Riches: Culture and History of the Low Countries: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Theo Hermans and Reinier Salverda (London: Centre for Low Country Studies, 1993), 235.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth* (1651), in *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 225.

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Dunthorne, 'The Dutch Revolt in English Political Culture', 235-47; Hugh Dunthorne, 'The Dutch Revolt and Its Impact on England during the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', in *The Low Countries: Multidisciplinary Studies*, ed. by Margriet Bruijn Lacy (New York: University Press of America, 1980), 237-46.

learned of Venetian political institutions largely through written histories, their knowledge of the Dutch Republic was more likely to have come through less formal paths. Secondly, the words of Balzac and Hobbes suggest that the experiences of the Dutch through the Revolt and under their newly established republican government had a considerable impact on the political consciousness of the English. Again, this differs from Venice, where the focus rested more heavily upon the political institutions they had built.

It is also important to remember that the political thought of the Dutch Revolt, and indeed the republic, was the result of continual confrontation with political reality. Rapidly shifting political circumstances forced thinkers regularly to reassert and extend their arguments.¹⁰⁷ So unlike Venice, which offered a very static political narrative, the political thought of the Dutch republic changed and adapted over the course of many decades. The following outline offers an overview of the history of the Dutch Revolt and Republic, alongside an account of the development of its political theory. This will not, of course, be a comprehensive account of Dutch political theory or its theorists, but is designed instead to highlight the aspects most relevant to the English republicans.

Throughout the medieval period the Low Countries was made up of a number of provinces, counties, and bishoprics, all of which were under the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire. Only in 1548, with the Pragmatic Sanction, did the territories that made up the Netherlands come to form a political unit, and even then, cultural and ethnic cohesion was low across the region.¹⁰⁸ The Netherlands was an interesting contradiction; although ruled by a largely absent monarch - who when the Revolt broke out was the Spanish King Philip II - they had maintained a distinct understanding of their relationship with him that over the years had become enshrined in a few key documents, such as the 'Great Privilege' and the 'Joyous Entry', both of which confirmed and guaranteed the 'liberties' of the provinces, their separate customs and laws.¹⁰⁹ These became known as 'privileges' and ought not to be underestimated in the history the Dutch Revolt and that nation's subsequent government.¹¹⁰ Although tensions in the Netherlands erupted over issues of taxation and religion, the political justification for the Revolt came to centre around three key issues: privileges, liberty, and States. A number of pamphlets protested against the alleged violation of the privileges and

¹⁰⁷ Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 266.

¹⁰⁸ Graham Darby, 'Narrative of Events', in *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt* (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁰ For a full outline of the Dutch Revolt see Darby, *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt* (2001).

liberties of the country, and were infused with a more active call to resistance.¹¹¹ For instance, in *A Defence and true Declaration of the things lately done in the Low Country*, which was translated into English and published in 1571, the author powerfully asserted that the foundation of the Dutch political order was a trinity of liberty, with privileges as the constitutional guarantees of liberty, and the States as the guardians of the privileges.¹¹² This led to the conclusion that the prince should be regarded a ‘subject’ to the power of the States. It was also the first pamphlet openly to hold Philip II himself responsible for the trouble and tyranny afflicting the Netherlands.¹¹³ Eventually, this trinity of liberty, privileges and States was developed into a refined constitutional argument that concluded that the Netherlands was not a monarchy, but a republic; in particular the *Address and Opening to make a Good, Blessed, and General Peace in the Netherlands* should be regarded as important in this development.¹¹⁴

This early focus on the traditions and powers of each province, as well as on the specific limitations of the power of a sovereign, eventually developed into the commitment to provincial sovereignty and decentralised federal government that is evident in the Dutch form of republican government, set down most clearly in the Union of Utrecht in 1579.¹¹⁵ This was considered the founding charter of the United Provinces, and it was intended that the union should function as a league of several sovereign provinces, basically as a confederacy of states rather than a federal state. The closest thing the Dutch had to a written constitution, it proclaimed that the Dutch provinces should ‘form an alliance, confederation and union among themselves as if they constituted only one province’, and that ‘each province and the individual cities, members and inhabitants thereof shall retain undiminished its special rights and particular privileges’.¹¹⁶ Subsequently, in July 1590, the States General was declared ‘the

¹¹¹ See for instance, *Third Warning and Admonition to the good, faithful rulers and community of the country of Brabant* (1566), *Advertisement by the good and loyal subjects and inhabitants of the Royal Majesty’s Patrimonial Netherlands* (1566). These and many other significant pamphlets are discussed at length in Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*. Also see E. H. Kossmann and A. F. Mellink, eds., *Texts Concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

¹¹² Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of Dutch Revolt*, 125.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹¹⁴ See Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of Dutch Revolt*, 135.

¹¹⁵ J. J. Woltjer, ‘Dutch Privileges, Real and Imaginary’, in *Britain and the Netherlands, Vol. V: Some Political Mythologies*, ed. by J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 25. Woltjer also claims that the emphasis placed on privileges was more due to the need to justify the Revolt and provide a legitimate basis for action, rather than a desire to defend privileges at any cost. However, although the privileges began as a weapon in the revolt, for instance as a means for justifying resistance to Alva’s policies, over the course of the struggle privileges acquired such sanctity that they became an end in themselves.

¹¹⁶ First Article of the Union of Utrecht (1579), 2. Online Edition.

sovereign institution of this country...[which] has no overlord except the deputies of the Provincial States'.¹¹⁷

Moreover, the right of disobedience inherent in these political tracts evolved into the articulation of a political right of resistance, which allowed the inhabitants to disobey and oppose by force a prince who violated the privileges, and, by means of their representatives, the States, to replace him with a regent.¹¹⁸ In framing their political thought in such a way, the Dutch legitimised their actions against the Spanish king. In 1581 the Act of Abjuration was passed which formally rejected Philip II as ruler of the Netherlands. This is not to say that monarchy was completely rejected at this point; the Dutch continued to invite foreign princes or monarchs to take the position of sovereign. Most notably, the Duke of Anjou was invited to become Prince and Lord of the Netherlands in 1581, albeit with severely constrained powers. After Anjou's failure, the Dutch approached Queen Elizabeth I of England, who chose to send the Earl of Leicester in her stead, accompanied by 7000 troops. This was also a disaster.¹¹⁹ This final experience awoke the Dutch to the fact that they had no need for a foreign ruler, leading the way to the establishment of a sovereign republic. Maurice of Nassau, stadholder of Holland since 1585, and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, advocate of Holland since 1586, became the leading figures in the United Provinces. Holland became the natural leader of the republic, and under its leadership, the Republic began functioning as a viable confederacy.¹²⁰ In 1609 the Twelve Year Peace was agreed, giving the Dutch Republic its first respite since its creation and allowing it to flourish and prosper without the threat of constant war.

The abjuration had sparked a lively debate among pamphleteers regarding the form of government the new state should take. Proponents of an aristocratic republic looked towards Venice or Sparta, while those who envisioned more popular government looked towards the Swiss Cantons or ancient Athens.¹²¹ A 1590 pamphlet by Simon Stevin made the United Provinces a democratic republic, while Pieter Corneliszoon Brederode, a diplomat, argued in 1607 that at present only the democratic aspect of government existed, and that the rest of the elements of a mixed constitution needed to be incorporated into the Dutch polity. Brederode believed that a proper aristocratic element – that is a Council of State, that could act independently of the States assemblies – over which Prince Maurice (then stadholder) would

¹¹⁷ Quoted from Peter Limm, *The Dutch Revolt, 1559-1648* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 62.

¹¹⁸ Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of Dutch Revolt*, 162.

¹¹⁹ Darby, 'Narrative of Events', 22.

¹²⁰ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 234-239.

¹²¹ James D. Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic: War, Finance, and Politics in Holland, 1572-1588* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 306.

preside as ‘head and perpetual dictator’, was still missing.¹²² Ultimately, the Dutch republic most resembled a tight-knit oligarchy. A closed ruling class known as regents governed the provincial towns in their States, with the nobility making up only a small minority of those termed regents; nonetheless, historians have often been at pains to suggest that the closed oligarchy still represented the voice of the people.¹²³ The town councils sent delegates to the Provincial States, usually with strict instructions regarding how to vote and debate on issues. For this reason, there was often much back and forth between various political bodies, since the delegates could not make autonomous decisions beyond their prescribed remit. The same process applied at national level; delegates to the States General from the Provincial States were bound by the same limits. Although this decentralised system served the ideal of provincial sovereignty, it was not practical when decisions needed to be made in a timely manner. This applied particularly to financial and military matters during periods of conflict. As such, the stadholder took on an increased degree of executive power over such matters, while other tasks were delegated to experienced councils or ‘colleges’, freeing up the States General to deal with the everyday tasks of government.

The Dutch Revolt and the subsequent establishment of the republic created a strong emotional need for examples and justifications from the past.¹²⁴ The Batavian myth was the result of this search for legitimisation. The connection between the ancient Batavi people and the Dutch people was drawn in the early sixteenth century, when scholars sought to prove that the Batavi had, in Roman times, settled in various parts of the region: for instance, Cornelius Aurelius, a cleric from Gouda, composed *Defensio gloriae Batavinae* in 1516, outlined that the Batavi were exclusively from the Holland region.¹²⁵ Later scholars like Paulus Merula found a prototype for seventeenth-century Holland in the ‘republic’ of ancient Batavians.¹²⁶ Of course, the most famous account of the Batavian myth was produced by Hugo Grotius in his *Liber de antiquitate reipublicae Batavicae* of 1610.¹²⁷ Grotius was born in 1583 in Delft, Holland, into a regent family. He was directly involved in the political life of the Dutch Republic from an early age, and eventually became official historiographer for the States of Holland in 1601. In his account of the myth, Grotius outlined the exemplary way that the Batavi had organised their government. The timing of the publication was unlikely to have

¹²² Ibid., 307.

¹²³ See for instance Limm, *The Dutch Revolt*, 62.

¹²⁴ I. Schöffner, ‘The Batavian Myth during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in *Britain and the Netherlands. Volume V*, 87.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 82.

¹²⁶ Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic*, 307.

¹²⁷ For a full outline of Grotius’ political thought, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 154-201.

been an accident. The twelve year truce had just been signed and the fledgling republic needed legitimisation from the best possible sources.¹²⁸ Grotius theorised that since the Batavi were numerous enough to provide auxiliaries to the Romans, they would necessarily have had enough to settle in a number of cities. These cities, he suggests, like all other Germanic communities, were governed by the best citizens, elected for life to represent the mass of those whose daily work left them too busy for politics. Further, since there was a Germanic tradition of tribal assemblies (*concillia*) the Batavian communities must also have had their delegates settle between them the main issues of the nation. He therefore proposed an unbroken institutional continuity, from the Batavians through to the modern Netherlands and in doing so made the Batavi a symbol of genuinely republican government in the United Provinces.¹²⁹ Grotius's theory became widely accepted, particularly among the educated classes, to whom it furnished unexpected support for the belief that the regents' rule in Holland was the best of governments because it was the oldest.¹³⁰

Grotius also produced *de iure belli ac pacis* in March 1625, in which he argued that the liberty of a republic was lost if it fell under the rule of a single individual.¹³¹ Later experiences of the Dutch would suggest there was some truth in this statement. William II of Orange had succeeded his father Frederick Henry as stadholder in 1647, but his leadership was short lived. After an attempted *coup d'état* against Amsterdam in 1650, brought about over disputes regarding the Treaty of Münster and size of the army, his reputation suffered and considerable resentment brewed, especially in Holland, against the stadholderate. His actions had threatened the constitutional balance within the republic, which navigated a purposefully ambiguous line regarding the location of sovereignty, which overlapped between the States and the stadholder. In an unexpected turn of events, William died suddenly in November 1650, leaving behind no living successor, just an unborn child to his widow, Mary Stuart. With the actions of the stadholder still fresh in their memory, the leaders of Holland decided that it was no longer preferable to elect a stadholder and the Orange family was essentially overthrown.¹³² Importantly, Dutch struggles with the figurehead of the Orange stadholder occurred almost simultaneously with England's troubles with the Stuarts.

¹²⁸ Schöffler, 'The Batavian Myth', 92.

¹²⁹ Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic*, 308.

¹³⁰ I. Schöffler, 'The Batavian Myth', 92-3.

¹³¹ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 192-3.

¹³² Herbert H Rowen, *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 77-94.

But the Hollanders still needed a leader to help unite a hugely diverse array of needs and interests both within Holland and across the Republic. They chose to make Johan de Witt Grand Pensionary of Holland. This position was very clearly as a servant of the state, and foreign diplomats regularly described him as the ‘prime minister’. He was not head of the government, since the States of Holland was his master.¹³³ This is not to suggest that everyone was happy about the rejection of the Orange family, who had traditionally occupied the semi-monarchical, semi-hereditary position of the stadholderate. In fact, the provinces remained divided, both between themselves and internally regarding this shift in position. In order to justify and politically theorise the new form of republic, De Witt published his *Deduction, or Declaration of the States of Holland* in which he argued that true freedom rested on the principle that full absolute sovereignty is vested in the States of the respective provinces, together with the indisputable right and unlimited power to resolve all matters not explicitly reserved to the States General by the 1579 Union of Utrecht. It was the first elaboration of the theory of government without an ‘eminent head’, the term used by De Witt to describe the role of the stadholder rather than the title, which would become known by its adherents as ‘True Freedom’.¹³⁴ But alongside the theorising of the rejection of an ‘eminent head’, True Freedom also incorporated a theory of provincial sovereignty. Within this, government fell largely to the regents, the Dutch name for members of the town governments. They held their positions for life, and new entries after a death were made by cooptative election by the other regents.¹³⁵ Legally, all could become regents but in reality it was only possible through marrying into established regent families, and it became increasingly oligarchic towards the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century.¹³⁶

The De la Court’s two most famous works, *Political Balance* and *Political Discourses*, were both published after Johan’s death in 1660.¹³⁷ They also produced *The Interest of Holland* (1662), which De Witt is also thought to have had a hand in composing. These are considered to be the first clear expressions of a distinctly Dutch republican theory.¹³⁸ It was their foremost concern to show that it was possible for the republic to be governed without a single

¹³³ Herbert H. Rowen, *John de Witt: Statesman of the “True Freedom”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-67.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁷ It is impossible to know for sure which of the two brothers contributed most to the works, but Haitsma Mulier argues that it is safe to assume that Pieter agreed with the contents, else he would have changed them after his brother’s death. See: Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 126.

¹³⁸ Haitsma Mulier, ‘The Language of Seventeenth Century Republicanism’, 188.

figurehead and to show how such a regime could be given a degree of stability.¹³⁹ As such, there was strong criticism of the House of Orange. The De la Courts also rejected the concept of mixed government in order to strengthen the position of the States against the stadholderate.¹⁴⁰ Haitsma Mulier paints a picture of the De la Courts as emphatically in favour of a popular state with all citizens who were cultivated, virtuous and rich capable of being chosen for office. The great assembly of all male residents who qualified for citizenship possessed sovereignty. Group interests must not come to dominate; the ideal was that each individual decided for himself on behalf of the well-being of the state and thus displayed his 'virtue' without representing the interests of a specific category.¹⁴¹

The concept of interest was not entirely new; what the de la Courts offered was a reinterpretation of an older theory that was nonetheless distinctly Dutch. The use of interest as a moral and political concept was expounded by thinkers including Francesco Guicciardini, Giovanni Botero and the Duc d'Rohan, and became conceptualised as 'reason of state'. It referred to the idea that the survival and well-being of the state was paramount, and all the actions of government should be directed to this end. Moreover, it understood that human action was informed almost universally motivated by self-interest.¹⁴² For the ruler, interest was state interest, defined in opposition to the interests of other states, but more importantly to the particular preferences and passions of the ruler.¹⁴³ However, it is with Machiavelli and in particular *The Prince* that reason of state has come to be associated. *The Prince* is famously known for arguing that in order to ensure the stability of the state, illegal or immoral actions might be undertaken. So in pursuit of the greater good and the survival and success of the state, almost any action appeared to become justifiable. It is worth noting, here, that despite the notorious reputation Machiavelli gained from this publication, recent work by Skinner has done much to offer a more complex and forgiving understanding of both man and text.¹⁴⁴ Scholars such as Haitsma Mulier have highlighted the evident influence of Machiavelli on the works of Dutch writers, particularly the De la Courts, but Arthur Weststeijn has argued that

¹³⁹ Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 137.

¹⁴⁰ Haitsma Mulier, 'The Language of Seventeenth Century Republicanism', 189-90.

¹⁴¹ For an in-depth study of the political thought of the De la Courts see Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 120-169.

¹⁴² Lionel A. McKensie, 'Natural Right and the Emergence of the Idea of Interest in Early Modern Political Thought: Francesco Guicciardini and Jean de Silhon', *History of European Ideas*, 4, 2 (1981), 279. Also see Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism* (2012).

¹⁴³ Johan Heilbron, 'French Moralists and the Anthropology of the Modern Era: On the Genesis of the Notions of 'Interest' and 'Commercial Society'', in Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnusson and Björn Wittrock, eds., *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity: Conceptual Change in Context, 1750-1850* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 80.

¹⁴⁴ See for instance Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1*, 113-38.

his influence is more ambivalent than hitherto assumed.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Wootton demonstrates that the concept of interest that existed in the Dutch Republic was presented by Traiano Boccalini as a new type of politics, one directly opposed to the reason of state advocated by princes; his politics represented an updated version of Machiavelli's.¹⁴⁶ Dutch interest theory was therefore more innovative than a simple borrowing of traditional European understandings of the concept; the ways in which this theory was put to use will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Conclusions

Setting out the ways in which knowledge about the Dutch and Venetian republics reached English republicans like Harrington, Milton, and Neville, demonstrates the value in the approach this thesis takes. For the most part, these republican figures had first-hand experience of either the Venetian or the Dutch Republics, and in some cases both. The influence of this should not be underestimated, even if it is difficult to pin down definitively. The histories of these governments and outlines of their political constitution set down in written form and transmitted to England further demonstrate that these republics were not isolated intellectually. They helped inform and influence English understandings of how republican government could function in different contexts in the contemporary world. There were differences between the English, Dutch and Venetian countries, peoples, and forms of government, but these did not prevent English thinkers from engaging with and utilising the lessons that could be learned from their European neighbours. The subsequent chapters will examine the various ways in which Harrington, Milton, Nedham, Neville and Sidney used the examples of the Dutch and Venetian models and ideas of republicanism to inform and support their own distinctive understandings of what English republicanism should look like.

¹⁴⁵ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 128.

¹⁴⁶ David Wootton, 'Machiavelli and the Business of Politics', in *Machiavelli's Legacy: "The Prince" after Five Hundred Years* ed. by Timothy Fuller (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2016), 94.

Section 2

Regicide and Republic

Chapter 2: Debating Single Person Government

In the ancient world, *res publica* was simply taken to mean one of the three good forms of government, one of which could of course be a monarchy.¹ The position, role and powers of a king were increasingly debated over the course of the English civil wars; however, after the execution of the king the position of a single person within England's republican constitution became even more crucial to the debates. Significantly, the two most powerful contemporary republics in Europe in the mid-seventeenth century both had individual figureheads. Venice had the Doge, an elected position that nonetheless was recognised in several political tracts to be the monarchical element of a mixed republican constitution.² The Dutch had chosen to continue selecting stadholders even after the Spanish king had long since lost his power over the United Provinces; moreover, they continued to nominate from within the Orange family, giving the position a quasi-monarchical element. On the continent, then, the position of a single person within a republican government was a generally accepted norm. The English republican tradition therefore appears to have placed considerably more emphasis on the rejection of monarchy and single person rule than did its European counterparts.

Evidence of this can be demonstrated by looking at John Milton's republicanism. The sincerity of Milton's republicanism has been called into question, particularly by Worden and Thomas Corns, precisely because of his reluctance to commit to non-monarchical republicanism.³ As understandings of republicanism have evolved and diversified, so understandings of Milton's position have deepened. Martin Dzelzainis, for instance, has argued that Milton showed a 'high degree of indifference to constitutional forms' and that Scott's understanding of republicanism as a moral tradition might provide a more enlightened approach to Milton's political beliefs.⁴ In other words, a narrow, exclusionist definition of republicanism has undermined Milton's republican credentials. By looking at Milton's commitment to 'a politics of virtue', Dzelzainis has demonstrated that Milton's commitment to republican thought was present from the mid-1640s, whereby *Of Education* can be viewed

¹ Wootton, 'The True Origins of Republicanism: The Disciples of Baron and the Counter-Example of Venturi', 273.

² For instance see Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 65.

³ Worden, 'English Republicanism', 443-75; Thomas Corns, 'Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth', in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. by David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25-42.

⁴ Also see Frank Lovett, 'Milton's Case for a Free Commonwealth', *American Journal for Political Sciences*, 49, 3 (2005), 466-478.

as a ‘republican moment’ that brings together, for the first time in a political context, the themes that would dominate his future writings.⁵

By defining republicanism in a more pluralistic manner and looking beyond the exclusionist narrative, we can make better sense of Milton’s place in the republican tradition. It will also enable a further contribution to the debates surrounding the consistency of Milton’s political thought throughout the 1640s and especially the 1650s. Questions of consistency have similarly been asked of Milton’s contemporary, Marchamont Nedham, a man who was able to change his political allegiances at an astonishing rate; writing first for the Parliamentarians during the First Civil War, switching to Charles’ cause in 1647 just in time for the monarch’s acceleration towards failure and execution, and finally coming back to writing for the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Even after the Restoration he attempted to switch sides once more, albeit with less success than he had previously found. Described by Anthony Wood as a ‘weather-cock’ who valued ‘money and sordid Interest rather than Conscience, friendship or love to his Prince’, it is then understandable that the interpretation of Nedham as disloyal and unscrupulous has stood as his ‘unofficial epitaph’.⁶

However, Nedham's posthumous reputation has undergone a transformation in recent years from one of the flakiest propagandists of the mid-seventeenth century to being placed centre stage as one of the most important republican thinkers of the period. This shift began, as so many others, with J.G.A. Pocock’s *The Machiavellian Moment*, which declared that in spite of his moral flexibility, Nedham was important for producing ‘the first sustained English exposition of republican democracy in classical and Machiavellian terms’.⁷ Joad Raymond also sees Nedham as a key figure in the history of republicanism, arguing that although he compromised his republican principles when he wrote for the Cromwellian Protectorate, he maintained certain republican positions throughout the 1650s, including ideas of freedom, religious conscience, and separation of the legislative and executive branches of government.⁸ Worden went a step further, declaring that Nedham had been an avowed adherent to classical models of republicanism from 1647 through to the Restoration and perhaps even beyond. Whilst his public face might have been forced through circumstance to adopt unsavoury

⁵ Martin Dzelzainis, ‘Republicanism’ in Thomas Corns, ed., *A Companion to Milton* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 296, 300.

⁶ Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ii, 626; Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print, and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 118.

⁷ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 381-3.

⁸ Joad Raymond, ‘A Mercury with a Winged Conscience’: Marchamont Nedham, Monopoly and Censorship’, *Media History*, 4, 1 (1998), 9.

positions, in private he remained true to his beliefs throughout the Interregnum.⁹ Whilst these views have been on the whole accepted by historians, Jonathan Scott's suggestion that Nedham had been a committed republican and Leveller from as early as the closing months of 1644 has received some criticism and has been described by Jason McElligott as 'unconvincing'.¹⁰ Thus, whilst there are limits as to how far we can push the interpretation of Nedham as a committed republican throughout his life, it is clear that Nedham has been increasingly read by historians as a committed republican at least from the later 1640s whose royalism has been invariably described as a 'guise' or a 'phase'.¹¹

Harrington's associations with royalism and monarchy have done little to undermine the interpretation of his thought as purely republican. In *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, he set out a formula that demonstrated how the form a government should take related directly to the distribution of land within a nation. In England, the ownership of land had shifted into the hands of the people, and subsequently the balance of power ought to rest with them.¹² However, in focusing too closely on this, Harrington's earlier interactions with the Stuarts have been dismissed or, where acknowledged, have rarely been incorporated into an interpretation of Harrington's political thought. Hammersley has been at the forefront of attempts to counter this trend; much of her recent work has argued that there was indeed a role for a monarchical element in a Harringtonian vision for England's future.¹³

This chapter will trace Milton, Nedham and finally Harrington's attitudes to single person government through their references to single person rule in both the Dutch and Venetian republics. Paying attention to this aspect of their analyses of the Dutch and Venetian models will demonstrate that a narrow definition of republic as anti-monarchical is too simplistic; by tracing their attitudes to single person government, it is possible to see that not only were differing definitions of republic used - at some times to refer to an ideal mixed government with space for a single ruler, and at others to mean non-monarchical government - but that at

⁹Blair Worden, 'Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism, 1649-1656', in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 45, 62, 80.

¹⁰ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 242; Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print, and Censorship*, 119.

¹¹ Joad Raymond, *Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 151; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 381-2; Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 223.

¹² Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 11-12.

¹³ Rachel Hammersley, 'The Republican Theorist at Royal Servant: James Harrington's Civil War', *Paper Delivered at History Research Seminar*, Newcastle University, October 2016; Rachel Hammersley, 'Rethinking the Political Thought of James Harrington: Royalism, Republicanism and Democracy', *History of European Ideas*, 39, 3 (2013), 354-70; Rachel Hammersley, 'James Harrington, The Commonwealth of Oceana and a Revolution in the Language of Politics', in *Revolutionary Moments: Reading Revolutionary Texts*, ed. by Rachel Hammersley (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 18-26.

least some English republicans drew a distinction between ‘name king’ and ‘thing king’ prior to the execution of the king.

Rejecting the ‘Name King’

While debates surrounding republicanism have come to rest on the binary distinction between republicanism as non-monarchical versus the broader definition of government for the common good, a second layer of debate has been added to this. With regards to the Levellers in the 1640s, Rachel Foxley has pointed out that there were divisions between those who were more alarmed by the person of the king and those who were more concerned about monarchical power.¹⁴ Similarly, John Gurney has shown that Gerard Winstanley developed the distinction between kingly office and kingly power, the latter of which had been allowed to survive the establishment of the republic.¹⁵ Indeed, Nedham made this distinction himself in *Mercurius Politicus* defining it as the difference between the ‘name King’ and the ‘thing king’.¹⁶ This is the distinction between the political office of monarch, and the more abstract notion of monarchical interest, a concept that is difficult to define because of the sheer diversity of opinions regarding what this kingly power or interest entailed. However, in considering the different ways in which kingly power and kingly office were conceptualised and by applying this to republican thought in the 1640s and 1650s, we can get closer to understanding their republican beliefs and, thereby, the nature of English republicanism.

In February 1649, only weeks after the execution of Charles I, Milton published *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. Milton was initially somewhat vague about his understanding of the position of a single person within a constitution in his early tracts. This is perhaps not surprising; the regicide was an unexpected and unprecedented occurrence, and the future of English government was by no means decided as Milton penned this tract. It was not until March that the government declared the official abolition of the monarchy, and not until May that England was declared to be a commonwealth or free state.¹⁷ Thus *The Tenure* was more a justification of England’s actions rather than any comment about a potential republican government. In order to legitimise their actions, Milton drew upon the experiences of other times and places that had faced similar circumstances. The Dutch Republic provided Milton

¹⁴ Rachel Foxley, *The Levellers: Radical Political Thought in the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 182.

¹⁵ John Gurney, *Brave Community: The Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 163.

¹⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 72, 16-23 October 1651, 1143

¹⁷ See ‘Act Abolishing the Office of King’ (March 1649) and ‘Act Declaring England to be a Commonwealth (May 1649), in Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 384-387, 388.

with examples of both contemporaneous and relevant political turmoil as well as constitutional ways in which such turmoil could be prevented and durable government established. Both the Dutch and English nations had recently dealt with a monarch overstepping the accepted boundaries of their power, resulting in protracted civil war in both nations. As a result, much of Milton's admiration for the United Provinces centred on the fact that, like the English, they had overcome a tyrannical prince in the pursuit of liberty. In *The Tenure*, Milton argued that it was lawful to call tyrants to account, if necessary to depose them, and even put them to death. He outlined the achievements of the Dutch Republic in declaring its independence from the Spanish:

In the yeare 1581. The States of Holland in a general Assembly at the Hague abjur'd all obedience and subjection to Philip King of Spaine; and in a Declaration justifie thir so doing; for that by his tyrannous government against faith so many times giv'n and brok'n he had lost his right to all the Belgic Provinces; that therefore they depos'd him and decalr'd it lawful to chose another in his stead.¹⁸

The Dutch had been subject to a tyrannical government and had fought to attain their freedom; having done so, they considered it entirely lawful to name another to take his place. The 'name king' did not therefore at this point cause any problems either to the Dutch or to Milton in terms of viewing that nation as a free commonwealth; this therefore sits with the wider understanding of republicanism as a mixed government that combined the best forms of rule. At this point in time, Milton had no reason to argue against monarchy in general; his issue was with tyranny. Although he did not draw explicit parallels between the way in which the Dutch and the English dealt with their tyrannical monarchs, the inclusion of them in his tracts suggests at least an implicit affinity with the Dutch and the struggles they had endured. Both were considered legitimate ways of holding tyrants accountable, and therefore their actions in overthrowing these monarchs were comparable. That Milton was perhaps aware that these parallels might not be well received is suggested in *The Tenure* when he encouraged the Dutch 'not to look with an evil and prejudicial eye upon their Neighbours walking by the same rule'.¹⁹

He was right to be cautious. In the 1640s, Parliament had been fairly successful in acquiring popular support in the Dutch Republic. However, the execution by the English of an anointed

¹⁸ Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 3, ed. by Merritt Hughes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 226-7. Merritt Hughes informs us that Milton took this information from Jacques-Auguste de Thou, more commonly known as Thuanus, who was a French historian. He had recorded this historic declaration of the rights of nations against their princes in his *History of his Own Times*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 226-7.

monarch caused a radical turn in Dutch public opinion.²⁰ Feelings of horror and distaste promptly turned to action when Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland, two English ambassadors, arrived in the United Provinces only to be attacked by Orangist crowds at The Hague. European distaste was put into words in Claudius Salmasius's *Defensio Regia* (1649) and Pierre Du Moulin's *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (1652). Both offered a condemnation of the execution of Charles I, as well as a call to arms of the monarchies of Europe against the English Republic.²¹ Salmasius called the execution of Charles a parricide 'committed by a nefarious conspiracy of impious men' who had declared war on humanity itself. He condemned any comparison between the heinous acts of the English and the legal overthrow of Philip II, insisting that 'what they [the English] did and what the Hollanders [did]...differs as ink differs from milk'.²² Du Moulin's tract provided a less scholarly, more cutting attack on the actions of the English; he also referred to the regicide as a parricide, going so far as to state that 'compared with this, the crime of the Jews in crucifying Christ was nothing'.²³ Feelings evidently ran deep across Europe at the execution of an anointed monarch; even implicit connections between the actions of the Dutch and the English were powerfully and efficiently condemned.

But neither Salmasius nor Du Moulin settled for condemnation. They both sought to explain why the abjuration of Philip could not be equated to the regicide of Charles, and did so in a similar way. Salmasius argued that the Dutch actions during the Revolt were entirely justified, because the Hollanders had always been a free people, and had not deposed a king, but a Count of their own election, who simply happened to be sovereign of another country. The English, on the other hand, had always been subjected to kings, and had therefore revolted against the King's lawful power.²⁴ Du Moulin's argument followed the same trajectory; he declared that:

the greatest of all injuries was done to the Dutch Federation by this defection and parricide, especially when it did not shame the Independents to compare their foul deeds of the Dutch for liberty. If the whole matter were looked into the Dutch never had a king, but a count.²⁵

²⁰ Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 2.

²¹ Thomas Corns reminds us that in these *Defences*, Milton was forced to defend the actions of a particular people at a particular time, dealing with a particular king, as opposed to espousing the merits of republicanism in general. See Corns, 'Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth', 33.

²² Salmasius, *Defensio Regia*, quoted in Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 132.

²³ Pierre du Moulin, *The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven Against the English Parricides*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 4, 2 trans. by Paul Blackwood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 1049.

²⁴ Salmasius, *Defensio Regia*, quoted in Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 132.

²⁵ Du Moulin, *The Cry of the Royal Blood*, CPW, Vol. 4, 2, 1072.

Like Salmasius, Du Moulin argued that the Dutch experience was entirely different because ‘supreme authority and the power of life and death were not in the possession of the count or duke, except as he shared them with the people’, whereas in England ‘the Parliaments have been called and dissolved at the will of the king; for the king had sole and solid power without the Parliament, but the Parliament without the king has no power’.²⁶ Thus their distinction between the English and Dutch experiences ultimately came down to a distinction between the name of monarch and monarchical powers; Salmasius and Du Moulin both argued that the English monarch had possessed both, whereas they had elected a ruler for themselves, who had no sovereign power in and of himself within the United Provinces. This distinction therefore made any parallels between the actions of the two nations fundamentally false and extremely offensive.

After Salmasius’s tract, Milton published his first *Defence of the People of England*, in which he sought to rebut the arguments of his antagonist. Published in 1651, the circumstances had evidently changed significantly since *The Tenure*; England had been a commonwealth free of single person rule for two years. In the *Defence*, Milton continued to imply that the actions of the English and the Dutch were related: ‘Could you forget the Dutch, whose republic, after they had driven out the Spanish king in long wars successfully waged, by glorious courage won her freedom?’²⁷ Here, however, there is no suggestion of any other legitimate form of king for the Dutch; indeed, the distinction appears to be drawn quite clearly between the name of the ‘Spanish king’ and the ‘freedom’ of the commonwealth that had since been established. How Milton feels about the ‘thing king’ is still not clear, but he appears to have rejected the idea of the name king from as early as 1651.

However, while events in England had transpired to allow Milton to reject the name of king and draw a distinction between the office of king and free government, relations between the English and the Dutch also developed in such a way that Milton had to deny explicitly that the English were following in the footsteps of the Dutch. In his first *Defence* Milton actively rejected the claim that the English had ‘attempt[ed] to justify’ their actions ‘by the example of the Dutch’, and in the *Second Defence* he denied denying that the English ‘considered it necessary to emulate’ the Dutch.²⁸ Placing these *Defences* in their context goes some way to resolve the contradiction between the implicit connections between the English and Dutch actions in Milton’s writings and his explicit rejection of such connections. When he wrote the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1072.

²⁷ Milton, *A Defence of the People of England*, CPW, Vol. 4, 1, 429.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 533; Milton, *A Second Defence*, CPW, Vol. 4, 1, 656.

first *Defence*, tensions between England and the Dutch Republic were escalating, particularly after the Dutch had rejected the idea of a political union between the two commonwealths proposed by the Rump parliament.²⁹ War was on the horizon, and Milton may have realised that continuing to draw comparisons between the abjuration and the regicide could only exacerbate the conflict between the two commonwealths. After all, the Dutch Republic was the most likely potential ally for the English, considering the similarities between the two, namely their republican nature, their Protestantism, and their mutual reliance on maritime affairs. By the time he came to publish the *Second Defence*, the war was drawing to a close, and antagonising the Dutch would again be far from prudent. Thus Milton's attempt to distance himself from his initial use of the Dutch as a tool of justification may have represented political prudence in difficult international circumstances. This is further supported by the fact that Milton took his denials too far, claiming that 'the English see no need for them to justify their own deeds by the example of any foreigners whatever'.³⁰ He continued these denials in his *Second Defence*, stating that 'he is mistaken who supposes that we depend upon anyone's example'. He also argued that 'if any brave deed must be done on behalf of liberty, we are our own exemplars, accustomed to lead, not to follow others'.³¹ This was demonstrably not true; Milton's political tracts were full of examples - biblical, ancient and modern - of other nations resisting tyrants and establishing commonwealths. It is by acknowledging that Milton was protesting a little too much that we are able to reconcile his two positions with regards to the Dutch.

Rejecting the 'Thing King'

The Dutch Republic did not just have the Spanish king to contend with in regards to single person government. They also had a stadholder, a position traditionally held by the House of Orange, who acted as a figurehead that could unite the seven diverse Provinces that made up the Dutch Republic. Politically and military, his position was somewhat vague and undefined.³² Also significant was the fact that there were strong familial connections between the Houses of Orange and Stuart that led to natural comparisons between the two. Charles I and William II of Orange were, after all, related by marriage. The marriage of Charles's

²⁹ For a succinct summary of the proposed union see Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall*, 714; Simon Groenveld, 'The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1640-1652', *The Historical Journal*, 30, 3 (1987), 555-57.

³⁰ Milton, *A Defence of the People of England*, CPW, Vol. 4, 1, 533.

³¹ Milton, *A Second Defence*, CPW, Vol. 4, 1, 656.

³² For the complex position of the stadholder to the Dutch constitution, see Herbert H. Rowen, 'Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Stadholderate in the Dutch Republic', in *Political Ideas and Institutions in the Dutch Republic* (California: The William Andrew Clark Memorial Library, 1985), 3-31.

daughter Mary to William, who at the time was simply the son of the presiding stadholder Frederick Henry, in 1641 had significantly improved the prestige of the House of Orange in the courts of Europe, as it was the first time they had married into a major royal line. Later, in 1644, the Stuarts proposed yet another marriage between the two families.³³ However, the Dutch had made only minor gestures of support for the royalist cause during the first civil war. England's queen, Henrietta Maria, had fled to the Netherlands in search of financial and military support for her husband's cause in the civil war.³⁴ The Dutch were characteristically reluctant to get involved in a foreign war, particularly considering their continuing conflict and negotiations with Spain; even after William II became stadholder in 1647 and a peace treaty with Spain had been signed, William was far more interested in resuming the fight than supporting his father-in-law. However, in 1648, Charles II had sought refuge with his brother-in-law at The Hague, and was still residing there when the news reached him of his father's execution. Even without really getting involved in England's civil war, the familial connections between the Houses of Orange and Stuart meant that connections continued to be drawn between the two republics.

Nedham's first foray into political writing came about in his parliamentary newsbook *Mercurius Britannicus*.³⁵ It was in this newsbook that Nedham demonstrated that he did not view the position of stadholder as the 'name King' within the Dutch constitution, arguing that it was 'false...that the Prince of Orange is King of the Netherlands, or that he intends to make himselfe'.³⁶ He recognised that the stadholderate did not possess sovereignty in the same way as the English king did. Nonetheless, he drew distinct connections between the political positions of the houses of Stuart and Orange. He argued that the Dutch people shared the 'same common interest with them, and fights against the same tyrannie and popery'.

Although this reference to tyranny could have been about Philip II, Nedham actually had a

³³ Jonathan Israel argues that the only reason Charles agreed to the first marriage was because of the increasingly difficult situation within England, the second offer demonstrates just how dire things had become for Stuarts. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall*, 538.

³⁴ Indeed early historiography supported the strength of support the House of Orange had offered the Stuarts. Pieter Geyl argued that the House of Orange, notably stadholders Frederick Henry and his successor William II, deliberately subordinated the interest of the United Provinces to Orangist dynastic aspirations. More recently, Simon Groenveld has argued that the continuous line of policy drawn by Geyl from Frederick Henry to William II never really existed. Pieter Geyl, *Orange and Stuart: 1641-72*, translated by Arnold Pomerans (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); Simon Groenveld, 'The House of Orange and the House of Stuart, 1639-1650: A Revision', *The Historical Journal*, 34, 4 (1991), 972.

³⁵ Jason Peacey, 'The Struggle for *Mercurius Britannicus*: Factional Politics and the Parliamentary Press, 1643-1646', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68, 3 (2005), 517-43; Nicholas Brownlees, 'Polemical and Propaganda in Civil War News Discourse', in *News Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Brownlees (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2006), 17-40; Joyce Macadam, 'Mercurius Britannicus on Charles I: An Exercise in Civil War Journalism and High Politics, August 1643-May 1646', *Historical Research*, 84, 225 (2011), 470-492.

³⁶ *Mercurius Britannicus*, Issue 28, 18-25 March 1644, 217.

different target in mind when he immediately warned the Dutch that ‘Oranges may do as much harme in Holland as Lemmons have done in England’.³⁷ Nedham therefore anticipated the danger that the stadholderate might pose to liberty in the Dutch Republic. After all the Stuarts, or Lemons, had gradually sought to rule without parliament, increasing their own power and hampering the liberty of the people. The result was the messy civil war subsequently being fought all across England. So while the houses of Stuart and Orange were dissimilar in the fact that they were not both actually monarchs, their positions within their respective constitutions resembled the ‘thing king’ enough that they both posed a danger to liberty.

What Nedham recognised from very early on was that abolishing the ‘name king’ was not enough to guarantee the freedom of the people. He perceived that retaining within the constitution any form of kingly power or monarchical interest was to the detriment of liberty, because it always had the potential to degenerate to such an extent that the office of king could in fact return, and tyranny be re-established over the population. As early as 1646, Nedham warned that the Dutch needed to open their eyes and recognise the danger that was facing them:

So now they cannot choose but perceive also how much they are beholden to their kind Prince of Orange, and what eye they ought to have over him for the future, when for his own ambitious end, the greatening himself by alliance with a neighbour Monarch, he will steer his course in such a line as is absolutely Diametricall to the Publick Interest of that State.³⁸

He stated that the United Provinces ‘are free states, and know the miseries of tyranny and slavery, and are looking a little behind them at their Prince of Orange; and wish they had not let him into so deep an interest’.³⁹ Nedham was therefore arguing that the position of the Prince of Orange represented the potential for tyranny. The very existence of this potential for tyranny was a threat to the liberty of the people, and to truly call themselves a commonwealth, this threat must be removed.⁴⁰ Thus, he hoped that ‘Holland it self...may yet learn to be wiser, and never suffer their teeth to be set on edge any more with sowre Orange’.⁴¹ That Nedham perceived there was tyranny, or at the very least the potential for tyranny, in the Dutch Republic remained consistent into his royalist writings. After switching to support the

³⁷ *Mercurius Britanicus*, Issue 26, 5-12 March 1644, 205.

³⁸ *Mercurius Britanicus*, Issue 126, 13-20th April 1646, 1081.

³⁹ *Mercurius Britanicus*, Issue 21, 19 January-5 February, 1644, 165.

⁴⁰ This supports Skinner’s sense of Nedham as committed to neo-Roman liberty.

⁴¹ *Mercurius Britanicus*, Issue 67, 20-27th January 1645, 528.

king in 1647, Nedham founded his second newsbook, *Mercurius Pragmaticus*.⁴² In this he sought to degrade the reputation of the parliamentarians; he accused them of trying to turn England ‘from a glorious Monarchy...in to Dutch modell, from the subjection of a King to the arbitrary vassalage of a free-state’.⁴³ This perception of the Dutch is actually entirely consistent with Nedham’s political position in the 1640s regarding single person government. Although he described the United Provinces as ostensibly ‘free states’, he also recognised that the Dutch were fully aware of ‘the miseries of tyranny and slavery’ imposed by the House of Orange.⁴⁴ Nedham consistently recognised that the Dutch were subjected to dangers within their republic that threatened the liberty of the people.

The danger that Nedham recognised in the stadholderate was most expressly suggested through the family’s ambition, and how marrying into the Stuart family, his ‘neighbour monarch’, had increased the political prestige granted to the House of Orange across Europe due to it being bonded to a powerful royal line. He perceived that this would only lead to increasing danger for the Dutch, because now the passions of ambition would be lit under the Orange family – a remarkable bit of foresight considering William II’s actions only a few years later. The Prince of Orange had been ‘let into so deep an interest’ that he represented a position that was ‘absolutely Diametricall to the Publick Interest of that State’.⁴⁵ By allowing the stadholderate to pursue its own ambition, they moved increasingly away from the public interest and towards the pursuit of their own private interest. Ambition was symptomatic of private interest, the pursuit of which would override the public good and endanger the existence of the commonwealth. The position of the stadholderate was therefore increasingly irreconcilable with the public interest. Nedham’s use of interest theory in the 1640s has only recently been acknowledged by historians.⁴⁶ What it reveals is that even before the regicide and the establishment of a republic in England, Nedham was reflecting on the position of a single person within the constitution and finding it severely problematic. This therefore challenges Foxley’s assertion that Nedham only began to condemn the ‘thing King’ in the 1650s⁴⁷; rather, what my approach shows is that Nedham theorised the removal of an individual leader from a constitution several years before England was even contemplating

⁴² Jason Peacey, “‘The counterfeit silly cur’: Money, Politics, and the Forging of Royalist Newspapers in the English Civil War”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), 27-57.

⁴³ *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, Issue 17, 4-11 January, 1648, 2.

⁴⁴ *Mercurius Britannicus*, Issue 21, 19 January- 5th February 1644, 165.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴⁶ Blair Worden, “‘Wit in a Roundhead’”: the Dilemma of Marchamont Nedham’, in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 17.

⁴⁷ Foxley, *The Levellers*, 199.

any such action against the English monarch.⁴⁸ There is a general acceptance by historians that the execution of the king was a last resort, when negotiations had completely broken down and no suitable alternative monarch could be found to take Charles's place.⁴⁹ This has led scholars to present English republicanism as a consequence rather than a cause of the regicide.⁵⁰ By examining Nedham's approach to single person government through his attitude to the Dutch and House of Orange, we can suggest that for Nedham at least, republican thought was evident from considerably before the king lost his head.

Kingly Power: A Time and a Place

To demonstrate his assertion that kingly power degenerated into kingly office, or the 'name king', Nedham had to look no further than the example of the Orange family. More importantly, in order to prove that something degenerated, it was also necessary to prove that something had once been good. Nedham first demonstrated this through his representation of the Orange family. In his third newsbook, commissioned by the English government in 1650, Nedham actually outlined a positive description of the Orange family, the only one anywhere in his political writings. It features in a discussion of the correlation between wealth and tyranny, in which he argued that government in free states was 'less Luxurious, than Kings or Grandees use to be' and that 'where Luxury takes place, there is as natural a tendency to Tyranny'.⁵¹ He then proved this maxim with reference to the Dutch:

If we look nearer home to such Free-States as are now in being, we find the United Provinces, while under a Tyranny, to abound in luxurious Govenors and people, but much alter'd upon the very first appearance of Liberty, insomuch that Luxury and Tyranny flying both away together, they have livd ever since in a sober parcimonious condition (yet wealthy) under a grave and serious Government by the people. And the Family of Orange it selfe (before it grew corrupt) was in every respect suited unto this popular Form.⁵²

Nedham followed this with a lengthy extract from Fulke Greville's life of Sir Philip Sidney, published in 1652, which gave an account of the sober nature of 'Prince William the founder

⁴⁸ Jonathan Scott has pointed out that Nedham's interest theory mirrored and pre-empted its later use by the De la Courts, due to their similarity of practical circumstance, in which the two nations aimed to defend and define themselves against a still present and dangerous 'monarchical interest'. What is interesting is that while the de la Court's only theorised on republicanism without a single person after the complete and total removal of the stadholderate, Nedham was considering this several years before any one in England was contemplating kingless government. See Scott, 'Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth Century England and the Netherlands', 68.

⁴⁹ Sean Kelsey has argued this line most emphatically, but there are, of course, scholars who dissent from this position. Clive Holmes, in particular, has argued against Kelsey's position, arguing instead that at least for some, the execution of the king was a deliberate aim. For these debates see for instance Sean Kelsey, 'The Death of Charles I', *Historical Journal*, 45, 4 (2002), 727-754 ; Clive Holmes, 'The Trial and Execution of Charles I', *The Historical Journal*, 53, 2 (2010), 289-316.

⁵⁰ Worden, 'Republicanism, Regicide and Republic', 307-08.

⁵¹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 84, 8-15 January 1652, 1333.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1336.

of their liberty’, including his humble mode of dress and personality. Showing ‘no outward signe of degree of merit, [none] could have discovered the inequality of his worth or estate from that multitude’. The lesson to take here, is that ‘an outward passage of inward Greatnesse, which in a popular state is worth the observing’.⁵³ William the Silent had therefore been suitable to the Dutch constitution, with its sober commitment to liberty, because its stadholder and founder also possessed that characteristic.

Again this attitude mirrors a similar comment Nedham had made in *Mercurius Pragmaticus* in which he accused the parliamentarians of unleashing a devastating civil war just ‘to bring the King into the same posture with a Dutch burgomaster, as if there could be no good fellowship in the Kingdome unless he go in and out before us, as one of our companion’.⁵⁴ Although from a royalist perspective this would have been considered most likely as a comedic and almost farcical position to envisage a monarch in, viewed from the perspective of Nedham the republican, it appears to reinforce a consistency in his political beliefs. He praised the only member of the Orange family whom he believed demonstrated inward greatness and virtue, rather than a gaudy display of outward wealth, which corrupted the position of ‘thing king’, through the pursuit of private interest, into the ‘name king’. In this way, Nedham was able to argue that ‘the Family of Orange it selfe (before it grew corrupt) was in every respect suited unto this popular Form’.⁵⁵

Through tracing the degeneration of the stadholderate from ‘thing king’, and by understanding how Nedham conceptualised this degeneration, we can draw three hypotheses. Firstly, that single person government can start off as good rule, and that a person of exceptional virtue in a time of exceptional political circumstances might be exactly what a nation needs to thrive. Secondly, that the perpetuation of this single person government contributes to the likelihood of its corruption, since personal interest gradually erodes concern for the public good, leading in turn to tyranny. Thirdly, that this degeneration into private interest could be most visibly perceived through excessive material consumption.

Nedham was proved right in 1648. In the months and years immediately following the Peace of Münster, the Dutch continued to battle with William II and his ambition; William wanted to restart the war with Spain and also sought to increase his own personal power. He acted upon this desire in an attempted *coup d’état* on Amsterdam. After Nedham’s return to the parliamentary cause, he invoked the attempted coup to continue his warnings against the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1337.

⁵⁴ *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, Issue 7, 26 October–2 November, 1647, 54.

⁵⁵ *Mercurius Politicus* Issue 84, 8–15 January 1652, 1336.

Orange family: 'if the Prince had seiz'd upon Amsterdam, an infinite Treasure would have come into his hands; whereby he would have recruited his own sinking estate, settled his Tyranny over those people, and make them bear that yoke which they so tamely received from his Father and Himself'.⁵⁶ Indeed, before William's death, he went so far as to warn Orange to 'look to his head too, if the Dutch once bring in a charge for his disuniting the Provinces'.⁵⁷ Nedham therefore drew clear and direct parallels between the behaviours of the two single person leaders. Both were tyrants who could be justifiably resisted, overthrown or punished. In a way, William's actions at Amsterdam proved to be something of a 'told-you-so' moment for Nedham. He now had 'no doubt, [that] the Dutch will see now how near they were to the brink of danger, and put him in to a like capacity of doing the like again'.⁵⁸ Thereafter he unleashed acidic attacks on the Orange family - specifically William II - and the tyranny he saw inherent within them: 'Orange makes shift to leade them all in a String, and causes them to bite upon the Bridle. He hath enslaved them with their owne Army, and now they much thank him for being Slaves...fine Feats of Tyranny that he plaid at Amsterdam'.⁵⁹ The Dutch 'do not so easily see a defence against his Tyranny. By what he hath done, they see what he can do when he pleases, and they have no ground to be secure upon the hopes of his good nature'.⁶⁰ This final statement fully expressed what he had been hinting throughout the 1640s; that by having to rely on the continued good nature of a monarchical interest, the liberty of the people is endangered and the potential for tyranny ever present.

Once the immediate danger posed by both Orange and Stuart had passed and single person rule seemed to have been ousted from both commonwealths, Nedham's depiction of both softened. In the months after the death of William in November 1650 (which led to the dismantling of the stadholderate) and the decisive defeat at the battle of Worcester, which seemed to end the hopes of the Stuart family, he no longer needed to launch such bitter diatribes in their directions. Thus prior to Worcester, Nedham had taken to calling Charles Stuart the 'young tarquin', in doing so emphasising the tyrannical nature of hereditary kingship.⁶¹ After his defeat, Nedham knew that Charles and the royalists stood little chance of retaking England, and as such the way he was depicted changed. From a tyrant, Charles was

⁵⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 9, 1-8 August 1650, 138.

⁵⁷ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 1, 6-13 June 1650, 16.

⁵⁸ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 9, 1-8 August 1650, 139.

⁵⁹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 15, 12-19 September 1650, 254.

⁶⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 20, 17-24 October 1650, 339.

⁶¹ See for instance *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 52, 29 May -5 June 1651

demoted to merely an unfit monarch and a disrespected king.⁶² Similarly, the threat Orange posed to Dutch liberty had been removed and therefore such harsh invective was no longer necessary. Nonetheless, the example of the House of Orange continued to serve as a useful example of the danger of a single person within the constitution of an allegedly free state.

William II's actions at Amsterdam also featured in Milton's work. In *A Defence of the People of England*, he reminded his readers of William and in doing so, indicated that there had been a development of his attitude from 1649. As mentioned above, in *A Defence* Milton had drawn a clear distinction between the rule of the Spanish kings and a free commonwealth, but had not, as before, suggested the benefit of naming another ruler. But he went on to consider the position of the stadholderate:

Consider now, most illustrious council of the Federated Netherlands...who it was that latterly began to act the king amongst you. Consider what plots, attacks and disturbances followed throughout Holland, and what the case would now be, how slavery was prepared for you and a new ruler, and how that liberty which had been won by so many years of toil and battle would now have perished from your midst had not the most providential death of that headstrong youth allowed it to breathe again.⁶³

King was used here as a synonym for tyrant, since the people would have been forced back under the 'slavery...prepared for you'. The stadholderate, by beginning to act 'the king' began therefore to take the 'name king'; this suggests that the single person government of the stadholderate was perceived by Milton as having previously taken a position resembling that of kingly power. William had then degenerated through his personal ambition into a kingly tyrant, who sought to cause the liberty of the Dutch to perish. This mirrors the attitude that Nedham had to single person government more generally - that it could easily deteriorate into tyranny and enslavement.

Tentative Support for Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell had risen to a position of considerable prominence during the course of the civil wars and was named Lord Protector in 1653. However, it has been suggested that Cromwell was seeking monarchical power from as early as 1649, and moreover, that Nedham knew it. Benjamin Woodford has demonstrated that Nedham connected Cromwell to kingship as early as 1649: 'witness Nol Cromwell, who...is crept up to be a Prince of the Last edition,

⁶² Benjamin Woodford, 'From Tyrant to Unfit Monarch: Marchamont Nedham's Representation of Charles Stuart and Royalists during the Interregnum', *History*, 100, 339 (2015), 8-11.

⁶³ Milton, *The Defence of the People of England*, CPW, Vol. 4, 1, 312.

and now is taking care to settle the Government in his Family'.⁶⁴ Kevin Sharpe has shown that even 'before 1653 he [Cromwell] was being written and visually represented as a king'.⁶⁵ Indeed, in late 1651 Cromwell allegedly proposed the Restoration of a monarchical element to the constitution and during the next year, there seemed to be genuine fears he would make himself king.⁶⁶ The spectre of single person government had barely been laid to rest before the threat of a Cromwellian monarchy began to rear its ugly head. It was to warn against this danger that Nedham now put the example of the House of Orange to use.

From October 1651 to August 1652 Nedham published a series of editorials in *Mercurius Politicus* in which he ostensibly sought to condemn the oligarchical government of the Rump. In June 1656 Nedham republished these editorials in edited and revised form, to create *The Excellencie of a Free-State*. When the Protectorate was eventually established, Nedham – as a government propagandist – had remained ostensibly loyal to the new Lord Protector, and had initially justified Cromwell's ascension, differentiating it from a quasi-monarchy by defining it as 'elective'.⁶⁷ However, by 1656 it was clear to Nedham that the Cromwellian Protectorate was playing out exactly as he had feared, in spite of his earlier warnings about the dangers of raising one man to a position where he could pursue his private interests at the expense of the public good. He saw that Cromwell was becoming increasingly dictatorial through the dissolution of the first Protectorate parliament and the instigation of the Major-Generals, and subtly edited his earlier editorials in order to reflect the new political circumstance. In the original *Mercurius Politicus* editorials, the purpose was primarily to condemn the Rump parliament whereas the *Excellencie* manipulated these editorials to change them into a condemnation of the Cromwellian Protectorate. However, by looking at the examples and language used regarding the Orange family, I posit that in fact this criticism of single person government was already a present, but previously under acknowledged aspect of the initial editorials, and that it was simply brought more clearly to the fore in the *Excellencie*.⁶⁸

In his *Politicus* editorials, Nedham's use of the Orange family harked back to the 1640s, thus representing a continuation of his arguments in which he had claimed that single person government always offered the potential for ruin. Nedham showed how in Holland

⁶⁴ *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, Issue 3, 1-8 May 1649, no page number. See Woodford, 'From Tyrant to Unfit Monarch', 8-9.

⁶⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 467

⁶⁶ Worden, 'Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism', 66.

⁶⁷ Marchamont Nedham, *A True Case of the Commonwealth Stated* (London, 1654), 28-9.

⁶⁸ This was to a certain extent acknowledged by Worden. He states that the editorials warn against the gradual contraction of power from the hands of the few to into the hands of one. See Worden, 'Introduction', in *The Excellencie of a Free State*, xxxix-xl.

‘permitting the Family of Orange to greaten a little more than beseemed a member of a Free-State, they were insensibly reduced to the last cast, to run the hazard of the loss of their Liberty’.⁶⁹ He went on to argue that:

It hath bin usual not to suffer particular persons to Grandise, or greaten themselves more than ordinary... The not keeping close to this Rule, had of late like to have cost the Low-countries, the loss of their Liberty; for the Wealth of the House of Orange, grown up to excess, and permitting the last man to match into a Kingly Family, put other thoughts and designs into his head, than beseemed a member of a Free-State; which, had he not been prevented, by the Providence of God, and a dark night, might in all probability, have reduced them under the Yoak of Kingly Power.⁷⁰

This very clearly mirrored Nedham’s earlier arguments, whereby the personal ambition of the Orange family combined with their exceptional position within the constitution allowed them to hoard wealth and marry into powerful royal families and in doing so they moved closer to tyranny. That Nedham perceived that the ‘thing king’ could easily develop into the ‘name king’ was reinforced when he told his readers ‘nor can it be forgotten, how much of Monarchy (of late) crept into the United Provinces’.⁷¹ He therefore urged his readers to observe:

what Effects the continuation of Power, in the Family of Orange, hath had in the United Provinces, is every mans observation... but certainly that People have wisely improved their opportunity, (the Cockatrice being not flech’d) in reducing that Family into a temper more suitable to a State and Interest of Liberty.⁷²

The warning is repeated to remind his readers of the possible consequences had Orange succeeded: ‘nor must it be forgotten what the Family of Orange would have done in Holland; for upon the very same account have Usurpations bin commenced in all Free-States throughout the World’, the implication being that such a usurpation could just as easily happen in England as it had elsewhere.⁷³

In *The Excellencie of a Free-State* these references to the Orange family remain overwhelmingly unchanged. Where alterations appear, these are usually minor cuts to remove year-specific references. In fact, he only deleted two references that were to the Dutch more broadly, and not specifically about the Orange family. The most significant of these was a passage in which he talked about England and Holland’s ‘high achievements [which] may match any of the Ancients, since the extirpation of Tyranny, and a re-establishment of our

⁶⁹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 88, 5-12 February 1652, 1395.

⁷⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 101, 6-13 May 1652, 1587-88.

⁷¹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 100, 29 April-6 May 1652, 1573.

⁷² *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 102, 13-20 May 1652, 1595.

⁷³ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 106, 10-17 June 1652, 1661.

Freedom in the hands of the People'.⁷⁴ This was likely eliminated because of the rising danger of tyranny after the establishment of the Protectorate; under the Commonwealth, when liberty was considered to have been in the hands of the people, the country had proven its power and greatness on the European stage, whereas under the Protectorate victories had rarely been forthcoming. The establishment of the Protectorate also eliminated the illusion that the people possessed complete liberty. In removing this passage, Nedham indicated not just that England was creeping back under tyrannical government, but that the greatness of the commonwealth was being directly impacted as a result of that tyranny. Nedham also removed a passage specifically referencing the Rump and standing powers that had been the focus of his initial editorials but which was less relevant by 1656: 'add to the former instances, the consideration of the former sad condition of Switzerland, and Holland, under standing Power, with the flourishing state they have bin in ever since the expulsion of those powers, and a settling of those Governments in the Peoples Successive Assemblies'.⁷⁵ These alterations hardly changed the ultimate presentation of single person government; both in their original and edited format, Nedham sought to warn against the monarchical interest that Cromwell represented, and the danger that any perpetuation of his position would descend into private interest and tyranny.

Unlike Nedham, Milton never drew connections between the stadholderate and the Protectorate. Nonetheless, Milton was critical of the Cromwellian Protectorate, though he did not publicly speak out against it during its existence. He did not reject monarchy outright until a few months prior to the Restoration, and even then there remained a small part of him that clung to the ideal of single person rule: he argued that 'ther may be such a king who may regard the common good before his own...but this rarely happens in a monarchy not elective'.⁷⁶ Milton therefore drew a distinction between hereditary and elective monarchy. While the Stuarts fell decisively into the first category, the positions of Cromwell and the Orange family were more complex, and can at best be described as having evolved into something resembling a quasi-hereditary position.⁷⁷ The Venetian Doge, on the other hand, fell squarely into the elective monarchy category; the position was filled through a

⁷⁴ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 85, 15-22 January 1652, 1352.

⁷⁵ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 92, 5-11 March 1652, 1462.

⁷⁶ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 7, ed. by Robert W. Ayers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 448.

⁷⁷ In the Humble Petition and Advice, Cromwell was granted the power to 'appoint and declare the person who shall, immediately after your death, succeed you in the Government of these nations'. Although this does not mean that Cromwell's son would inevitably be his successor, nor did it prohibit it, and many Englishmen feared that this would eventually lead to a hereditary monarchy under the Cromwell family. 'The Humble Petition and Advice' in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, 447-459.

complicated system of lot and ballot, and was protected from hereditary tendency by several laws.⁷⁸ Moreover, the Doge was so constrained by councils and advisors that it was almost impossible for him to work against the common good. Following Milton's own arguments then, a single figurehead following the Venetian model could potentially offer a viable alternative to single person rule for a man who was extremely reluctant to completely reject monarchical forms of government. However, there were two problems with this model. The first was the disappointment with the personal virtue that Charles, but particularly the Doge and Cromwell, exhibited when raised to positions of influence. The second was that by 1660, although he might have believed in the possibility of an elective monarch of exceptional civic virtue ruling for the common good, he no longer had any faith that the people of England were capable of recognising and subsequently electing such a person.

Milton made a very pointed and enlightening reference to the Doge in *The Readie and Easie Way* – a tract that was written in early 1660 with the express intention of dissuading the English people from restoring the English monarchy – when he condemns the ‘fond conceit of something like a Duke of Venice’.⁷⁹ This is the only reference to the Dogeship as a political institution anywhere in Milton's prose works, which makes its purpose here particularly significant. By ‘fond conceit’ I suspect that Milton was condemning those who embraced the outward, material trappings of monarchy. That Milton was critical of this trait is clear when he reflected on the potential reestablishment of the Stuart monarchy, Milton mocked courtly pretensions, and demonstrated how the outward appearances of monarchy could gradually erode the liberty of the people and enhance the power of the monarchical figurehead. He criticised kings who had to be ‘ador'd like a Demigod’, setting a ‘pompous face upon the superficial actings of State’.⁸⁰ This ‘pompous face’ was a ‘vast expence and luxurie’, allowing a monarch to ‘pageant[s] himself up and down’. Moreover, this pageantry was considered by Milton to be the ‘price of our subjection and their debauserie’.⁸¹ This criticism mirrors that of Nedham on single person government, that the pursuit of personal wealth represented a lack of concern for the public good and by extension the loss of liberty of the people.

⁷⁸ In the early eleventh century the Venetians had faced a problem whereby the Doge's were naming their sons as co-regents in an effort to perpetuate their family's power. Legislation was actively enforced which prevented the naming of co-regents; thereafter, for the seven and a half centuries before the Republic ended, there were only two occasions on which the same family name appears successively. In both cases the succession was from brother to brother, rather than from father to son, and in neither case was there any hint of impropriety regarding the election. See Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 65-66.

⁷⁹ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 446

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 425-26.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 425-26.

If Milton found this sort of behaviour distasteful in a sovereign monarch, he would likely have found it intolerable in one who was no more than a chief magistrate, as both Cromwell and the Doge ought to be. Nonetheless, Milton had expressed support of Cromwell in the early 1650s. He wrote a sonnet to Cromwell in 1652⁸², and defended him in his *Second Defence*, and Robert Fallon and Laura Lunger Knoppers have both argued that Milton's earlier positive view of Cromwell survived the Protectorate.⁸³ However, this view has been attacked by numerous historians; for instance, Worden and Elizabeth Sauer have both suggested that these compliments were also warnings, a view that is supported by Sharpe's work which outlined how in the seventeenth century praise was well understood to also communicate advice, guidance and criticism.⁸⁴ Both Worden and Sauer argued that Milton's attitude towards Cromwell throughout the 1650s and into 1660 can be viewed as consistent, perceiving Milton's initial praise of Cromwell to have been conditional, and insisting that the Lord Protector failed to achieve the expectations Milton placed upon him.⁸⁵ The advice that Cromwell had rejected concerned encouraging him to admit good counsellors, to allow freedom of expression and more importantly, to listen to their ideas on how to maintain liberty.

A further respect in which Cromwell failed to meet Milton's expectations was in his inability to resist the trappings of monarchy, a profound disappointment that led Milton to reject single person rule by 1659.⁸⁶ Thus Milton's criticism of the Doge's 'fond conceit' can also be extended to the Cromwellian Protectorate, which had increasingly begun to embrace the material trappings of monarchy and the power associated with them. Even at the beginning of the Protectorship, there is evidence of a gradual shift towards a Cromwellian monarchy. In 1654 Cromwell moved into the royal residence at Whitehall, which was viewed by his enemies as evidence that Cromwell's motive regarding his new position was pure kingly ambition.⁸⁷ Even the Venetian envoy considered the move as Cromwell having 'exercise [of]

⁸² John Milton, 'To the Lord General Cromwell May 1652', in *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. by H.C. Beeching (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 88.

⁸³ Robert Fallon, 'Milton in the Anarchy, 1659-1660: A Question of Consistency', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 21, 1 (1981), 123-146; Laura Lunger Knoppers, 'Late Political Prose' in Corns, ed., *A Companion to Milton*, 309-325.

⁸⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ Blair Worden, 'John Milton and Oliver Cromwell', in *Soldiers, Writers, and Statesman of the English Revolution*, Ian Gentles, John Morrill, and Blair Worden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 243-264.

⁸⁶ Kevin Sharpe has argued this convincingly in "'Something of Monarchy": Milton and Cromwell, Republicanism and Regality', in *Reading Authority and Representing Rule in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 173-91.

⁸⁷ For instance Sir Edward Hyde said of Cromwell's move to Whitehall: 'yett takes on no other state upon him [than] usinge those romes, which are more richly furnished than ever they were in any King's tyme'. Quoted in

regal sway under the royal roof, leaving out the royal title until he takes a fancy to it'.⁸⁸ The most explicit indication of Cromwell's move towards monarchy and its material trappings, however, was reflected in his second inauguration as Lord Protector. Indeed, the ceremony was influenced by monarchical coronations, containing many of the theatrical and visual elements of those events, despite the fact Cromwell had rejected the crown offered to him in the Humble Petition and Advice. An account set down by John Prestwick describes the 'prince-like canopy of state', under which the 'chair of Scotland' (upon which, historically, British monarchs were crowned) was located. Cromwell himself was 'richly dressed, habited with a costly mantle of estate, lined with ermines, and girt with a sword of great value'. After he was 'enthroned' on the chair of state, 'his highness, Oliver Cromwell' was presented with 'a rich and costly robe of purple velvet, lined with ermines; a Bible, ornamented with bosses and clasps, richly gilt; a rich and costly sword; and a sceptre of massy gold'. These items, the sword and sceptre in particular, provided strong monarchical symbolism, although the Speaker emphasized their civil, rather than royal or monarchical power.⁸⁹ The image of Cromwell portrayed to the world was one of increasing regality and symbolic power.⁹⁰

This interest in the material trappings of monarchy indicated to Milton a lack of civic virtue and a level of self-interest that indicated corruption, and as such by 1660 Milton's anxieties about single-person rule were deeper than in 1654, and it was the experience of the Protectorate that had deepened them.⁹¹ In 1654 Milton had praised Cromwell for his ability to resist the temptation of monarchy:

The name of king you spurned from your far greater eminence, and rightly so. For if, when you became so great a figure, you were captivated by the title which as a private citizen you were able to send under the yoke and reduce to nothing, you would be doing almost the same thing as if, when you had subjugated some tribe of idolaters with the help of the true God, you were to worship the gods you had conquered.⁹²

Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print, 1645-1661* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 111. *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, 1653-54, 196.

⁸⁹ Account of John Prestwick, in Thomas Burton, *Diary of Thomas Burton, Volume 2* (London, 1828), Appendix 6, 511-513.

⁹⁰ The development of the image portrayed of Cromwell is examined in Roy Sherwood, *Oliver Cromwell: King in all but Name, 1653-1658* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1997). Sherwood's work certainly has its problems, see for example Alistair Bellany's 'Review' in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 30, 4 (1998), 686-687. Sherwood's work has also been challenged by a more nuanced interpretation of Cromwell's image set down by Laura Lunger Knoppers, who has suggested that it was Cromwell's personal instinct to move away from monarchical iconography. See Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell* (2000); Knoppers, 'The Politics of Portraiture: Oliver Cromwell and the Plain Style', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51, 4 (1998), 1282-1319.

⁹¹ Worden, 'John Milton and Oliver Cromwell', 256.

⁹² Milton, *A Second Defence*, 672.

From early on in the Protectorate, then, Milton warned Cromwell about embracing the very monarchy they had just overthrown. He specifically warned Cromwell ‘to yield to no allurements of pleasure, to flee from the pomp of wealth and power’.⁹³ His support of Cromwell at the start of the Protectorate was not therefore without strings attached, and Milton was clearly conflicted with the ‘sometimes strained efforts to distinguish Cromwell’s majesty from regality’.⁹⁴ Milton therefore condemned the Doge and Cromwell for shrouding their rule in monarchical trappings, despite their lack of sovereign power. Moreover, this tendency signified a lack of virtue, whereby they sought to materially distinguish themselves and as such it ‘elevated them above thir brethren’. Perhaps worse, though, this pageantry bred in the nobility and gentry ‘hopes not of public, but of court offices’.⁹⁵ Thus the ‘demigod’-like single figurehead was not only himself corrupt, but corrupted those around him, who would no longer look to the common good, but rather would pander to his interests and ambitions. Under such rule, Milton believed, the common good could not hope to prevail.

The second problem with installing an elected figurehead like a Venetian Doge was that Milton no longer trusted a large majority of the population to make any sensible decisions in such elections. Milton’s disillusion with the people of England becomes increasingly apparent throughout his tracts of 1659 and 1660. He opened *The Readie and Easie Way* with immediate references to this. He refers to the ‘unsound humour of returning to old bondage, instilld of late by some cunning deceivers, and nourished from bad principles and fals apprehensions among too many people’.⁹⁶ He emphasised this problem repeatedly throughout both editions of the tract, condemning the people who want ‘to creep back so poorly as it seems the multitude would, to thir once abjur’d and detested thraldom of kingship...argues a strange degenerate corruption spread among us, fitted and prepar’d for new slaverie’.⁹⁷ He finished his second edition of *The Readie and Easie Way* with a stark warning: ‘what a precipice of destruction the deluge of this epidemic madness would hurrie us through the general defection of a misguided and abus’d multitude’.⁹⁸ Milton’s turn away from single government had a twofold motivation. Firstly, he saw how Cromwell had ignored warnings against making himself too great through the pursuit of the material trappings of monarchy, demonstrating ambition for more power and a disregard for the public good. Secondly, even if

⁹³ Ibid., 674.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Sauer, ‘Milton’s Defences and the Principle of *Sanior Pars*’, in Laura Lunger Knoppers, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 454.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 425.

⁹⁶ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 355.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 356-7.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 463.

there were a man who possessed such exceptional virtue that they could avoid falling into the same traps as Cromwell had, the people of England would be incapable of recognising and electing him. Milton's hand was forced; by 1660 he could no longer advocate single person government for England.

It was only in 1660 that Milton was able to reject both the name and the thing king. By 1660 Milton had moved from these more focused attacks to a broader denunciation of monarchy and single person rule, declaring that 'a free Commonwealth without single person' is 'by far the best government'.⁹⁹ However, it seems even then he did not truly believe that. He had, of course, become disillusioned with the Protectorate and with the people, but part of him still believed in a leader of exceptional virtue who truly could distinguish himself to such a degree that the people had to sit up and take notice. What he rejected in *The Readie and Easie Way* was the name and thing king in only a very limited sense. Specifically thinking about the rejected Stuarts, Milton also declared it 'pernicious' to invite monarchy back into England since 'never forgetting thir former ejection', the people will be 'kept so low' that 'they never shall be able to regain what they have now purchasd and may enjoy, or to free themselves from any yoke impos'd upon them'.¹⁰⁰ 'After all, 'a Family once ejected' ought 'not to be trusted with the power of Revenge'.¹⁰¹ His references to the Dutch supports this limited rejection of single person rule; he declared that 'this facilitie we shall have above our next neighbouring Commonwealth that our liberty shall not be hamprd or hoverd over by any ingagement to such a potent familie as the house of Nassaw of whom to stand in perpetual doubt and suspicion, but we shall live the cleerest and absolutest free nation in the world'.¹⁰² Milton's rejection of single person rule in 1660 was based on circumstance and necessity; he genuinely believed that any remnants of the Stuart or Orange families, in either name or monarchical interest, ought to be cast out of their nations in order to save the liberty of the people. However, in a broader sense, Milton never truly seems to abandon his belief that the 'thing king', if possessed by a virtuous leader, could stand atop an English republican government.

Harrington and the Lord Archon

One republican who has long been held firmly to have rejected any notion of a single virtuous leader for the English republic is James Harrington. His argument that England was not

⁹⁹ Ibid., 364-5.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 378.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 393.

¹⁰² Ibid., 446.

suitable for a monarchy because of the shift in the balance of land, and as such power, into the hands of the people meant that only a commonwealth could ensure political stability and national prosperity. However, such a reading has meant that any monarchical elements of the Oceanic constitutional blueprint have been overlooked by historians. A closer reading of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* demonstrates that in fact Harrington too saw a place in Oceana, and England, for an individual leader or figurehead. Moreover, just like Nedham and Milton, Harrington was writing in the context of the Cromwellian Protectorate, and therefore *Oceana* must be read as part of the same tradition as that of his contemporaries, as a means of both flattering the Protector and influencing the way he might choose to wield his power.

Although Harrington argued that England was not suitable for monarchy, *Oceana* constantly had its own figurehead in the form of Olphaus Megaletor who is ‘created, by the universal suffrage of the army, Lord Archon, or sole legislator of Oceana’.¹⁰³ It is the Lord Archon who designs the orders and institutions of Oceana, based on his learning and experience, which demonstrates just how important a role one exceptional person could play in a commonwealth. Constitution established, Archon abdicates his role and retires, but he is soon persuaded to come back and reclaim his role.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, there was a role in Oceana for a single person. However, there are two different positions here: the founding legislator and the returning ruler. The rest of this chapter will look at these two governing figures, exploring in particular their relation to Cromwell, as well as the influence that the Venetian Doge might have had on Harrington’s conceptualisation of the Lord Archon.

With regards to the necessity of a single person as legislator, Harrington was Machiavellian in his attitude.¹⁰⁵ He accepted the possibility that a single man should undertake the founding of a stable and long-lived republic. Harrington quoted and paraphrased Machiavelli’s *Discourses* in order to support his arguments and demonstrate that a legislator founding the government would lead to longevity and stability: ‘Thrice happy is that people which chances upon a man able to give them such a government at once...seeing it is certain that Lacedaemon, in observing the laws of Lycurgus, continued about eight hundred years without any dangerous tumult or corruption’.¹⁰⁶ Indeed he went on to declare that ‘it is certain, saith Machiavelli, that a commonwealth is seldom or never well turned or constituted, except it hath been the work

¹⁰³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 67. Rachel Hammersley is one of the few historians to have acknowledged this in her article ‘Rethinking the Political Thought of James Harrington’, 354-370.

¹⁰⁴ Harrington, ‘The Corollary’ in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 244-66.

¹⁰⁵ Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157.

¹⁰⁶ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 66. Quoted from Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book I, Chapter 2, 22-28.

of one man'.¹⁰⁷ This is a clear suggestion on Harrington's part that commonwealths founded by a legislator were most durable, and as such, the tract was an appeal to Cromwell to become the benevolent legislator England needed at this time. Indeed, the tract itself is dedicated to 'His Highness The Lord Protector of The Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland'. Historians have argued over whether to interpret this dedication as genuine. Worden has argued that it is in fact an 'anti-dedication' since the figure of Archon is intended to be an 'anti-Cromwell'; Archon achieves what Cromwell has not or could not, and Oceana is an attack on the Protectorate.¹⁰⁸ However, subsequent historians have argued this is too simplistic, and that the dedication is in fact genuine. Both J.C. Davis and Woodford argue that whilst *Oceana* may have served as a criticism of Cromwell, Harrington, like Milton, intended his words to be used almost as an instruction manual for the Lord Protector in order to guide him and the Commonwealth to greatness.¹⁰⁹ He was likely thinking of Cromwell too when he sang the praises of this virtuous legislator who is 'able to do harm and doth none may well be called honest, what shall we say unto my Lord Archon's highness, who, having had it in his power to have done us the greatest mischief that ever befell a poor nation, so willing to trust such as they thought well of, hath done us so much good as we should never have known how to do ourselves'.¹¹⁰ He would therefore be:

a wise legislator, and one whose mind is firmly set not upon private but the public interest, not upon his posterity but upon his country, may justly endeavour to get the sovereign power into his own hands, nor shall any man that is master of reason blame such extraordinary means as in that case shall be necessary, the end proving no other than the constitution of a well-ordered commonwealth. The reason of this is demonstrable; for the ordinary means not failing, the commonwealth hath no need of a legislator, but the ordinary means failing, there is no recourse to be had but to such as are extraordinary.¹¹¹

Harrington argued that in extraordinary times, as England found themselves experiencing in the 1650s, when such a sudden and dramatic shift had occurred in the political landscape, extraordinary measures, such as a single person seeking to gain sovereignty in his own hands was not just permissible, but was the only way in which to constitute a well ordered commonwealth.

¹⁰⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Blair Worden, 'Harrington's 'Oceana': Origins and Aftermath, 1651-1660', in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 124.

¹⁰⁹ J. C. Davis, "'De Te Fabula Narratur': Oceana and James Harrington's Narrative Constitutionalism", in *Utopian Moments: Reading Utopian Texts*, ed. by J.C. Davis and Miguel A. Ramiro Avilés (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 56; Benjamin Woodford, *Perceptions of Monarchy without a King: Reactions to Oliver Cromwell's Power* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2013), 166-7.

¹¹⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 253-4.

¹¹¹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 67. This is paraphrased from Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book I, Chapter 9, 45-6.

In accepting the necessity of a legislator in England, Harrington diverged from the myth of Venice. Part of the historical narrative of the Republic of Venice was that due to the vast wisdom of its ancestors, it had never needed a legislator to create its ideal constitution. As Contarini outlined, it was ‘our auncestors, from whome wee have receyved so flourishing a commonwealth, [who] all in one did unite themselves in a consenting desire to establish, honour, and amplify their country, without having in a manner any the least regarde of their owne private glorie or commodity’.¹¹² In *Aphorisms Political* Harrington demonstrated that the Venetians, collectively recognising that their existing constitutional orders were causing seditions and tumults, were able to reorganise their system to bring about their current, stable system of government:

The Venetians, having slain divers of their dukes for their tyranny, and being assembled by such numbers in their great council as were naturally incapable of debate, pitched upon thirty gentlemen who were called *pregati*, in that they were prayed to go apart and, debating upon the exigence of the commonwealth, to propose as they thought good unto the great council; and from thence first arose the senate of Venice, to this day called *pregati*, and the great council; that is, the senate and the popular assembly of Venice; and from those two arose all those admirable orders of Venice.¹¹³

That Harrington admired this about the Venetians was evident; however, he warned ‘that a people of themselves should have such an understanding, as when they of Venice did institute their *pregati*, is rare’.¹¹⁴ This ability of the Venetian people to create their own perfect constitution without a legislator therefore placed that republic even higher in Harrington’s estimation. It is not however an option for England, as experience had proven. Since the people lacked the virtue and wisdom to redesign their own constitution, it was necessary that a legislator step in and do this for them. Here Harrington fundamentally diverged from the myth of Venice, despite acknowledging the history of that republic. It is also worth noting that although Oceana has been defined as ‘utopian’, Harrington here was pragmatic in his movement away from the myth.¹¹⁵ Harrington understood that the Venetian example was a rare exception, because he believed he understood human nature.

Although Venice did not need a legislator, Hammersley has suggested that Harrington’s Archon, after his abdication and subsequent Restoration, became a single figurehead ‘perhaps

¹¹² Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 6.

¹¹³ Harrington, *Aphorisms Political*, in PWJH, 772.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 772.

¹¹⁵ *The Commonwealth of Oceana* has been described as utopian in the work of J.C. Davis and more recently by Gaby Mahlberg. See J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 205-240; Gaby Mahlberg, ‘Historical and Political Contexts of The Isle of Pines’, *Utopian Studies*, 17.1 (2006), 111.

not too dissimilar from a Venetian doge'.¹¹⁶ She does not however explore this observation in any further detail. It is certainly an interesting notion and as such is worthy of further examination. How much do we learn about the role and powers of the Lord Archon after the position is restored? How does this relate to the balance of mixed government in Oceana? And how similar are the positions of Archon and Doge in relation to the constitutional systems in their respective states?

The first question to ask is why Archon was invited back, and how this relates to the justification behind the establishment of a Duke in the Venetian system. The answer in both cases is, perhaps unsurprisingly, stability. The purpose of the Doge was to prevent 'homebred discord and civill dissention'.¹¹⁷ According to Contarini, in the early days of the Venetian Republic, it was constituted of twenty-two small towns each of which was self-governing but weak and vulnerable to attack from enemies. For mutual security they settled on electing one person from each city, who was given the title of 'Tribune' to, on a certain day, meet and consult with other Tribunes to treat on common business. This proving inconvenient due to the variety of opinions between the Tribunes, the Venetian settlers decided to 'lay the whole charge of the general and common affaires upon some particular man, whom all the rest should acknowledge as their prince and ruler'.¹¹⁸ Thus it was not until the establishment of the Doge in Venice that the republic really came into being as the secure and stable commonwealth it was still perceived to be in the seventeenth century.

Harrington's explanation for the people's desire for the return of the Lord Archon was similar, due to the instability that was being caused in Oceana from 'dangers abroad and parties at home'. Archon must return because 'so long as they should have need of a standing army, his work was not done'.¹¹⁹ Internal instability was therefore cited as the fundamental motivation behind the justification for the return of Archon, as 'they durst not trust themselves without a standing army, nor a standing army in any man's hands but those of his highness'.¹²⁰ Thus one of the 'particulars' in relation to Archon's return was 'a standing army of twelve thousand men, defrayed upon a monthly tax during the term of three years, for the protection of this commonwealth against dissenting parties, to be governed, directed and commanded by and with the advice of the council or war'.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Rachel Hammersley, 'Rethinking the Political Thought of James Harrington', 357.

¹¹⁷ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 38.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 255-6

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

However, it must be remembered that when the Venetians created the Doge it was as a crucial part of the constitution that has survived, albeit with some changes, throughout the centuries. Archon's position is not so clear. Harrington did not really make clear how the figure of Archon related to the constitution or the idea of mixed government. Is it a position that will continue after the death of Olphaus Megaletor? If not, it hardly seems as though the position can be considered as a part of a mixed constitution. Harrington does not address this issue, rather ending the tract with the death of the current the Lord Archon with no hint as to what might occur next. On the other hand the Venetian commonwealth was considered a mixed government and as such the Doge inevitably represented the monarchical element. However, there were strict controls on the power of the Doge so that he was 'deprived of all means whereby he might abuse his authority or become a tyrant'.¹²² The benefit of the magistracy of the Doge was that it was largely ceremonial and any real level degree of power was constrained by law and numerous balances and checks; Harrington was certainly aware that the actions of the Doge were severely constrained: 'though without the Counsellors he have no power at all while they can perform any function of the Signiory without him'.¹²³

The complex relationship of Archon to the constitution of Oceana was similarly mirrored by that of Cromwell to England. *The Commonwealth of Oceana* was published in the months preceding the offer of the crown to Cromwell under the Humble Petition and Advice in February 1657. When Cromwell had become Lord Protector in December 1653 his power had been limited by a constitution (the Instrument of Government) and a council. Although his power was limited he did adopt some aspects of monarchy; for instance he was referred to as 'Your Highness' and signed himself 'Oliver P' in a similar way to kings who had styled themselves 'R' or 'Rex'. However, his power had become increasingly unconstrained as he began dissolving parliaments and establishing military rule in England. Whispers of the possibility of Cromwell being offered the crown in order to restore him to an understood legal position were therefore undoubtedly in circulation prior to the official offer, and Harrington would likely have been aware of this.¹²⁴ We might therefore read Harrington's elevation of Archon as an attempt to prevent the monarchical element of Oceana from simply becoming a monarchy. After all a King Cromwell ascending the throne of England would destroy the English commonwealth, undermine the balance of power and land, and force the country back into turmoil and chaos.

¹²² Ibid., 42.

¹²³ James Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, in *PWJH*, 483.

¹²⁴ For further reading on the "kingship" of Oliver Cromwell during his Lord Protectorship see Woodford, *Perceptions of a Monarchy*, 70-4.

What Harrington appears to do is present Archon, and therefore Cromwell, as he ought to be, as an individual capable of being ‘no seeker of himself in the way of earthly pomp or glory’.¹²⁵ However, what proves that Archon was this particularly virtuous man was the very fact that he had voluntarily stepped away from government. Indeed he asks:

if he who is able to do harm and doth none may well be called honest, what shall we say unto my Lord Archon’s highness, who, having had it in his power to have done us the greatest mischief that ever befell a poor nation, so willing to trust such as they thought well of, hath done us so much good as we should never have known how to do ourselves?¹²⁶

It therefore appears as though Harrington is advocating that Archon be trusted because he was that rare exception: the selfless virtuous man. Indeed the adulation that is heaped upon Archon in ‘The Corollary’ is quite exceptional:

Ah, my Lord Archon shall walk the streets (as it be for his ease I mean) with a switch, while the people run after him, and pray for him; he shall not wet his foot, they will strew flowers in his way; he shall sit higher in their hearts, and in the judgment of all good men, than the kings that go up stairs unto their seats...he has two or three hundred thousand men that, when you say the word, will sell themselves unto their shirts for him and die at his foot.¹²⁷

However, what Harrington may have been doing was pandering to Cromwell’s desire for glory. In expressing that the glory he could expect would be this excessive and reverent after his abdication, Harrington appears to be actively encouraging the Protector to stand down. The purpose of this abdication appears to represent some sort of test of Cromwell’s personal virtue and commitment to the public good. Having proven that he was more interested in the public, than his own personal, interest, Harrington raised the position of the Lord Archon above that of any other monarch or prince in the world. He is also described as ‘the greatest prince in the world; for in the pomp of his court he was not inferior unto any, and in the field he was followed with a force that was formidable to all’.¹²⁸ With regard to the pomp of the office, there are certainly similarities to the Doge who was possessed with all the outward ornamental trappings of monarchy. However, there was justification for doing so: the ‘limitation of authoritie is on the other side recompensed with an exterior princely honour, dignitie, and royall appearing shew’.¹²⁹ Although Harrington does not describe in any detail the ‘pomp’ with which Archon would be surrounded in his position, as Contarini does for the Doge, one can imagine that to ensure it was superior to all other princely courts, it would have been quite spectacular. In order to assist him in achieving this level of pomp, in another of the

¹²⁵ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 255

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹²⁹ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 42.

‘particulars’ the senate grant Archon ‘three hundred and fifty thousand pounds per annum...for the said term and to the proper and particular use of his highness’.¹³⁰ In outward trappings then, the Doge and the Lord Archon were fairly similar in that they both possessed the ornamental and decorative appearance of monarchical government.

This places Harrington in quite distinct contrast to Nedham and Milton, both of whom considered pomp and excessive material wealth to be a corrupting force on power. It is worth asking, then, why this is not the case for Harrington. In part, this might be explained by the example of the Doge; despite the grandeur of his place and position, the actual powers he possessed were severely limited. Furthermore, in having stepped down, Archon gave the people chance to elect him officially to a position of government. Even though Cromwell was given the title of Lord Protector through a written constitution, he had risen to power initially as part of what was essentially a military coup. The Corollary demonstrates that it was the people's will that Archon return to power, just as it was the people in Venice who elected the Doge. There were further similarities between the positions of the Doge and the Lord Archon. Both were held for ‘the term of his natural life’.¹³¹ Archon also had to work in conjunction with the Councils of War and State, and he took one of three magistracy seats in the senate, all of which suggest that, like the Doge, there were mechanisms in place that prohibited Archon from being able to act on his own on important issues.

However, it is important that we do not push this comparison too far. Harrington is distinctly unclear on any other kinds of controls on Archon’s power. He is given control (albeit in conjunction with the Council of War) of a large standing army. And despite being brought back specifically to manage the standing army, after two years the army is disbanded, suggesting that the instability that had been threatening Oceana was no longer a danger, Archon does not then re-abdicate, instead going on to remain in power for fifty years. This is a long time for a man who insisted on such a complex system of rotation in all other parts of his constitutional blueprint.

So how can we explain the Harrington’s vagueness in this respect? It may have been a deliberate ploy to encourage Cromwell to step down. If Harrington genuinely feared that he might accept the crown and make himself King, the limited powers that he could offer him as a Doge-like figure in Oceana might not have been enough to encourage him to reject it. However, we should perhaps not take a lack of explicit restraint as a tacit acceptance of a

¹³⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 251.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

powerful, monarch-like prince. Although some have read *The Commonwealth of Oceana* as a utopia, Harrington was actually fairly pragmatic as we saw in his acknowledgement of England's need for a sole legislator. We could therefore perhaps suggest that Harrington was being deliberately vague here. There were enough references to a Doge-like figurehead for Cromwell to have recognised the similarities, but Harrington was vague enough on the specifics regarding the limitations of his power that it might have been possible to convince his readers to forget just quite how controlled and restrained the Doge really was. Harrington could be seen to be tempting Cromwell with the best parts of the Dogeship to persuade him to reject the crown, whilst conveniently leaving out the limitations that would be placed upon his power if he chose to model himself on the Doge of Venice. Harrington may therefore have been utilising the myth of Venice in order to manipulate Cromwell to fulfil his own particular vision for England. This demonstrates that the fundamental issue for Harrington was not rule by a single person. He unequivocally defined England as a commonwealth whilst simultaneously incorporating into his proposals not just a legislator, but a ruling figurehead that appears to represent the monarchical interest.

Conclusions

An examination of Harrington therefore undermines the argument that exclusivist republicanism predominated after 1649. Similarly, Milton and Nedham's engagement with the contrast between kingly power and kingly office demonstrates that by defining English republicanism as narrowly anti-monarchical, as Skinner and Worden have done, we have prevented a more nuanced understanding of what it meant to be a republican in the mid-seventeenth century. We are instead faced with a fluid and shifting view of republicanism that supports a more pluralistic interpretation, and can see distinct languages of republicanism that intersected and diverged according to a given context; moreover, when it suited them, individuals could change language, as for instance Milton did as the threat of the Stuarts' return appeared increasingly imminent. There was no one form of republicanism that was suitable for all times and all purposes; rather, people switched between them in order to serve specific purposes or agenda in different political contexts.

Suggesting that these figures switch between republican languages further allows us to contribute to discussions regarding the consistency of both Milton and Nedham's political thought. Milton in particular becomes a much more consistent political thinker when interpretations of his republicanism are not limited to his rejection of monarchy. Similarly, by tracing Nedham's thought against, (in particular) the example of single person rule in the Dutch Republic, he remains remarkably consistent in spite his numerous changes of

allegiance. Small shifts in his portrayal merely represented a shift in the political atmosphere of either the Dutch or English Republics, emphasising or downplaying themes such as tyranny where they suited the change. This reading therefore rejects recent work by historians such as McElligott, who seek to undermine the consistency of Nedham's republican thought.¹³²

Examining Milton, Nedham and Harrington through the lens of the individual figureheads of other European republics serves to further highlight Harrington's distinctiveness from his contemporary republicans. Although each of them understood English republicanism to allow for an element of single person government, this was to differing extents. Furthermore, the predominant influence of the Dutch or Venetian republic appears to have also impacted the way in which they each envisioned an individual figurehead in England. Milton and Nedham made much more of the comparisons between the English and Dutch experiences, and therefore looked to their interactions with single person government. Nedham saw that a sober, parsimonious figurehead in the form of William the Silent had been a force for public good in the fledgling United Provinces, while Milton actively rejected the material luxury of the Venetian Doge. As such, they rejected the Cromwellian Protectorate when it began to betray the ideals they both held to sit at the centre of public minded government. Harrington, on the other hand, admired Venice, and as such his point of reference for single person government was the Doge, in his gilded cage. Harrington saw that wealth and luxury could not be a threat if the power of the figurehead was sufficiently restrained.

This approach also offers specific revelations for certain individual republicans. Examining Nedham's attitude to the Dutch in the early 1640s demonstrates just how much more radical his thought was, and how much earlier he made bold comments on the role of monarchy and single-person government in well-ordered republics than his contemporaries. This approach therefore supports Scott's assertion that Nedham's republicanism was present from the mid-1640s and that in fact, Nedham was reflecting on government without monarchical interest from considerably before the regicide.¹³³ In doing so, it challenges Worden and Woodford, who both attribute Nedham's distrust of single person rule to his 1651 to 1652 editorials in *Mercurius Politicus*.¹³⁴ It also demonstrates that an exclusivist understanding of republicanism in some cases pre-dated the regicide and abolition of the monarchy in 1649, thereby throwing doubt on the validity of using this date as a turning point within the wider republican tradition.

¹³² McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, 111-126.

¹³³ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 242.

¹³⁴ Worden, 'Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism', 68; Woodford, *Perceptions of a Monarchy*, 71.

Chapter 3: Harrington and the Importance of Contemporary Republics

The methodological approach undertaken by Harrington in formulating *The Commonwealth of Oceana* reinforces the significance of modern, contemporary republics on the political thought of seventeenth-century English republicans. In the ‘Council of Legislators’, Harrington set out his intention to explore the specifics of various constitutions. Featured most heavily throughout *Oceana* was the Venetian Republic, Harrington’s understanding of which was strongly informed by the accounts of the myth outlined by Contarini and particularly Giannotti. This chapter will consider why Harrington favoured Venice, a small city state, over the large, predominately agrarian state of the Dutch Republic, which was much more similar to England. In many ways, he found the success of the Dutch extremely admirable, which accounts both for its inclusion in *Oceana* as well as Harrington’s attempts to manipulate certain aspects of the Dutch constitution in order to justify his admiration for them. Ultimately, however, Harrington did not find the Dutch approach to government suitable to English circumstances.

That Harrington both venerated Venice and followed its myth is clearly reflected in this statement from *Oceana*: ‘we behold her [Venice]...at this day with one thousand years upon her back, for any internal causes as young, as fresh and free from decay or any appearance of it, as she was born’.¹ In one sentence, he encapsulated several of the important themes of the myth; namely, its longevity, its stability and its continued freedom from any internal or external corruption. This was the essence of Venice that Harrington sought to recapture, and it was for this reason Harrington viewed Venice as the greatest teacher England could have: ‘if I be worthy to give advice unto a man that would study the politics, let him understand Venice; he that understands Venice right shall go nearest to judge (notwithstanding the difference that is in every policy) right of any government in the world’.² Harrington’s admiration for Venice was based on the fact that the republic has always ‘had her eye fixed upon ancient prudence’ – meaning an empire of laws not men - and as such had ‘attained to a perfection even beyond her copy’.³ In order to achieve such perfection and longevity for *Oceana*, Harrington had to deconstruct the Venetian constitution, in order to understand how they had been able to

¹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 218.

² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, in PWJH, 486.

³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 8-9.

achieve such a remarkable position in history. In this way, Venice and its myth informed Harrington's constitutional blueprint for England.

Harrington's understanding of Venice was particularly informed by the work of Giannotti, 'the most excellent describer of the commonwealth of Venice', whom he references by name immediately upon getting to the core of his text.⁴ It is worth considering why Harrington favoured Giannotti over Contarini - whom he used, but cited less frequently – particularly since the latter would have been more accessible considering its English translation in 1599 by Lewkenor. The answer perhaps lies in the backgrounds of these two Italians; whilst Contarini was a native Venetian, Giannotti was a stranger to that republic. So too was Harrington and as we have seen, Harrington advocated travel beyond one's own national borders in order to truly understand forms of government. He perhaps therefore believed that a stranger could better interpret Venice than a native. Moreover, Florence was a city-state that had undergone numerous political upheavals, and Giannotti's primary purpose was to use the model of Venice to find a solution to Florentine instability. Harrington wanted to use the same model to achieve the same ends in England; it therefore makes sense that he turned to Giannotti for guidance.

Defining Democracy

Political stability was the keystone of Harrington's political thought; everything he proposed contributed towards this ultimate goal. In England, as has been outlined above, Harrington believed that the only form of government that could ensure ongoing stability in the existing circumstances was a commonwealth, or democracy, since the balance of land had shifted into the hands of the people. Both Venice and the Dutch Republic were presented by Harrington as democracies, although Venice was declared to be by far the 'most democratical or popular of all others'.⁵ But what did Harrington actually understand by democracy? This is an important question to ask, since, the narrative of English republicanism in the mid-1650s has tended to overlook any commitment to democracy. Often, only the Levellers are seen as having promoted proto-democratic proposals, such as parliamentary sovereignty and equality before the law; and they continued to distance themselves from the term 'democracy'. However, recent work by Foxley and Hammersley has begun to correct this narrative. Both have taken a closer look at the attitudes of English republicans, in particular James Harrington, to both the

⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵ Ibid., 17.

term ‘democracy’ and its conceptual underpinnings.⁶ Taking a closer look at Harrington’s republicanism through the Dutch and Venetian republics further demonstrates his commitment to a democratic republicanism that is much more complex and deeply held than traditionally understood.. Furthermore, in order to define both the Dutch and Venetian Republics as democratic required manipulation and engagement with their national myths.

The most straightforward definition of democracy followed the ancient division of the three kinds of government: ‘the government of one man, or of the better sort, or of the whole people; which by their more learned names are called monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy’.⁷ Combining these forms of government created the Polybian ideal of mixed government, which was said to prevent the cyclical corruption of each form of government. Venice was thought to be the proof of this concept: each of these types of governments were represented through the superstructures of government; the monarchical element was linked to the Doge, the aristocracy with the senate, and democracy with the Great Council. Venice could be defined as a democracy with a mixed government if the preponderance of sovereignty lay with the people.

Harrington explained how the Great Council was made up of all those in Venice who were classed as citizens, as opposed to servants: ‘The Great Council is the aggregate body of the whole People, or Citizens of Venice, which for the paucity of their number, and the antiquity of their extraction are called Gentlemen or Noble Venetians, every one of which, at five and twenty years of age hath right of Session and Suffrage in this council’.⁸ Members of the Great Council then elected those who would become members of the Senate. The commonwealth was therefore structured in such a way that ‘the few depend upon or are included in the many, as the senate of Venice depends upon, or is included in the great council, by which it is annually elected in the whole or in some part’.⁹ This was all clearly influenced by the myth of Venice, as outlined in Chapter 1. However, if democracy was defined as the government of the whole people, then suggesting Venice was a democracy was somewhat difficult. Indeed Harrington recognised this issue, acknowledging that even though the entire citizenry held all

⁶ Rachel Foxley, “‘Due Libertie and Proportiond Equalitie’”: Milton, Democracy and the Republican Tradition’, *History of Political Thought*, 34.4 (2013), 614–38; Rachel Foxley, ‘Democracy in 1659: Harrington and the Good Old Cause’, in *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited*, eds., Stephen Taylor and Grant Tapsell (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 175-196; Hammersley, ‘Rethinking the Political Thought of James Harrington, 354–70; Hammersley, ‘James Harrington, The Commonwealth of Oceana and a Revolution in the Language of Politics’, 18-26.

⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 10.

⁸ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 482-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 425.

the power, this still only amounted to ‘the three thousand now governing’.¹⁰ In practise, this meant that the majority of those who resided in Venice were not eligible to play a role in governing the republic. Moreover, these citizens made up, more or less, a closed group, meaning that social mobility was next to impossible.

Harrington, however, was able to explain this problem away, and in doing so demonstrated that his understanding of democracy was also connected to his fundamental assertion that ‘empire is founded upon dominion’.¹¹ He described how ‘at the first institution’ Venice ‘took in the whole people; they that now live under the government without participation of it are such as have either voluntarily chosen so to do, or were subdued by arms’.¹² In the beginning then, all the people possessed all the land, and as such held all the power, creating the ultimate democratic commonwealth. Indeed to demonstrate his point he goes into the history of Venice in order to demonstrate that Venice had always been a democratic government:

For many retiring into those islands where that city is now built, from the inundations of barbarians that overwhelmed the Roman Empire – when they were increased unto such a number that to live together it was necessary to have laws, they ordained a form of government whereby, assembling often in council upon affairs, and finding their number sufficient for government, they put a bar upon all such as, repairing afterwards to their city, should become inhabitants, excluding them from participation of power. Whence they that were included in the administration had right, and they that were excluded, coming afterwards and being received upon no other conditions to be inhabitants, had no wrong, and therefore had no occasions – nor were they trusted with arms, and therefore had no means – to be tumultuous.¹³

This could easily be read as a closed oligarchy perpetuating their own power, and indeed subsequent scholars have argued that this event, the Serrata of 1297, constituted just that.¹⁴ But, as Harrington does here, it was also possible to equate this narrow patrician class with the ‘many’. The myth suggested that those who established Venice possessed exceptional virtue and liberty, and that even without a single legislator, they had been able to create an ideal commonwealth. Thus, Harrington argued the government of Venice was ‘usually mistaken; for Venice, though she do not take in the people, never excluded them’.¹⁵ He

¹⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁴ Adherents of the myth of Venice, such as Donald Queller, have continued to understand the Serrata as a closing: Donald E. Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Recent scholarship has challenged this in various ways, concluding that as Venetians rushed to demonstrate their eligibility, the size of the council, which had been declining for years, dramatically increased. For a good historiographical discussion of this, see Gerhard Rösch, ‘The Serrata of the Great Council and Venetian Society, 1286-1323’, in *Venice Reconsidered*, 67-88.

¹⁵ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 17.

therefore followed the myth by equating the closing of the Great Council with the establishment of the democratic element of the Venetian commonwealth.

Harrington's definition of democracy also had another aspect, one that reached beyond the question of where sovereignty, power, and empire lay, and this is one that has been often overlooked by historians. Hammersley and Foxley are the exception to this rule.¹⁶ In this, he placed emphasis on the orders and superstructures of a commonwealth and the role they play, which themselves dictated whether a government was an oligarchy or a commonwealth; so, for instance, 'A single council, having both the right of debate and result, never was nor can be esteemed a commonwealth, but ever was and will be known for mere oligarchy'.¹⁷ As such, his definition of a commonwealth was thus:

where the people have the election of the senate, not bound unto a distinct order, and the result, which is the sovereign power, I hold them to have that a share of government (the senate not being for life) whereof, with the safety of the commonwealth, they are capable in nature, and such a government for that cause to be a democracy.¹⁸

Democracy therefore lay in the bicameral system which divided the legislative functions of debating and resolving between the senate and popular assembly: 'the true form of a democracy or free state consisteth in this: that as to lawgiving, the wisdom of the nation propose and the interest of the nation resolve'.¹⁹ The importance of this division was emphasised in several of Harrington's works, demonstrating its significance to his conception of democracy. For Harrington, the 'whole mystery of a commonwealth...lies only in dividing and choosing'.²⁰ This separation would ensure that those in power governed in the public interest, with a wiser, 'natural aristocracy' to engage in the debate, and subsequently presenting to the rest of the people 'things that they never thought on, or are cleared in divers truths which had formerly perplexed them'.²¹ In this formulation, he believed he had created a commonwealth in which everyone was able to participate according to the quality of their parts. So it was that in Venice stability was derived from 'the Senate proposing and the Great Council resolving'.²²

¹⁶ Foxley, 'Democracy in 1659, 175-196; Foxley, 'Sparta and the English Republic', 54-70; Foxley, "'Due Libertie and Proportiond Equalitie'", 614-38; Hammersley, 'Rethinking the Political Thought of James Harrington', 354-70.

¹⁷ Harrington, *A Discourse upon this Saying* in PWJH, 737

¹⁸ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 143.

¹⁹ Harrington, *A Discourse Showing that the Spirit of Parliaments, With a Council in Intervals, Is Not to Be Trusted for a Settlement*, in PWJH, 750.

²⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 483.

Harrington was aware that there would be those who rejected his vision, and this idea of a silent council voting on essential matters was one of these areas of potential contention. In order to pre-empt criticism, he included within his narrative dissenting characters, whose purpose was to raise these issues so that Harrington could immediately address potential concerns. In one speech, Epimonus de Garrula explained that he had observed the Great Council of Venice and was unimpressed because it conducted all of its business in silence, claiming that ‘a council, and not a word spoken in it, is a contradiction’.²³ He stated that he ‘came from among them as wise as I went thither....set the wisest man of your house in the great council of Venice, and you will not know him from a fool’. Harrington however virulently defended the need to prevent the people from engaging in debate. He argued that ‘the greatest part of her steadiness’ rested on the ‘great council, which is with her people, by the authority of my lord Epimonus, never speaking a word’ for ‘debate, by the authority and experience of Lacedaemon and Venice, is not to be committed unto the people in a well ordered government’.²⁴ In arguably the most relatable metaphor that Harrington used in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* he used sport to demonstrate his point: ‘Venice plays her game as it were at billiards or nine-holes, and so may your lordships, unless your ribs be so strong that you think better of football; for such sport is debate in a popular assembly as...was the destruction of Athens’.²⁵ What we have here then is a very specific vision of democratic government that was more complex than the relationship between the balance of land and power. It was also defined by the specific superstructures established as well as the way in which legislative responsibilities were divided between the two houses.

Ballot and Rotation

Having established the superstructures for Oceana, Harrington then turned his attention to the practises of this government, and the ways in which it could ensure the citizens of Oceana continually sought the public good. It was in this aspect that Harrington adhered most closely to Venetian practises. He believed that they had found a way to harness man’s natural self-interest via constitutional means; this was a key aspect of Harrington’s political belief, that properly ordered and controlled, man and government could work in unmistakable harmony together.²⁶ This vision was termed by Pocock as “mechanised virtù”, a means through which

²³ Harrington. *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 114.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁶ He outlined this best when he said: ‘I saw one which represented a kitchen, with all the proper utensils in use and action. The cooks were all cats and killings, set in such frame, so tied and so ordered, that the poor creatures could make no motion to get loose, but the same caused one to turn the spit, another to baste the meat, a third to skim the pot and a fourth to make green sauce. If the frame of your commonwealth be not such as causeth

to create an overarching public good out of corrupt individual citizens.²⁷ Two key aspects had aided Venice in achieving this: the secret ballot and the rotation of office; combined these had allowed Venice to master human nature and in doing so had allowed that republic to maintain her ancient prudence into the modern world.

Of all the aspects that Harrington copied from Venice, the ballot was borrowed most closely. Harrington had visited the Great Council of Venice and it obviously made a significant impact on him. He studied it in immense detail and put the system to work in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*. He also wrote a pamphlet in which he used an annotated diagram to describe in exact detail, [Appendix 1], the system of balloting used in the senate of Venice.²⁸ When John Toland published his edition of Harrington's works, he inserted this pamphlet seamlessly into Harrington's *Oceana*, in order to further clarify how the ballot system worked in Venice. In the Venetian system, the ballot was ubiquitous; the right to vote was given 'in all debates and election' by a system which is 'called the right of balloting, whereby this Council, being the Sovereign power, createth all the rest of the Orders, Council, or magistracies; hath constitutely the Ultimate result, both in cases of Judicature, and constitutions of Laws'.²⁹ In fact, he used the balloting system of Venice so extensively in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* that he declared: 'I have not stood upon a more particular description of this ballot, because that of Venice, exemplified in the model, is of all others the most perfect'.³⁰

The importance of allowing the people to vote was crucial to the stability of the Venetian republic, as it established a system of impartiality which subsequently prevented faction. It was the 'purity of the suffrage in a popular government' which was 'the health if not the life of it', and the 'soul is no otherwise breathed into the sovereign power than by the suffrage of the people'.³¹ In Venice the elections were 'most of them made in the Great Council, and all by the Ballot, which is the most equall and impartial way of Suffrage'.³² The secret ballot therefore ensured impartiality by preventing any one man's vote from influencing another's. Thus the people were able to resolve following their own self-interest, which in sum would equate to the public interest, and prevent the government from becoming factional or oligarchical. An extra benefit was that he considered this to be an efficient system, and he

everyone to perform his certain function as necessarily as this did the cat to make green sauce, it is not right'. From Harrington, *A Discourse upon this saying*, PWJH, 744.

²⁷ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 284-85.

²⁸ James Harrington, 'The Manner and Use of the Ballot', PWJH, 361-367.

²⁹ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 482-3.

³⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

³² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486.

assures his readers that it takes little time to learn ‘for as in practise it is of small difficulty’ and uses his experience of observing the Venetian vote to assert that ‘the great council of Venice, consisting of a like number, begins at twelve of the clock, and elects nine magistrates in one afternoon’.³³ Harrington here was being deliberately and uncharacteristically vague; the Venetian system of ballot was extremely complex, a fact he well knew, since he stated that to demonstrate the manner of the Venetian ballot was ‘a thing as difficult in discourse or writings, as facile in practice’.³⁴

However, as with all areas of his constitution building, Harrington again saw fit to pre-empt criticism of the ballot. Harrington’s character Epimonus spoke out against it: ‘but there is such a pudder with their marching and countermarching as, though neer a one of them draw a sword, you would think they were training’. He went on to mock the ballot and its achievements: ‘a pretty sum for urns and balls, for boxes and pills, which these same quacksalvers are to administer unto the parishes; and for what disease, I marvel? Or how does it work? Out comes a constable, an overseer, and a churchwarden’.³⁵ Harrington, as Archon, defended the ‘Venetian boxes’ as ‘the most sovereign of all the remedies against this same cogging’ declaring it a ‘strange thing that they should be thrown first unto the fire by a fair gamester’.³⁶ For ‘men are naturally subject unto all kinds of passion; some you have that are not able to withstand the brow of an enemy’. Therefore if the suffrage be not secret ‘you shall not have one fair cast in twenty’. The secret ballot ensured that whether successful or not, a man ‘neither knoweth whom to thank nor whom to challenge’.³⁷ These criticisms against the Venetian system were quickly brushed off by Harrington, who continued to emphasise its virtues. He had such faith in the Venetian system that he declared that ‘the great council of incomparable Venice, bowling forth by the self-same ballot’ convinced him of her position as an ‘immortal commonwealth’.³⁸ No doubt he hoped it would have the same effect in Oceana.

The ballot was carried out as a means to vote new members to the Senate, and it was by this method that the Venetians achieved the ‘exquisite rotation of the senate’.³⁹ Harrington considered the system of rotation in Venice to be the best in all of history, for he said: ‘the great council of Venice, like the statue of Nilus, leans upon an urn or water pot, which poureth forth the senate so pure and perpetual a stream as, being unable to instagnate, is

³³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 95.

³⁴ Harrington, *The Manner and Use of the Ballot*, PWJH, 362.

³⁵ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 114.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 117-8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

forever incapable of corruption'.⁴⁰ In fact, it is the example of Venice and its system of rotation that led Harrington to believe that 'neither by reason nor by her experience is it impossible that a commonwealth should be immortal' for 'seeing the people, being the materials never dies, and the form, which is motion, must without opposition be endless'.⁴¹ This is a very clear commitment to the myth of Venice and the idea that the commonwealth could be immortal. Like Giannotti before him, Harrington believed that the complicated system of rotation and ballot secured Venetian liberty indefinitely.

The purpose of rotation was to ensure that governors also became the governed, and as such they would never enact legislation that would be detrimental to themselves when they were no longer an active member of the magistracy. Thus 'the Magistracies in Venice (except such as are rather of Ornament then of power are all Annual, or at most biennial. No man whose terme is expired, can hold his Magistracy longer, but by a new election'.⁴² Moreover the rotation, like the ballot, was an essential way of avoiding faction building up within the ruling elite. Harrington describes the senate of Venice as a 'rolling stone' which 'while it continues upon that rotation, ever shall gather the moss of a divided or ambitious interest'.⁴³ By continually changing the people in positions of authority, they never had time to build up sufficient power to become a dangerous influence in government. Suffrage in the hands of the people, with the magistracies elected through the secret ballot and rotated frequently ultimately became one of the cornerstones of Harrington's constitutional blueprint, thanks largely to the example of the Venetian republic.

Again, Harrington acknowledged problems with the Venetian system in an attempt to stave off criticism, agreeing that 'her superstructures by virtue of her ballot or rotation' were not 'exactly librated'.⁴⁴ The greatest problem that they faced was, as has been noted above, that 'through the paucity of her citizens, her greater magistracies are continually wheeled through a few hands'. The sheer number of elective positions coupled with the limitations placed on how much responsibility the younger members could take on, meant that the most powerful positions could only be shared between a very small number of citizens. Harrington explained that Giannotti had already noted this problem:

he saith that if a gentleman come once to be savio di terra ferma, it seldom happens that he faileth from thenceforward to be adorned with some one of the greater magistracies, as savi di mare,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁴¹ Ibid., 99.

⁴² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486.

⁴³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 160.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 34.

savi di terra ferma, savi grandi, counsellors, those of the decemvirate or dictatorial council, the avvocatori, or censors, which require no vacation or interval.⁴⁵

This was problematic since it meant men did not experience the outcomes or implications of the legislation that they enacted, by living as ordinary citizens, and therefore risked becoming disengaged or disconnected from the public interest. The problem lay in the fact that although the Magistracies:

are all confer'd for certain terms; yet those terms do not necessitate vacation, that is, the term of a Magistracy being expired, the party that bore it, is capable upon a new Election of bearing it again without interval or vacation; which doth not altogether trash the Rotation of the commonwealth, though it render the same very imperfect.⁴⁶

For Harrington this was a considerable problem with the Venetian system, as it undermined the fundamental purpose of rotation. It was not a problem, however, that prohibited Harrington from borrowing the fundamental concept and putting it to use in Oceana. He simply recognised what the problem was, and demonstrated how this would be corrected and improved upon by putting this system to use in a larger country such as England. For Oceana, Harrington decreed that a man 'having fulfilled his term of three years, shall not be re-elected unto the same or any other tribe, till he hath also fulfilled his three years vacation'.⁴⁷ He described this problem as an 'infirmity of Venice' which was of no 'incident into a commonwealth consisting of many' meaning Oceana.⁴⁸ Although he evidently admired Venice and the way in which they had constructed their constitution, he seems to believe that it was actually better suited to a large nation state as opposed to small city-state, since the former provided enough people who could be considered citizens to have a well sized franchise base for a properly functioning democracy.

So if Harrington believed that large nation states could encompass a broader spectrum of the population and therefore run as a more effective democracy, then the Dutch Republic ought to have been a useful model for him also. In fact, the Dutch Republic as a commonwealth contained similar complications to that of Venice. Like Venice, which after the Serrata was often conceived as an aristocracy or oligarchy, the Dutch Republic too has been described as 'the closest and most uncontrolled oligarchy in Europe'.⁴⁹ But again, Harrington manipulated Dutch history and its myth in order to suggest that this republic too was a democratic commonwealth.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486.

⁴⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 96.

⁴⁸ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486.

⁴⁹ See footnote 68 in CPW, Vol 7, 371-2.

He achieved this by indicating that Philip II, their ‘potent prince’ had usurped the natural government of the United Provinces. Having overthrown him, the Dutch had simply undertaken ‘the restitution of the popular government’.⁵⁰ The word ‘restitution’ in this indicates that the government has restored back to the hands of the people, and that the normal form of Dutch government had always been self-government under a commonwealth. To support this, Harrington engaged with the Batavian myth, most popularly propagated by Grotius. He did this most explicitly in *The Prerogative of Popular Government* when he discussed the ‘liberty of Holland’ which is ‘in many cities more ancient than any records or other monuments there can witness, and in itself than that of Tacitus, whereby Civilis born of princely blood, is affirmed to have vindicated the Batavian freedom’.⁵¹ The Batavian myth drew parallels between the Dutch people and the ancient Batavians, both of whom had led revolts against the injustices of external dominion.⁵² The Revolt against the Spanish was therefore conceived not as a means to create more freedom, but rather a defensive movement to restore traditional liberties that had always existed.⁵³ It was a fight to defend the antiquity of Dutch liberty and restore self-government.⁵⁴ Post-revolt, they were back under ‘their ancient and accustomed form’ ‘under the orders of popular government’.⁵⁵ In defining Holland as a popular government with regard to its ancient form of government, Harrington embraced the Dutch understanding and justification of their polity.

As a popular republic, Harrington placed the Dutch Republic as comparable to England and Venice. But where Venice proved almost perfect to Harrington as a model of political institutions, the Dutch Republic was found wanting. In Venice, the Great Council was considered by Harrington at least to consist of the whole people of Venice. In Holland, however, the popular assembly consisted of ‘a representative of the people’ who ‘may be for life, as in the particular cities or sovereignties of Holland, improperly called senates’.⁵⁶ While the members of the Venetian Grand Council were for life, it consisted of the entirety of the people; the town governments of Holland were made up of only representatives of the people, the regents, who, being sat for life, could become corrupt without the panacea of rotation.

⁵⁰ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 456.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵² Laura Cruz, ‘Turning Dutch: Historical Myths in Early Modern Netherlands’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 39, 1 (2008), 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁴ Martin van Gelderen, ‘Liberty, Civil Rights, and Duties in Sixteenth Century Europe and the Rise of the Dutch Republic’, in *The Individual in Political Theory and Practice*, ed. by Janet Coleman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 100.

⁵⁵ Harrington, *A Discourse upon this Saying*, PWJH, 737.

⁵⁶ Harrington, *The Art of Lawgiving*, PWJH, 612.

Not only did the Dutch system of government lack the rotation Harrington deemed necessary, he also considered ‘the proceeding of the commonwealths of Switzerland and Holland’ as being of an ‘obscure manner’.⁵⁷ He was alluding to the decentralised federal system that both these republics embodied, outlining how:

the sovereignties, whether cantons, provinces or cities, which are the people, send their deputies commissions and instructed by themselves (wherein they reserve the result in their own power) unto the provincial or general convention or senate, where the deputies debate, but have no other power of result than what was conferred upon them by the people, or is farther conferred by the same upon further occasion’.⁵⁸

Harrington was here referring to the way in which national government functioned, with delegates sent from each province with specific instructions of what they could and could not agree to. This ensured the principle of provincial sovereignty, but was often seen as a slow and cumbersome approach to government. Moreover, this meant that the division within the legislature between debating and resolving was not distinct enough. Those who were dispatched to the States General had the ability to debate, but so did the Provincial States and town councils who also possessed the power to resolve.

Moreover, the ‘senate’ in this situation, the States General, was not granted sufficient powers of debate. Those who sat in the senate were supposed to be the ‘natural aristocracy’ whose wisdom to debate important issues could be recognised by the people, who would subsequently elect them to that body. As such, another perspective is added to the earlier comment that the nobility in Holland were ‘but few’.⁵⁹ By lacking a senate of the sort that was favoured by Harrington, that could freely debate on issues, the Dutch system seemed to be lacking this sort of natural aristocracy as well, since it was essentially conflated with the people in their popular assemblies. Harrington declared that an aristocratic element is therefore necessary ‘or how else can you have a commonwealth that is not altogether mechanic? Or what comparison is there of such commonwealths as are to come nearest to mechanic, for example, Athens, Switzerland, Holland, unto Lacedaemon, Rome and Venice, plumed with their aristocracies?’.⁶⁰ The Dutch system was therefore to be considered inferior because, by depriving themselves of a proper senate, they also deprived themselves of having a wise minority who could guide the people towards the best options for the public interest. Although he did criticise the theory of provincial sovereignty because of this deprivation, he also saw some benefits within it. When he discussed the issue of veto, particularly the

⁵⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 138, 141.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

negative voice of the nobility, within the Dutch system, ‘an example which I am far from commending’, he suggested that high level of decentralisation was the main reason that it did not destabilise their commonwealth:

if those governments were not cantonised, divided and subdivided into many petty sovereignties that balance one another... would be the most dangerous that ever was but the Gothic, of which it savours. For in ancient commonwealths you shall never find a nobility to have had a negative but by the poll, which, the people being far fewer in number, came to nothing; whereas these have it, be they never so few, by their stamp or order.⁶¹

Dutch decentralisation was therefore both a benefit and a problem according to Harrington, but he saw no benefits in importing federalism into England.

Agrarian Law

In a speech responding to the attack on the agrarian law by Lord Philautus – another of Harrington’s fictional characters – Archon defends the proposal. One of Philautus’s (meaning “self-love” in Greek) arguments was that ‘an agrarian is altogether unnecessary’ and that there can be no clearer testimony of this fact than ‘that the commonwealths which are our contemporaries... have no such thing’.⁶² This was, for the most part, a fair statement; not only did they have no such thing, but the economic foundations of both Venice and the Dutch Republic were considerably different from that of England. Nonetheless, Harrington sought to demonstrate that in both cases, something resembling an agrarian law existed to ensure that the balance of power remained in the hands of the people in order to maintain the government as a commonwealth. Again, he manipulated these commonwealths to allow him to portray a vision of each that suited his own agenda. This is not to say that, having done so, he necessarily found utility in the way in which Venice and the Dutch found this economic equality. However, his agrarian law was such an unusual proposal amongst his republican contemporaries that it was necessary for him to demonstrate that it had an equivalent in contemporary as well as ancient republics.

In this respect, Harrington acknowledged that Venice was somewhat lacking. This is because ‘her laws, supplying the defect of an agrarian, are not so clear nor effectual at the foundation’.⁶³ Thus ‘she hath not in my judgement arrived at the full perfection of equality’. However, the character Philautus pushes this further, arguing that in fact an agrarian law was necessary; he asks ‘what clearer testimony can there be, than that the commonwealths which

⁶¹ Ibid., 141.

⁶² Ibid., 102.

⁶³ Ibid., 34

are our contemporaries (Venice, whereunto your highness giveth the upper hand of all antiquity, being one) have no such thing?'. He continues, arguing that it is 'in the sovereign power [of the Venetians] at any time to establish such an order'; that they do not further demonstrates that 'they need it not'.⁶⁴ The Lord Archon responds by admitting that 'at first sight of them there is some appearance but also states that they are to be 'no precedents unto us'. He explains that the lack of agrarian law in Venice is 'not a point that she is to fear' because 'seeing she consisteth of nothing else but nobility; by which whatever their estates suck from the people, especially if it come equally, is digested into the better blood of that commonwealth, which is all or the greatest benefit they can have by accumulation'.⁶⁵ By this Harrington is referring to the fact that all of the citizens, who terminologically were 'called in respect of their subjects nobility', own all the land.⁶⁶ Therefore the political actions of the nobility have the most immediate ramifications on themselves and therefore those who are considered citizens (not subjects) equally reap the benefits of their own decisions.

However, Venice was not totally without equalising measures to ensure the equilibrium of dominion and empire. He referred to both the Council of Ten and the 'Officers of the Pomp' whose responsibility it was to ensure economic equilibrium within the republic. So however 'unequal soever you will have them [the people] to be in their incomes, they have officers of the pomp, to bring them equal in expenses, or at least in the ostentation or show of them'.⁶⁷ Thus, 'if the best of them appear with other state or quipage, then is allowed unto the meanest he is obnoxious unto the officers of the pomp'.⁶⁸ The Council of Ten served a similar purpose: 'if a Venetian should keep a Table, or have his house furnished with retainers, he would be obnoxious unto the Council of Ten'.⁶⁹ This suggests that in Venice, the concern was less related to the incomes of the nobility, than their external expenditure. Between the Officers of the Pomp and the Council of Ten, these 'two orders in a Commonwealth, where the Gentry have but small Estates in Land, are as much as need be in lieu of an Agrarian'.⁷⁰ Although this was not quite the guarantor of stability that Harrington desired, he seems to be suggesting that these measures served that purpose in a city-republic that was very different from Oceana.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁸ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 461.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 461.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 461.

The Dutch situation was more complicated due to its size and diversity. Its provinces vastly differed in terms of economic power as well as the basis of their economic activity. It would have been very difficult for him to talk in general terms about an agrarian law applying to the entirety of the United Provinces; it is for this reason that he predominantly refers to ‘Holland’ specifically, rather than the ‘Dutch Republic’ more generally. This therefore simplified his analysis of the Dutch Republic. Holland was uniquely powerful among the provinces, leading the union both politically and economically. It had built up its power through the rapid expansion of trade and commerce, which by the seventeenth century had led to it becoming the foremost trading power in Europe.⁷¹ This economic power had enabled Holland to take on effective political leadership of the United Provinces after the death of William II and their failure to elect a new stadholder. But although it was the most powerful of the seven provinces, it was hardly the most directly comparable to English circumstances. England was, after all, a large agrarian nation-state, and Holland a small commercial province. Other Dutch provinces may have had more in common with England; the eastern provinces for instance remained reliant on agriculture, and subsistence agriculture at that.⁷² Choosing Holland therefore seems like an odd choice for a man who declares that ‘Agriculture is the bread of the nation...wherefore I am of Aristotle’s opinion, that a commonwealth of husbandmen (and such is ours) must be the best of all others’.⁷³ Holland’s political and economic power, however, were so much more considerable than the other six provinces combined. Throughout the seventeenth century, for instance, Holland was responsible for meeting at least sixty per cent of the Republic’s expenditure on common affairs), which provided that province with considerable political power, being able to use money as a tool of leverage over the rest of the provinces.⁷⁴ As such, Holland was a natural source of interest and comparison for Harrington.

What Holland lacked above all was land, which might lead us to believe that the agrarian law would not apply to them. However, Harrington suggested that in Holland they have an ‘implicit agrarian’ which makes them ‘not obnoxious to a growing nobility’.⁷⁵ In this context, ‘obnoxious’ should be defined in the sense most common before the nineteenth century of ‘liable, subject, exposed, or open to a thing (especially something actually or possibly

⁷¹ J.L. Price, *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1974), 44-5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 48-9.

⁷³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 197.

⁷⁴ J. L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 112.

⁷⁵ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 105.

harmful)⁷⁶ By this he seems to be referring to the lack of land that was available in Holland. There was simply not enough land for people to gain vast tracts of it, as opposed to in England where it was perfectly possible for people to gain vast swathes of land and thus cause an overbalance which could threaten the commonwealth. It is also important to remember that society in Holland was largely urban; within the States of Holland nineteen votes were cast, eighteen of which represented towns, and the nineteenth went to the nobility, who were supposed to represent not only their own interests but also those in the countryside.⁷⁷ Thus the proliferation of towns and urban society meant that there was not the danger from big landed estates that existed in England. As such, Harrington argued, Holland was ‘of no example unto us, whose experience in this point hath been unto the contrary’.⁷⁸

Pocock has suggested that Harrington was largely dismissive of the Dutch Republic exactly because it was a ‘republic founded upon trade rather than land’ and suggested that Harrington actually had no interest in ‘showing how the balance of property works where property is in moveable goods or money’.⁷⁹ Indeed, Harrington did state that in republics in which ‘property producing empire, it is required that it should have some certain root or foothold, which, except it in land, it cannot have’.⁸⁰ The relationship between power and an economy based on land ownership was therefore the best way in which to ensure political stability. Indeed, when he considered the Dutch situation specifically, he continued his argument that a commonwealth of people who owned and worked their own land was superior to one whereby the people traded the goods of others:

at the long run it will be found that a people working upon a foreign commodity doth but farm the manufacture and that it is entailed upon them only where the growth of it is native; as also that it is one thing to have the carriage of other mens’s goods, and for a man to bring his own unto the best market.⁸¹

In lacking the land and natural resources to trade in native commodities, the Dutch were dependent on, and at the mercy of, other nations. The Dutch vulnerability to the political agendas of their neighbours would have been clearly demonstrated to Harrington through the Navigation Act imposed upon the Dutch by the English, which prohibited the import of goods to England other than in a vessel of either the country of origin or of England.⁸² Although the

⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition (2004), Online Edition.

⁷⁷ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 125.

⁷⁸ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 105.

⁷⁹ Pocock, ‘Historical Introduction’, PWJH, 3.

⁸⁰ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸² Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London Fontana Press, 1991), 231-2.

reasons for the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch War are more complex, the imposition of the Navigation Act, which had a significant impact on Dutch trading ability, was certainly one important factor.⁸³ This perhaps emphasised to Harrington the vulnerability and continued danger posed to a commonwealth whose foundations were not grounded in her own land.

It was, however, unfair of Pocock to suggest that Harrington had no interest at all in the impact of moneyed goods on his political theory. Harrington acknowledged that the Dutch had developed much further with regards to trade than the English: ‘in manufactures and merchandise, the Hollander hath gotten the start of us’.⁸⁴ This showed a begrudging respect for the inhabitants of the province of Holland for their industry and work-ethic, but more importantly suggested a level of competition; Harrington evidently saw a place for England as a trading power and believed that they would be much more successful than the Dutch. Moreover, in relation to his agrarian law, he suggested that there may be a way to apply a similar law to city-state commonwealths who lack land. He stated that ‘in cities such as subsist most by trade and have little or no land, as Holland or Genoa, the balance of treasure may be equal unto that of land in the cases mentioned’.⁸⁵ The acknowledgement of this possibility was made without any further clarification. However, the fact that Harrington did at least consider the role that trade might play in England has been overlooked. He criticised the Dutch for having to rely on trading in foreign goods, but, he suggested that a commonwealth like England, which had enough land to produce goods both for the people and for international trade, would be ideally suited to expand its commercial enterprises: ‘wherefore, nature having provided encouragement for these arts in this nation above others where, the people growing, they of necessity must also increase, it cannot but establish them upon a far more sure and effectual foundation than that of the Hollanders’.⁸⁶ Despite his insistence of the centrality of land and agriculture, Harrington appeared, at least superficially, to be encouraging the development of commerce within England.

⁸³ Pincus, for instance, has argued that English disappointment at Dutch rejection both of the regicide and proposals for union demonstrated to them that far from the ideal protestant republican state, the Dutch had been corrupted by their long vassalage to the House of Orange – see Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, 441; Jonathan Israel has argued that while the Navigation Act was a serious blow to the Dutch, war was made certain by the interference in Dutch trading system by English navy and privateers – Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall*, 715. Recently Helmers had criticised the arguments of Pincus and James Jones that there were religiously ideological underpinnings to the war, suggesting instead that by relegating trade to the background, the Dutch perspective is lost – Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 199-200; Jonathan Scott also emphasises the economic factors in the outbreak of war – see Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 69.

⁸⁴ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 198.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

Unfortunately Harrington provided little detail regarding what effect the development of a strong moneyed economy might have upon the agrarian balance on which his eternal commonwealth ought to rest. Harrington's failure to consider this is quickly noted by his most vociferous and astute critic, Matthew Wren with whom Harrington engaged in a lively pamphlet debate.⁸⁷ Wren argued in *Considerations upon Mr Harrington's Commonwealth of Oceana* that 'the assertion will appear too positive that property producing Empire consists only in land'.⁸⁸ Instead, he suggested that 'experience instructs us that it is not a large possession in lands, but an Estate in ready money which is proper for carrying on a great and sudden Enterprise'.⁸⁹ Harrington responded by suggesting indeed that 'the balance in money may be as good or better than that of land in three cases'. One of these references the Dutch situation specifically: 'in cities of small territory and great trade, as Holland and Genoa, the land, not being able to feed the people, who must live upon traffic, is overbalanced by the means of that traffic; which is money'.⁹⁰ This clear statement has led C.B. Macpherson to suggest that Harrington supported a bourgeois commonwealth where the landed gentry supported and actively participated in market society, and to overestimate Harrington's interest in moveable property. Moreover, he argued that the gentry's involvement in financial capitalism actually had a stabilising effect on the republic.⁹¹ In perhaps an even stronger assertion, Constantine Vassiliou has argued that Harrington believed in a reconciliation of commerce and ancient prudence, ultimately concluding that Harrington sought to reconcile ancient republican virtue with modern commercial society.⁹²

This is an exaggeration. For Harrington, ownership of property was everything. The capacity of citizenship was exclusively defined by the possession of land; it was only this that marked an individual out from a servant. He did not believe that social power could long be held by money, or that a flood of money into a country could bring about a permanent redistribution of lands, and so he did not believe that the fiscal or financial resources of a society could be mobilised to make a permanent paid army.⁹³ Thus while for Holland, lacking in land as it was,

⁸⁷ Matthew Wren, *Considerations on Mr Harrington's Commonwealth of Oceana* (1657) and *Monarchy Asserted* (1659), in response to Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* and later *The Prerogative of Popular Government*. Harrington then responded to *Monarchy Asserted* in the last book of *The Art of Lawgiving* (1659) as well as in *Politica* (1659).

⁸⁸ Wren, *Considerations*, 14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁹⁰ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 406.

⁹¹ C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 160-193.

⁹² Constantine Vassiliou, 'Reckless Roundheads and Shortsighted Speculators: The Importance of Moderation in the Republicanism of Harrington and Montesquieu', Paper Delivered at Inaugural Conference in Early Modern Intellectual History, Newcastle University, June 2015.

⁹³ Pocock, 'Historical Introduction', PWJH, 88. Harrington, *Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 404-8.

a 'balance in money' was a better system, for England a political theory of property could only ever be based on land and not on labour.⁹⁴ Government is more easily preserved if the 'foundation of property be in land; but if in money, lightly come, lightly go'.⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that Venice too was a commonwealth that depended heavily on trade, but that this fact went largely unacknowledged by both Harrington and Wren, perhaps because its trading influence was declining, particularly compared with the rapid commercial expansion of the Dutch Republic.

Internal stability

One of the things that Harrington sought most ardently was a commonwealth devoid of tumults. The correct balance of political to economic power, combined with effective political institutions and practises ought to produce commonwealths 'of the most prudent and serene spirit, and the voidest of intestine discord or sedition; as the Venetians, the Switzerland, and the Hollanders'.⁹⁶ Venice was the epitome of this ideal, and was conceptualised as 'the most equal in the constitution' of any commonwealth. The benefit of an equal commonwealth was that it was capable of 'domestic peace and tranquillity' whereas 'to make a commonwealth unequal is to divide it into parties, which setteth them at perpetual variance, the one party endeavouring to preserve their eminence and inequality, and the other to attain unto equality'. Harrington believed that by creating a constitution that was perfect in all aspects, that the people would be satisfied and therefore have no need to rebel: 'the government which, if it have been anything near equal, was never seditious; or let him show me what sedition hath happened in Lacedaemon or Venice'.⁹⁷

Wren challenged Harrington's assertion that Venice lacked dissension noting that he was not 'put upon any difficulty in the retring of Instances to prove she hath been subject to Tumults and Faction'.⁹⁸ He noted that there were 'continual Disorders to which she was exposed before the settlement of the commonwealth upon the Election of her Dukes'.⁹⁹ He gave accounts of several conspiracies and rebellions against the state that occurred during the time

⁹⁴ Wren, *Considerations*, 87.

⁹⁵ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 405.

⁹⁶ Harrington, *A Discourse upon this Saying*, PWJH, 737.

⁹⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 32.

⁹⁸ Wren, *Considerations*, 64.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

of the Serrata at the turn of the fourteenth century, including those of Marino Bocco¹⁰⁰, Baiemonte Tiepolo¹⁰¹, and Marin Falerio.¹⁰²

After that in the year 1355 the Health of the Commonwealth became her Disease, I mean the power of the Dukes by which she gained so much order, Grace, and Formness, was made an Instrument to the ambition of Duke Marin Falier for dissolving the Frame of the Government; But at this Time the Power of the Dieci was salutary to the Republic in the Deposition and Execution of Falier.¹⁰³

Wren demonstrated that between 697 and 1172, Venice had been subject to continual tumults. What Wren demonstrated here was the value he placed on the ducal element of the Venetian system, which he credits with the 'health' of the commonwealth. As a monarchist, it is perhaps unsurprising that in his work, Wren placed great emphasis on the role that the correct formulation of the ducal position played in bringing order to the republic, rather than the impact of the Serrata. Although Wren did somewhat begrudgingly acknowledge, that 'of late days indeed the commonwealth of Venice hath enjoyed tranquillity enough at home', his testimony undermines Harrington's mythical interpretation of Venice as free from tumults. Similarly, Wren argued that even if Venice now seemed peaceful, the potential for internal dissent remained, since the 'partialities and factions be kept up between the Old and New families of Noblemen'.¹⁰⁴ This perception that factions and tensions still exist within Venice challenged the view that Harrington and the myth puts forward.

In his response, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, Harrington dismissed these rebellions, denying that these seditions represented 'a disease in the bones of the commonwealth'.¹⁰⁵ He argued that the revolts to which Wren referred did not constitute dangerous sedition but rather the sort of standard criminal acts any nation could be subject to, asking: 'there passeth not a month but there die rogues at Tyburn; is the government therefore

¹⁰⁰ Marino Bocco and his co-conspirators organised a rebellion against Pietro Gradenigo in 1300. It is thought to be because their families were not included on the government's ruling council, and as revenge they planned to riot in St Marks Square and kill the Doge. However, the plot was uncovered and those involved swiftly hanged for their crimes.

¹⁰¹ Baiemonte Tiepolo rebelled after the closing of the Great Council. Conspiracy known as the Querini-Tiepolo conspiracy in 1310. He came from an influential family, whose fathers before him had been elected Doge. Alongside other old noble families, he plotted to overthrow the Doge (Piero Gradenigo) and the Great Council. The rebels got all the way to the Piazza San Marco before their forces were defeated. After surrendering Tiepolo was sentenced to exile, condemned to *damnatio memoriae* and his house demolished. The plot led to the created of the Council of Ten, which was initially intended to be a temporary institution, but gradually became a permanent body with the responsibility of preventing and future conspiracies and coups.

¹⁰² Marino Faliero was the fifty-fifth doge of Venice, being elected on 11 September 1354. Faliero attempted to conduct a *coup d'état* in April 1355, in a plan to take effective power out of the hands of the nobility. Little is known about the exact circumstances surrounding the failed coup, but it was quickly uncovered. Faliero pleaded guilty to all the charges against him and he was beheaded and mutilated. He was condemned to *damnatio memoriae*.

¹⁰³ Wren, *Considerations*, 64-5.

¹⁰⁴ Wren, *Considerations*, 65-6.

¹⁰⁵ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 428.

seditions?’ These rebellions that Wren mentions were merely ‘sudden flashes’ that ‘no sooner appeared or broke out...than it fell off like a scab’.¹⁰⁶ Harrington also rejected the value Wren placed on the power and role of the doge, instead emphasising the significance of the closing of the Great Council; he asserted that ‘since the Reformation there hath not been a cut Finger upon this score, save onely through the conspiracy of Baiamonte, which indeed came to blows’.¹⁰⁷ He therefore argued that only ‘for the space of about four hundred years from the present day’ had Venice been ‘an Example of an equal commonwealth’. Prior to the Serrata the commonwealth was ‘not bound by sufficient orders to give her self security of her native Liberty, her Dukes on the one side did what they pleased, and the inrage people on the other side banished, condemned to death or murdered them’.¹⁰⁸ In Harrington’s formulation it was therefore the enacting of the correct orders in the senate and great council that led to the stability and peacefulness of Venice, and not any changes that had been made to the ducal position.

Even within Harrington’s perfectly balanced commonwealth, however, there was space for dictatorial power. After the Querini-Tiepolo rebellion of 1310 the Council of Ten had been introduced into the Venetian constitution, and Harrington recognised that even in a commonwealth like Venice ‘there are sometime wicked and disloiall citizens, that are causes thereunto of great troubles and calamities’. Harrington recognised that its principal responsibility was to ensure the safety of the commonwealth: ‘the power which they now exercise...consists in the punishment of certain heinous crimes, especially that of treason, in relation whereunto they are as it were sentinels standing upon the guard of the commonwealth’.¹⁰⁹ This important responsibility again contributed to the stability of the Venetian republic and the ‘important speed and secrecy’ granted to them ‘the full and absolute power of the whole commonwealth, as Dictator’.¹¹⁰ In *Oceana* there is also space for a council with dictatorial powers for in situations or ‘emergencies requiring extraordinary speed or secrecy’.¹¹¹

Harrington described the constitution and orders of the Council of Ten at length in *The Prerogative of Popular Government*. He described how the council is established and the system of rotation it utilises:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 428.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 428.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 426.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 484.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 484.

¹¹¹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 129.

The *consiglio de' dieci*, or council of ten, being that which partaketh of dictatorial power, is not a limb of her, but as it were a Sword in her hand. This council (in which the signiory hath also Session and Suffrage) consisteth more peculiarly of ten annual magistrates, created by the great council, who afterwards elect three of their own number by lot, which so elected are called *capi de' dieci*, their Magistracy being monthly.¹¹²

Through the tight control of ballot and rotation, Harrington argued that the Venetians had little to fear from 'the arbitrary power of their courts, as the constitution of them; whereby that arbitrary power, being altogether unable to retard or do hurt unto business, produceth and must produce the quickest dispatch and the most righteous dictates of justice that are perhaps in human nature'.¹¹³ The Venetians were therefore protected from their own councils and those potentially seditious citizens who could endanger their safety and stability.

Nonetheless, the Council of Ten was widely considered problematic. Even before the anti-myth of Venice became a coherent narrative, the Ten were perceived to have grown increasingly authoritative and oppressive, and in some cases tyrannical. Harrington hinted towards an awareness of these types of criticisms in *Oceana* through, as he was wont to do, the voice of one of his characters. In Epimonus' speech against the use of Venice as a model for Oceana, he complains about the reliability of the intelligence they have received from Mr Peregrine Spy who 'should make such fools of us here, when I know that he must have had his intelligence from some corncutter upon the Rialto; for a noble Venetian would be hanged if he should keep such a fellow company'.¹¹⁴ This suggested that Harrington was aware of the culture of secrecy that was innate in the Venetian patriciate, as well as the brutal retribution that was enacted against anyone who broke that secrecy. Harrington, however, does not address this issue. Instead, he focused on the ways in which Venice benefitted from the Ten:

In the war (saith he [Giannotti]) which the Venetians had with Florence in Casentine, the Florentines, finding a necessity in their affairs, far from any other inclination in themselves, to ask their peace, sent ambassadors about it unto Venice, where they were no sooner heard than the bargain was struck up by the council of ten; and everybody admiring (seeing this commonwealth stood upon the higher ground) what should be the reason of such haste, the council upon the return of the ambassadors imparted letters unto the senate, whereby it appeared that the Turk had newly launched a formidable fleet against their state; which had it been known to the Florentines, it was well enough known they would have made no peace. Wherefore the service of the ten was highly applauded by the senate, and celebrated by the Venetians.¹¹⁵

In using this particular example of the way in which the Council of Ten provided Venice with stability, Harrington is also supporting his own interpretation of Venice. Rather than providing an example of how the Council of Ten had dealt with internal dissension, which

¹¹² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, 484.

¹¹³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 41.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

would undermine his portrayal of Venice as internally equal and non-seditionary, he offered an instance that demonstrates their dealings with international problems. Indeed in offering this example, Harrington avoided explicit recognition of the criticism that the Council of Ten faced in relation to its swift, secret and often harsh justice.

External Stability

Dealing effectively with enemies from abroad was a yet further way in which Venice was considered admirable by Harrington. According to the myth of Venice, this commonwealth ‘from the first beginning till this time of ours it hath remained safe and free this thousand and two hundred yeares...from the domination of Straungers’.¹¹⁶ This added to the ability of both Harrington and the Venetians to argue that the Serene Republic was the embodiment of ancient prudence as their liberty had never been infringed by domination.¹¹⁷ But although this was indeed true, it was on this subject that Harrington most struggled to reconcile the myth of Venice with his own political thinking and aspirations for England. Whilst Venice was a commonwealth for preservation and peace, Harrington sought to recreate the glory of Rome without the tumults this latter republic had endured. The myth of Venice, on the other hand, acknowledged that ‘there hath been many commonwealths, which have farre exceeded Venice as well in empire and greatness of estate, as in militarie discipline and glory of the wars’.¹¹⁸ Thus he sought a way to marry the internal stability of Venice with his warlike, expansionist ambitions.

This is not to say that Harrington was dismissive of Venice’s continued independence from any external dominion, which by any interpretation was no mean feat considering the powerful enemies surrounding the tiny city-state. In fact, part of Venice’s success was down to its unique geographic location. As an island, it had been protected ‘by virtue of her impregnable situation’.¹¹⁹ But Harrington took offence at the suggestion that it was *only* because of geography that Venice had survived: ‘it is true that a man in time of war may be more secure from his enemies by being in a citadel, but not from his diseases, wherefore the first cause, if he live long, is his good constitution, without which his citadel were to little purpose, and it is no otherwise with Venice’.¹²⁰ Harrington argued that without the good foundations and orders that the Venetians have instituted, their island location would matter

¹¹⁶ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 146.

¹¹⁷ For more on this “Neo-Roman” conception of liberty see: Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (1998).

¹¹⁸ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

little, because they would be constitutionally unequal and therefore vulnerable to seditions, tumults and invasion.

Its success at staving off dangerous enemies was all the more impressive considering that Venice was constituted as a commonwealth for peace and preservation. Because of its unusual nature, the Venetian republic favoured peace, and found it 'essential' to rely on 'Forraign or mercenary Forces'. One of the reasons for this was also an issue that Harrington had elsewhere sought to circumvent, for he explained that 'for Land services such a Constitution can have no other'.¹²¹ Harrington believed that only citizens should be permitted to bear arms. As much as he sought to argue that politically Venice represented a democracy, those who would be eligible to bear arms would make up a minuscule proportion of the population, and hardly constitute a forbidding army. After all she had only a few thousand citizens and 'to make wars with small forces is no husbandry, but a waste, a disease, a lingering and painful consumption of men and money'.¹²² Following Machiavelli, Harrington lamented that this was the main 'defect of Venice': 'her want of proper arms' had 'cut her wings and spoiled her mount unto heaven'.¹²³ Although it was necessary for Venice to rely on mercenaries, Harrington did not like it. He believed that 'in a government of citizens, if the commonwealth be not for increase, but preservation only, as Lacedaemon, Carthage, Venice, Forraign Arms are both necessary and dangerous'.¹²⁴ Mercenaries were 'Souldiers of Fortune' who 'of all others be the most pernicious; for what can we expect lesse of which whose Art is not otherwise so profitable, then that they should (as Machiavelli shews) be breakers of their faith, given unto rapine, Enemies of peace and government'.¹²⁵ Thus in respect to Venetian military orders, Harrington stated unequivocally that 'in this part of our government neither Venice, nor any nation that maketh use of mercenary forces, is for our instruction'.¹²⁶

Venice was also categorised as a commonwealth for preservation. One of the benefits of this type of commonwealth was it ensured stability: 'wherefore let a legislator consider with himself whether he would make his commonwealth for preservation, in which case she may be free from tumults; or for increase, in which case she must be infested with them'.¹²⁷

However, as Harrington recognised, this is not always the case, for 'if he make her for preservation she may be quiet at home, but will be in danger abroad.' This was because her

¹²¹ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 447.

¹²² Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 211.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹²⁴ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 447.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 444-45

¹²⁶ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 211-2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-7

‘foundation must be narrow and therefore weak; as that of Lacedaemon, which lay upon thirty thousand citizens, or that of Venice, which lies but upon three thousand.’¹²⁸ Thus, ‘considering the paucity of citizens taken in and the number not taken in’ Harrington concludes that Venice as a commonwealth for preservation ‘*is externally unequal*’.¹²⁹ This problem of the narrowness of the patriciate class, although Harrington can adapt it to suit his constitutional arguments and the concept of mixed government, is a repeated problem when it came to Venice’s military orders.

Moreover, he argued that one should not attempt to transcend the ends of government that best suit your particular constitution. Thus he was critical of the Venetian attempt to partake in both war and territorial expansion. Thus a commonwealth for preservation that pursues war is at danger for ‘succeeding ill, she is an easy prey, or succeeding well, ruining by increase, a weight which her foundation is not able to bear’.¹³⁰ In order to demonstrate this last point, Harrington points to the famous battle of Agnadello of the War of the League of Cambrai in which ‘Venice, having possessed herself of a great part of Italy by her purse, was no sooner, in defence of it, put unto the trial of her arms, than she lost all in one battle’.¹³¹ The possession of such an extensive *Terrafirma* therefore surpassed what the structure of the Venetian government was able to sustain. As a result, her ‘progress, or increase, which by this means either cannot be great, must render her but the more infirm’.¹³² Indeed a republic like Venice was ‘planted in a flowerpot, and if she grow, she grows top-heavy and falls too...[for] you cannot plant an oak in a flowerpot’.¹³³ As a commonwealth for preservation, Venice was therefore doomed whether she was for peace or war, which in turn was a result of the fact that her arms were only in the hands of the few.

Furthermore, although it was considered a commonwealth for preservation, the Venetian republic had in fact undergone some expansion and possessed many island territories to accompany its *Terrafirma* possessions. It appears that this expansion was initially unintended:

For though the citty being builded in the sea, and at the first for many years careless of extending their dominion and rule over the continent, did not apply themselves to land wars, yet did they with marvellous glory of success bend themselves to warres by sea, atchiving therewith many

¹²⁸ Ibid., 156-7

¹²⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 157

¹³¹ Ibid., 157.

¹³² Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 447.

¹³³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 217.

notable exploits, as well in defence of their own liberty, as revenge of injurie done them by their enemies.¹³⁴

From these wars at sea the Venetians gathered numerous islands that were taken into their empire. After this success, Contarini tells us how the Venetian's eventually yielded to the petitions and pleas for help from the 'oppressed bordering people', sending forces into the mainland to expel the tyrants, and 'with an infinite applause and willingness of the people receive[d] all those Provinces of their olde consideration into their protection, as though they have never been disunited thereby setting them free from out the servitude'.¹³⁵ Thus, we are informed, this increase of dominion simply 'added to the former greatness of the city'.¹³⁶

While the myth of Venice claimed that this territorial expansion added to the glory of Venice, Harrington did not see it as such. He argues that although 'every commonwealth that holdeth provinces must in that regard be such [externally unequal], yet not into that degree.'¹³⁷ The loss of the entire *Terrafirma* after the Battle of Adnadello has demonstrated that empire of Venice was extremely fragile. However, Harrington argued that the possession of these provinces did not actually make Venice *more* externally unequal by undermining the balance of power and dominion in the Venetian republic itself, for it was that the Venetians did not dare 'take in their subjects upon this balance, lest the foreign interest should root out the national, which is that of the three thousand now governing, and by diffusing the commonwealth throughout her territories, lost the advantage of her situation, by which in a great part she subsisteth'.¹³⁸ Thus by denying those in the provinces any access to the patriciate class, the internal balance of the commonwealth remained the same and the interests of the city of Venice remained secure.

Harrington did, however, argue that the Venetian treatment of her provincial subjects helped ensure the republic's safety and stability, and here he does come back to the myth of Venice. Harrington claims, that because of the 'exquisite justice' of the Venetian provincial government, their subjects 'have no will to invade her'.¹³⁹ This follows the myth of Venice which declares that after they had obtained these provincial territories the Venetian's 'desire and indeavour was not onely to comfort and cherish this new received people with wholesome and profitable laws, but also to finde out meanes, whereby to maintaine and preserve their

¹³⁴ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 129.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 129

¹³⁶ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 130.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

freedome and tranquillity'.¹⁴⁰ As such the Venetians left 'to every citty that commeth into the fellowship of our government, their own municipale lawes and statutes, and the Cittizens, every one in their owne citties, obtaine many great and honourable places, and not a few towns of those abroad in the countrie, are governed by magistrates of their owne, chosen among themselves'. For the Venetians it was a matter of:

great honour and reputation, as also of great gaine and commoditie unto them, these manner of offices may not bee executed by any of the Nobilitie of Venice, but one eyther chosen from among the plebeians, or else, and that in a manner alwaies from out the citties, subjected to our fellowship. And therefore it may easily appear, that this our commonwealth is tempered with than moderation, which seemeth chiefly and nearest to imitate nature.¹⁴¹

Thus although those who lived under the subjection of Venice were not admitted to the patriciate of Venice, they were treated well enough that they did not feel the need to rebel or invade their rulers. In doing so, the Venetians ensured that they had nothing to fear either from their own people within the city of Venice, nor those under its subjection in its provinces.

Harrington therefore did not see much value in the military orders of Venice, because it stood in opposition to the vision of the type of government he wanted to establish in England. He envisioned a commonwealth for expansion like Rome. When he considered expansion, he argued that there were three ways in which this provincial (as opposed to national) government could be structured:

'Commonwealths', saith he [Machiavelli], 'have had three ways of propagating themselves'; one, after the manner of monarchies, 'by imposing the yoke, which was the way of Athens and towards the latter times of Lacedaemon; another by equal leagues, which is the way of Switz' (I shall add of Holland though since his time); 'a third by unequal leagues, which to the shame of the world, was never practised', nay not so much as seen or minded, 'by any other commonwealth, but only that of Rome.'¹⁴²

Pocock has suggested that by distinguishing the commonwealths of Switzerland and Holland as 'leagues' Harrington was 'declining to treat the Swiss and Dutch confederacies as republics but as leagues on the Achaean or Aetolian pattern'.¹⁴³ Machiavelli, however, does not make these mutually exclusive, and Harrington's incorporation of them in the Council of Legislators suggests not either. As such, Harrington expanded upon each form of propagation, saying of equal leagues:

¹⁴⁰ Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, 130.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 221; Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book II, Chapter 4, 163-167.

¹⁴³ See footnote 23 in Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 105.

The second way of propagation or enlargement used by commonwealths is that of Switzerland or Holland, equal leagues. This, though it be not otherwise mischievous, is useless to the world and dangerous unto themselves, useless unto the world, for, as the former governments were storks, these are blocks, have no sense of honour, or concernment in the suffering of others.¹⁴⁴

In *Aphorisms Political* he continued upon this theme, arguing that in equal leagues ‘one commonwealth, under the league, is no more than another, and each one as to herself hath a negative; which kind of union is not only obstructive, but tendeth (as we have seen both in Holland and Switz) towards division’.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, in Harrington’s preferred form of unequal leagues, ‘the commonwealth uniting other commonwealths, retaineth unto herself the leading of the whole league, leaving under each of the rest her own laws and her own liberty’.¹⁴⁶ Rome, of course, followed this last method. However, Harrington did not provide much explanation as to why an equal league might be ‘dangerous’, ‘useless’ or tending towards ‘division’. For that we must turn to Machiavelli himself, and he appeared far less pessimistic about equal leagues, pointing out that they have some benefits: ‘first, you do not easily bring wars down on your own back; secondly, you can easily keep all that you take’.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, he too sees distinct disadvantages. He argued that under leagues which rely on alliances, ‘it is impossible to expand very much...because such a republic is disjointed and has several seats of power, which makes it difficult for them to consult and reach decisions’.¹⁴⁸ For Harrington, expansion was essential to the immortality of a commonwealth; one that could not, or would not, expand was thereby unstable and dangerous. Understanding this makes sense of Harrington’s metaphors which hint at a similar explanation: ‘the senates of Switzerland and Holland...being bound up, like the sheaf of arrows which this gives, by leagues, lie like those in their quivers. But arrows, when they come to be drawn, fly some this way and some that’.¹⁴⁹ He repeats this imagery later in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*: ‘that their cantons and provinces are so many arrows is good; but they are so many bows too, which is naught’.¹⁵⁰ Since the leagues failed to allow sufficient expansion, and caused dissent among provinces who might have different agendas, Harrington rejected them in language far stronger than Machiavelli, from whom he had borrowed the idea.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 222.

¹⁴⁵ Harrington, *Aphorisms Political*, PWJH, 767.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 767.

¹⁴⁷ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book II, Chapter 4, 165.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴⁹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 143.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 222-23.

Conclusions

In exploring the various ways in which Harrington engaged with the Dutch and Venetian republics, we can offer fresh perspectives on both the political thought of Harrington and the republican tradition more broadly. We can see that Harrington's admiration for the Venetian republic was far from ubiquitous, and that often he had to manipulate aspects of its myth and its history in order to make it serve his specific purpose. While Harrington's engagement with Venice has long been recognised, his incorporation of the Dutch Republic has received less attention. What I have demonstrated is that even though the specifics of Holland and the United Provinces often proved counter to Harrington's vision, he still sought to portray the specifics of that commonwealth in such a way that it could support the proposals he set out in his own constitutional blueprint.

Moreover, this chapter continues the work done by historians such as Foxley and Davis, who are taking a closer look at the language and terminology utilised by Harrington. It supports their claims that Harrington was both specific and innovative with his use of language.¹⁵¹ I have shown here that Harrington's definition of democracy was actually more complex than has traditionally been understood. It involved not just the people possessing sovereignty, but also related to the balance of land, the political infrastructure, and the division of legislative powers between political bodies.

Moreover, this chapter contributes to wider arguments concerning the English republican tradition. Just as she has argued for a monarchical role within republicanism, so Hammersley has also been at the forefront of scholars arguing that some English republicans embraced the term 'democracy'. Even the Levellers, who are often seen as the most proto-democratic group of the mid-seventeenth century, actively tried to distance themselves from the term. Here, however, we find Harrington deliberately manipulating history and terminology in order to present both Venice and the Dutch Republic as democratic. This builds on the work of Chapter 2, demonstrating a further element of a pluralistic understanding of English republicanism.

We can also offer fresh insights into recent work that has re-examined the literary value of *Oceana*. Some historians have viewed Harrington, and *Oceana* in particular as 'large, ponderous, and rather badly written'.¹⁵² However, as I have demonstrated, Harrington was on

¹⁵¹ Foxley, 'Sparta and the English Republic', 54-70.

¹⁵² Charles Blitzer, *An Immortal Commonwealth: The Political Thought of James Harrington* (New Haven: Archon Books, 1960), 32.

the whole very specific with his language, using it to a specific purpose and often manipulating words. Harrington's tendency to redefine key terms for his own ends has also recently been acknowledged by Hammersley, who has reassessed Harrington's use of the terms 'monarchy', 'aristocracy' and 'democracy'; and by Davis, with regards to the meaning of 'equality' in Harrington's works.¹⁵³ Davis has also been crucial in changing the way *Oceana* has been viewed. Rather than portraying it as an ungainly mess, Davis has demonstrated that the form and language of a prose romance narrative used in *Oceana*, rather than being a clumsy means by which to portray his ideas, actually serves a specific purpose.¹⁵⁴ An examination of Harrington's engagement with the Dutch and Venetian republic serves to reinforce this reading; *Oceana* did not use language lightly, instead showing a deftness with words that demonstrates both his linguistic ability and the distinctiveness of his political thought.

¹⁵³ Hammersley, 'James Harrington, The Commonwealth of Oceana, and a Revolution in the Language of Politics', 18-16; J. C. Davis, 'Equality in an Unequal Commonwealth: James Harrington's Republicanism and the Meaning of Equality', *Soldiers, Writers, and Statesman*, 229-42.

¹⁵⁴ Davis, 'The Prose Romance of the 1650s', 65-83.

Chapter 4: Debating the Dutch and Venetian Constitutions

In the historiography, and especially in the work of Fink and Pocock, Harrington has traditionally been placed at the centre of the English republican tradition.¹ Harrington was described as not just a ‘classical republican’ but as ‘England’s premier civic humanist and Machiavellian’.² Even recent work, such as Nelson’s on the Hebrew Republic, while challenging some standard assumptions about republicanism, places Harrington as a leading figure in English republicanism.³ There has, however, been a move away from this in recent years. Scott, Rahe and Hammersley have all argued that Harrington’s republicanism was highly atypical, although the ways in which they have distinguished him from other republicans has differed considerably.⁴ In taking a look at the way in which other republican thinkers engaged with the Venetian and Dutch Republics we can further ascertain Harrington’s distance from the conventional republican narrative and highlight some of the distinctions between various English republican thinkers.

James Howell

Although Harrington is often remembered as most strongly advocating the Venetian Republic as a model for English government to follow, there was another who set out a similar political agenda. In 1651, James Howell published *S.P.Q.V. A Survey of the Signorie of Venice, of Her Admired Policy and Method of Government*. Although Howell has never been considered as part of the republican canon, his was one of the only tracts published in England in the first half of the 1650s outlining the myth of Venice. It has, for the most part, been described as ‘a straightforward presentation of the myth’.⁵ Howell picked up on several of the essential themes of the myth, adopting the panegyric tone of Contarini’s well-known text. He also emphasised Venice’s position as a maritime power, and crucially highlighted its status as an island, in order to highlight the comparison with England: ‘England hath reason to affect Venice more than any other, for in point of security ther is much resemblance between them, being

¹ Fink, *The Classical Republicans* (1945).

² Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Pocock, ‘Historical Introduction’ in PWJH, 15.

³ Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic* (2010).

⁴ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, x; Scott, ‘The Rapture of Motion: James Harrington’s Republicanism’ in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 139-163; Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar*; Rachel Hammersley, ‘The Harringtonian Legacy in Britain and France’, in Gaby Mahlberg and Dirk Wiemann, eds., *European Contexts for English Republicanism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 197-210.

⁵ Wootton, ‘Ulysses Bound?’, 344.

both seated in the sea, who is their best protector'.⁶ Moreover, although he was an admirer of antiquity and its authority, he was not inclined to accept the notion of the inevitable decay of the world.⁷ Howell showed that the Venetian republic had survived for a thousand years constant in its Christian faith, despite the constant threat from innumerable enemies from both east and west. In the face of these assaults from without 'she hath continued a Virgin ever since, nere upon twelve long ages, under the same forme and face of government, without any visible change or symptome of decay, or the least wrinkle of old age'.⁸ If, therefore, it were 'within the reach of humane brain to prescribe Rules for fixing a Society and Succession of people under the same Species of Government as long as the World lasts, the Republic of Venice were the fittest pattern on Earth both for direction and imitation'.⁹ Harrington would express an almost identical sentiment only five years later.

Howell also followed Contarini in acknowledging the aristocratic predominance in the Venetian mixed government. This favoured Howell's personal political beliefs that distrusted the 'mechanick' sort of people; rather, he was an admirer of aristocracy for its potential to govern the realm in counsel with the monarch.¹⁰ Furthermore, like Harrington, Howell perceived that the decline in the power of the aristocracy had contributed to the political turmoil in England, although Howell blamed Charles I for this, while Harrington looked back to Henry VII and Henry VIII.¹¹ Much of Venice's success he ascribed to a collective political wisdom or 'prudence' embodied in the Senate, rather than in the doge.¹² The Venetian model supported Howell's conviction that a reassertion of aristocratic influence would be necessary in a new commonwealth if its descent into the chaos of a popular state was to be arrested.¹³ Howell's dedication of the tract to the 'most noble senators' of England provides further support for Howell's preference for an aristocratic form of government. In publishing *S.P.Q.V.* he was encouraging the newly founded English commonwealth to reassert the type of aristocratic influence that was present in the Venetian republic in order to establish control over the newly founded commonwealth.

⁶ Howell, *S.P.Q.V.*, b1.

⁷ Daniel Woolf, 'Conscience, Constancy, and Ambition in the Career and Writings of James Howell', in *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth Century England: Essays Presented to G. E. Aylmer*, ed. by John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 252.

⁸ Howell, *S.P.Q.V.*, b1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰ Woolf, 'Conscience, Constancy, and Ambition', 245-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹² *Ibid.*, 271.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 269.

In many ways, Howell appears to anticipate Harrington's arguments in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*. However, Howell and *S.P.Q.V* have not received much attention in recent years. Howell was a royalist and found himself imprisoned in the Fleet in 1643, ostensibly for his allegiance to the king and indeed he saw himself as 'a martyr to the royalist cause'.¹⁴ Released on bail in 1650, he quickly published *S.P.Q.V* and dedicated it to the Rump parliament. In his preface, Howell declared the purpose of the tract to be to exhort Christendom to come to the aid of the Venetians who were still engaged in a war against the Ottoman Empire: 'it imports all Christian Princes to resent her Condition, She being both the Key, and Bulwark of Europe that way; And with humble leave I speak it, it may well become England (now that she is more formidable at Sea than ever) to be sensible of Her case'.¹⁵ The content of the tract, however, barely mentions this conflict again; instead, it contains a whole section devoted to an elaborate description of Venetian institutions, the most detailed description, in fact, which had appeared that century.¹⁶ Wootton has warned that 'Howell's book is an object lesson in the danger of assuming there is necessarily a straightforward connection between the subject matter of a book and its author's private convictions'. Instead, Wootton argues, the publication of this text was more than likely an attempt by Howell to reconcile himself to England as a republic, as well as an effort to convince the government of his loyalty.¹⁷ Daniel Woolf supports Wootton's view, adding that in fact 'it is difficult to see *S.P.Q.V*. as anything other than an attempt to impress his new governors by drawing parallels between the two republics'.¹⁸

But it is unfair to dismiss Howell's intentions entirely just because he had sought royal position and sought to reconcile king and parliament. After all, Harrington had been appointed as gentlemen of the bedchamber to Charles I whilst the latter had been imprisoned, and although employed by Parliament, he appears to have been on good terms with the king.¹⁹ Aubrey stated that 'Mr Harrington passionately loved his Majestie', of whom he spoke 'with the greatest zeale and passion imaginable'.²⁰ Therefore the possibility of reading Howell's work as a republican offering ought not to be entirely dismissed. This is especially the case if we consider the works Howell published in the 1640s. Although much of his wartime writing

¹⁴ Ibid., 256.

¹⁵ Howell, *S.P.Q.V.*, b1.

¹⁶ Zera Fink, 'Venice and English Political Thought in the Seventeenth Century', *Modern Philology*, 38.2 (1940), 160.

¹⁷ Wootton, 'Ulysses Bound?', 344.

¹⁸ Woolf, 'Conscience, Constancy, and Ambition', 269.

¹⁹ Rachel Hammersley has been at the forefront of examining Harrington's royalism, in particular in a paper entitled 'The Republican Theorist as Royal Servant: James Harrington's Civil War', Presented at Newcastle University, 26.10.2016.

²⁰ Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, 282.

concerned the proper relation of king to parliament, he also wrote about Europe and travel.²¹ As early as 1642, in his *Instructions for Forren Travel*, Howell praised Venice above all European states, describing it as ‘a rich magnificent city in the very jaws of Neptune’.²² He presented Venice as the very essence of a balanced state, apparently untroubled by its lack of a real monarchy.²³ He was therefore consistent in this admiration of the Venetian constitution, and had even already declared that there were ‘many things in that Government worth the carying away’.²⁴ Wootton has stated that it would ‘be surprising indeed if he was straightforwardly advocating Venetian institutions for England’; the evidence, however, shows that Howell’s relationship with Venice was one of continued admiration and a recognition of its potential utility.²⁵ Moreover, looking at Howell through a broader understanding of republicanism puts him alongside Harrington in a way that he has not necessarily been before.

Nedham’s anti-Venetian discourse in late 1651-2 can be read as a direct response to Howell’s praise of Venice. On several occasions in *Mercurius Politicus* Nedham referred to the publications of a ‘countrayman of ours’, which has been credibly assigned to be James Howell.²⁶ Nedham’s attacks on the Venetian government reflect his broader commitment to a popular state that would allow the people to maintain their liberty against kingly or aristocratic influence or tyranny.²⁷ He believed that ‘the People were the best keepers of Liberty’ and that the people ought to be ‘continually trained up in the Exercise of Arms, and the Militia lodged onely in the Peoples hands’ because ‘the Sword, and Sovereignty, ever walk hand in hand together’.²⁸ However, while he recognised that popular sovereignty was the true foundation of government, since people generally defended their own interest, he also understood that the people were often misled by their pre-existing beliefs and so had to be educated in good citizenship. He published tracts such as *The Case of the Commonwealth of England*, *Stated* exactly in order to remind different groups what their specific interests ought to be. Under this guise he was able to justify his outward support for both the Rump parliament and the Cromwellian protectorate as necessary expedients providing a stable

²¹ Woolf, ‘Conscience, Constancy, and Ambition’, 252.

²² James Howell, *Instrutions and Directions For Forren Travell* (London, 1650).

²³ Woolf, ‘Conscience, Constancy, and Ambition’, 270.

²⁴ Fink, ‘Venice and English Political Thought’, 160; Howell, *Instructions and Directions for Forren Travel*, 43.

²⁵ Wootton, ‘Ulysses Unbound’. 344.

²⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 88, 5-12 February 1652, 1395.

²⁷ Foxley has written on the ways in which Nedham’s relationship to democracy and populism can be understood, particularly regarding his earlier connections to the Leveller movement. See chapter ‘Levellers into Republicans?’ in Foxley, *The Levellers*, 194-229.

²⁸ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 77, 20-27 November 1651, 1222; *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 103, 20-27 May 1652, 1609-10.

government that was capable of teaching the people true liberty. Moreover, Nedham supported a warlike expansionist state and as such insisted that arms must be in the hands of the people.

As a supporter of an armed popular state, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Nedham reacted so quickly and harshly to Howell's presentation of Venice as a model for emulation, since he saw it as neither popular nor capable of allowing the people to bear arms. Much of the criticism that Nedham directed towards Venice focused on its oppression of the people and its tyrannical oligarchical Senate. He argued that the best governments are 'settled in an equal mixture of both Interests, Patrician and Popular'. But in Venice: 'the Patrician is predominant, and the People a little too much kept under'.²⁹ Nedham built on this to offer a complete condemnation of the aristocratic nature of the Venetian polity and the associated subjugation of its people. Soon enough the people 'are little better than Vassals under the Power of their Senate' and are 'excluded from all interest in Government, the power of making and executing of laws, and bearing of Offices, with all other immunities, lies only in the hands of a Standing Senate, and their kindred, which they call the Patrician or Noble Order'.³⁰ As for those people who lived beyond the city itself, they 'are so extremely oppressed in their Territories, that they live by no law but the Arbitrary dictates of the Senate'. So oppressed were the people who had been conquered by the Venetians that Nedham repeatedly asserted that they 'are ready still, upon any opportunity (as they have been ever) to revolt to the Turkish Government' and 'would rather subject themselves to the Pagan Tyranny of the Turks' than continue under the oppression of the Venetian republic.³¹ The people were portrayed as being all but slaves under the power of the Senate, and as such it was the patrician order of Venice, responsible for that oppression, that was on the receiving end of Nedham's harshest reproach.

Nedham condemned the Venetian nobility on two fronts. First that the patriciate represented a tightly closed order: 'none but the sons of the Senate are admitted to any dignity or power, but they all of them (without distinction) are admitted to the Helm, after they are once 25 years old; so that...the reasons and occasions of inconvenience are the same, as in the Kingly hereditary Form'.³² Indeed, the patriciate 'proceeded so far as to debar the people from

²⁹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 70, 2-9 October 1651, 1100.

³⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 73, 23-30 October 1651, 1158. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368.

³¹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 84, 8-15 January 1652, 1338. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368.

³² *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 87, 29 January-5 February 1652, 1385.

marrying into their Families; and by this means (as they do now in Venice, for the most part) keeping a kind of State and Grandeur above the people, they the more easily made a shift to keep them out of all places of high trust and Authority'.³³ The power of the Senate was so great that it was able to incorporate both the aristocratic *and* monarchical elements of the Venetian government, since it possessed the hereditary danger that was inherent in the kingly form. By contrast, Nedham appears to have had very little problem with the Duke of Venice because he was so heavily restrained and controlled. He comments on how 'the People are Free from Domination of their Prince or Duke' because he is 'indeed restrained, and made just another Officer...differing from the rest of the Senate, only in a Corner of his Cap, besides a little outward Ceremony and Splendour'.³⁴ Furthermore, while the Doge was held accountable to the Senate the 'Senators are accountable to none, so the People are remedyless'.³⁵

The second reason that Nedham condemned the Venetian nobility was that they alone possessed all sovereignty and power. As such he criticises them for being 'a standing senate of Grandees', a 'hereditary titular Nobility', 'a multiplied monarchy' and accuses the republic of being 'more a Juncta than a Commonwealth'.³⁶ These pointed criticisms are intended to draw the reader's attention to the parallels between the Senate and the Rump parliament of England. After Pride's Purge had reduced the House of Commons to half its previous number of members, and the House of Lords had been abolished, a tiny minority of English Grandees had unprecedented legislative and executive powers.³⁷ Since Nedham was writing in a state-sponsored news-book, he could hardly directly criticise the Rump; by veiling his criticism of England within his commentary upon the Venetian Republic, he could superficially appear loyal whilst more astute readers would discern his real opinions. In his strongest criticism he stated unequivocally that the men in the Senate are 'seated there in an hereditary, arbitrary, uncontrollable, unaccountable state of dominion over that poor people'.³⁸ In the face of these criticisms, Nedham argued that in fact the Venetian Republic should hardly be defined as a commonwealth at all. He said that 'Venice, though it bear the name of a Free-State, yet it hath

³³ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 80, 11-18 December 1651, 1273.

³⁴ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 73, 23-30 October 1651, 1158. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368.

³⁵ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 91, 26 February-4 March 1652, 1445.

³⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 84, 8-15 January 1652, 1337. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 89, 12-19 February 1652, 1412. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 100, 29 April-6 May 1652, 1572. *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368.

³⁷ 470 MPs were elected to the Long Parliament; after the purge in December 1648, the Rump Parliament consisted of around eighty of these. However, some eighty more members returned after the regicide. In total approximately 200 MPs sat between Pride's Purge and the dissolution of the Rump.

³⁸ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 100, 29 April-6 May 1652, 1572.

little of the substance'.³⁹ In a later editorial, he stated that 'Venice hath not so much as a Face of Freedom, nor so much as a Forme of a Real Republic'.⁴⁰ Whilst the English government remained balanced precariously upon a narrow oligarchy, like the Venetian Republic, it was not deserving of the name "commonwealth".

Twinned with Nedham's emphasis on the necessity of popular government was the need for them to possess arms. However, in Venice the people were so unhappy that they could not be trusted with arms:

Were Venice a State, so free as it is called, we might then have seen them in another posture of Militia then now they are: For, the Nobility, as the grand secret of State to uphold their own power, do not intrust the Arms in the hands of the people, but hold an Army ever in pay, mixt partly with Natives, partly Foreiners, who depend onely upon themselves, being enabled thereby to do what they please with the people.⁴¹

As an advocate of an armed popular state, Nedham was therefore critical of this reliance on mercenary forces. Indeed, the impression the reader forms is that under normal circumstances a republic relying on such forces would not last. He suggests that 'you might wonder how this State hath held up for so long' and states that it is merely because of its location: 'we know the interest in Christendom being concerned with her security, she hath been chiefly supported by the Supplies and Arms of others'.⁴² By this he means that by acting, just as Howell suggests, as a bulwark between the pagan Ottoman Empire and western Christendom, it has long been in Christian princes' interest to ensure that the Venetian republic continued to take the brunt of the Turkish onslaught. Despite attacking other elements of it, Nedham utilizes one of the key themes of the myth of Venice here, agreeing that its location was fundamental to its lengthy survival; but he also subverts it by portraying Venice as strategically useful to Europe and as such a mere pawn in European political and religious games. European powers provided the mercenary forces that propped up the Venetian republic and ensured its continued survival.

The patriciate class did not trust the people to bear arms, and they had just as little trust in one another. Another theme that Nedham draws out is the distrust, jealousy and secrecy that existed both between and within the classes. In his 1652 editorials Nedham sets out his fundamental rules for the preservation of the public freedom, one of which is that 'it be made an unpardonable Crime, to incur the guilt of Treason against the Interest and Majesty of the

³⁹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 84, 8-15 January 1652, 1337.

⁴⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 89, 12-19 February 1652, 1412.

⁴¹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 103, 20-17 May 1652, 1612.

⁴² *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368.

People'.⁴³ Venice features heavily in this editorial, demonstrating that the Venetians buy their mythical stability at the price of terror and oppression. He outlines how in Venice 'it is, there, Death without mercy, for any man to have the least attempt, or thought, of conspiring against the Common-weal'. He also outlines how it is treason 'in case any Senator betray Council: there it is an unpardonable Crime, and such a moral sin, that draws on Death without mercy'.⁴⁴ Internal stability is not therefore a result of the perfect Venetian constitution, but rather an enforced peace, paid for with the blood of any man who dared step out of line.

As well as fears of treason, the Venetian patriciate class were shown to be fearful of any one of their number becoming excessively powerful. The most explicit example of this was of course the Doge, who was dismissed by Nedham as 'indeed restrained', 'made just another Officer' and of 'small power'.⁴⁵ The Venetian Senate takes special care 'to preserve themselves free from the usurpation of any of their Fellow Senators, as well as their Duke'.⁴⁶ Limitations on the Doge, though, were understood and well known; what was less commonly known was the distrust that was inherent within the patriciate. Nedham states that 'it is attributed by a Countreyman of ours to be one main cause of the long life of that Republick, that is was never yet usurpt by the Power of Policie of any of its Members'.⁴⁷ Howell evidently meant this as a positive point, demonstrating that the patriciate were content with their lot and as such had no desire to seek an increase in power. However, given the strict controls on behaviour and any deviation from the norm being punishable by death, it is likely that Nedham deliberately interprets this as a negative aspect suggesting that the patriciate had managed to oppress even themselves.

What this demonstrates is that the themes of the myth and anti-myth of Venice were being put to use very early on in the English Republic. Moreover, neither the myth nor the anti-myth were being put to use in ways that we might expect, since it is widely remembered as a model for English republicans. Instead, here we have Howell, a man who was supposedly imprisoned during the civil war because of his royalism, who used the myth of Venice to support the Rump parliament. He wanted to bolster the position of the Rump Parliament, who were, in his conception, the embodiment of the virtuous aristocracy, and in doing so, prevent the people from playing a larger role in the government of the country. On the other hand, we

⁴³ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 107, 17-24 June 1652, 1673.

⁴⁴ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 107, 17-24 June 1652, 1675.

⁴⁵ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 86, 22-29 January 1652, 1368; *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 98, 15-22 April 1652, 1540.

⁴⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 88, 5-12 February, 1395.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1395.

have Nedham, a widely accepted contributor to the English republican canon and employed by the newly established commonwealth, who portrayed a strongly negative vision of Venice as an oligarchical, oppressive anti-model for England. Representations of the Venetian Republic ought not therefore be interpreted as endorsement of it as the ideal model of a commonwealth.

Responding to Harrington's Venetian Principles

The ways in which Venice was represented were therefore different depending on the political views and agenda of the author. Harrington and Howell used the myth of Venice to project their own positive, albeit different, images of that republic onto England's form of government. Nedham, on the other hand, not only attacked the vision of government that Howell propounded; he also reacted against the Venetian principles outlined in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*. However, the way in which he responded to Harrington's vision of Venice was very different to the visceral way in which he had attacked Howell.

Nedham responded to Harrington's constitutional proposals by condemning the creation of constitutional blueprints, on the grounds that one form of government cannot be appropriate to all times. Although Harrington also admitted this (in that he argued that when the balance of land favoured the monarch or the nobility a commonwealth was no longer a suitable form of government) *Oceana* was designed to ensure that now the balance of land in England is in the hands of the people it would remain so indefinitely. Nedham on the other hand argued that

all Forms of Government are but temporary Expedients, to be taken upon Tryal, a necessity and Right Reason of State enjoins in order to the publick safety; and that as 'tis madness to contend for any Form when the Reason of it is gone, so 'tis neither dishonour or scandal, by following right Reason, to shift through every Form after all other Experiments made in vain, when the ends of Government cannot otherwise be conserved, to revert upon the old bottom and Foundation.⁴⁸

In his perception then, political theorists like Harrington misunderstood the nature of government: 'the Rules and Reasons of Government cannot always be the same, it depending on future contingents, and therefore must be alterable according to the variety of emergent circumstances and accidents; so that no certain form can be prescribed at all times'.⁴⁹ Political modelling was as useful as building 'Castles in the aire'.⁵⁰ Nedham's four editorials from "Utopia" demonstrate that he believed 'it matters not what the Form be, so we attain the ends

⁴⁸ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 355, 26 March-2 April, 1657, 7692.

⁴⁹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 354, 19-26 March 1657, 7675.

⁵⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 356, 2-9 April 1657, 7706

of Government'.⁵¹ His disdain was not just limited to Harrington for his utopianism; he also listed 'Doctor Ferne, Mr Hobbs, Mr White, Mr John Hall of Richmond, together with the High-Notionall-Knight, and the Author of the late Animadversions upon the Welsh') as equally deluded.⁵² Rosanna Cox has suggested that utopian discourse flourished during the interregnum reflecting 'their hopes and fears and their increasingly desperate attempts to fashion a constitution which could secure a long-lasting and suitably magnificent future' for the republic.⁵³ It seems several people started imagining an ideal government when political instability seemed to be worsening, as indeed it was when Harrington and Nedham were writing. Nedham recognised that the commonwealth was on the brink of a significant change; in the month prior to his letters from "Utopia" the first draft of 'The Humble Petition and Advice' had been presented to Cromwell, which offered him the crown. For Nedham this represented a constitutional crisis that could not be solved by political idealising and modelling but rather called for flexibility. This is not necessarily an about-turn from his earlier position, since Nedham had previously argued that the people often had to be educated into liberty rather than naturally embracing it. This argument conveniently helped Nedham adapt himself to the numerous shifts in constitutional form over the course of the 1650s, and although historians have tended to label him a 'weathercock' for it, this stance helped him embrace his core principles whilst maintaining the pragmatism that was necessary in such a rapidly changing political landscape.

The last of Nedham's editorials differed from the previous four in that it was written from "Oceana", rather than "Utopia". Nedham recognised that many of the orders of Oceana were modelled upon the Venetian system, and in this letter he mocks not just the concept of political modelling, but Harrington's use of the Venetian model in particular. Nedham focused his attention on Harrington's dependence on and faith in the balloting box.⁵⁴ Nedham criticized Harrington for his naïve belief that 'very ordinary tools will serve the turn' of ensuring liberty and stability within a commonwealth. He was referring of course to the twin pillars of rotation and the ballot which are so fundamental to the constitution of Venice and

⁵¹ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 364, 28 May-4 June 1657, 7674.

⁵² *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 352, 5-12 March 1657, 7644. These men and works are as follows: Henry Ferne, *Pian Piano* (1656); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651); Thomas White, *The Grounds of Obedience and Government* (1655); John Hall, *Of Government and Obedience* (1654); Rosanna Cox suggests that the High-Notionall-Knight referred to Sir Henry Vane, *A Healing Question Propounded and Resolved* (1656); William Sedgwick, *Animadversions upon a letter and paper first sent to his highness by certain gentlemen and others in Wales* (1656).

⁵³ Rosanna Cox, "'Atlantick and Eutopian Polities': Utopianism, Republicanism and Constitutional Design in the Interregnum", in Chloë Houston, ed., *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 180.

⁵⁴ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 89, 12-19 February 1652, 1412.

Oceana. Harrington saw the balloting boxes as an infallible means by which to control human nature and prevent corruption in government. Nedham, on the other hand, disagreed, arguing that in fact the ballot could easily be manipulated. He stated that ‘a High-Constable is a Prime Office of the State amongst them if he Ken the Knack of Balloting, and can but tell Noses, by which means he may perchance amount to the Dignity of a non-sincer, whose Office it is to provide Boxes of all colours of the Rainbow’.⁵⁵ He went on to declare that ‘If you go to Venice to learn to cog a Die with a balloting box, you will soon get money enough to purchase an island better than Utopia’.⁵⁶ Nedham did not believe that Harrington’s solutions to the problems of inherent self-interest worked at all. For him, the ballot boxes were simply another means by which the Venetian system could be corrupted and the already powerful patriciate could maintain or increase its own power.

For the most part, Milton had shown a similar disinterest in creating constitutional models or blueprints. However, this changed in his 1659 and 1660 political tracts, at a time in which the political climate in England was particularly chaotic and unstable. Although he never came close to a complete constitutional outline along Harringtonian lines, he did begin to consider how institutional structures and political practises might help consolidate republican government in England. Moreover, by the time Milton had written a tract, the situation had often changed before it got to print, as happened with the first edition of *The Readie and Easie Way*, which is prefaced with the acknowledgement that ‘since the writing of this treatise, the face of things hath had some change’.⁵⁷ It was within this tract that Milton first presented his constitutional proposals to the public, although he had outlined in less detail some of these ideas in his unpublished *Letter to a Friend* and *Proposals of Certaine Expedients*. Between the first and second editions of *The Readie and Easie Way*, Milton adapted and expanded upon the constitutional proposals as a response to continuing developments. Many of the additions were made as a reaction to the increasing influence of Harringtonian language and principles, which proposed a ‘democratic’ commonwealth, which stood seemingly in opposition to Milton’s oligarchic constitutional model.⁵⁸ But, he was also responding to the criticism he had received, most notably in an anonymous, satirical, pamphlet *The Censure of the Rota*, in which the author condemned Milton for the oligarchy

⁵⁵ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 356, 2-9 April 1657, 7706.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7705.

⁵⁷ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 353.

⁵⁸ On the increasing influence of Harrington in 1658-60, see Foxley, ‘Democracy in 1659’, 175-196.

he proposed and the meagre participation he allowed the people in government.⁵⁹ As such, the rest of this section will largely focus on the two editions of *The Readie and Easie Way* wherein his most explicit constitutional proposals lay.

While Nedham had directed most of his attention towards Harrington's proposals for a secret ballot, Milton found Harrington's system of rotation problematic. Like Harrington, Milton called for a 'general council of ablest men' who will rule 'for the common good', a political body he termed the Grand Council (perhaps after Venice's Great Council), which was to be 'both foundation and main pillar of the whole State'.⁶⁰ Milton, however, argued that 'the Grand or General Council being well chosen, should be perpetual'. Perpetual government could mean that the members of the Grand Council sat every day or that the members who were elected for the Council sat for life. It is likely that Milton meant both. It was important that the Council did not rotate since it was 'the main pillar of the whole State; and to move pillars and foundations, not faultie, cannot be safe for the building. I see not, therefor, how we can be advantag'd by successive and transitorie Parlements'.⁶¹ Successive parliaments, he believed were 'much likelier [to] continually unsettle rather than to settle a free government, to breed commotions, changes, novelties and uncertainties'. One of the main reasons that Milton rejected rotation at this point was that he had become increasingly disillusioned by the people of England. As outlined in Chapter 2, he despaired at the rabble's calls for the Restoration of monarchy. Opening positions of office up to a wider range of people therefore risked inviting into government those who might seek to reach out to Charles Stuart and bring about the end of the English republican experiment.

Milton therefore not only proposed a standing senate, he also severely limited those who ought to be considered eligible for election to the Grand Council, to such an extent that he has been accused by historians of proposing an oligarchic government. Norbrook sees *The Readie and Easie Way* as a desperate combination of the 'existing polity into a rigid oligarchy', whilst Woolrych claims that despite the virtue of those being elected, the narrowness of those allowed to vote creates an oligarchic system.⁶² With regards to the first edition, this is certainly true. He was advocating the perpetuation of the Rump Parliament, but justified it by declaring that it was the members of the Rump who 'at first freed us from tyrannie, and have continued ever since', and that subsequently they offered the greatest means through which to

⁵⁹ Anon., *The Censure of the Rota Upon Mr Milton's Book, Entitled, The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (London, 1660).

⁶⁰ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 430, 434.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁶² Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 412; Austin Woolrych, 'Historical Introduction', CPW, Vol. 7, 218.

‘secure and confirme the peoples libertie’.⁶³ But a tightly closed group of people, defined as the ‘rightly qualified’ by Milton, was also advocated in the second edition. By the ‘rightly qualified’ he referred essentially to those who supported the Good Old Cause: those who continued to be committed to anti-monarchical government and a wide definition of liberty of conscience.

Like Harrington though, Milton also perceived that there were potential problems with a standing senate, the main one being that of mankind’s ambition. In particular, he was wary of those whose desire for power meant that they ‘cannot stay till they be orderly chosen to have thir part in the government’. Only for this danger, does Milton suggest that some level of rotation might be acceptable:

if the ambition of such be at all to be regarded, the best expedient will be, and with least danger, that everie two or three years a hundred or some such number may go out by lot or suffrage of the rest, and the like number be chosen in thir places; (which hath bin already thought on heer, and done in other Commonwealths:) but in my opinion better nothing mov’d unless by death or just accusation.⁶⁴

When examining the specifics of the rotation that Milton was prepared to consider, it becomes clearer that he was responding specifically to Harringtonian proposals. He stated that he was responding to ideas ‘lately propounded...that annually (or if the space be longer, so much the better) the third part of Senators may go out according to the precedence of thir election, and the like number be chosen in thir place’.⁶⁵ This use of the figure of a third is strongly suggestive of an engagement with Harrington, who propounded the exact same figure. However, Milton immediately then stated that ‘I could wish that this wheel or partial wheel in State...might be avoided; as having too much affinity with the wheel of fortune’.⁶⁶

Milton recognised that he needed to respond to these concepts ‘lately propounded’, referring here to Harrington’s recent repackaging of his political theories and constitutional proposals. Harrington had stripped away the baroque flourishes of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* for the later tracts published in 1660, including *The Rota* or *The Wayes and Means*.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Rota Club had been flourishing in the latter half of 1659 and Harringtonian proposals, had been presented to parliament in a petition entitled *The Humble Petition of Diverse Well Affected Persons*.⁶⁸ In response, Milton doubled down in his insistence that the only way the

⁶³ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 366.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 369-370.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 434

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 435

⁶⁷ Davis, ‘The Prose Romance of the 1650s’, 65–83.

⁶⁸ Robbins, *Two Republican Tracts*, 10-11.

country could guarantee stability was through standing governments, not the constant rotation advocated by Harrington, as only by sitting for life, could each senator 'become everie way skilfullest, best provided of intelligence from abroad, best acquainted with the people at home, and the people with them'.⁶⁹ This essentially amounted to a perpetuation of the Rump, which was hardly amenable to the wider population, but, as we have seen elsewhere, Milton sought to argue that it was the members of the Rump parliament who had set the English people free.⁷⁰ He continued to reluctantly concede that some level of 'partial rotation' might be acceptable, but he remained reluctant to truly adopt such rotation since successive governments 'are much likelier continually to unsettle...to breed commotions, changes, novelties and uncertainties, to bring neglect upon present affairs and opportunities'.⁷¹

That Milton felt the need to engage with elements of the Venetian Republic being proposed, despite appearing to be essentially opposed to them, suggests that Venice as a model commonwealth had at least some political currency or credence at the time. Thus we find him at pains to explain that the foundation and security of that republic rested upon a standing council, and not, as Harrington argued, upon the rotation of office. Having discussed the Jewish Sanhedrim, the Athenian Areopagus, and the Roman Senate, he went on to consider how: 'in Venice, they change indeed oftner then everie year som particular counceles of State, as that of six, or such others; but the true Senate, which upholds and sustains the government is the whole Aristocracy immovable'.⁷² While he accepted that there was rotation in the Venetian system, he argued that the strength of the Venetian constitution lay in its Great Council - the 'true Senate', which was made up of the 'whole Aristocracy immovable' - and was a closed, oligarchical, and perpetual body of patricians. Milton therefore interpreted Venice in complete opposition to Harrington. Whereas the latter determinedly portrayed it as 'most democratical or popular of all others', Milton believed that the small number of families that constituted the citizenry, all of whom were eligible to sit in the Great Council, amounted to a strong self-perpetuating aristocracy.⁷³ It was this aristocratic, or perhaps oligarchic, aspect to the Venetian constitution that explained why it was so stable and durable. He may well therefore have made a conscious decision to build upon the popularity of the Venetian republic, as advocated by Harrington, to bolster support for his own proposals.

⁶⁹ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 433.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 435.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 371.

⁷³ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 19.

The Dutch Republic

Defining a republic as democratic or aristocratic was therefore more of an art than a science. It was open to interpretation, depending on the agenda of the author. The fundamental fuzziness of the Venetian myth meant that there was significant scope for interpretation depending on the personal intentions of each person within a specific context. The Dutch Republic also proved to have enough ambiguity to enable multiple interpretations of its constitution. While Nedham followed Harrington in deliberately and consistently portraying the United Provinces as democratic, Milton again engaged with the Dutch as an oligarchic nation. The rest of this chapter will explore these differences.

Nedham chose to portray the Dutch Republic as a popular form of government, and this portrayal remains consistent throughout his writings. In the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus*, the author accuses the parliamentarians of wanting to ‘wave the word Councell and call themselves States’.⁷⁴ Worden has argued that the implication here, which is played out in the subsequent paragraph which discusses instructions sent to the Dutch, is that *Aulicus* saw in parliament's use of the term ‘states’ an opportunity to charge the Roundheads with intending to introduce a republic on the model of the States of the United Provinces.⁷⁵ Nedham, in *Mercurius Britannicus*, responded by asking ‘reader, why not States? Is not this Kingdome a State? Is not this the State of England? Have they no Freedome, no Power, no Privilege in the Legislative power of this Kingdome?’⁷⁶ Nedham challenged those who railed against the idea of England as a republic styled like that of the Dutch, and asked why England should not follow in the path of those ‘that...are free States’.⁷⁷ After all, their republican neighbours had freedom and power, neither of which the people of England possessed. In his later editorials, the benefits of England and the Dutch in having embraced the form of the free-state were expounded: ‘witness at present, the valiant Swiss, the Hollanders, and not long since, our own nation, when declared a Free-State, and a Re-establishment of our Freedom in the hands of the people procured (though not secured) what noble Designs were undertaken and prosecuted with success’.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Mercurius Aulicus*, 2 March 1644, 851; *Mercurius Aulicus*, 9 March 1644, 863.

⁷⁵ Worden, ‘Wit in a Roundhead’, 317.

⁷⁶ *Mercurius Britannicus*, Issue 28, 18-25 March 1644, 216.

⁷⁷ *Mercurius Britannicus*, Issue 21, 29 January-5 February 1644, 165.

⁷⁸ Nedham, *The Excellencie of a Free-State*, 36. In the original *Mercurius Politicus* editorial this read as follows: ‘...Hollanders, and also our own Nation; who high achievements may match any of the Ancients, since the extirpation of Tyranny, and the re-establishment of our Freedom in the hands of the People [end phrase]’. See *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 85, 15-22 January 1652, 1352.

Even in his royalist newsbook, Nedham clearly stated that the Dutch Republic was a 'free-state', although this time the English were simply trading the 'subjection of a King, to the arbitrary vassalage of a free-state'.⁷⁹ What Nedham may have meant here was that it was equally possible for democracy to descend into tyranny as it was for monarchy to do so. Foxley demonstrates two ways in which Nedham believed this: first that the licentious rule of the lower people following their passions was a tyranny in itself; and secondly that the people's proneness to be gulled by anyone promising excessive liberty meant that a democracy could very easily tip into tyranny.⁸⁰ Thus Nedham's argument here - that the free states of the United Provinces could be portrayed as representing a form of tyranny - does not necessarily break with his arguments for popular government. This is because Nedham had a particular understanding of popular government, as did many of his contemporaries. He rejected the term 'democracy' despite favouring a popular element within the English government.⁸¹ Like Milton, Nedham's conception of the 'people' was defined in a limited way, allowing him to reconcile his belief that the people had to be guardians of their own liberty with the republican exaltation of virtue and discipline.⁸² Thus it was easy for him to switch between condemning and praising popular government, simply by broadening or constricting his definition of the people. As such, Nedham's royalist portrayal of the Dutch Republic was not a marked divergence from what came before or after, but can instead be seen as a typical sleight of hand.

In his later editorials for *Mercurius Politicus*, many of which subsequently appeared in *The Excellencie of a Free-State*, Nedham grew more specific in defining the Dutch Republic as popular. Particularly he considered the proportion of power that was shared between the 'Patrician and Popular' groups, arguing that a 'Commonwealth ever thriv'd best, when the People had most Power'.⁸³ This was the model he saw formulated 'by our Neighbours the United Provinces...the best part of their Interest lies deposited in the hands of the people'.⁸⁴ In fact, he credited the endurance of the Dutch to the fact that this was so:

in Holland it may be observed as one principall cause of their long subsistence against the Spanish, that the main authority hath been reserved in the peoples hands, and not much allotted to the

⁷⁹ *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, Issue 17, 4-11 January 1648, 2.

⁸⁰ Foxley, *The Levellers*, 212.

⁸¹ Worden, 'Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism', 65-67.

⁸² Foxley, *The Levellers*, 212.

⁸³ Nedham, *The Excellencie of a Free-State*, 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

Nobility, so that they have been the less considerable for effecting any design against the public liberty, their power being small, and they but few in number.⁸⁵

Although the influence the nobility had in the States Provincial varied from province to province, for Holland this was decidedly accurate, with the eighteen towns having one vote each, and the nobility as a collective only having one vote. We can therefore see Nedham defining the popular element as those who were eligible for election to the town governments and the States Provincial, namely those who were more influential as burgomasters, guild members and the like. In reality these represented local oligarchies, but Nedham chose to represent them as the popular element of government, again indicating his limited definition of 'the people'.⁸⁶ The idea that this form of Dutch government came closest to popular government as opposed to any other was highlighted by a report printed by Nedham in *Mercurius Politicus*, composed by a Dutchman which declared: 'our Government was never so Democraticall as now'.⁸⁷

While Nedham highlighted the popular elements of the Dutch Republic, Milton in 1660 tethered his understanding of Dutch liberty to their narrow political ruling elite, a group of regents who together more or less constituted the ruling party of Holland and by extension the Republic itself. It has already been demonstrated that by 1660 Milton was advocating rule by an increasingly narrow group of the 'rightly qualified'. By this definition, he still wanted a rule of the virtuous, but that definition of virtue was limited to those who were opposed to any form of single person rule and who also advocated liberty of conscience. In *The Readie and Easie Way*, Milton essentially advocated the perpetuation of the Rump, a proposal which was so unpopular and unrealistic that Milton knew he would be forced to defend it. As he had done before, Milton looked towards the Dutch and borrowed aspects of its constitution that could both support his narrow oligarchy and ensure stability in England.

As indicated above, Milton preferred a perpetual Grand Council. In order to justify his political inertia, the Dutch Republic provided him with a much more useful example than Venice. He declared how 'the States of every citie...are a standing Senat, without succession, and accounted chiefly in that regard the main prop of their liberty', whereas by contrast, 'the States General, which are indeed but a council of state deputed by the whole union, are not usually the same persons for above three or six years'.⁸⁸ Milton's Grand Council may therefore have been informed by the States Provincial, which were composed of a standing

⁸⁵ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 89, 12-19 February 1652, 1413.

⁸⁶ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 20.

⁸⁷ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 119, 9-16 September 1652, 1875.

⁸⁸ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 437.

body of regents who co-opted new members when another died (or was removed for corruption), rather than the States General. Although the States General was the central governing body of the United Provinces, it was more truly a gathering of ambassadors. Sovereignty lay in the Provincial States: it stands to reason then that Milton's Grand Council, to whom sovereignty would be delegated (although only by those who continued to uphold republican liberty in England) was based on these States.

The idea of perpetuating the Grand Council, to whom sovereignty would be transferred, was not a widely appreciated solution; even less so because it created an impression of an almost completely disenfranchised population. The powers that were committed to the Grand Council were huge: they would have 'the forces by sea and land in thir power, must raise and manage the Publick revenue, make lawes, as need requires, treat of commerce, peace, or war with forein nations'. For affairs of state that required 'more secrecie and expedition' a Council of State was to be elected out of their own number. Only on the occasion that a senator died or was removed for corruption would the people get to exercise their vote. Although Milton briefly discussed the concept of local government in the first edition of *The Readie and Easie Way*, the overwhelming impression left on his contemporaries was of a narrow controlling oligarchy who had massive power and very little accountability ruling over a people who had almost no control over their political destiny.

For Milton, though, this narrow oligarchy did not amount to a renunciation of republican political thought because he still upheld the idea that these people made up an aristocracy of virtue. Only the most virtuous people in the country, admittedly by 1660 numbering fewer than ever, could successfully lead the country towards liberty. Since the death of William II of Orange in 1650, the regents of Holland, who had been so pro-active in persuading five of the seven provinces not to name a new stadholder had effectively governed the Republic. Moreover, under the leadership of Johan de Witt, this oligarchic form of government had been manipulated as a basis for the first real republican theory of Dutch government (historians agree that Dutch political theory was almost non-existent until the mid-seventeenth century in the United Provinces).⁸⁹ De Witt's 'Deduction' was the first elaboration of the theory of government without an 'eminent head', the term used by De Witt to describe the role of the stadholder rather than the title, which would become known by its adherents as 'True

⁸⁹ Catherine Secretan, "'True Freedom' and the Dutch Republican Tradition', *Republic of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts*, 2, 1 (2010), 86; Haitsma Mulier, 'The Language of Seventeenth-Century Republicanism in the United Provinces', 179.

Freedom'.⁹⁰ But alongside the theorising of the rejection of an 'eminent head', True Freedom also incorporated a theory of provincial sovereignty. Within this, government fell largely to the regents. Legally, all could become regents but in reality it was only possible through marrying into established regent families, and it became increasingly oligarchic towards the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century.⁹¹ The narrow regent body was now at the helm of a successful, prosperous and stable government. For Milton, the Dutch regent system demonstrated that government by an oligarchy would be effective, and particularly an oligarchy who were so passionately trying to resist popular demands for the Restoration of the traditional position of the Orange family. Similarly in England, Milton hoped that a small perpetual Grand Council committed to the Good Old Cause would be able to manage the hopes of many Englishmen regarding the Stuarts. Only by keeping this small group of virtuous men in charge did Milton believe that, like the Dutch, England could achieve liberty and stability.

Thus what we see in Milton's writings is an admiration for the way in which the Dutch had established a stable republican government which was so successful that from its establishment 'no State or Kingdom in the world hath equally prosperd' like the Dutch.⁹² Milton reminds his readers that 'our neighbours the United Provinces', although in comparison to the English 'inferior in all outward advantages' had 'courageously, wisely, constantly' established new government and were subsequently 'settld in all the happie enjoymments of a potent and flourishing republic to this day'.⁹³ By 1660, when England was at its most politically changeable, Milton began to consider the way in which the Dutch constitution was formulated, and whether any facets of it might aid the English in their quest for durable government. He settled on two key aspects. The first built on his continued pessimism towards the English people; he observed the narrowly oligarchical Dutch system, and the institutional bodies by which it functioned, which informed and justified the constitutional proposals he outlined in *The Readie and Easie Way*. The second aspect focuses on the Dutch decentralised federal system, a system that was widely criticized by non-Dutch commentators, but within which Milton found unexpected utility. Milton viewed both of these aspects as essential to the maintenance of Dutch stability. Unfortunately, due to the Restoration, Milton was never able to build on these constitutional proposals; what he does

⁹⁰ Herbert H Rowen, *John de Witt: Statesman of the "True Freedom"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 41

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹² Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, CPW, Vol. 3, 227.

⁹³ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 423.

provide, however, demonstrates that at the peak of Milton's panic regarding England's future, he turned to a contemporary republic, whose experiences could provide immediate guidance for the political problems of the day.

What is perhaps even more unexpected than Milton using the narrow Dutch oligarchy to support his own constitutional proposals, is that he also finds use for the highly devolved federal system of the United Provinces. The principle of provincial sovereignty was embodied in the very foundations of the Dutch Republic. The Union of Utrecht, widely considered to be the foundation of the United Provinces and the closest thing to a written constitution, declared that the provinces formed an 'alliance, confederation, and union among themselves...to remain joined together for all time, in every form and manner, as if they constituted only a single province', but more importantly it stated that 'each province and the individual cities, members, and inhabitants thereof shall each retain undiminished its special and particular privileges, franchises, exemptions, rights, statutes, laudable and long practiced customs'.⁹⁴ However, almost universally, the Dutch federal system was interpreted as a pitfall of an otherwise effective republican system. Its main problem was alluded to by Milton; the delegate system between the States General, States Provincial, and the town councils was inherently slow, with delegates having no scope for negotiation or decision making without first consulting their parent institutions.⁹⁵

Milton, however, also saw in the federal system two key benefits that he could adopt for his own constitutional proposals, both through the introduction of local assemblies. The first was that by proposing country assemblies Milton could respond and react to the prevailing republican mood at the time, which was leaning towards a more democratic commonwealth.⁹⁶ Accordingly, Milton therefore injected a superficial element of public participation in an attempt to counterbalance the strong oligarchic flavour of the rest of his tract. In order to ensure the 'civil rights' of those in the republic, and 'prevent all mistrust' by the people of the powers of the Grand Council, Milton suggested:

if every countie in the land were made a kinde of subordinate Commonaltie or Commonwealth, and one chief town or more, according as the shire is in circuit, made cities, if they be not so call'd already; where the nobilitie and chief gentry from a proportionable compass of territorie annexd to each citie, may build, houses or palaces, befitting thir qualitie, may bear part in the government,

⁹⁴ Union of Utrecht, 1579. Online edition.

⁹⁵ For the relationship between provincial and central government, see Jonathan Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 61-83.

⁹⁶ Rachel Foxley, 'Democracy in 1659', 180.

make thir own judicial laws, or use these that are, and execute them by thir own elected judicatures and judges without appeal, in all things of civil government between man and man.⁹⁷

There were two main roles for these local assemblies. The first was that in large nation-states like the Dutch Republic and England, they provided chains of communications in both directions, from national to local and vice versa. Such a model was not necessary in city-states like Venice, and therefore the Dutch system of decentralisation came closest to a natural comparison for Milton. The second was that the local assemblies decentralised administration and justice. They may make their 'own judicial laws', but as Woolrych highlights, these were likely only bylaws, only binding in the counties that enacted them. For those national issues that were 'of any great concernment to public libertie', 'these commonalities, or in more general assemblies, could gather to 'declare and publish their assent or dissent by deputies within a time limited sent to the Grand Council'.⁹⁸ However, unlike the Dutch system, which was slowed down by its system of veto, Milton suggested that 'thir judgment declar'd shall submit to the greater number of other counties or commonalities, and not avail them to any exemption of themselves, or refusal of agreement with the rest, as it may In any of the United Provinces'.⁹⁹ By recognising where in the Dutch federal system its problems lay, and adapting his own constitutional proposals accordingly, Milton was able to circumvent them and build what he believed was a more effective system. The Dutch system of veto meant that even urgent issues could be subject to lengthy delays and negotiations, which Milton clearly saw as unacceptable, since the business of government is 'oft times urgent' with 'the opportunitie of affairs gaind or lost in a moment'.¹⁰⁰ By accepting the principle of the decision of the majority, Milton ensured that any crisis that threatened the stability of the country could be promptly dealt with.

The second use for local councils was that they proved useful to Milton as a means to address the criticism he had received regarding the oligarchic nature of his first edition of *The Readie and Easie Way*. Several satirists targeted Milton for the arguments he propounded, including royalist Roger L'Estrange, who published *Be Merry and Wise* a mere ten days after *The Readie and Easie Way*. In it, L'Estrange taunted Milton for the fact that the model of a commonwealth was already defunct, as well as dismissing the proposal to perpetuate the Rump in the Grand Council.¹⁰¹ The best known of the tracts, however, was the anonymous

⁹⁷ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, 7, 458-9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 433.

¹⁰¹ Roger L'Estrange, *Be Merry and Wise; Or a Seasonable Word to the Nation Shewing the Cause, the Growth, the States, and the Cure of our present Distempers* (London: 1660), 4.

The Censure of the Rota. Within *The Censure*, the author attacks the lack of popular participation that Milton allows the common people stating that:

though you bragge much of the Peoples Managing their own affaires, you allow them no more share of that in your Utopia (as you have ordered it) then only to set up their throats and Baul (instead of every three years of which they might have done before) once in an Age, or oftener, as an old Member drops away, and a new one is to succeed, not for his merit or knowledge in State affairs, but because he is able to bring the greatest and most deep mouth'd Pack of the Rabble into the field.¹⁰²

Milton's proposed oligarchy of perpetuated Rump members therefore resulted in 'the most ready and easie way to establish downright slavery upon the Nation that can possibly be contrived'.¹⁰³ Although it is often overlooked, William Collinne's brief comments in *The Spirit of the Phanatiques Dissected* demonstrate that Milton's contemporaries also noticed his use of the Dutch Republic, since Collinne asks 'whether J. M. his ready and easie way to establish a Common-wealth without re-admitting of Kingship....be not borrowed in copy from the States of Holland'.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately Collinne fails to expand on this theory, but as we have demonstrated above, there is certainly a sound base for this accusation. Moreover, as shall be suggested below, the Dutch Republic also proved its utility when he came to address these accusations of oligarchy.

We can also see that Milton's introduction of these local councils was a direct response to Harrington. He states that his proposed local councils offered a better solution than the larger popular assemblies proposed by republicans such as Harrington, since they could be convened:

in the chief towns of every countie, without the trouble, charge or time lost of summoning and assembling from far in so great number, and so residing from thir own houses or removing of thir families, to do as much at home in their several shires, entire or subdivided, towards the securing of thir libertie, as a numerous assembly of them all formed an convened on purpose with the wariest rotation.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, these councils were proposed as a means through which to assuage the accusations that the people would have little power to check the Grand Council, since he stated that 'the people well weighing and performing these things, I suppose would have no cause to fear'.¹⁰⁶ But it is worth considering here who exactly constitutes 'the people' at a local, rather than national, government level. Although Milton still desired that these men be

¹⁰² *The Censure of the Rota*, 14.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ William Collinne, *The Spirit of the Phanatiques Dissected* (London, 1660), 7.

¹⁰⁵ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 443-444

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 443-444

‘rightly qualified’, there is also a hint at the inclusion of the traditional social elites, which is summarised by Woolrych’s accusation that Milton really proposes ‘a central oligarchy balanced by a multiplicity of local aristocracies’, thus suggesting that the decentralisation Milton proposed hardly constitutes a democratic element to the constitution.¹⁰⁷ This is further supported by the perpetual nature of the local assemblies as proposed in *The Present Means* when he suggests to Monck the creation of a ‘standing Council in each City’.¹⁰⁸ Further examination demonstrates that those who were to sit on these local councils in reality represented the traditional social aristocracy of the counties, as opposed to any true element of popular government. Throughout all of his constitutional proposals of 1659 and 1660 in which he discussed this proposed decentralisation, he consistently suggested that it ought to be ‘the nobilitie and chief gentry’, ‘the chief Gentleman’ or the ‘ablest Knights and Burgesses’ who be eligible for election.¹⁰⁹ That Milton incorporates the traditional local ruling elites is interesting considering his previous commendation of the abolition of the distinctions between lords and commons and his general advocacy of an aristocracy of virtue.¹¹⁰ Evident here is a blending of aristocracies, further suggesting that Milton’s belief that those who were capable of virtue and liberty were the “better sorts” and were who he meant by “people”. In this light, we can make sense of Milton’s pandering to Harringtonian proposals; in 1660 he neither wants, nor advocates, allowing the ‘rude multitude’ to participate in any level of government because they continue to be ‘devoted to kingship’.¹¹¹ It gives further credence to the claim that ‘the whole picture in *The Readie and Easie Way* of the nobility and greater gentry running local affairs from their palazzos in the county towns suggests an English equivalent to the hereditary regent class in the cities of the Dutch Republic’.¹¹²

Milton clearly saw utility in the Dutch federal system, both in the way in which it was constitutionally structured and the membership it allowed. He also saw ways in which the Dutch system was ineffective, particularly relating to the veto and the location of its sovereignty, and responded to these by creating his own constitutional model in such a way that these problems would be rectified. The two systems no doubt differed in the final results, but that he was adapting the Dutch system can be in no doubt, since he himself stated in no uncertain terms that by making his proposed changes:

¹⁰⁷ Woolrych, ‘Introduction’, CPW, Vol. 7, 216.

¹⁰⁸ Milton, *The Present Means*, CPW, Vol. 7, 393.

¹⁰⁹ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, 458-9; *The Present Means*, 393-4.

¹¹⁰ Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, CPW, Vol. 3, 218.

¹¹¹ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 455.

¹¹² Woolrych, ‘Introduction’, 184.

We shall also far exceed the United Provinces, by having not as they (to the retarding and distracting oft times of thir counsels on urgentest occasions) many Sovranties united in one Commonwealth, but many Commonwealths under one united and entrusted Sovrantie.¹¹³

The influence of the Dutch Republic on Milton cannot, therefore, be denied. He looked at the way republican government functioned there, borrowed aspects where they functioned well and adapted others where he saw defects. In this way, a quasi-federal form of republican government was proposed for England by the usually constitution-averse Milton.

Once again, however, Milton and Nedham took different positions over this issue. What Nedham's newsbook accounts of ongoing events in the United Provinces reveal is that he was very aware of the divisions within and between the provinces and even the towns: 'it is strange to consider, how that every Town here in the Countrey seeks to make itself great by the undoing of another. If they proceed this way, they are in the way to ruin. If they agree not about their own affaires, what union then can be expected among them touching others affairs when they all meet in the great assembly'.¹¹⁴ He clearly believed that pursuing interest in this particular context, as towns or provinces as opposed to individual interest almost represented faction within the state, and could therefore only be dangerous to the continuation of liberty. Faction, to Nedham, was 'that grand Cankerworm of a Commonwealth'.¹¹⁵ We can extrapolate from this that Nedham would have distinctly disagreed with Milton over this aspect of the Dutch system. Milton admired the federal system as a means by which to ensure the localisation of potential troubles, thereby ensuring stability; Nedham appears to have taken the opposite view that federal government caused interests to pull in different directions that ultimately would lead to the breakup of the United Provinces. His interpretation of the Dutch Republic in this way might have been due to Nedham's awareness of the power of Amsterdam as well as the resentment this caused throughout the Dutch Republic: 'all the other Towns do envy Amsterdams greatness, saying that they of Amsterdam do seek to make themselves a Province'. Moreover, Nedham's disdain for Venice comes back to the fore again when he compares the two powers: 'and being jealous over them, as if they feared their intention were to make Amsterdam like Venice, the capital and commanding City that should dominate over all the rest'.¹¹⁶ The domination of the oligarchy in Venice over their city and beyond, into the *terra firma*, was a model that Nedham did not wish to see emulated in the Dutch Republic. Amsterdam pursuing its own interest at the expense of the rest of the

¹¹³ Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, Vol. 7, 461.

¹¹⁴ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 53, 5-12 June 1651, 857.

¹¹⁵ Nedham, *The Excellencie of a Free-State*, 22. The OED defines this figurative use of cankerworm as 'a highly malignant and corrupting influence that spreads and consumes, in the manner of a cankerworm'.

¹¹⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, Issue 53, 5-12 June 1651, 857.

commonwealth could only result in a small, unrepresentative group exercising tyrannical rule over a wide and diverse majority.

Conclusions

Examining the ways in which English figures other than Harrington engaged with both the Dutch and Venetian Republics shines some interesting light on the connections that have traditionally been drawn between English republicans. By setting Nedham and Milton's understanding of Venice against that of Harrington, the author of *Oceana* actually appears to have more in common with Howell. Both were considered to have complex royalist associations, both engaged with the form of republican constitution that England ought to have as a commonwealth, and both placed the myth of Venice at the centre of their political visions. On the other hand, Nedham came out as strongly anti-Venetian in the early 1650s, and anti-constitution modelling towards the end of the decade. Putting the two figures under the same republican banner hardly seems to make sense. Milton, too, proved rather reluctant to engage in the specifics of what an English republican constitution ought to look like. As such, Venice only features in those political works written in the dying months of the English Republic. Moreover, his engagement with the utility of Venice comes almost entirely from necessity; Harrington's *Oceana* and subsequent writings continued to present Venice as an ideal form of government. Milton, who saw it as problematic, if not to the same extent as Nedham, was therefore forced to respond and consider which, if any, of the aspects of Venice might be suitable for England.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, what we also find is that the Dutch Republic features much more positively across the generally accepted canon of English republican thinkers. Both Nedham and Milton portray that republic in a positive manner, and find utility in it. Nedham consistently portrayed the Dutch Republic as popular, suggesting he found it much more favourable than the oligarchic, tyrannical Venice. Although he found no real utility beyond this, it is hardly surprising since he cared little for the specifics of political modelling. However, what this does do, is demonstrate a degree of consistency that is not often accredited to Nedham. Milton, on the other, found much more of use in the Dutch Republic when it came to thinking about the form of government England should take if they were to prevent the Stuarts from coming to power. In the Dutch system, Milton found a system of decentralised government and local assemblies that could balance the severely limited virtuous aristocracy that he wanted to actually possess real power against a system that gave the impression of political power to the 'people' more broadly defined.

What this chapter has also demonstrated is that republican constitutions were not static models. Nedham, Harrington and Milton all presented both the Venetian and Dutch commonwealths as to various degrees democratic, aristocratic and oligarchic depending on the political principles and motivations underlying their beliefs, as well as the linguistic gymnastics they were prepared to undergo to achieve any given portrayal. As such, we see Harrington at pains to portray both republics as democratic, whereas Milton takes the same republics and used them to support his own aristocratic, or perhaps more fairly, oligarchic vision for England by 1660.

This has almost brought us full circle. Although Harrington was demonstrably often at odds with his republican contemporaries, in other ways he was at the centre of republican dialogues during the 1650s. This feeds into new questions that Foxley and Hammersley have already made a start at addressing with regards to the influence of Harringtonian principles of democracy in 1659 and 1660. Foxley in particular has demonstrated that Harrington's innovative, sometimes manipulative, but wide ranging understanding of democracy forced other republicans to directly engage with his political thought and vision for an English constitution.¹¹⁷ So although Harrington was far from representative of the English republican tradition, we can still find him at the centre of fierce debates surrounding the nature of republican government and the future of the English commonwealth.

¹¹⁷ Foxley, 'Sparta and the English Republic', 59-64.

Section 3

Post-Restoration England

Chapter 5: The Dutch Republican Experience

On 8th May 1660, the Convention Parliament proclaimed that King Charles II had been the lawful monarch since the execution of his father in January 1649.¹ The English experiment with republican government was ended, and the last eleven years all but overwritten. Many republicans fled to the continent in fear of repression or punishment for their beliefs or actions against the monarchy. Amongst them were Algernon Sidney and Henry Neville. Sidney was abroad working as ambassador for the English Commonwealth when Charles was restored and chose to remain on the continent rather than risk the wrath of the Stuarts. Neville had been less fortunate; after being imprisoned in 1663 for his suspected involvement in the so-called Yorkshire rising he was released into exile in 1664. While abroad, and in the aftermath of republican exile and defeat, both men continued to engage in political writing. Sidney penned *Court Maxims* between 1664 and 1665, and Neville published *The Isle of Pines* in 1668. Considering the numerous similarities between Neville's *The Isle of Pines* and Sidney's *Court Maxims*, it is rather surprising that they have not been sufficiently examined side by side. They have been placed alongside one another by *name* as both being tracts written after the 'experience of defeat', but the similarities between the key concerns and themes of the tracts have been woefully under-examined. Taking a closer look at these two tracts will demonstrate the considerable shift that had occurred in the way in which English republicans engaged with the Dutch Republic by the 1660s.

As suggested above, there were similarities between the life experiences and careers of the two men. Sidney entered parliament in December 1645 as a Member of Parliament for Cardiff. He remained as an MP through the regicide (in which he appears to have played no role, believing parliament had no right to sentence the king) until Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump in April 1653. In 1652 Sidney had become a member of the Council of State, and involved himself enthusiastically in foreign affairs. He promoted an aggressive foreign policy, which contributed to the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch war in that same year.² Neville too had been a member of the Council of State in 1651-2 and took a particular interest in foreign politics, for which his travelling experience and foreign language skills would have prepared him.³ The successful expansionist policies of the Rump were looked upon by republicans with

¹ See 'The Declaration of Breda', in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, 465-467.

² For additional information on Sidney see Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic* (1988) and *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis* (1991).

³ For additional biographical information on Neville see Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts* (1969) or Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republican Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (2009).

pride. The fledgling republic had not just successfully waged war against the Dutch Republic, but had also finally vanquished the royalist threat, and conquered both Scotland and Ireland. Such success in a just a few years raised the reputation of the English republic, and was looked back on ruefully in the years following the Stuart Restoration, when English foreign policy was less successful. Despite his involvement with the Council of State, Neville quite quickly became disillusioned with certain parts of the Commonwealth government. As early as late 1649 or early 1650 he wrote *Newes from the New Exchange* in which he criticised what he considered to be the new commonwealth's greed and lust for power.⁴ Neville was opposed to Cromwell after the dissolution of the Rump, and throughout the 1650s tried to get elected to parliament in order to keep Cromwell's favoured candidates out of parliament, but he failed to gain a seat. After Cromwell's death, he finally returned to parliament in December 1658. He used his position to present *The Humble Petition of Divers Well-Affected Persons*, which set out Harringtonian proposals for a republican constitution.

As was outlined in Chapter 1, both men also spent time on the continent as exiles. After the Restoration, Neville retired to a more private life, but still found himself implicated in the so-called Yorkshire rising. After a short imprisonment, Neville was released to go abroad. Neville spent most of his time in Italy, which appears to be where he wrote *The Isle of Pines*, whereas Sidney was much less settled, travelling around fairly regularly until 1667. What is particularly pertinent to this chapter is the fact that Sidney was in the Dutch Republic when he wrote *Court Maxims*. During his time there, he actively sought to encourage his fellow exiles in plotting to overthrow monarchy in England. He had very little in the way of success. By 1664 he was in Holland, appealing to the Dutch for military and financial aid. After De Witt refused to support Sidney's plotting, he turned to Louis XIV of France, who proved equally reluctant to assist him, and eventually Sidney was forced to cease his plotting.

Neither *Court Maxims* nor *The Isle of Pines* have been widely considered part of the typical republican canon until recently. For Neville, we have historians to blame, for failing to take *The Isle of Pines* seriously as a political statement. Historians have invariably described it as arcadian, utopian, dystopian, as travel literature, Restoration satire, a parody of Biblical patriarchalism, and even as a 'pornotopia'.⁵ Even Caroline Robbins, the first twentieth-century historian to treat Neville seriously as part of the English republican canon argued that although *The Isle of Pines* did portray a 'social moral', it more probably 'sprang simply from

⁴ Mahlberg, 'Historical and Political Contexts of The Isle of Pines', 120.

⁵ Peter G. Stillman, 'Monarchy, Disorder, and Politics in The Isle of Pines', *Utopian Studies*, 17.1 (2006), 147–75; Susan Bruce, 'Introduction' in *Three Renaissance Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis, The Isle of Pines*, ed. by Susan Bruce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xxxvi–xlii.

Neville's high spirits and Rabelaisian humour, writing to amuse himself.⁶ Contemporaries and historians alike have, however, agreed that *The Isle of Pines* was intended as a representation of England, and the Pines family as symbolic of the Stuart monarchy. The sexual "liberty" or depravity of the Pines was intended to mirror and condemn the licentiousness and moral decline of the Stuart court, a decline that in consequence extended to England's political and commercial position. The work of Adam Beach began to take *The Isle of Pines* seriously, drawing connections between the sexual satirical aspects of the tract and the serious political comment Neville was trying to make about England's declining position as a European power.⁷ But it is the work of Mahlberg, Susan Wiseman and Daniel Carey that put Neville's political agenda, and more specifically his commentary on patriarchal government, at centre stage.⁸ Wiseman and Mahlberg are right that it is important to take *The Isle of Pines* seriously as a political tract; however, my interest is less in its treatment of patriarchy and focuses instead on the political interactions it depicts between the Dutch and English as well as the political form taken on the island. *Court Maxims*, on the other hand, was never published by Sidney or his contemporaries. In fact, the manuscript was only discovered in the 1970s by Blair Worden, and a printed edition only became available for wider consumption in 1998. Although it does not survive in Sidney's hand, historians have agreed that it does not appear to have been significantly tampered with content wise, although Jonathan Scott suggests that the chapters may have been reordered.⁹ *Court Maxims* now features in any study of Sidney, but it has never been sufficiently examined alongside its contemporary and thematic partner, Neville's *The Isle of Pines*. The principal historians of each of these men, Mahlberg on Neville and Scott on Sidney, both fail to offer any analysis of the two tracts side by side. Scott does not even mention *The Isle of Pines* in any of his work prior to 2011, although the recent excellent work on Neville by Mahlberg does lead Scott to correct this error; he offers some analysis on *The Isle of Pines* in *When Britannia Ruled the*

⁶ Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts*, 13.

⁷ Adam Beach, 'A Profound Pessimism about the Empire: "The Isle of Pines", English Degeneracy, and Dutch Supremacy', *The Eighteenth Century*, 41, 1 (2000), 21.

⁸; Mahlberg, 'Republicanism as Anti-Patriarchalism in Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668)', in John Morrow and Johnathan Scott, eds., *Liberty, Authority, Formality: Political Ideas and Culture 1600-1900* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008), 132; Susan Wiseman, "'Adam, the Father of all Flesh": Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and after the English Civil War', *Prose Studies*, 14, 3 (1991), 134-57; Mahlberg, 'Historical and Political Contexts of The Isle of Pines', 111-29; Daniel Carey, 'Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines*: From Sexual Utopia to Political Dystopia', in Houston, *New Worlds Reflected*, 203-218.

⁹ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic*, 189; Hans Blom, Eco Haitisma Mulier, and Ronald Janse, eds., 'Note on the text', in *Court Maxims* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ix.

Waves. This does not, however, amount to much more than a repetition of Mahlberg's arguments.¹⁰

Both tracts were written in the escalation and explosion of tensions between the English and the Dutch. This is particularly pertinent given the fact that Sidney was writing in the months of increasing tensions leading up to the second Anglo-Dutch War, in circumstances in which he implored the English and Dutch to recognise their common interests rather than fighting against one another. Similarly, it is worth noting that Neville was writing *The Isle of Pines* in the years after the raid on the Medway, when the Dutch humiliated the English navy by sailing up the Thames and setting English ships ablaze, ultimately winning them the war. The Dutch were inevitably at the forefront of English thinkers' minds during the mid-1660s, as an increasing power and military threat. Taking a closer look at the roles in which the Dutch were cast during these years by Sidney and Neville can therefore inform us about how their republicanism shifted in the years following the restoration of the monarchy.

Form and Purpose

Despite the similarities between the contexts within which the tracts were written, the forms they take are rather different. *Court Maxims* was written as a dialogue between two people, Philaethes, 'a moral honest Courtier and lover of state truth' and Eunomius, the Commonwealthsman. The two characters discuss fourteen maxims of the court, with Philaethes expounding the schemes of an absolute monarch, in which he seeks to put people and country to his own private use. At the beginning of the dialogue, Philaethes asks Eunomius to explain the ancient 'virtue and piety', that he as a courtier cannot understand. Eunomius explains that the English people are discontented with the king, and argues that it is not necessary to have government by one man. As such, a king should only be allowed to govern so far as men's interests require it. Hereditary kingship brings only vice and hatred, and is contrary to the principles of reason. In the present age, argues Eunomius, kings sought to make the nobility weak, effeminate flatterers, while the people were reduced to poverty and obscurity.¹¹ The government of the Stuarts amounted to tyranny, and tyrannous government could never last, because 'whatsoever government is unjust, cannot be permanent'.¹² The pair also discuss England's foreign policy; Philaethes encourages an alliance with France and

¹⁰ Jonathan Scott, *When Britannia Ruled the Waves: Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 100-01.

¹¹ Blom, Haitsma Mulier, and Janse, 'Introduction', in *Court Maxims*, xvii-xviii.

¹² Algernon Sidney, *Court Maxims*, ed. by Blom, Haitsma Mulier, and Janse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150.

Eunomius argues for a union of protestant nations. It is within these discussions that the Dutch Republic takes centre stage.

The form of *The Isle of Pines* was somewhat less straightforward, in terms of a clear political narrative. Neville published the work in several parts and presented it as a genuine travel narrative. It told the story of a ship called the *India Merchant*, which supposedly set sail from England, heading east to seek the advantages of trade. After sailing into a great storm the ship shattered upon some rocks and killed all on board but a few. Only George Pines - a bookkeeper - and four women survived: the ship's captain's daughter, two maidservants, and a black slave. Finding no other survivors, the company set about building shelter and salvaging what they could of the ship's cargo. The island abounded with fruits, nuts, and harmless animals that could easily be hunted for food. Eventually realising it was unlikely anyone would rescue them, the five settled in to a luxurious, leisurely, and licentious life and began to populate the island. After forty years, their offspring had become so numerous that George had to bring order to society by marrying males of one family or 'tribe' to the females of another. George named his eldest son, Henry, 'King and Governor of all the rest' upon his deathbed, and also wrote down his story in case anyone ever discovered them. After George's death, morality on the island began to decline, and social disorder, licentiousness, incest, and violence broke out, forcing Henry to gather those near to him to march on and punish the worst offenders. To prevent any future social unrest, Henry put into place a law code, which appeared to bring peace to the island. After Henry's death, his son William succeeded him, and it was under his rule that the islanders were finally discovered. Dutch ships, also headed to the East Indies, noticed fire from the island and set out to investigate. They were stunned to find English speakers and disembarked in order to hear more about these strange people and explore their island. After assisting the islanders in various ways – supplying tools, improving their lodgings and helping suppress a rebellion – the Dutch continued on their journey. One of these Dutch sailors, Henry Cornelius Van Sloetten, wrote an account of his discovery of this 'Land of Pines', also including the original narrative written by George Pines, much to the astonishment and amazement of Europe.

When it was first published in 1668, people accepted this tale as truth, and accepted the tract as a genuine travel narrative; for instance, *The Isle of Pines* was included in Samuel Pepys' library bound up with other 'Pamphlets Naval'.¹³ The core narrative, that of George settling his descendants on the island, had originally been published in June 1668, and was followed

¹³ Gaby Mahlberg, 'Henry Neville and English Republicanism in the Seventeenth Century', PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2005. 126-8.

by a separate letter allegedly written by van Sloetten, describing the discovery of the island by the Dutch. The full version of the tract was published on 27th July 1668.¹⁴ But as much as people wanted to believe in the story of the ‘Land of Pines’, doubt was soon thrown upon its authenticity, causing people to reject the pamphlet outright. It was eventually exposed as a scam perpetrated by Neville, who had recently returned from exile in Italy.¹⁵ After its authenticity as a travel narrative was undermined, the tract fell somewhat into obscurity.

Although different in form, the two tracts are tied together by their mutual belief that the Dutch Republic offered an example of how republican government was inherently more successful and powerful than the monarchical government of England. Both men demonstrated this by comparing English experience with the success of the Dutch military and commercial enterprises. Sidney demonstrated the strength of the Dutch Republic in both the military and commercial realms quite clearly. In *Court Maxims* he declared that ‘The United Provinces is not to be contested with at sea, and able very powerfully to hinder progress by land’.¹⁶ He also wrote of ‘their power and riches, their security, happiness and prosperity’, a sentiment he repeated when he argued that ‘through good government and liberty of traffic’ the Dutch had become ‘so rich, powerful and prosperous that no state in Europe dares singly contend with it’.¹⁷ The Dutch, the Hollanders in particular, ‘in all business of war or peace with any nation do principally consider trade’ and as such had ‘advanced them[selves] from one of the most contemptible nations in Europe to be formidable to the greatest princes in the world’.¹⁸ There was therefore an explicit connection made here between good government, commercial success, and the building of a powerful and wealthy nation.

Sidney’s political beliefs were more clearly displayed in *Court Maxims* than in the much subtler *The Isle of Pines*. This was partly due to the purpose and audience of the tracts. Neville’s work was published, which in itself meant that it had to err more on the side of caution lest the censors ban it, or worse, accuse him of treason and imprison him once again. He may have chosen a form of writing that was distinct and therefore separate from typically political or republican tracts. In fact, the genre choice of a travel narrative acted almost as code, allowing the author to conceal hidden messages and criticism without angering government censors. And indeed, Neville had many things he wished to criticize about the

¹⁴ Gaby Mahlberg, ‘An Island with Potential: Henry Neville’s *The Isle of Pines*’, in *Utopian Moments*, 1-2.

¹⁵ Mahlberg, ‘Republicanism as Anti-patriarchalism’, 136-39.

¹⁶ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 171.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

restored English monarchy and the ongoing internal political corruption he saw therein.¹⁹ By hiding his republicanism in amongst a sensationalist travel narrative, he would have reached a much wider audience, who may have been able to decipher the political messages hidden within. Sidney, conversely, did not publish *Court Maxims*, and even if he had, caution and subtlety were hardly characteristics of his personality or approach to any situation so it would be hard to imagine him toning his invective down for publication. *Court Maxims* was an explicitly republican tract, written in the form of a dialogue (a form Neville would later borrow for *Plato Redivivus*) which clearly argued that ‘a free nation, full of men who excel in wisdom and experience...[should] keep the power in their own hands of governing themselves or one another by turns’ rather than suffer being ‘perpetually governed by one man and his posterity’.²⁰ Moreover, he argued that ‘if it appear that another government does more conduce to their good than that of kings, they may choose some other form of government from which they may expect more happiness’.²¹ Sidney not only criticised the restored monarchy, he explicitly stated that republican government was more beneficial to the people of England and actively encouraged Englishmen to overthrow the Stuart tyranny. *Court Maxims* was therefore an outright appeal to England to once again change its form of government.

It was not simply, however, an appeal to the English. Sidney wrote *Court Maxims* whilst living in Holland, and aimed to garner not just English but also Dutch support to assist in overthrowing the Stuarts. As such, *Court Maxims* is by necessity much more based in the historical moment than *The Isle of Pines* whose abstract nature does not require it to be so. In appealing to the Dutch audience as well, Sidney also showed that he was capable of a level of pragmatism. In the early 1650s, Sidney had encouraged England to pursue an aggressive foreign policy according to his understanding of ideal republicanism, which aspired to create an expansionist English commonwealth that could become the new Rome. Part of this policy had involved a head-on attack on the Dutch Republic. Historians are now largely in agreement that this war was undertaken as part of an economic strategy to expand England’s trade by destroying their closest commercial rivals.²² By the 1660s, however, Sidney was not pursuing a republican foreign policy; he had to restore republican government first, and sought to do so by persuading the people of the danger posed by a Stuart tyranny, and to

¹⁹ This is outlined best in Peter G. Stillman, ‘Monarchy, Disorder, and Politics’, 147.

²⁰ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² Gijs Rommelse, ‘The Role of Mercantilism in Anglo-Dutch Political Relations, 1650-74’, *The Economic History Review*, 63, 3 (2010), 591-611; Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 199-200; Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 69. Pincus, as outlined above, disagrees: Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*.

convince them to rise against it in order to secure their liberty. He needed assistance and allies to do this, and the Dutch Republic was the most likely nation to encourage the spread of republican liberty. From 1663 he was actively seeking allies and financial support in order to launch an invasion against England and overthrow Charles and the English monarchy. His incorporation of the Dutch Republic in his tract was a continuation of this policy; a means to persuade not just the English, but also the Dutch, that England ought to overthrow monarchy and establish a commonwealth.

The Isle of Pines

For Neville, the theme of the strength of England and its position in Europe was central to his concerns and his republicanism. At the beginning of the later *Plato Redivivus*, the Noble Venetian asks why England, ‘which has ever been esteemed (and very justly) one of the most considerable people of the world...is now of so small regard, and signifies so little abroad?’²³ This concern for England’s reputation and position as a European or global power was not a new one for Neville, as it also made up one of the key themes of *The Isle of Pines*. In *The Isle of Pines* the English were being held up against the militarily and commercially successful Dutch Republic; more importantly, England was found wanting. Reading *The Isle of Pines*, the superiority of the Dutch, who arrive on the island to find naked, uncivilised Englishmen, is evident. The contrast between the experiences of the two nations allowed Neville to present the Dutch Republic as a model of republican government worthy of emulation. At first this might appear like a bold claim; *The Isle of Pines* has often been overlooked as part of the republican canon, and when compared to the much more explicitly republican *Plato Redivivus*, it almost pales into insignificance. However, given the circumstances in the mid-1660s, which saw the Charles II re-established as a legitimate monarch, Neville merely expressed his republicanism in a different way in *The Isle of Pines*, drawing on the experiences of the Dutch to praise their republican principles, rather than explicitly admiring their constitution.

Neville put this contrast between English and Dutch fortunes at the centre of his narrative.²⁴ George Pines’ account, which was published first and on its own, initially presented a utopian vision of island life, only the arrival of the Dutch sailors breaks this illusion. There were three key ways in which the Dutch were presented as superior to the English: their naval power; their industry and work-ethic towards colonisation; and their military strength, each of which

²³ Henry Neville, *Plato Redivivus, or, A Dialogue Concerning Government* (1681), in *Two English Republican Tracts*, 79.

²⁴ Mahlberg’s discussion of this contrast is excellent; see ‘An Island with Potential’, 60–66.

will be examined in turn. From the first moment the islanders encountered their strange visitors, their ignorance of naval affairs is exposed. The ‘naked islanders’ encountered by the Dutch were ‘so wondering at our ship as if it have been the greatest miracle of nature in [the] whole world’.²⁵ The Dutch asked the English how they should have come to inhabit that island, ‘having not, as we could see, any ships or boats amongst them the means to bring them thither, and which was more, altogether ignorant and mere strangers to ships or shipping’.²⁶ Knowledge of shipping and naval affairs, or at least the little that George Pines likely knew, was not passed down to subsequent generations, to the extent that the English descendants had no conception of ‘a thing called a ship’.²⁷ Not only had the descendants of the English lost all conception of what a ship is, they were also ignorant of their geography. While the Dutch confidently navigated the seas, the English no longer had any sense of their place in the world, or of the presence of anyone else. They could only vaguely conceptualise that George Pines’s ‘native country was a place called England, far distant from this our land, as he led us to understand’. They also refer loosely to George’s original destination, ‘a place called India’.²⁸ Despite the position of power that England aspired to across the globe, and which had appeared to be coming to fruition after the military successes of the English Commonwealth, the English had diminished to a point where even if they wanted to become a global power, they could not tell up from down. Although something of an exaggeration, this demonstrates the fall in the perceptions of English naval power in England as well as the wider world.

The Dutch experience was altogether different. During their journey to the East Indies, the Dutch encountered a ‘violent storm as if all the four winds together had conspired for our destruction’.²⁹ However, despite, it being ‘beyond our expectation that we should have escaped’, the Dutch guided their ship to safety. Similarly, when they continued on their journey after leaving the Isle, the Dutch continued to save themselves when crisis arose. Near Cambaia, their vessel sprang a leak and they were ‘forced to put to shore...we were forced to ply the pump for eighteen hours together, which, had that miscarried, we had inevitably had perished’.³⁰ Further storms and the ship ‘striking twice upon a rock’ did not deter the Dutch, and when ‘we were chased by a pirate of Argiere’ ‘by the swiftness of our sails we outran

²⁵ Henry Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, in *Three Renaissance Utopias*, 191.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

him'.³¹ Thus, even as a standalone example, the Dutch appeared to be able seamen, capable of sailing through dangers without significant loss or shipwreck, and ensuring that their riches transported from the East reach their destination. However, when juxtaposed against the English, the strength of the Dutch, as well as the inferiority and ignorance of the English becomes strikingly obvious. George Pine's narrative began in a very similar way to that of Van Sloetten, with a fleet setting out to the East Indies. Indeed, like the Dutch, the English also encounter a 'great storm of wind, which continued with such violence many days'. Drawing near land, and 'losing all hope' and 'perceiving no safety in the ship, which we looked would suddenly be beat in pieces, the Captain, my master, and some others got into the long board thinking by that means to save their lives, and presently after all the seamen cast themselves overboard, thinking to save their lives by swimming'.³² The contrast between the behaviour of the Dutch and English sailors is stark. Whereas the Dutch worked for eighteen hours to prevent their boat from sinking upon a leak, the English merely abandoned ship and sought to save themselves, rather than labour together to salvage the ship and its contents. Ultimately, the Dutch survive numerous storms and other dangers through their industry while the English predominantly perish.

As a metaphor, this connects directly to the experiences of the United Provinces and England. The English had lurched from crisis to crisis throughout the 1640s and 1650s with the political system of the country repeatedly being challenged, reshaped and usurped. The country was so divided that nothing seemed capable of uniting them. Only under the restored monarchy of Charles II did something resembling stability appear to return. However, it is worth remembering that *The Isle of Pines* was written only a few years after the Restoration; there was no guarantee that this was the government that was going to stick either. On the other hand, the Dutch had weathered several constitutional challenges over the same period, without suffering anything close to the turmoil of England. William II had attempted a military coup to increase the political power of the stadholder and re-start war with Spain; two years later he died suddenly, leading to the decision taken by five provinces to abolish the position of the stadholder. In none of this was there any challenge to the political functioning of republican government. The message here seems to be that the Dutch republican government was put together in such a way as to make it effective and stable even in times of uncertainty. This stability therefore allowed them to pursue their military and commercial ambitions without being hindered by internal dissent.

³¹ Ibid., 210.

³² Ibid., 194-5.

The naval success of the Dutch, in terms of both commerce and conquest, had begun in earnest after the signing of the Treaty of Münster and continued right through to the second Anglo-Dutch war. While the Dutch had been at war with Spain, their trade had stagnated, allowing the English to make commercial gains. However, when the Treaty of Munster was signed in 1648, the Dutch were able to re-establish themselves as a major trading power. The Treaty of Munster was not the only factor, of course, in Dutch expansionism. The effects of the English Civil War on English overseas trade and the Venetian-Turkish war, which paralysed Venetian trade in the Levant, also played a part.³³ As well as re-establishing their commercial power in familiar markets, the Dutch also engineered vast changes in the Caribbean, massively extending sugar cultivation, for example, and bringing in huge profits, while such a thing was barely heard of in English or French colonies. Moreover, the Dutch were innovative and opportunistic. They were able to take an island that appeared barren and unsuited to plantation agriculture, like Curacao, and turn it into the West Indian Company's (WIC) crowning territorial asset; they saw its deep harbours and ideal location near the Spanish American mainland, and used it as a huge storehouse for their trade in the Caribbean.³⁴ As well as achieving success in the Caribbean, the Dutch were also able to make huge gains in south west India, through a combination of military success, large garrisons, and a vigorous diplomacy backed by force.³⁵ Thus by the early 1660s, the Dutch had swept up the Malabar coast of India, driving the Portuguese and English out and devastating English trade in the region. In 1663 the Dutch also extirpated the English from the Guinea coast in Africa, dealing a severe blow to the Royal Africa Company, and in the process adding to the factors of the outbreak of the second war.³⁶ The Dutch were therefore making significant gains in trade, war and colonisation, which stood in stark contrast with the situation of the English.

The differences between the industry and attitude of the two nationalities was not simply limited to their naval prowess; they can also be seen in the ways in which the Pines and later, the Dutch, approached life on the island. In George Pines' narrative, the initial industry of the stranded English quickly gave way to a life of luxury and licentiousness. In the first few days on the island, the company salvaged what they could of the ship and set about building somewhere to live, so that 'in the space of [a] week had made a large cabin big enough to

³³ Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 196-199.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

³⁶ Beach, 'Profound Pessimism', 23.

hold all our goods and ourselves in'.³⁷ However, after seeing to these very basic human needs – food and drink being in abundance on the island – the company gave into 'living idly'. They failed to explore the island properly. For instance, when they landed on the island, George expressed fear that there may be 'wild people' or 'wild beasts' who might seek them out. But rather than explore the whole island to ensure their safety, they simply accepted that since 'we saw no footstep of any, no not so much as a path, the woods round about being full of briars and brambles' there must be no imminent danger.³⁸ It was only after they had lived on the island for a 'full four months, and not so much as seeing or hearing of any wild people' that they decided the island 'was wholly uninhabited by any people, neither was there any hurtful beast to annoy us'.³⁹ In fact, because 'the country [was] so very pleasant, being always clothed in green, and full of pleasant fruits, and variety of birds, ever warm and never colder than in England in September', George stated that the island 'had it the culture that skilful people might bestow upon it, would prove a paradise'.⁴⁰ The implication here was that the island could be a utopia but not under the governance of the English. Instead, the islanders gave in to their lusts and felt themselves at 'liberty to do our wills', after which point the narrative became an account of the sexual and familial relations between the rapidly developing population.

The Dutch disdain for the laziness of the English is present from their first impression of the living conditions of the Pines. They described the 'palace' as 'about the bigness of one of our ordinary village houses...supported with rough unhewn pieces of timber, and covered very artificially with boughs'.⁴¹ Having seen this, and been entertained by the islanders, the Dutch 'resolved to go higher into the country for a further discovery', something which the English appear never to have attempted.⁴² In doing so, they explored the more remote villages on the island, as well as noting the fertility of the land and abundance of nature, so much so that they echoed George Pines' initial sentiment and the utopian nature of the island: 'no question, but had nature [had] the benefit of art added unto it, it would equal, if not exceed, many of our European countries'. The Dutch seemed dumbfounded by the good fortune they had stumbled upon: 'it was very strange to us to see that in such fertile country, which was as yet never inhabited, there should be notwithstanding such a clear and free passage to us'.⁴³ Although

³⁷ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 197.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 205.

they were talking here about the physical hindrances – grasses, trees, etc – the double meaning can hardly be missed. Here, lying in front of the Dutch was a rich, untapped resource; that they considered it to be ‘never habited’, in spite of the thousands of islanders who resided there, indicates just how little respect they had for the “civilisation” that the English had established on this outpost. Having discovered this, the Dutch set about documenting the island more thoroughly, taking into account possible good harbours, the size of the island, its climate, and other relevant information. The Dutch were so industrious that ‘after our return back from the discovery of the country, the wind not being fit for our purpose, and our men also willing thereto...we built up a palace for this William Pines’.⁴⁴ The Dutch were always willing to work hard, simply because they could, whereas the English had built a basic, inadequate hut and had settled for it to pursue a life of idleness.

The military strength of the Dutch was indicated even before there was any political upheaval on the island. During their exploration of the island, the Dutch came across more islanders who offered to journey with them. During this time, a Dutchman ‘espying a beast like a goat’ ‘discharged his piece, sending a brace of bullets into his belly, which brought him dead upon the ground’. The ‘poor naked unarmed’ islanders, who had never experienced such violence and power before, ‘without speaking any words betook them to their heels, [ran] back again as fast as they could’. Moreover no assurance from the Dutch that ‘they should have no hurt’ could have any impact on the islanders, who refused to go any further with their dangerous visitors.⁴⁵ The contrast here is stark; the English were just as vulnerable as the goat, who had been mown down without any understanding of what was happening to it. Any time the Dutch felt like it, they could turn their guns on the English and immediately gain the upper hand. And in spite of their promises, the Dutch did eventually turn their guns on the islanders. William calls upon them and the ‘strange effects of [their] powder’ to help suppress unrest between two factions on the island.⁴⁶ The rebels were armed simply with sticks and stones, which were of course useless against the Dutch guns; as van Sloetten states: ‘what could nakedness do to encounter with arms?’⁴⁷ Just twelve Dutch men go with William, and after attempts to parley fail, the Dutch ‘discharging off three of four guns’ caused the rebels to flee, and the ringleader to be captured and condemned to death. The nakedness of the English islanders points not just to their lack of civilisation, but also to their lack of defences – likely a commentary on the English vulnerability when the Dutch had sailed up the Medway.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 204.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 208.

By placing these narratives side by side, of Dutch power and English weakness, ‘Neville contrasted the republican Netherlands with the patriarchal monarchy of England, concluding that the patriarchal state is not conducive to trade, progress and military strength’.⁴⁸ However, there was more to it than this. Neville was also demonstrating just how, tactically, the Dutch had continued to gain the upper hand in colonisation. They achieved this through their recognition of the advantage to themselves of having England remain under monarchical government. After all, the Pine/English dynasty was clearly ineffective, but nonetheless, the Dutch continued to support and bolster it, by providing useful resources and increasing the regality of the monarchy. They ensured the friendship of the islanders by providing them with necessary tools and equipment, but more significantly, they ensured the friendship and indebtedness of Prince William. Having suppressed the rebellion for him, William owed his continuing position of power to the Dutch. Moreover, they set about building a palace for ‘this William Pines the Lord of that country’ – the mockery in this comment can hardly be missed – which although ‘much inferior to the houses of your gentry in England, yet to them (which had never seen better), it appeared a very lordly place’. William was delighted with his new home, thanking the Dutch ‘for so great a benefit, of which he said he should never be able to make a requital’. This upgrade caused a shift in William’s position on the island. William was initially described as a man with ‘nothing of majesty in him’, and the island as a place where ‘prince and peasant here faring alike’, by the end of the Dutch visit, William was ‘attended after a more royal manner than ever we saw him before, both for a number of servants and multiplicity of meat’.⁴⁹ By increasing the royal nature of William’s government, the Dutch intended to more deeply entrench the concept of patriarchal monarchy on the Isle, and as such, keep the English in an inferior position.

Thus Neville was not just showing that the Dutch were superior to the English, he was demonstrating that the Dutch *knew* they were superior, and were continuing to support the English monarchy because it kept the English nation weak. Under the English Republic, the English had defeated the Dutch Republic at war, and had been able to force political concessions from them. Under the restored Stuart monarchy, the Dutch had won the second war, and had been able rapidly to expand their global trade. Thus, it was ultimately to the advantage of the Dutch to keep the English under weak, patriarchal, monarchical government, because it provided them with the military edge, and allowed them to take advantage of English weakness in trade by forcing them out of key English trading outposts, such as the

⁴⁸ Mahlberg, ‘Republicanism as Anti-patriarchalism’, 151.

⁴⁹ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 192, 207.

Guinea coast and southwest India. Neville was able to view this perhaps with the gift of hindsight. The second Anglo-Dutch war had proved to be an abject demonstration of the weakness of the English in naval and military affairs. The raid on the Medway was a national humiliation, demonstrating the strength, resilience, courage and ambition of the Dutch naval forces. During the course of the war, the Dutch had also demonstrated the grip they had on key commercial trading routes, which helped fund the continuation of the war.⁵⁰ The strength of the Dutch demonstrated to Neville the benefits of republican government, the industry and virtues that it instilled in its people, allowing them to grow in power and European influence.

Republican Languages

The different approaches taken by Neville and Sidney to influencing ideas and events led to a difference in the republican languages they used. Neville incorporated Machiavellian ideas of conquest and greatness with concerns about patriarchal government and, most importantly, a Harringtonian concern with the balance of property and power. This latter issue has not been acknowledged before and, as shall be demonstrated, puts a more radical spin on *The Isle of Pines* than has previously been recognised by historians. Sidney, however, used a different language from Neville. While they did share some Machiavellian commitments, Sidney's language of republicanism embraced that of his host nation, the Dutch Republic. In engaging with Dutch republican interest theory, expounded by the De la Court's and De Witt in the years immediately preceding the composition of *Court Maxims*, he hoped to appeal to and persuade the Dutch to assist the English republican cause. It also enabled him to tie together the histories and fates of the English and the Dutch based on the interests of the various parties within both nations.

To examine Neville's Harringtonianism first will demonstrate the uniqueness of Sidney's arguments within an English republican tradition. Neville was not just commenting on the comparative strength and success of the Dutch against the failing foreign and commercial policies of the English. Rather, this commentary served a greater purpose, to examine how the type of government in each country contributed to its achievements. The republican Dutch were able to outstrip the English exactly because of the latter's patriarchal monarchy. *The Isle of Pines* therefore contains a thread of the constitutional republicanism that was more dominant in the 1650s than in the 1660s, where arguments against monarchical government were much more dangerous than they had been under the Commonwealth or Protectorate. Moreover, given that we know Neville supported Harringtonian principles during the 1650s,

⁵⁰ Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 121-291.

and later they are clearly set out in *Plato Redivivus*, it only seems logical to seek them in *The Isle of Pines* as well. The notion that ‘empire is founded upon dominion’ is particularly relevant here, and helps to explain not only why government on the island had degenerated so rapidly, but also why the Dutch were so successful.⁵¹ Because the Dutch were able to carry out a successful and stable expansionist policy, we can extrapolate that Neville viewed the Dutch as holding the correct balance, the result of which was stable internal republican government. On the other hand, the English Pines, with their monarchical government, were inevitably going to fail because their internal balance was already unsettled. They could not follow a successful foreign policy or colonisation project until they established an appropriate balance between property and power.

As Mahlberg has established, *The Isle of Pines* is a critique of patriarchal government.⁵² George Pines, as the only surviving male, established himself as ‘King and Governor of the island’. Even the dynastical name, ‘Pines’, was an anagram of ‘penis’, hyping up the patriarchal connotations to satirical levels, and ensuring that even the basest of readers understood the underlying themes of the pamphlet. Under George the political constitution was undefined. As the eldest male, and with all other males on the island being his offspring, he was by default the ‘patriarch’ as both the fatherly head of the family and of the government’. All the land on the island was therefore his, and he exercised sole sovereignty. He was able to exercise a personal influence over a small (albeit growing) number of people. Only when he was nearing death did George appear to have put any kind of official government, law, more loosely, rules into place. He made his eldest son Henry ‘King and Governor of all the rest’, as well as informing them ‘of the manners of Europe, and charged them to remember the Christian religion’ at a Bible meeting once a month.⁵³ William supplemented this story with his own detail, that Henry was charged ‘not to exercise tyranny over them, see they were his fellow brethren...exhorting him to use justice and sincerity amongst them’.⁵⁴ Whether George had ever titled himself as King is unclear; perhaps as the undisputed patriarch, by virtue of his age, he did not feel the need to define his power in such a way.

Under Henry, however, it immediately became clear that the problems of governance had increased: the ‘people growing more populous, made them to range further in the discovery of the country’, and thus ties of kinship, tradition and law weakened. So, William informed his

⁵¹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 11.

⁵² Mahlberg, ‘Republicanism as Anti-Patriarchalism’, 131–52.

⁵³ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 200.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

visitors, ‘it is impossible, but that in multitudes disorders will grow, the stronger seeking to oppress the weaker, no tie of religion being strong enough to chain up the depraved nature of mankind’ and so ‘mischief began to rise, and they soon fell from those good orders prescribed by my grandfather’.⁵⁵ The ‘neglect of hearing the Bible read’ was accounted as the source of their mischief, causing the islanders to fall to ‘whoredoms, incests, and adultery’.⁵⁶ Henry was astute enough to launch a pre-emptive strike against these sinners, gathering those near him and denouncing the wickedness of the sinners, and rousing them to march against them, ‘arming themselves with boughs stones, and such like weapons’. As a result of this disorder, Henry introduced new laws, so that ‘bad manners produceth good and wholesome laws for the preservation of humane society’. Mahlberg has pointed out that these laws resemble the Ten Commandments, punishing blasphemy, rape, adultery, as well as forbidding any defamation of the Governor.⁵⁷ Although this was a minor disturbance to the peace of the island, it appeared merely a quaint quarrel when compared with the unrest under William. When the Dutch appeared on the island, there seemed to be peace under William’s governance. However, the day before they intended to leave the island, the Dutch were held up by ‘the prince, W. Pines’ who, ‘imploring our [Dutch] assistance in an insurrection’, persuaded the Dutch to delay their departure in order to help suppress this island rebellion.⁵⁸ The insurrection was instigated by Henry Phill who had ‘ravished’ the wife of one of the principal family members of the Trevor tribe, causing the Trevors to assemble themselves together to bring him to justice. The Phills fought to defend themselves, resulting in the whole island become a ‘great hurly-burly’.⁵⁹ William turned to the Dutch and their superior weapons for aid, and the rebellion was easily suppressed.

So how does this connect to the Harringtonian aphorism that empire equalled dominion? Initially the island had been stable and peaceful under the sole government of its leading patriarch, George. However, as the population expanded George found it necessary to relocate some of his many offspring: ‘I sent and placed them over the river by themselves severally, because we would not pester one another’.⁶⁰ There is a suggestion here of granting new land to his citizens as well as a widening of the geographic area over which the Pines sought to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁷ Mahlberg, ‘An Island with Potential’, 3. There are also perhaps echoes of Harrington’s idea of civil religion here. See Mark Goldie, ‘The Civil Religion of James Harrington’, in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 197–222; Ronald Beiner, ‘Civil Religion and Anticlericalism in James Harrington’, *European Journal of Political Theory*, 2013, 1–20.

⁵⁸ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 207.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 207.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 199.

maintain control. Under George, however, this shift does not appear to have dangerously unsettled the balance of land to power. However, when Henry came to rule ‘and the people growing more populous, [he] made them to range further in the discovery of the country’.⁶¹ Again, the proportion of land held by the monarchical element of the island’s government was further diluted by a growing population taking ownership of new, more distant lands. Under Henry’s rule, and as Harrington argued it would, social upheaval and political instability resulted, since the form of government had not altered accordingly. In fact, instead of devolving political power to the islanders, Henry introduces harsh new laws, and a rudimentary judiciary to enforce them. Power therefore shifted even further from the balance it needed to strike with land ownership in order to ensure political stability on the island.

The failure of the Pines' monarchy mirrored the reason why the Stuart monarchy was also far from glorious. As Harrington had argued of England, the balance of land had shifted into the hands of the people, and a commonwealth was the only form of government that suited those circumstances. William’s monarchical government was therefore unsuited to this shift in power balance, and just as had happened with the outbreak of the English Civil War, unrest had broken out on the island between ‘two great potent factions’, threatening ‘general ruin to the whole state’.⁶² Moreover, Neville presented William as powerless in the face of such unrest; despite having ‘interposed in the matter’ he ‘found his authority too weak to repress such disorders’. Where the centre of government, in this case the King (represented by William Pines), is weak, or, ‘where the hedge of government is once broken down’, it ends up being ‘the most vile [who] bear the greatest rule’.⁶³ It would only be a matter of time before the people of the Isle successfully overthrew their oppressor and established a commonwealth, just as the English had already tried to do, and the Dutch had managed successfully.

The instability of the island (whether England or Pines) was the result of an imbalance of the ownership of power and property; in order to ensure continued stability on the island, government on the island needed to be in the hands of the people. Only in doing so and subsequently achieving internal stability could the English hope to be able to match the expansionism of the Dutch. More importantly, the Dutch themselves were also aware of this, explaining why they continued to support the Pines monarchy. By keeping the English under monarchical government and therefore perpetual instability, the Dutch were free to continue

⁶¹ Ibid., 201.

⁶² Ibid., 207-8.

⁶³ Ibid., 207-8.

their seemingly relentless pursuit of trade and land. Although not an explicit call to arms against the Stuarts like *Court Maxims* was, Neville can still be clearly seen arguing that democratic republican government was, under the current circumstances, the only form of government that could achieve success and power.

Sidney set out the same arguments, albeit couched in much more explicit terms, in *Court Maxims*. What set this tract apart from *The Isle of Pines*, however, was the language used by Sidney to make his case against monarchical government. He spoke in a republican language that would have been much more familiar to the Dutch than the English; that of interest theory. Dutch republican interest theory was first explicitly expounded in the works of the brothers De la Court. The De la Court's most influential works were entitled *Political Balance* and *Political Discourses*, as well as *The Interest of Holland* (1662), which De Witt is also thought to have had a hand in. Indeed, these are considered to be the first clear expressions of a distinctly Dutch republican theory.⁶⁴ They argued that there did indeed exist a normative common interest, in this case the 'interest of Holland'. But the De la Courts also asserted that humanity more often than not sought to further self-interest at the cost of the common good.⁶⁵ They argued that self-interest as the defining characteristic of human behaviour could be reconciled with the indisputable interest of society at large. This entailed a crucial departure from the classical view that the quest for personal advantage should be subordinated to the common good. Ultimately the republican use for interest theory was summed up in this maxim: 'true Interest cannot be compassed by a Government, unless the generality of the People partake thereof'.⁶⁶ The self-interest of the people could only be realised under a republican form of government. Moreover, any form of monarchical government amounted to tyranny, as the tyrant sought to pursue interests at odds with the common good. As such, they explicitly rejected the stadholder as it represented monarchical government. Weststeijn has recently demonstrated that the De la Court's notion of self-interest was closely tied to commercial activity in the Dutch Republic; he argues that for the brothers, 'a true republic could only be a commercial republic'.⁶⁷ The Dutch Republic was able to thrive because of its commerce, its liberty and its peace, all of which were inherently connected. The political writings of the brothers De la Court were ultimately a 'radical plea

⁶⁴ Haitzma Mulier, 'The Language of Seventeenth Century Republicanism', 188.

⁶⁵ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 175

⁶⁶ Pieter de la Court and Johan de Witt, *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland*, trans. by John Campbell, (London, 1746), 2.

⁶⁷ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 4.

for a truly republican government, devoid of any monarchical element such as a stadholder, for far-reaching religious toleration and comprehensive economic liberty'.⁶⁸

Philalethes recognised that the Dutch experience in freeing themselves from tyranny and their subsequent prosperity was a dangerous example to England. The Dutch had, after all,

with such difficulties oppugned with the vast powers of Spain, and have with small helps attained so great prosperity, England, if so governed, may promise itself incomparable more, abounding in all they want, and being free from all inconveniences they suffered or feared, apprehending no opposition but that of the Stuart family, which is left weak and naked the first moment we come to discover its reign inconsistent with our welfare.⁶⁹

In other words, as soon as the English looked to the Dutch experience and realised how easy it would be to overthrow the Stuarts and the huge gains in prosperity and liberty that could be garnered from doing so, the English monarchy would be doomed. The only way to prevent such a thing happening, therefore, was 'by destroying Holland'. Philalethes proposed going about this by manipulating the private interests of 'monarchs' (for ease of terminology, I will use the word monarch here to refer to the position of Orange within the constitution, assuming that was what Sidney was suggesting Orange would become). It was in the interests of both Stuart and Orange to 'make the prince of Orange master' of the Dutch people', Philalethes argued, because it enabled them to 'kill two birds with one stone: destroy them we hate and fear in Holland, and set up the title and power of the Orange family, that may help us to destroy our more hated and feared enemies at home'.⁷⁰ Philalethes therefore suggested that it was in the private interest of Charles to suppress republican government in the Dutch Republic as this would both crush any examples of alternative, and perhaps better government, and that it was in the private interest of William of Orange to support Charles, who would help him regain his power and position as 'monarch' in the United Provinces.

Moreover, this connection of interest between the two dynasties was considered by Philalethes to be historic, if not almost hereditary. Philalethes demonstrated how James I and Prince Maurice allied to get rid of Oldenbarnevelt, in order to further continue the advance of the House of Orange. Moreover, 'the same design went on in king Charles and Henry, prince of Orange'.⁷¹ Charles I continued this policy, marrying his daughter Mary to Frederick Henry's son, William, on the condition that Charles help make him Lord of the United Provinces, and then he would employ all his power to make Charles absolute master in

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁹ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 162.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 162.

⁷¹ Ibid., 163. He means here Frederick Henry, stadholder from 1625 to 1647.

England.⁷² This connection of interests between the two families was not therefore a new phenomenon, but rather representative of the fact that monarchs pursue their own private interests, and that these interests invariably involved increasing their own personal power and infringing upon the liberty and wellbeing of their people.

The problem was that ‘the power of a prince and subsistence of their commonwealth is inconsistent’, as Philalethes clearly recognised. He acknowledged that ‘that their liberty is their life’ and that this liberty had led to their ‘vast revenues, treasure and credit’.⁷³

Philalethes was repeating the arguments of the De la Courts, but from the opposing perspective. He knew that the people’s liberty, and by extension their and the nation’s economic success depended on not having a monarch; he therefore had to argue that both of these were bad in order to justify his continued support for Charles II and monarchical government in general. Philalethes believed that a monarchy ought to keep the people ‘poor, weak, miserable, and few [so] they will be humble and obedient’. Otherwise, he warned, ‘all people grow proud when numerous and rich; they think themselves masters of all. The least injury puts them in a fury’.⁷⁴ He argued that wealthy cities were cities that revolted against government: ‘in all times, seditions have begun in the richest and most populous cities. All the tumults in the Low Countries began in Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels and other principal cities’.⁷⁵ The evidence of the connection between liberty and commerce was evident to Philalethes in the example of Dutch recent experience: ‘Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges are almost desolate by loss of trade, whilst Amsterdam gaining it flourishes in number of men, riches and power...by increase of trade, it is of a poor town grown in short time the richest and most powerful city in the world...this art is well understood by the Hollanders’.⁷⁶ The connection between commerce, liberty and power is explicitly made here.

Sidney as Eunomius readily accepted that ‘the king will endeavour to ruin the United Provinces and set up his nephew’, suggesting that the connections between the two houses was widely understood by all parties.⁷⁷ On the other hand, he was able to state explicitly that liberty and economic success were good things, and that it was in the private and public interests of both the English and the Dutch people to join together to ensure that monarchical private interest never be allowed sovereignty in their respective nations.

⁷² Sidney makes a mistake in his tract; he states that Charles married his daughter to Frederick Henry. Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 163

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

the king seeking the ruin of the English trade and people, and the ruin of the Holland commonwealth, these two nations may see their joint interest against him and Orange, and unite in counsels and action joining their hands, hearts, and heads to extirpate the two detested families of Stuart and Orange, who, like serpents, as soon as they recover a little vigour, tear out the bowels of them that cherish them. The opposition between us and them, their concernment and ours is universal and irreconcilable.⁷⁸

For Sidney, there was no question that the people of England could have no peace while Orange and Stuart posed a serpent-like threat to their liberty. The two would continue to collaborate, acting upon their private interests, and by extension, against the public interest, until the Dutch Republic was destroyed and both nations subjected to tyranny and oppression. The interests of a monarch and the people could never be reconciled and as a result, republican government was the only way in which to ensure self-interest and the public good were in harmony.

Like Neville, Sidney also had a European perspective to his republicanism. Where Neville was concerned about England's slipping prestige in Europe, Sidney was more concerned about the balance of power on the continent more broadly, although he couched his concerns in interest theory once again. Eunomius argued that the Dutch and the English had a common interest in uniting against the ambitions of France in order to maintain the European balance of power: 'the interest of every nation that cannot pretend to a universal monarchy or more limited superiority over its neighbours, is to keep any others from attaining it and maintain its own freedom and independency on any for protection'.⁷⁹ Sidney therefore saw allying with the Dutch not just as a strategic move in terms of the future of English government, but also as a means of preventing England from entering into a war that would ultimately be disastrous to England and the balance of power in Europe. Commerce likely played a significant role here.⁸⁰ In a lengthy exposition, Eunomius outlined exactly why Philaethes' plan to seek war with the Dutch was a bad idea. He goes through numerous European countries, including Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Copenhagen, Prussia and Poland, explaining in detail why, because of their important trade connections, none of them would side with England, against the Dutch, in a war.⁸¹ From this speech, we can extrapolate that Sidney placed huge emphasis on the power and influence that trade provided. Half of Europe had to remain allied with the Dutch in order to maintain their own economic interests. Fighting the Dutch therefore made little sense. If the English and the Dutch could unite and fight the French,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 176.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 155.

⁸⁰ Kustaa Multamäki, *Towards Great Britain: Commerce and Conquest in the Thought of Algernon Sidney and Charles Davenant* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1999), 110-1.

⁸¹ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 173-74.

Sidney argued that the English and the Dutch would benefit from the trade opportunities that would present. Eunomius stated that the 'king of France knows that in losing the benefit of trade with Holland, by which all the maritime provinces receive great advantages and his own revenues much increase, those provinces might be discontented and his revenue much diminished'.⁸² Trade was therefore rapidly becoming, in Sidney's opinion, the currency of European power.

This leads us to consider what exactly it was that Sidney saw in the Dutch Republic. Although in his earlier years he had pursued an aggressive foreign policy against the Dutch, his admiration for them at this point in the 1660s seems to suggest a change in opinion. Sidney believed that England ought to be an expansionist republic, as republican Rome had been. However, 'unlike Rome, the republic of the De la Courts is not a commonwealth for the increase of territory, but for the increase of trade'.⁸³ The Dutch Republic therefore more resembled the commercial and peace loving Athenian commonwealth than the Roman Republic. Indeed Alan Houston has argued that Sidney viewed the Dutch as a commonwealth for trade and peace, which he must reject because he favoured territorial expansion.⁸⁴ However, it is worth examining just what we mean here by expansion. Although the Roman example demonstrated military conquest as expansion, there is also surely an argument to suggest that trade and commercial interests must also seek out expansion, especially in city states or republics such as the United Provinces which lack natural resources for trade. Recently, Kustaa Multamäki has argued that defining the Dutch Republic as a commonwealth for peace and trade places limits on the understanding of their government and overlooks part of Sidney's argument.⁸⁵ Eunomius stated that 'the greatest advantage to their state is the increase of people that they may have the more trade, and of that trade they may have the more people'.⁸⁶ Thus, he suggests, Houston underestimates the effect that trade could have upon a commonwealth; in this case, trade proved to be the catalyst to expansion, which in turn helped trade, which in turn aided expansion and on and on until the Dutch monopolised the world. This historiographical development leads me to suggest that the aggressive military foreign policy against the Dutch in the early 1650s and the suggestions of alliance between the two nations in the mid-1660s might not be as conflicting as they first appear. Both positions acknowledge the benefits of an expansionist republican foreign policy, but come at

⁸² *Ibid.*, 173.

⁸³ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republican*, 219.

⁸⁴ Alan Craig Houston, *Algernon Sidney and the Republican Heritage in England and America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 160-62.

⁸⁵ Multamäki, *Towards Great Britain*, 21, 103-19.

⁸⁶ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 74.

it from different perspectives: firstly that of empirical expansion and the second from economic expansion. Both sought the same thing – an aggressive foreign policy that would increase English power and influence across Europe and beyond. This is not to say that had England suddenly become a republic in the 1660s that Sidney would have continued forevermore to pursue an alliance with the Dutch, but rather to suggest that his experiences in the Dutch Republic might have opened his mind to the differing understandings of what an expansionist commonwealth might look like.

Conclusions

In setting *Court Maxims* and *The Isle of Pines* alongside one another in this analysis two things become particularly clear. First, it demonstrates just how large the Dutch republic seemed to loom in the English republican narrative in the post-Restoration years. In both texts, the Dutch Republic is presented as an aspirational type of commonwealth, one that was raised in glory and power by its military and commercial prowess. Both Neville and Sidney saw the Dutch as the answers to the problems, albeit in different ways. Sidney saw this literally; he engaged with the republican language of that country in order to try and persuade its people and leaders to support the overthrow of the Stuarts and the re-establishment of the English commonwealth. Neville saw salvation in the Dutch example less literally, instead recognising that the example of the Dutch – their military strength, their naval prowess, their commercial power and particularly their internal stability – served as the ideal counterpoint for shaming England into addressing her own political problems under monarchy.

The presence and positive portrayal of the Dutch Republic in these two tracts also supports the findings of Chapter 4. In both *Court Maxims* and *The Isle of Pines* the Venetian Republic was all but invisible, and the United Provinces remained at the forefront as a contemporary example of republican government. However, the ways in which those prior to the Restoration engaged with it was considerably different to how Sidney and Neville did in the aftermath of the Stuarts' return. While in the 1650s the focus was primarily on the constitutions and institutions of the Dutch Republic, this was not and could not be the case in the 1660s – the altered political context simply would not allow it. Instead, Sidney and Neville focused on the immediate and recent historical experiences of the Dutch. They did not seek to construct a republican blueprint of government like Harrington, but rather sought to demonstrate that republican government was superior to monarchical government, which was evidenced by the fact that the Dutch were militarily and commercially far more successful than the English had been since the monarchy had been restored.

The aims of these two men in writing their tracts were different. Sidney was explicit in arguing that the overthrowing of the Stuart monarch and the re-establishment of republican government free from monarchical interest was the only way to save both England and the Dutch from years of tyranny, slavery, and oppression. Although much more subtle, *The Isle of Pines* was also a commentary on the dangers of poorly restrained monarchy for England. Using Harringtonian language, Neville argued that England would never be politically or socially stable under Charles II if he maintained the same degree of power because the balance of land had shifted too far into the hands of the people. As such, they could never hope to match the power of the Dutch, who easily outshone the English islanders in naval and military powers, as well as in their industry and colonisation. Until the monarchical element had been rectified in their government, the English could neither enjoy liberty nor political stability. Nor too could England expect to be a major player on the European stage.

Chapter 6: The Exclusion Crisis

In the opening years of the 1680s, both Neville and Sidney were again motivated to put pen to paper and set about writing new republican tracts. Again, they were writing with the same context, this time the so-called Exclusion Crisis. However, just as in the 1660s, they were writing for considerably different purposes. Neville's *Plato Redivivus* was a more restrained, cautious republican tract in which the author was very aware that he was writing under a monarchical government, even if it that monarchy appeared to be in crisis. Sidney on the other hand, true to form, wrote *Discourses Concerning Government*, a tract that has been described as the only writing of the seventeenth century to not only justify, but encourage rebellion.¹ It was a tract so damning and inflammatory that it was used as a means to secure his subsequent execution. However, there is more to tie together *Plato Redivivus* and *Discourses Concerning Government* than might perhaps meet the eye. Both Sidney and Neville, to differing degrees and certainly different levels of success, sought to conceal their true intentions in the way in which they presented their political writings.

Single Person Government: Revisited

Both tracts were written in the context of the Exclusion Crisis, and this necessarily informs our understanding of them. In particular, this context forced a re-engagement with what has been argued to be one of the key themes of the English republican tradition: single person government and the rejection of monarchy. In fact, the Exclusion Crisis has been described by Scott as a repeat of the arguments that led up to the outbreak of the civil war and the regicide, namely debates surrounding popery and arbitrary government. These fears centred on the issue of succession. Charles II was ageing but had no legitimate heir, meaning that the throne would pass to his brother James, Duke of York, who was suspected of Catholicism. Two solutions were offered to this crisis. One was, as the name of the crisis suggests, to exclude James from succession, and name the Duke of Monmouth, the eldest illegitimate son of Charles II, as heir in his stead. Others argued that a more constitutional approach would achieve the same ends.

In *Plato Redivivus*, two of the main characters take these two positions. The dialogue sets up a debate between the Doctor and the English Gentleman about the appropriateness and usefulness of excluding the Duke of York from succession, and replacing him with the Duke

¹ Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677-1683* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 203.

of Monmouth, who was a staunch Protestant. These Whig Exclusionists, represented by the Doctor, saw exclusion as the cure to the disease that threatened the health of the English monarchy. The English Gentleman, who represented the voice of Neville himself, disagreed with the Doctor's diagnosis, and argued that the dangers that the exclusionists believed James represented, namely tyranny and popery, were merely symptoms of a greater sickness, and that exclusion would not address its root cause. Instead, Neville took a seemingly Harringtonian stance, arguing that because the balance of property had shifted to the hands of the people, the king ought to surrender some of his powers to them. In placing limitations on the power of the monarch, he would never be able to 'violate the laws'; in doing so, they would produce 'an infallible remedy both against popery and arbitrary power'.² In setting up this primary narrative, Neville therefore made *Plato Redivivus* appear as though its only commentary was on the Exclusion Crisis, thereby remaining very much within the realms of the immediate political, monarchical context.

As a result of this context, Neville remained cautious and explicitly declared that 'there are not a more loyal and faithful people to their prince in the whole world, than ours are'.³ However, there is more than just expediency at play here. Although Neville endorsed the Harringtonian idea that empire equalled dominion in *The Isle of Pines*, this does not necessarily preclude an individual figurehead sitting at the top of a commonwealth, and as a result, Neville's position on this was not exactly clear in the 1660s. However, if we look at the way in which Neville presented the Dutch Republic in *Plato Redivivus*, we can get a clearer sense of his stance on this. He appears to have seen in the stadholder a monarchical element of government that functioned effectively, having upon its powers clear restraints and limitations. In his fairly brief consideration of the Dutch constitution, Neville made very clear that power in the United Provinces rested with the 'people' (broadly defined): 'every one of these cities is a sovereignty; governed by an optimacy, consisting of the chief citizens' who have 'continued to govern those towns, time out of mind'. Sovereignty in the Dutch Republic was therefore not just highly decentralised, but also lay in the hands of the 'chief' citizens.⁴ Since gaining their liberty from the Spanish, the Dutch 'have instituted an artificial minister of their own, whom they still call stadtholder; and make choice of him in their provincial

² Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 160.

³ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴ 'Chief' here could suggest an aristocracy of wealth/class; however, the Dutch theory of 'True Freedom' did not necessarily understand it this way, portraying it more as an optimacy of virtue. Neville does not really provide enough context to make a bold assertion on how Neville viewed this; however, the extreme decentralisation he outlines here, combined with the fact that he explicitly recognises that the nobility (as traditionally understood in England as landowners) possessed only minimal influence, might suggest that Neville viewed the sovereignty as lying in the hands of the people.

assemblies, and for form sake defer something to him, as the appropriation of their *Skepen* and other magistrates, and some other matters'.⁵ There are several noteworthy points to take from this. First, that after their independence, the Dutch people still continued to have a single figurehead, or 'artificial minister' at the apex of government. Moreover, the name stadholder continued to be used even with its connections to their years of oppression. Similarly, this position was held 'in the succession of the princes of Orange' or 'some other of the house of Nassau', again connecting this to older, semi-hereditary positions. Second, the choice of the next stadholder rested in the hands of the people; although the position was usually held by the Orange family, there was a formal process of selecting the stadholder which made clear that he was accountable to the people. Finally, the choice of the powers granted to the stadholder remained in the hands of the people, and those that were offered to him were of minimal importance.

The example of the Dutch stadholder therefore appeared to be of comparable nature and utility for Neville. Indeed, the Dutch example was so comparable to English experience that he described how the United Provinces was 'so oddly set together, and so composed of a state intended for a monarchy'.⁶ Borrowing from this almost-monarchical structure that the Dutch had put together would reduce the king to the position of an 'artificial minister', and would not necessarily prevent the Stuarts from continuing to hold this position, as the Orange family had done. The Dutch example even demonstrated how they had been able to actively intervene in the nature of their constitutional structures in 1650 when the majority of the provinces, at Holland's persuasion, abolished the position of stadholderate. Moreover, they had since reinstated the position when William II's son, also William (III), became of age. All of which occurred without any significant political, social, or military upheaval. Moreover, over the years in which William III had been stadholder, he had tried in several ways to impose his own will and agenda, but rarely to any significant avail, with William frequently being forced to confront the limitations on his own power.⁷ The Dutch Republic thereby provided Neville with perhaps the most explicit English republican argument for the value of a single figurehead, accountable to the people, at the top of a republican constitution.

As we have seen, Neville's approach to the Exclusion Crisis was to work within the given constitutional structure, and as a result it was necessary to 'totally exclude a civil war from

⁵ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 105.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷ Simon Groenveld, 'William III as Stadholder: Prince or Minister?', in *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context*, ed. by Esther Mijers and David Onnekink (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 18–37.

being any of the remedies' to the existing political crisis.⁸ Sidney, on the other hand, was typically less willing to work within the existing political context. Although his *Discourses* was ostensibly a refutation of Filmer's *Patriarcha*, Sidney barely bothered to hide the calls to rebellion that were present within the text. Although the tract was never finished nor published in Sidney's lifetime, the contents were still dangerous enough that they served as an extraordinary 'witness' at Sidney's trial for treason in 1683. Within the tract, Sidney argued that the people had not just a right but a duty to disobey bad laws and even to depose or kill a tyrant. Thus he argued:

the whole body therefore of a nation cannot be tied to any other obedience than is consistent with the common good, according to their own judgment: and having never been subdued or brought to terms of peace with their magistrates, they cannot be said to revolt or rebel against them to whom they owe no more than seems good to themselves, and who are nothing of or by themselves, more than other men.⁹

But Sidney did not necessarily argue that the constitution could not possess a monarchical or magisterial element. Indeed he asserted that 'there never was a good government in the world, that did not consist of the three simple species'.¹⁰ An element of monarchical government was therefore accepted even by Sidney, who advocated killing monarchs who became tyrannical. The issue was accountability. The value of this could be shown through the Doge. He demonstrates how the 'dukes of Venice have certainly a part in the government, and could not be called magistrates if they had not. They are said to be supreme; all laws and publick acts bear their name'.¹¹ They are, however, 'so well known to be under the power of the law, that divers of them have been put to death for transgressing it'.¹² He demonstrated that the Doge and all the magistrates of Venice were not able to 'commit undue acts' or 'endeavour to overthrow the law', since men, using their judgement, would recognise them as against the laws of the country, and would ultimately hold them accountable. The citizens of Venice were, and always had been,

born and bred in families that never knew a master, who act for themselves, and have a part in all the good and evil that befalls the commonwealth, and know that if it be destroyed, they must perish, or at least that all changes are to their prejudice, do neglect the publicks interest, as thinking that the whole not depending of any one of them, things will be well enough governed, though they attend only their private benefit.¹³

⁸ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 80.

⁹ Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. by Thomas G. West (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996), 519.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹² *Ibid.*, 223.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 274.

The wisdom of Venice, he suggested came from ‘a knowledge, that whosoever offers an injury to a private person, or attempts a publick mischief, is exposed to the impartial and inexorable power of the law; whereas the chief work of an absolute monarch is to place himself above the law’.¹⁴ If they ‘prove false’, the dukes ‘ought rather to be hanged, than suffered to accomplish the villainies they design’. If this is the case for ‘the highest magistrates’ in other republics, why, he asked ‘should not the same be in all others, by what name soever they are called?’¹⁵ The ‘power of the duke is so circumscribed, that in 1300 years no one except Falerio and Tiepoli has dared to attempt anything against the laws; and they were immediately suppressed with little commotion in the city’.¹⁶

In some ways, then, the line that Sidney was advocating was not far from that which Neville had proposed; it suggested that a monarch could be held accountable through popular government and power curtailng laws. Under the monarchical context of Charles II’s reign, the Doge and the stadholder became increasingly relevant and useful counterpoints of single person rule. Here were two examples of individual figureheads at the top of a republican government who were restrained and limited in such a way that they did not endanger the common good. In addition, the recent experiences of the Dutch with William III as the reinstalled stadholder, who often fought against his chains but could rarely break them, served as an example to the English that there was hope for a single figurehead, even a reinstated Stuart monarch. English republicans in the 1680s were therefore engaging with the same debates that had been ongoing in the 1640s and 1650s; exclusivist republicanism was still far from the dominant narrative or language.

Ends of Government

Although Sidney included Venice as a useful example of republican over monarchical government, it was not an ideal model for him. For one thing, what mattered most to Sidney was not longevity, but value: that something endured interminably did not automatically make it a good thing.¹⁷ While for Harrington, Venice was the prime exemplar of republican government because of its continued existence, this was not enough for Sidney. He accepted tumults and political upheaval as necessary to the maintenance of liberty: ‘the wisdom of man is imperfect, and unable to foresee the effects that may recede from an infinite variety of accidents, which according to emergencies, necessarily require new constitutions, to prevent

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 522.

¹⁷ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis*, 230.

or cure the mischiefs arising from them, or to advance a good that at the first was not thought on...changes therefore are inevitable'.¹⁸ However, as the title of section seventeen of *The Discourses* attests, while 'good Governments admit of Changes in the Superstructures...the Foundations remain unchangeable'. Indeed, where his earlier contemporaries had maintained a particular concern with the constitutional aspects of contemporary republics, Sidney argued that it was the ends of government that would really dictate their success.

Following Machiavellian principles, Sidney divided his commonwealths into four basic types: those designed for war and conquest (Rome and Israel), those aimed at defensive war (Sparta), those focused on war and trade (Carthage) and those that prioritised peace and trade (Venice).¹⁹ He considered which of these ends is best, asking:

whether it were better to constitute a commonwealth for war or for trade; and of such as intend war, whether those are most to be praised who prepare for defence only, or those who design by conquest to enlarge their dominions. Or, if they admit trade, whether they should propose the acquisition of riches for their ultimate end, and depend upon foreign or mercenary forces to defend them; or to be as helps to enable their own people to carry on those wars, in which they may frequently be engaged'.²⁰

Ultimately he came to the conclusion that 'the best judges of these matters have always given preference to those constitutions that principally intend at war, and make use of trade as assisting to that end: and think it better to aim at conquest, rather than simply to stand upon their own defence'.²¹ Wars for conquest and trade were consequently the ideal ends of a commonwealth. On the other hand, those who desired peace in order to trade, and who as a result hired mercenary soldiers to fight any wars that they were inadvertently entangled in, were held lowest in his esteem, for those who 'serve for wages, often betray their masters in distress, and always want the courage and industry which is found in those who fight for their own interests, and are to have a part in the victory'.²²

However, when considering the ends of government, the Dutch Republic proved to be somewhat problematic for Sidney and also for Neville. Both men had portrayed that commonwealth as a powerful military (particularly naval) and commercial force in their 1660s writings. In *Plato Redivivus*, Neville described how the provinces united under the Union of Utrecht only as a means of defence against the 'the cruelty and oppression of the Spaniard'. As such he argued that it seemed 'to be composed only for necessity as a state of

¹⁸ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, 173.

¹⁹ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis*, 236.

²⁰ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, 204.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

²² *Ibid.*, 198.

war, [which] has made modern statesmen conjecture, that it not be very practicable in times of peace and security'.²³ This was therefore a republic that could only function under war conditions, whereby the different provinces were united by a common enemy and continued active defence of liberty. Sidney similarly had argued that the 'the United Provinces is not to be contested with at sea, and able very powerfully to hinder progress by land', but that 'in all business of war or peace with any nation do principally consider trade'.²⁴ By this account, the Dutch Republic most closely resembled Carthage, a commonwealth for war and trade. However, Sidney created a new category for federated commonwealths like the Dutch and Swiss, which he defined as a 'commonwealth composed of many cities, associated together, and living *aequo jure*'.²⁵ These sorts of commonwealth, however 'are more hardly preserved in peace' since 'disputes may arise among them concerning limits, jurisdiction, and the like. They cannot always be equally concerned in the same things. The injuries offer'd to one do not equally affect all'.²⁶ Internal peace was therefore not something that ought to be expected from a federated republic like the United Provinces. However, all things considered, 'we may safely conclude that their state is as well settled as anything among men can be...still continuing in their union in spite of all their endeavours that have been used to divide them, give us an example of such steadiness in practise and principle, as is hardly parallel'd in the world'.²⁷

According to Sidney's understanding then, when considering the Dutch Republic from a non-constitutional perspective, it was a commonwealth that excelled in war and trade; however, when considered from a more analytical, constitutional position, it did not quite fall under this category. Instead, it was defined almost exclusively by its federal nature, and the resultant dangers that this could cause to the internal peace of the republic. Although he had alluded to these in *Court Maxims* – in seeking to further divide the Dutch provinces by 'setting up private interest in each' in order to create 'faction' and thereby 'dissolve the union' – Sidney had dismissed it due to the 'particular regard to the preservation of the liberties and privileges of each'.²⁸

There was a similar shift in the way in which the Venetian Republic was portrayed between *Court Maxims* and *Discourses Concerning Government*. In *Court Maxims*, Venice is not

²³ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 105.

²⁴ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 171, 74-75.

²⁵ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, 206. Meaning with equal right.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁸ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 170-72.

mentioned with any regularity, but when it is, it is praised for its strength in military and trading pursuits. In order to demonstrate the strength of commonwealths in warfare, Sidney used the United Provinces and England, but also, and perhaps unexpectedly, Venice:

The one of the United Provinces, defending themselves against all the power of Spain, and increasing in strength and riches during the war. The other of Venice, warring with little loss for twenty years against the dreadful power of the Ottoman empire. And the English commonwealth, which in five years conquered absolutely Scotland and Ireland, and in so many battles broke the Hollanders that they were brought to the utmost weakness'.²⁹

The war to which Sidney referred here between the Venetians and the Ottomans is the Cretan War. The war, which had begun in 1645, was being fought over the valuable Venetian possession of Crete and was still raging in the mid-1660s when Sidney was writing. Although the Venetians had lost control of most of the island in the early years of the war, they had managed to maintain their hold on the island's most valuable possession, the port of Candia. Sidney's emphasis on the 'dreadful power' of the Ottoman Empire thus highlights the admiration Sidney had for this feat, so much so that he repeats his admiration later in *Court Maxims*: 'they have been able for twenty years to war with little loss against all the power of the Ottoman empire'.³⁰ Given the enormous size of the Ottoman Empire, the strength of the Venetians was indeed being demonstrated through their ability to hold off the Ottoman forces. That he held Venetian achievements in the same esteem as those of the early English commonwealth, acts as a testament to his admiration.

Sidney secondly praised the Venetians for their ability to utilise trade to assist them with this war. Speaking of Amsterdam in that other famous contemporary commonwealth, the Dutch Republic, he says: 'by increase of trade it is of a poor town grown in short time the richest and most powerful city in the world'. Moreover, he asserted that 'this art is well understood by the Venetians'.³¹ Sidney clearly saw Venice as a powerful trading country, whose riches were assisting them in their war with the Ottomans. Additionally, he demonstrated how a lack of trade weakened a commonwealth, and particularly its people. Using the contrary example of the Duke of Florence, Sidney showed how 'following the maxims of a politic prince' the Duke of Florence had 'by destroying trade ruined many he suspected, forced others to change their habitation, and so weakened the spirited commonwealth's men of Florence that he reigns securely'. Trade provided men with an economic motivation to engage in the defence of the republic. Venice, then, 'according to the custom of a well-governed commonwealth,

²⁹ Ibid., 18.

³⁰ Ibid., 74.

³¹ Ibid., 74.

endeavoured to increase trade and people'. This 'succeeds so well' that 'with those helps' they had been able to defend Candia for two decades.³²

Politically, the war was also gaining momentum and wider support by the 1660s. Sidney's time in Venice coincided with the end of the Franco-Spanish War, after which individual soldiers and companies of men were responding to Venetian calls-to-arms. The French were particularly responsive to this, as can be demonstrated in an account written by a gentleman who served 'in the first expedition of the *French Forces* under the Command of M. de la *Fueillade*'.³³ Simultaneously though, there was talk of a defensive and offensive alliance between the English and the Ottoman empire against the French and Venetians.³⁴ The war was beginning to resemble a sort of 'crusade' against the Ottomans, and Sidney would undoubtedly have been infuriated that the restored Stuart monarchy was prepared to support what he perceived to be the wrong side. Although he had been prepared to support the new monarch, Sidney would not have been any more endeared to Charles II by this act of betrayal. In supporting slavery over liberty, Sidney perhaps foresaw a rapid backslide into absolute and tyrannical government, a total abandonment of everything the English commonwealth stood for. Moreover, by the time Sidney came to write *Court Maxims*, the Cretan War was becoming increasingly romanticised on the continent.³⁵ Numerous accounts of Venice and the defence of Candia were published in both English and French, suggesting a widespread interest in the affairs of this small Venetian outpost.³⁶ Although the majority of these accounts were written in the later 1660s, after Sidney would have written *Court Maxims*, the number of publications, and the length and detail of each one, suggests that there was a wide audience for this material, and that it was a topic of much debate in the cities of Europe at the time. Moreover, the accounts predominantly sung the glories of the Venetians, particularly the works of Jean Gailhard and the Earl of Castlemaine.

Read in the light of the later defeat of the Venetians by a reinvigorated Ottoman army, Sidney's later, and much more negative, view of Venice hints at his disappointment that such

³² *Ibid.*, 74.

³³ Anon., *A Relation of the Siege of Candia From the first Expedition of the French Forces under the Command of M. de la Fueillade, Duke of Roannez, to its Surrender, the 27th of September, 1669* (London: 1670).

³⁴ Halil Inalcik, 'The Heyday and Decline of the Ottoman Empire', in *The Cambridge History of Islam. Volume 1A: The Central Islamic Lands from Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War*, ed. by P. M. Holt, Ann Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 351.

³⁵ Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 410.

³⁶ See for instance: Jean Gailhard, *The Present State of the Republick of Venice... With a Relation of the Present War in Candia* (London: 1669); Anon., *A Relation of the Siege of Candia* (1670); Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine, *An Account of the Present War Between the Venetians and Turk; with the State of Candie* (London: 1666); Anon., *A Description of Candia, in its Ancient and Modern State: With an Account of the Siege thereof* (London: 1670).

a glorious war ended in a decidedly inglorious defeat. After three years of unrelenting siege warfare by the Ottomans, and without consulting the Venetian mainland, the Candian fort surrendered in 1669. The peace terms that were negotiated, though surprisingly generous, left the Venetians with nothing to show for its twenty-five years of warfare. The criticisms that were levelled at the Venetian republic in the *Discourses* represent the specific factors which led to the loss of Crete. First, Sidney complained of how the Venetians are often ‘unwillingly enter’d into wars’ as they had been into the Cretan War by Maltese piracy.³⁷ Secondly, he was critical of Venetian reliance on mercenary soldiers, particularly of their being ‘always forced too much to depend upon foreign potentates’.³⁸ Indeed, Venetian over reliance on French support, particularly in the latter stages of the war, proved to be disastrous for the republic. An anonymous French account of the Candian siege highlights the problems that mercenary soldiers brought with them, and the havoc they wreaked. The author stated that ‘we began to complain, that instead of attempting some brave and considerable enterprize, as they had promised us, we were...employ’d night and day on trifling services, in which we lost the best of our men’.³⁹ This suggests that men went to seek glory for themselves, rather than to seek the glory and victory of Venice. Not only this, but there were tensions between the commanders themselves: ‘Mr. Fueillade...desired we might have the guard at the bastion of S. Andre: but the Knights of Malta and other Officers of the Town, who had had the keeping it a long time before, oppos’d it very strongly’.⁴⁰ It appears that the criticisms levelled at Venice by Sidney in the *Discourses* were a direct reaction and response to the factors which led to the loss of the Cretan War. As such, Sidney complained, the Venetians were wont to ‘buy peace with ignominious and prejudicial conditions, and sometimes to fear the infidelity of their own commanders, no less than the violence of their enemies’.⁴¹

The shift in Sidney’s attitude to Venice could therefore be related to the specific experience of that republic in war and the subsequent disillusion with Venice after its loss. We can only speculate as to whether this might have changed his categorisation of state aims. Certainly he never seems to have considered Venice as a commonwealth for conquest: ‘Venice in our days has nothing to fear more than the enlargement of its dominion.’ Referring to Venetian expansion in the fifteenth century into northern Italy, he condemned ‘the ill-measured design of gaining the Polesine and the Ghiradadda’ since it ‘brought that noble city to the brink of

³⁷ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, 203.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁹ Anon., *A Relation of the Siege of Candia*, 36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴¹ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, 205.

destruction'.⁴² However, its success in fighting a defensive war against the powerful Ottoman Empire might have led to a more conflicted categorisation of the Venetian Republic. In the end, however, the loss of the Cretan War marked a turning point in Venetian history. Their resources were sorely depleted, and after a couple more brief skirmishes, Venice began pursuing a policy of neutrality which would continue through the eighteenth century, further accelerating her decline.⁴³ Never again would that commonwealth be considered a global power.

This shift in the way in which Venice was portrayed therefore reflected a wider disillusionment with the history and politics of Venice. The myth of Venice was now significantly in the decline, and the anti-myth was beginning to dictate the narrative. This cultural shift makes it all the more interesting that in *Plato Redivivus*, Neville chose to have the final of his three characters as a Noble Venetian. The rest of this chapter will take a closer look at the characters, themes and political intentions of this text, particularly in relation to the myth and anti-myth of Venice.

Venice and the Anti-Myth in *Plato Redivivus*

Plato Redivivus has more often been connected ideologically to Harrington's *Oceana* rather than anything of its own period, like the *Discourses*. In fact, so closely connected were the two works, that in the preface to *Plato Redivivus*, it was necessary to defend Neville against accusations of plagiarism.⁴⁴ The publisher composed a letter in which he denied lifting wholesale ideas from *Oceana*: 'My next doubt was; that a considerable part of this treatise being a repetition of a great many principles and positions out of *Oceana*, the author would be discredited for borrowing from another and the sale of the book hindered'. He claimed that 'whosoever sets himself to study politics, must do it by reading history, and observing in it the several turns and revolutions of government; and then the cause of such change will be visible and obvious, that we need not to impute theft to any man that finds it out'.⁴⁵ This connection between Harrington and Neville has continued down the centuries, from Neville's contemporaries who accused him of having 'a finger in that pye' of *Oceana*, to modern historians who have termed Neville a neo-Harringtonian.⁴⁶

⁴² Sidney, *Court Maxims*, 16.

⁴³ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 557-60, 576-88.

⁴⁴ See Mark Knights, 'John Starkey and Ideological Networks in Late Seventeenth-Century England', *Media History*, 11, 1-2 (2005), 132-33.

⁴⁵ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 68.

⁴⁶ Allegedly Hobbes as quoted by Aubrey; see Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, 283.

Neville certainly did utilise many Harringtonian principles in *Plato Redivivus*, but defining Neville against Harrington has become increasingly problematic, since it predetermined the parameters within which Neville has been examined. This is particularly true in the case of Caroline Robbins and Pocock, both of whom drew connections between Harrington and those who inherited his ideas from the late seventeenth into the eighteenth centuries. Neville's case is somewhat complicated by the fact that although he was a contemporary and friend of Harrington, his intellectual contributions to republican theory apply not to the period of the English republic, but to the later constitutional crisis regarding Charles II.⁴⁷ This approach has overlooked crucial ways in which Harrington and Neville differed. By exploring the way in which Neville portrayed Venice, and in particular through a close analysis of the character of the Noble Venetian, it will be possible to demonstrate that in fact *Plato Redivivus* undermined Harrington's idealisation of Venice and in places had more in common with anti-myth tropes. I will consider why Neville took this position with regards to Venice, and what this might mean for his 'neo-Harringtonianism'.

It is important to point out that the recent work on Neville by Mahlberg has done an excellent job of assessing Neville's political thought in its own right. By assessing his body of work as a whole, she has highlighted the jocular and satirical nature of his writings, particularly in works like *The Parliament of Ladies*.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, *Plato Redivivus* has universally been read as a serious political text. Whilst it undoubtedly strikes a more serious and intellectual tone than his previous work, it is a mistake to ignore Neville's wry, satirical and sarcastic voice in this text when it is so present in his other political writings. This jocular nature will therefore be taken into account throughout my examination of the characterisation of the figures represented in *Plato Redivivus*.

We can learn a lot about the themes and form of *Plato Redivivus*, as well as Neville's approach, even before we reach the main body of text. The full title of the tract is: *Plato Redivivus: Or, A Dialogue Concerning Government, wherein, by Observations drawn from other Kingdoms and States both Ancient and Modern, an Endeavour is used to Discover the Present Politick Distemper of our Own, with the Causes, and Remedies*. From this, we can draw some important observations. First, that Neville's starting point for his analysis of England's troubles will be drawn 'from other Kingdoms and States both Ancient and Modern'. This certainly mirrors the method that Harrington described in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, particularly 'The Council of Legislators', indicating that both men valued not just

⁴⁷ Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

⁴⁸ Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republicanism*, 53-76.

ancient republics but modern commonwealths as well, and put their experiences to use in their own political modelling. We also learn that the tract will take the form of a dialogue and that illness and disease form the main thematic basis of the tract. The dialogue takes place between an English Gentleman, a Doctor, and a Noble Venetian. The Noble Venetian, who resides with the English Gentleman during his time visiting England, falls suddenly ill while his host is away in London. The Venetian calls to his aid the Doctor, who is said to be renowned for his skill. When the English Gentleman hears of his companion's illness he rushes home, at which point all three protagonists meet in the sick man's chamber. The English Gentleman is thankful that his friend appears much recovered and the conversation then turns towards politics.

It is important to take a moment here to consider the setting and form that Neville chose, since these decisions, particularly where the discussion is located and who participates in it is surely directly related to the meaning of the dialogue.⁴⁹ The choice of the dialogue form allows a level of textual and sub-textual flexibility that might not be achievable in a more static treatise. It allows the author to present different arguments to the reader via each of the participants in the dialogue.⁵⁰ This may indeed be one of the main reasons that Neville chose this form; the political situation was still divided in the 1680s, and the three-way dialogue enabled him to address several audiences at once. The impetus for him to do so may well have been sparked by his involvement in political clubs during this period. In *Plato Redivivus*, the English Gentleman comments that he has often enjoyed the 'good conversation' of the Doctor, but that recently the latter has 'done coming to our coffee-house'. Such a location was common place for political clubs to meet, and we know that Neville had participated in the Harringtonian Rota Club in 1659-60. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that he was keen to engage in debate during the years of the Exclusion Crisis. The most prominent club of the period was the Green Ribbon Club whose "Whiggish" membership debated and agitated for Exclusion. However as David Allen has argued, this club was most prominent because of its oppositional stance and visible nature. However there were plenty of smaller, lesser known Whig clubs that reflected the diversity of factions within the Whig "party"; Tim Harris has calculated there to have been twenty-nine in London alone during the Exclusion Crisis. One of these divisions, Allen suggests, was between those who were mere Exclusionists and those who can be defined as republicans, advocating the sort of limitations on the monarchy that Neville argues for in *Plato Redivivus*. One such location that housed those who thought

⁴⁹ Kent F. Moors, 'Plato's Use of Dialogue', *The Classical World*, 71, 2 (1978), 86.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

similarly to Neville was *The Salutation in Lombard Street*, hosted by the Duke of Buckingham. We cannot say for sure whether Neville was a party to this or any other political club, but it seems reasonable to assume that he may have been.⁵¹

What the existence of these clubs demonstrates is that there were a multitude of solutions being proposed to the crisis concerning the English monarchy. In creating a three-way dialogue, Neville attempted to address at least two of these broad audiences. With the Doctor and the English Gentleman, Neville was addressing the validity of exclusion as a means through which to resolve the crisis. This debate has been the main focus of historians' attentions. The purpose of the Noble Venetian, on the other hand, has rarely troubled scholars. Robbins overlooked the importance of the Noble Venetian to the dialogue, and although Fink criticised her for this, he offered no analysis either.⁵² Mahlberg has dismissed him as a 'neutral enquirer'.⁵³ However, if this is the case, surely the character could be simply a generic Englishman? Why make him Venetian? Hilary Gatti has recently addressed these questions, concluding that Neville demonstrates his commitment to Machiavelli's rejection of Venice.⁵⁴ Her focus is therefore on Machiavellian critiques of Venice, focusing on military weakness due to its aristocratic nature. While this offers an interesting way into interpreting *Plato Redivivus*, it does not take into consideration the position of Venice in the 1680s, with the rise of a more contemporary anti-myth and the increasing awareness of the Venetian decline.

The inclusion in the dialogue of the Noble Venetian serves as a means to address the republican audience and set forth his vision of how an English republic could function under the existing political structures. The Noble Venetian stands as a symbol of republican government, as a representative of values that had once been embraced by England. Furthermore, he represented a symbiosis with Harringtonian ideals as set out in *Oceana*, which had been so heavily influenced by the myth of Venice. That the Noble Venetian is intended to represent the myth of Venice is indicated clearly when he mentions Giannotti. The Noble Venetian declares that he has 'read many descriptions of our frame, which have taught

⁵¹ For further reading see: David Allen, 'Political Clubs in Restoration London', *The Historical Journal*, 19, 3 (1976), 561-580; Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society 1660-1715* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 80-116; O. W. Furley, 'The Whig Exclusionists: Pamphlet Literature in the Exclusion Campaign, 1679-81', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 13, 1 (1957), 19-36.

⁵² See Zera Fink, 'Reviewed Works; Venice and the Defense of Public Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of Counter Reformation by William J. Bouwsma; Two English Republican Tracts: Plato Redivivus or, A Dialogue concerning Government by Henry Neville; An Essay upon the Constitution of the Roman Government by Walter Moyle by Caroline Robbins, *The Historical Journal*, 13, 1 (1970), 174.

⁵³ Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republicanism*, 163.

⁵⁴ Hilary Gatti, *Ideas of Liberty in Early Modern Europe: From Machiavelli to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 159-172.

me something in it which I knew not before'. But it was from Giannotti in particular that he found himself best informed, for it was he 'to whom I refer those who are curious to know more of our orders'.⁵⁵ Giannotti was not only one of the most influential writers of the republican myth, but he was also used at length by Harrington in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*. The Noble Venetian stood as a figurative representation of the Harringtonian idealisation of Venice, its orders, and its constitutional structure.

For Neville's alternative perspective, we might look towards the list of 'political discourses and histories' included at the beginning of *Plato Redivivus*. The list comprises twelve texts, nine of which offer accounts of contemporary countries and governments: four on Venice, two on the Ottoman Empire, two on France and one on the United Provinces. Of particular interest, however, are two accounts by Frenchmen who offer assessments of the Venetian republic's history, policy, and constitution; these are Sieur de la Hay's *The Policy and Government of the Venetians, Both in Civil and Military Affairs*, and Amelot de la Houssaye's *The History of the Government of Venice*. The existence on the list of these two texts is significant because they were key texts in shifting the Venetian narrative from myth to anti-myth. They demonstrate that the most up-to-date literature regarding the Venetian Republic propounded a much more negative position than that which would have been available to the republicans of the 1640s and 1650s. If the Noble Venetian was therefore connected with this older position of Giannotti, Harrington and the myth of Venice, then the English Gentleman and therefore Neville, must be read through the anti-myth. This suggests that he was using the dialectic between the Noble Venetian and English Gentleman to argue against the mythical portrayal of Venice, and its use as a political model for England.

According to the traditional historiography that understood Neville as sitting alongside Harrington as an uncomplicated advocate of the Venetian constitution, we would expect that it would be his word, rather than the English Gentleman's, that is considered wise and authoritative in this dialogue. Instead, the reader is promptly made aware of the limitations inherent in the Noble Venetian's understanding. This is initially indicated when we learn that, like most Italian gentleman, the Venetian understands very little Latin; whilst the Doctor has reached 'perfection in that tongue', he himself remains 'defective' in it.⁵⁶ Later, the Noble Venetian moves onto more political issues, stating that 'I am one of those unskilful persons that cannot discern a state-marasmus, when the danger is so far off'.⁵⁷ Perhaps the most

⁵⁵ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

relevant instance of the Noble Venetian's limitations appears as part of a discussion that immediately references the political reputation of Venice. In an allusion to Harrington's assertion that 'he that understands Venice right shall go nearest to judge...right of any government in the world', Neville mocks the notion that if the Noble Venetian was not the man to save England, 'then no man living can; for your government is this day the only school in the world, that breeds such physicians'.⁵⁸ The Noble Venetian continued to argue that his companion was overestimating the Venetians' political knowledge, he argued that the English Gentleman over-valued:

not only me, but the wisdom of my fellow-citizens; for we have none of these high speculations, nor has scarce any of our body read Aristotle, Plato or Cicero, or any of those great artists ancient or modern, who teach that great science of the governing and increasing great states and cities...we only study our own government; and that too chiefly to be fit for advantageous employments, rather than to forsee dangers.⁵⁹

That the Venetians lacked a broader understanding of political history or theory beyond that of their own republic is suggestive. In rejecting study of any other constitutions beyond their own, they have become insular. Moreover, in only reading the histories of their own government, the Venetians were only exposed to the myth of Venice itself and could comprehend little else. To them, there was no mythical Venice, but just a straight history of the most Serene Republic. By the time Neville was writing *Plato Redivivus*, however, the anti-myth was beginning to gain traction across Europe and it was impossible wholly to accept the traditional portrayal of Venice as fact.

Nor will the Doctor be able to provide a cure to England's ills. At a superficial glance, the Doctor is placed high in the protagonists' and readers' esteem. He is described as an 'eminent physician of our nation', 'renowned for his skill and cures at home'.⁶⁰ Our immediate impression is of a doctor with a widespread reputation and unique skill, and if the praise stopped here, we might have no cause to query it. However, the hyperbole which Neville invoked in his further descriptions of the Doctor undermines this perspective. The English Gentleman describes him as 'the Aesculapius of our age', a man who has 'arrived to so exact and perfect a discovery of the formerly hidden parts of the human bodies' that he now knows and teaches more 'than either Hippocrates, or any of the ancients or moderns'.⁶¹ This is repeated later in the text when the English Gentleman exclaims: 'your skill did not terminate in the body natural, but extended to the politic: for a more pertinent interrogatory could never

⁵⁸ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486; Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 82.

⁵⁹ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

have been made by Plato or Aristotle'.⁶² The Doctor's skill is so grotesquely exaggerated, that it cannot be read as serious appreciation of his abilities.

The theme of illness also emphasises the idea that not even a doctor will necessarily understand the exact causes of a disease. Moreover, analogies of medicine and doctors was fairly common in Plato's works and in ancient Greek philosophy more generally.⁶³ A Platonic dialogue themed as such had several important implications. One was that it suggested a hierarchical model, with the doctor presumed to be more knowledgeable than the patient. However, Platonic theory claimed that understanding is dependent on the capabilities of each person to realise the truth of a given philosophical argument. This meant that although the aim of the dialogue was to reach mutual agreement, not all participants in a dialogue were capable either of contributing equally, or of learning the same lessons, based on their capacity for understanding.⁶⁴ Just as not all people were simultaneously capable of the same level of understanding, so nor were they necessarily capable of correctly diagnosing ills and offering an appropriate solution. This naturally applies to the Doctor in *Plato Redivivus*, but it also extends to the idea of curing England's ills by simply imposing mythical Venetian solutions. Neither was going to actually cure the patient's underlying problem. Neville utilised medical analogies in order to really emphasise this point: 'the patient cannot know what they ail, but are forced to send for some artist to tell them; yet they cease not to be uneasy and impatient, and lay hold oftentimes upon suitable remedies, and impute their malady to wrong and ridiculous causes'.⁶⁵ Most importantly in Plato's dialogues, his main protagonists (often Socrates) frequently argued that just as we seek an expert when our body is in need of help, so we should do the same for our soul. Presumably, the same logic applies to the state as well. Indeed, the Noble Venetian in this case has already declared himself ignorant of problems within both the English and the Venetian constitutions, further supporting the idea that Neville was warning against looking to Venice as an outside source of political wisdom. Even the 'expert' in this case, the Doctor, will fail to find the cure:

I will borrow one similitude more, with our doctor's favour from his profession – I knew once a man given over by the physicians, of an incurable cachexy; which they said proceeded from the ill quality of the whole mass of blood, from great adustion, and from an ill habit of the whole body: the patient had very often painful fits of the colic, which they said, proceeded from the sharpness of the humour which caused the disease; and, amongst the rest, had one fit which tormented him to that degree, that it was not expected he could outlive it; yet the doctors

⁶² Ibid., 121.

⁶³ Joel Warren Lidz, 'Medicine as Metaphor in Plato', *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 20 (1995), 527-541.

⁶⁴ Moors, 'Plato's Use of Dialogue', 78-9.

⁶⁵ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 82.

delivered him from it in a small time; notwithstanding, soon after the man dies of his first distemper . Whereas, if their art had arrived to have cured that which was the cause of the other, the colic had vanished of itself and the patient recovered.⁶⁶

The medical comparison demonstrates that the Doctor might not always provide a cure to the actual illness, but rather to the symptoms of the illness. So whilst patient and doctor might both examine the disease and its symptoms, they may both still reach different and incorrect solutions, and more importantly, fail to treat the actual disease itself.

In undermining both the Doctor and the Noble Venetian, Neville was demonstrating that those who were traditionally considered experts were not necessarily to be trusted. The Doctor could not necessarily be trusted with differentiating between symptoms and causes, thereby increasing the risk of killing the patient through misjudgement of the severity of the situation. On the other hand, the Noble Venetian, who ought to represent the ultimate in political wisdom demonstrates that in fact he and his countrymen were rather ignorant of the realities of constitutional systems. Simply borrowing wholesale from that commonwealth was just another example of addressing the symptoms of the English malaise rather than curing the illness itself. The characterisation of the Noble Venetian is therefore far from the mythologised idea of Venice's citizens that was evident in Harrington's writings. Rather than following either of these characters, we ought to listen to the English Gentleman, who 'understands the government of England better' than his conversational fellows.

As such, the English Gentleman proposed different solutions that deal with the fundamental, foundational problems within the English constitution as opposed to the superficial issues the Doctor recognises. He acknowledged that the true cause of England's problems was the 'breach and ruin of our government: which, having been decaying for near two hundred years, is in our age brought so near to expiration, that it lies agonizing; and can no longer perform the functions of a political life'.⁶⁷ According to the Harringtonian aphorism that Neville endorsed in *Plato Redivivus*, power ought now have to shifted to the many; the established government however was keeping them from this power, thus causing an imbalance between empire and dominion. The cure to this illness, Neville argued

will follow naturally, if you are satisfied in the disease and in the cause of the disease. For if you agree that our government is broken; and that it is broken, because it was founded upon property, and that foundation is now shaken: it will be obvious, that you must either bring property back to your

⁶⁶ Ibid., 159-60.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 81.

old government, and give the king and lords their lands again; or else you must bring the government to the property, as it now stands.⁶⁸

He, of course, subsequently argued for the latter solution. The way in which he proposed to transfer some power from the monarch to the people focused primarily on the need to put limitations on the prince so that he ‘can never violate the laws’; in doing so, they would produce ‘an infallible remedy both against popery and arbitrary power’.⁶⁹

The myth of Venice suggested that the citizens of Venice possessed some exceptional capabilities that enabled them to establish and perpetuate their system of government throughout the centuries. Harrington declared that Venice was unique as it had not needed a legislator to design their commonwealth, rather they possessed citizens so wise and virtuous that they had been able to formulate the ideal government by themselves.⁷⁰ It is therefore tempting to take the English Gentleman upon his word when he declares that the Venetians ‘have ever enjoyed a succession of wise citizens, that have had the skill and ability to forewarn you’ of dangers to the republic.⁷¹ This apparent praise follows a discussion between the English Gentleman and the Noble Venetian regarding the inability and unwillingness of the English parliament to instigate the necessary cure to England’s disease. The English Gentleman declares that ‘our counsellors (perceiving the decay of the foundation, as they must if can see but one inch into the politics) ought to have addressed themselves to the king to call a parliament, the true physician, and to lay open the distemper there; and so have endeavoured a cure’. Following Machiavelli he concedes that:

diseases in government are like a marasmus in the body natural, which is very hard to be discovered, whilst it is curable; and after it comes easy to discern, difficult (if not impossible) to be remedied: yet it is to be supposed that the counsellors are, or ought to be skilful physicians; and to foresee the seeds of state distempers, time enough to prevent the death of the patient: else they ought in conscience to excuse themselves from that sublime employment, and betake themselves to callings more suitable to their capacities.⁷²

Neville therefore excused both the people and the king for England’s current situation, and places the blame on the ministers of state, who are ‘inexcusable; and deserve all the fury, which must one time or other be let loose against them’.⁷³ The suggestion of the English Gentleman’s tirade is that politicians who cannot acknowledge and rapidly respond to emerging problems within the English constitution ought not to engage in employment within politics. Given the great reputation of the Venetian patriciate, who were theoretically capable

⁶⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁰ Harrington, *Aphorisms Political*, PWJH, 772.

⁷¹ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 83.

⁷² Ibid., 81.

⁷³ Ibid., 82.

of meeting and solving all constitutional crises, we would expect the Noble Venetian to be excluded from this sub-standard type of politician. However, after the English Gentleman's speech, he immediately requests to be informed 'how the government of England is decayed; and how it comes to be so'; this explanation is necessary since the Venetian had already declared himself to be 'unskilful' in recognising disease or decline within a state.⁷⁴ After such a declaration, we can only read the English Gentleman's subsequent comments about the wisdom of the Venetian people as a gentle mockery of those, like Harrington, who placed such emphasis on their exceptional capabilities. Similarly, the English Gentleman's comments that the Venetian government 'is this day the only school in the world, that breeds such physicians' can also be read as a dig at Harrington, who argued 'he that understands Venice right shall go nearest to judge...right of any government in the world'.⁷⁵

Neville's disregard for Harrington's glorification of the Venetian model of government was further emphasised when the three protagonists begin discussing the specific constitutions of modern republics. The English Gentleman gives a lengthy outline of the constitution of the United Provinces, but defers to the Noble Venetian for information about the Venetian republic, as 'it would be a presumption for me to say anything, whilst you are present'. Once again, however, the Noble Venetian declared his ignorance of the specifics of his own constitution: 'I believe strangers understand the speculative part of our government better than we do'.⁷⁶ He continued in this vein: 'we that manage the mechanical part of the government, are like horses who know their track well enough, without considering east or west, or what business they go about'. Neville was suggesting that ballot, which Harrington considered to be the cornerstone of the Venetian constitution, was understood by none of the patriciate, who simply did what they were told. For Harrington, this was part of the beauty of the ballot, as outlined previously in his mechanised kitten metaphor. Furthermore, he declared that anyone, 'if they can but draw the balls, though they understand nothing at all of the ballot', can understand how the system functions. Indeed, 'to philosophise further upon this art, though there be nothing more rational, were not worth the while, because in writing it will be perplexed and the first practise of it gives the demonstration'.⁷⁷ By having the Noble Venetian outline his own lack of understanding here, it suggests that Neville was less enthralled with the Venetian model of balloting than Harrington was. It undermines the idea that this constitutes a wise means by which to incorporate the people into the political system.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁵ Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government*, PWJH, 486.

⁷⁶ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 106.

⁷⁷ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 89.

Moreover, it further supports the medical analogies examined earlier, since by not fully understanding the system in which they were engaged, people could not reach optimal understanding, thereby resulting in faulty solutions or cures. We can suggest then, that Neville did not put much faith in the mechanised virtue created by the ballot; in fact, the ballot itself is not mentioned again.

This scepticism is reinforced by Neville's discussion regarding what constitutes wisdom. The Noble Venetian asks the English Gentleman whether the cure that the latter has proposed is likely to be put into practise any time soon. The English Gentleman declared that his country was 'not ripe yet for any great reform', the reason being that:

most of the wise and grave men of this kingdom are very silent, and will not open their budget upon any terms: and although they dislike the present condition we are in as much as any men, and see the precipice it leads us to, yet will never open their mouths to prescribe a cure.⁷⁸

There is a deliberate parallel drawn here, through word repetition, between the way in which Neville describes the politicians of England, as 'grave men', with our introduction to the Noble Venetian at the very beginning of the text, who is described as 'a grave, sober person'.⁷⁹ This parallel is further drawn out in this discussion of England's politicians' reluctance to enact a cure, who 'being asked what they would advise, give a shrug, like your countrymen'.⁸⁰ This allusion to silence also relates back to Harrington's idealisation of the lack of debate in the lower house, which he considered essential: 'set the wisest man of your house in the great council of Venice, and you will not know him from a fool'.⁸¹ For Harrington this was a positive feature, since even the most base of citizens were enabled to participate in the process of government. But this also links to the biblical proverb 'even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise'.⁸² Neville was therefore mocking Harrington for being tricked into thinking that the silence in which the Venetian system is conducted is a good thing. Whilst the Venetian remains silent, they could not expose their ignorance; by including the Noble Venetian in his dialogue, Neville could expose his foolishness. This is emphasized in the lengthy soliloquy given by the Noble Venetian about a Venetian Capuchin called Bernardino da Udine, intended to demonstrate the danger and futility of trying to dictate to the highest of powers, which in the story alluded to God, but within the context of the dialogue itself referred to monarchy.⁸³ The Noble Venetian tells the

⁷⁸ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 196.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁸¹ Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 114.

⁸² *King James Bible*, Proverbs, 17:28.

⁸³ Neville, *Plato Redivivus*, 175-6.

story in earnest, but the narrative is so exaggerated that the Noble Venetian and his countrymen appear ridiculous for having ever entertained it. Indeed, the Doctor subsequently declares that this ‘serious discourse’ can only be turned into ‘ridicule’, and the English Gentleman also teases him later when he states: ‘if I should have proposed anything in this discourse, which should have entrenched upon the king’s hereditary right; or that should have hindered the majesty and greatness of these kingdoms from being represented by his royal person; I should have made your story of the capuchin friar very applicable to me’.⁸⁴ The Noble Venetian is made aware of his own foolishness, seeing that ‘you have not forgiven me that novel yet’.⁸⁵

Neville undermined the mythical idea of the exceptional wisdom of the Venetian citizens merely by including him within this dialogue. By opening his mouth, the Noble Venetian undermines the value placed on silence within the Venetian constitution. He is exposed as an ignorant fool, who knows very little of the actual functions of the government he has served. Although he can recount the historical myth of Venice, and how it came into being, he cannot explain exactly how the constitution works, implying that he is nothing more than an animal who is trained to perform a trick with the balloting balls. The problem with this lack of understanding is that it means that an effective solution cannot be attained. What this combined lack of wisdom and balloting system actually result in it keeping the patriciate ignorant and blind to the realities of their government. The Venetians are thereby rendered unable to fully analyse their constitution and current political status, meaning that they cannot recognise if or when they were in danger from internal disease. The Venetian patriciate therefore ought not to call themselves politicians at all, if they could not ensure the stability of their republic.

One of the aspects of the Venetian government that the authors of the anti-myth discussed at length was the Council of Ten. Although Neville does not specifically refer to it in *Plato Redivivus*, it is alluded to in the discussions surrounding the Privy Council. The Council of Ten sat outside of the traditional mixed government of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and as such sat uncomfortably alongside the constitution, and similar concerns surrounded the Privy Council. The Doctor asks why ‘we may not begin, and lay the foundations now, by removing his majesty’s present council, by parliament’, since it does not serve the public interest, but rather that of the king. The English Gentleman responds that the Privy Council ‘is no part of our government...nor is the king obliged by any fundamental law,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 195.

or by any act of parliament, to hearken to their advice; or so much as to ask it'.⁸⁶ He later goes on to state that as for the privy council, 'the king may still please to continue to nominate them at his pleasure; so they act nothing in matters properly within the jurisdiction, of these four councils' that Neville proposes be established (for war and peace, for armed forces, for appointing officers, and for public revenue – all of which having previously been royal prerogatives).⁸⁷ He says that the privy council ought to have no foundation in law nor any public capacity at all, for these are often 'private men who speak according to the best of their cunning'. Rather, Neville hopes that 'his majesty please to take their counsel in private, but summon no persons to appear before them'.⁸⁸

That the Council of Ten is considered to have too much power is also indicated through the parallel drawn with the Privy Council. The English Gentleman continues that as the Privy Council cannot summon people to appear before them, much less should that council be given 'authority to send for in custody, or imprison any subject; which may as well be done by judges and magistrates: who, if secrecy be required, may as well be sworn to secrecy as these gentleman'.⁸⁹ The Noble Venetian, on the other hand, is horrified by the leniency and lack of secrecy of the English government. He asks: 'But would you have none to manage state-affairs? None imprisoned for secret conspiracies, and kept till they can be fully discovered?'.⁹⁰ Indeed, he is shocked by 'an act made here lately, about imprisonments; that every people shall have his habeas corpus, I think you call it: so that no man, for what occasion soever, can lie in prison above a night, but the cause must be revealed, though there be great cause for the concealing it'.⁹¹ Here, the fear, suspicion and perhaps paranoia, that the Venetian government possessed becomes evident; the Noble Venetian rejects the idea that justification ought to be provided for the arrest and imprisonment of a person.

Here the parallel between the Privy Council and the Council of Ten becomes obvious. The criticism being made here is that both councils have taken upon themselves authority beyond their remit. Both Amelot and De la Hay strongly rebuked the increasing authoritarianism of the Council of Ten. They accused it of usurping sovereignty by considerably surpassing the agreed limits of its power, and they condemned the severity with which the Council acted

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 185-187.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

against anyone it considered to be an enemy of the state.⁹² Thus by discussing the Privy Council, Neville has been able to further debunk the myth of Venice; he could show how the republic relied on extra-constitutional bodies, and their excess of judicial control, to create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. In doing so, the anti-myth suggests, the people are cowed into submission.

Conclusions

By looking at *Plato Redivivus* and *Discourses Concerning Government* side by side we can see several patterns. First, that exclusivist republicanism was still not the dominant republican language by the 1680s. Even Sidney, who called for rebellion and revolt against bad monarchs, did not argue against monarchy *per se*. He certainly made it clear that popular government was his favoured form of government, but he also demonstrated that an individual could sit at the top of that system. What was ultimately most important to Sidney and to Neville was that the powers of the king were sufficiently limited and significantly reduced. In these circumstances, the examples of the stadholder and the Doge both became pertinent examples of how this could effectively be achieved in a modern commonwealth.

What also becomes clear is that there was a shift back in these texts from a focus on the experiences of republican government to the particulars of constitutional republicanism. This was not a balanced shift. Sidney was always less concerned with the specifics of building republican institutions or engaging with republican practices. However, the nature of the *Discourses*, as a response to *Patriarcha*, meant that to a certain degree Sidney was forced to engage in these sorts of issues. Rather than looking at constitutional specifics, however, he shifted his focus on military and commercial strength that had been so present in *Court Maxims* into a discussion of the ends of government. By looking at the way the Venetian Republic was portrayed in these two tracts, we can also trace a wider cultural shift in the way in which Venice was perceived in the aftermath of the Cretan War, which left the republic considerably weakened as a trading, military, or even diplomatic power.

In *Plato Redivivus* the shift from experiential to constitutional republicanism was much clearer, as is the shift in the way in which Venice was perceived. In taking a closer look at the role of the Noble Venetian in the dialogue, as well as taking into consideration Neville's other political writings and the wider themes of *Plato Redivivus*, it has been possible to uncover a layer of meaning to the text that has long evaded discovery. The Noble Venetian represented

⁹² De la Hay, *The Policy and Government of the Venetians*, 21; Amelot, *The History of the Government of Venice*, 154-56.

the idealised vision of Harrington in the 1650s, building an allegedly utopian vision for England on the back of a myth. Neville's use of him, however, sought to undermine that vision and instead Venice becomes Neville's anti-model. That republic was problematic to Neville for a number of reasons. The citizens of Venice failed to recognise or address the problems and subsequent decline of their own commonwealth; an issue that was worsened by mythologizing, since even the Venetians appeared to have bought into it. In doing so, they were blinded to the reality of their situation. Neville therefore found it difficult to consider the Venetians wise as 'state-physicians', resulting in him casting a more critical eye over the rest of their constitution. Although not explicitly condemning or dismissing them, Neville also appeared critical of key cornerstones of the Harringtonian and Venetian polities; the system of balloting was portrayed as problematically mechanical and the silence of the Great Council further undermined the wisdom of the Venetian people. Similarly, the Council of Ten was criticised because of its extra-constitutional powers.

Never again would the myth of Venice reach the levels of veneration it had in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Harrington and Howell marked the end of the myth as dominating the cultural narrative. Nedham had indicated the beginning of a step-change in the overarching narrative of the Venetian Republic. After the loss of the Cretan War and with the subsequent French publications that examined the absolutism of Venice, the most Serene Republic began to lose its grip on the story told about it. Negative portrayals of the Venetian republican reflected the very real decline of its power. *Plato Redivivus* marked this clearly. Neville used Harrington's vision of his beloved Venice against him, and in doing so undermined the value of the Venetian republic as a model for restoring republican government to England.

Conclusion

This thesis starts from Venturi's assumption that the contemporary world had a direct and important impact on the political thought of English republican thinkers. The importance of the Dutch and Venetian republics to these figures has been largely neglected in existing scholarship in this field. The most eminent scholars, particularly Pocock, Skinner, and more recently Nelson, have dictated a narrative that constrained debates on the origins of English republicanism to classical examples and ideas. Although they are aware of the importance of contemporary debates and contexts, this has not precluded a quest for classical origins. Moreover, the contemporary debates that have been taken into consideration have often been limited to within national borders, thereby further contributing to the founding of an 'English republican tradition'.¹ The value of their work is not, of course, to be dismissed; the educational culture of the seventeenth century was steeped in the classical world, and the importance of ancient ideas of republicanism cannot be underestimated. However, by placing the Venetian and Dutch republics at the forefront of an assessment of republican writers in the mid- to late-seventeenth century, it is also clear that modern republics had an important influence on the way in which English thinkers understood republicanism functioning in the contemporary world. Using contemporary European republics as the lens through which to view English republicanism presents new perspectives, issues and ideas that challenge existing understandings of this topic.

The significant influence of the Dutch and Venetian commonwealths on English thought reinforces the recent progression towards 'shared' understandings of republicanism, and cultural transfers more generally. Once we understand that the contemporary world had a direct impact on the way in which political ideas were formulated and political visions were conceptualised, and that there are ways in which we can trace these influences, then the scholarship can begin to shift further towards an appreciation of the modern republics alongside the old. Skinner and Van Gelderen were therefore right to begin considering a 'shared heritage' of republicanism, even if their execution of the idea represented, as Wootton expressed it, individual trees rather than the whole forest.² This thesis has not attempted to provide a view of the forest, but it has demonstrated that the roots of these individual trees are

¹ Quentin Skinner, for instance, offered an important reassessment of Hobbes by placing him within the intellectual context of the mid-seventeenth century, rather than understanding him in the context of political and social upheaval. See for instance, Quentin Skinner, 'The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), 287-317.

² Wootton, 'Review: Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage', 136.

intimately entwined. Although they look like stand-alone national republican traditions, there were fundamental connections between each that shared foundational values and commitments.

One of these shared commitments was an understanding of the role of single person government in a republic or commonwealth. Only by looking at England from the perspective of other republics that possessed figureheads at the apex of their constitutions does it become clear just how misguided the scholarship has been in defining English republicanism as anti-monarchical. From their earliest institution, the Venetians had elected a Doge and the Dutch continued to elect a stadholder after they had declared themselves a republic (except between 1650 and 1672). In both of these commonwealths, this figurehead represented a monarchical element to their constitution, but was not considered to be inconsistent with republican liberty. Nonetheless, English republicanism has been increasingly defined by historians, due in no small part to the work of Worden and Skinner, as distinctly anti-monarchical. The dichotomy between republic and monarchy has become one of the primary ways in which scholars have examined English political thinkers in the mid-seventeenth century, and as a result, certain figures have been side-lined. Milton, for instance, while remaining as part of the traditional republican canon, has been viewed by Worden and Corns as decidedly uncommitted to republicanism because of his very belated conversion to an outright rejection of kingship in England.³

However, by approaching the thought of Milton and his contemporaries from an understanding of Dutch and Venetian republicanism, our understanding of English republican commitments inevitably shifts. It forces us to take into consideration the different understandings of what kingship might represent or entail. By considering the distinction between kingly power and kingly office, we can carefully pick apart the ways in which each of the five English republicans understood single person government. In every instance, they argued that there were ways in which republican government was compatible with monarchy, princes, legislators, or individual figureheads. In some instances this is particularly transformative of the way in which we conceptualise the political writings of certain English figures. Where Harrington's *Oceana* has long been understood as proposing a constitutional blueprint that shifted power into the hands of the people, rarely has the position of Archon been considered. However, examining him in the light of the Venetian Republic and the Doge makes clear that Harrington made considerable space within his republican constitution for an

³ Worden, 'English Republicanism', 443-75; Corns, 'Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth', 25-42.

individual leader. Similarly, Nedham's engagement with the Orange family and the stadholdership demonstrates that he was actually much more radical in his republicanism than scholars have generally assumed, lending support to Scott's observations that his republicanism was present from the early 1640s.⁴ The rejection of monarchy, or aspects of monarchy, was undoubtedly part of English republicanism but it cannot and should not define the movement in its entirety.

If anti-monarchism was not the defining feature of seventeenth-century republicanism, then the importance of the Regicide and Restoration on the conceptualisation of republicanism must be downplayed. Although there were exceptions, notably Nedham, 1649 appears to have been less of a shift than has often been emphasised.⁵ In continuing to accept the possibility of an English republic headed by a single leader, Milton, Harrington, and at times Nedham embraced a language of republicanism that had its roots already within English culture, therefore building upon Peltonen and Norbrook's concept of 'civic republicanism'. This understanding of republicanism also survived the Restoration, right through to the 1680s, where Neville and Sidney were both still accepting of the possibility of good republican government under a single person. This is not to suggest, however, that there was not a constitutional element to English republicanism. In the 1640s and 1650s, there was a distinctly constitutional approach taken by Harrington, Nedham, and Milton to Venice and the Dutch Republic. These figures used the constitutional and institutional aspects of each of these republics to frame their arguments, whether they were pro- or anti- Dutch or Venetian. Although examination of the minutiae of these constitutions lessened considerably after 1660, there are still traces of this in the writings of Sidney and Neville in the 1680s.

It was, in fact, in the 1660s writings of Sidney and Neville that the biggest shift in republican language becomes clear. After 1660, constitutional conceptualisations of republicanism gave way to one focused more on what I have termed the republican experience. Although there were still constitutional overtones, in the sense that authors such as Sidney and Neville still sought ultimately to demonstrate the superiority of republican over monarchical government, the way in which this was approached was through demonstrating the successes of the commonwealths. So the Dutch Republic – its military strength, commercial prowess, naval power – became the successful, influential brother of failing, weak, and oppressed England. This shift was to a certain extent a result of circumstances; with the restoration of the monarchy in England it was considerably more dangerous to advocate republican models of

⁴ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 242.

⁵ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*; Worden, 'Republicanism, Regicide and Republic', 307-27.

government. This is because the execution of the king inevitably tied these writers to a distinct moment in time that appeared to be anti-monarchical, regardless of whether that was their actual position or not. In fact, in the writings of the 1660s, monarchy is more explicitly contrasted with freedom than in the tracts of the 1650s, whereby Milton and Harrington in particular continued to insist that a monarch-like figure could still exist within an English republic. This figure would have been largely unrecognisable as a 'king' to many contemporaries. Milton and Nedham both favoured not just considerable restraints on the power and privileges of monarchy, but also believed that a publicly minded political figurehead ought to follow the sober, understated humility in the tradition of the early Dutch stadholders. Harrington's vision for a monarchical element in the constitution was perhaps a little more kingly, arguing that personal regality and splendour was, as in the case of the Doge, acceptable since the limitations of his power should be sufficient to prevent this from being a corrupting force. Perhaps it is this 'unrecognisable' nature of kingship within seventeenth-century political writings that has led generations of scholars to overlook its importance to republican thought in England.

This thesis has also demonstrated that the chronological divisions by which English republicanism is often studied are problematic. 1649, as noted above, was less of a turning point in English republican thought than has often been understood. However, when framing republicanism in a wider context and setting it against other European republican traditions, it makes even less sense. While 1649 might have been a landmark year in English history, it had no significant political impact in Venice for instance. Moreover, developments in the Dutch and Venetian republics had a specific impact on the way in which those republics were understood, and these changes help us to understand the nuances and shifts within English republican thought. For instance, the actions of William II in 1648 and his untimely death in 1650 were both influential in understanding Nedham and Milton's shifting understanding of the monarchical element of a republican constitution.

What this thesis also foregrounds is the fact that during this period, the Dutch Republic was utilised much more frequently than the Venetian republic, and that it was more regularly used as a positive example of republican government. Venice was placed at centre stage by the work of Fink, and the importance of that republic to Harrington has been noted by numerous commentators. However, its centrality to English republicanism more generally has here been called into question. The rapid rise to power of the Dutch Republic appears to have overshadowed the Venetian Republic which, by the mid-seventeenth century was stagnating and losing the influence it had once held, and subsequently its reputation declined as the anti-

myth began to predominate in the pamphlets and literature being published in England and across Europe. The Dutch Republic was rapidly becoming the most powerful force in Europe, and shared political connections with England through their ruling families. This brought it to the forefront of English thinkers' attentions, and although they frequently found the constitutional structures of the United Provinces awkward, they found innovative ways to adapt, interpret and reshape Dutch political theory and practises for their own republican agendas.

Venice, meanwhile, proved consistently problematic to all but Harrington. For Nedham, it represented oppression and tyranny. He seems to hold especial vitriol for Venice perhaps because it portrayed itself not just as a commonwealth, but as perfect model of liberty, frozen in time. This stood in stark distinction to the way in which Harrington understood Venice, presenting it as he did as somewhat flawed, but ultimately the best example of republican government in history. Milton and Neville found themselves engaging with the political ideas and institutions of the Venetian Republic, despite their reservations surrounding its utility as a political model, because of Harrington's position. Milton in particular, felt it necessary to incorporate Harringtonian and Venetian concepts of rotation into his vague outline of a vision for a republican constitution. Neville too engaged with Venice, but as a means to subvert its image; the Most Serene Republic was by the 1680s in considerable decline in global power and prestige, and themes of the anti-myth had become the dominant narrative.

What this suggests is that Harrington in many ways remains at the centre of the English republican narrative, but his role is now inverted. Rather than representing the quintessential English republican, he stands as the divisive figure, against whom people rallied. Both Milton and Nedham felt sufficiently strongly about Harrington's constitutional proposals in *Oceana* to pen responses against them. Moreover, they both disapproved of the idea of incorporating Venetian political practises into England. In fact, Harrington was in many ways so distinct from his fellow republicans that, considered through the lens of the Venetian republic, he can be legitimately assessed alongside the 'royalist' James Howell, who in turn appears more 'republican' when compared with Harrington. Although this comparison ought not be pushed too far, the way in which both understood Venice to represent an example of model republican government in a way that no one else did, suggests at least a underlying shared commitment to its values and lessons. Both saw in that commonwealth the cornerstones of effective republican government: stability, longevity, and mixed government. Although they differed on the emphasis placed on the different aspects of the constitution, they both saw in

Venice a constitutional model for emulation that could form the foundations of the English commonwealth.

Considering *Plato Redivivus* in the light of attitudes to Venice also offers a corrective to the scholarship that unquestioningly describes Neville as a ‘neo-Harringtonian’. In failing to consider the purpose of the Noble Venetian within the specific dialogical form of the tract, it has been too easy for scholars to continue to accept that Neville was merely repeating Harringtonian aphorisms in the context of a different political crisis. In fact, by taking into consideration the entirety of *Plato Redivivus*, the Noble Venetian can be seen as representing Neville’s shift away from the vision that Harrington had in the 1650s. By the 1680s, the Venetian narrative had shifted from predominantly mythical to the counter-myth, and this informed Neville’s reading of that commonwealth. Through an understanding of Neville as associated with this counter-myth, it is possible to reinterpret some aspects of his thought. While he remained true to certain Harringtonian aphorisms, Neville rejected several key aspects of the Venetian myth and its constitution. He did not believe, like Harrington that importing Venetian practises would cure the disease at the heart of England’s political system. In this sense, it does not make sense to continue to define Neville as a neo-Harringtonian.

Ultimately, this thesis has demonstrated that narrowly constraining definitions of republicanism does a disservice to the diversity, flexibility and vitality of republican thought in mid to late seventeenth-century England. It questions the categorisation of ‘English republicans’ as a distinct group, and it also suggests that there is a ‘right’ way to be a republican, particularly in rejecting any form of monarchical element in government. In looking at English republicanism through the lens of the Dutch and Venetian republics, we can see the real diversity of positions. Each of these figures engaged with different republican languages as events within the country shifted under their feet and forced a new approach. The concept of a single English republican tradition is therefore flawed. Instead, we ought to recognise that different republican traditions were tapped into at different times, sometimes being broadly constitutional, sometimes rejecting monarchy, and sometimes simply demonstrating the superiority of republican government in the benefits to trade, foreign policy and political stability. These languages were all connected and English republicans felt entirely comfortable shifting between them, seeing no contradiction in their republican beliefs.

Wootton’s trees and forest metaphor is therefore too simplistic as a way of understanding the complex nature of European republicanism, since it suggests that each tree represents one, clearly definable national tradition. This has been demonstrably proved false. Instead, we can

build on Wootton's metaphor by understanding the diversity that exists within a forest. We can continue to think of the forest itself as the shared European tradition as conceptualised by Skinner and Van Gelderen, but we need to reconsider what the trees might represent because 'tree' in itself is not a monolithic category. Rather, there are numerous families and types of tree, related but nonetheless distinct. If we consider each individual tree to represent a specific republican language, then each family of trees can instead represent the national basis for these. Not only are all these trees related, but within these forests they might intersect and intertwine, at the roots or in the canopies. This represents the various stages at which these republican languages or traditions transfer between national boundaries, not all of which will happen at once, but which may be dictated by the passing of time or the alteration of political circumstances within a nation. In approaching English republicanism through the understanding of Dutch and Venetian republicanism, we uncover a complex mesh of republican languages and national traditions, intersecting and diverging at specific points. Continuing to examine republicanism in the light of this much more diverse vision can only serve to offer important new directions of study as further ways in which ideas were borrowed, shared and adapted by political thinkers across Europe are uncovered.

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