

Chapter 8

WILLIAM CAVENDISH: VIRTUE, VIRTUOSITY AND THE IMAGE OF THE COURTIER

Rachel Willie*

The greatest family was the Earl of Newcastle's, a lord once so much loved in his county ... He had, indeed, through his great estate, and liberal hospitality and constant residence in his county, so endeared [the gentleman of the county] to him that no man was a greater prince than he in all that northern quarter, till a foolish ambition of glorious slavery carried him to court, where he ran himself much into debt to purchase neglects of the King and Queen, and scorns of the proud courtiers.

(Lucy Hutchinson)

All that can be said for the marquis is, that he was so utterly tired with a condition and employment so contrary to his humour, nature and education, that he did not at all consider the means or the way that would let him out of it, and free him forever from having more to do with it. It was a greater wonder that he sustained the vexation and fatigue of [the battlefield and generalship of the royalist troops] for so long, than that he broke from it with so little circumspection.

(Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon)¹

The often-cited observations by the Parliamentary Lucy Hutchinson and the Royalist Earl of Clarendon that preface this chapter are well known to Cavendish scholars, but they are worth returning to again. They exemplify both Royalist and Parliamentary feeling with regard to William Cavendish and the ways in which his reputation diminished following his defeat at the Battle of Marston Moor in July 1644. Financially spent, and with his army seriously depleted and scattered, Cavendish set sail for Hamburg and fifteen years of exile, declaring that he would not “endure the laughter of the Court.”²

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1 Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London: Phoenix, 2002), 84; Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. D. Macray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), 3:380–81.

2 Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 50. See also Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 167; Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People's History* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 336. On the Battle of Marston Moor, see also Peter Young, *Marston Moor, 1644: The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton: Roundwood, 1970); Trevor Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms, 1638–1660* (London: Abacus, 2004), 281–99; and Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 285–90.

For contemporaries, Cavendish placed the appearance of honour and fear of ridicule at the faction-fuelled court above actual honour and duty in continuing to fight for his king. Later critics have sought to temper this damning caricature of Cavendish's temperament.³ However, as Elspeth Graham has deftly observed, although Cavendish's reasons for abandoning his generalship might be more complex than bruised personal vanity, the very fact that both Royalists and Parliamentarians presented him as a whimsical romantic not fit for the battlefield means that we ought to pay attention to these critiques.⁴ As Graham contends, far from exposing Cavendish as a dilettante, the presentation of a romantic and poetic spirit married with military ability (and especially horsemanship) was a necessary part of Cavendish's attempts to restore his reputation in the decades after the Battle of Marston Moor.⁵ Previously, Cavendish had appropriated other forms of self-fashioning that drew from nostalgic views of the Elizabethan period and romance: in 1632 a dissatisfied Cavendish presented himself as a lord of misrule, in opposition to what he saw as the modish, unpatriotic ways of the Caroline court and its lack of respect for the noble families of old.⁶ Throughout his life, Cavendish clung to courtly notions of honour, yet he never quite belonged in courtly circles.

Honour was central to Cavendish's self-fashioning, even as contemporaries questioned his honour. It is also a recurring theme in his dramatic writing, demonstrating the performativity of office and of ceremony. In this context, Cavendish's self-imposed exile becomes a means through which honourable retreat is performed. Although Cavendish's reputation never fully recovered, far from evincing cowardice, Cavendish's exile and attempts at restoring his reputation demonstrate consistency with his strategies for bestowing and receiving patronage, self-fashioning as a courtier and playwright, presentations of courtliness, and what we know of his views on statecraft.

Contemporary criticism of Cavendish seems to point to him being an ambitious, self-aggrandizing fool who seeks preferment at court while knowing little of statecraft or the court through which he seeks worldly prestige. Hutchinson notes that he is a man of honour who holds considerable loyalty, influence, and respect in Nottingham and Derbyshire; prestige at home was squandered for ridicule abroad. Yet these endeavours to affirm his standing in the locality through fostering a reputation as a generous and lavish host fed into his designs at court. To great expense, Cavendish hosted Charles

3 For a detailed account of the reputational damage that it caused Cavendish, see John Barratt, *The Battle for York: Marston Moor 1644* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), esp. 29, 76–80, 141–42, 154–56. According to Barratt, Cavendish was one of the more vilified commanders.

4 Elspeth Graham, "‘An After-Game of Reputation’: Systems of Representation, William Cavendish and the Battle of Marston Moor," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England: William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle and his Political, Social and Cultural Connections*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 83–110, 86–87.

5 Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, especially 88.

6 Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 195.

I at Welbeck in 1633 and both Charles and Henrietta Maria a year later at Bolsover Castle. Cavendish was Ben Jonson's last patron, and the hospitality included Jonson's final lavish entertainments.⁷

In 1638 Cavendish's efforts were rewarded and he was appointed governor to the future Charles II; this gave him control of the prince's household and established him as among the most influential aristocrats in the country.⁸ However, for Hutchinson, it is better to reign in the north than to serve at court, and Cavendish's public and private afflictions all stem from a foolish and misguided ambition to serve a neglectful king. While Hutchinson perceives him as entering impotent servitude, Cavendish's model of the ideal courtier is predicated upon ideas of virtue, virtuosity, and nobleness. They informed his political thinking and governed his everyday life, even as he married and promoted his second wife, Margaret, who was anything but the model silent and obedient courtly noblewoman.⁹ They also informed his literary patronage and his writing. In this chapter, I will examine how Thomas Hobbes, Baldassare Castiglione, and Niccolò Machiavelli informed Cavendish's political thinking, as articulated in his *Advice to King Charles II* (ca. 1659) and represented in his play *The Country Captain* (ca. 1639). This drama has largely been attributed to James Shirley due to his revisions of the original text; more recently, James Fitzmaurice has suggested that Cavendish as author and Shirley as editor highlight the collaborative interaction of author and editor.¹⁰ As Matthew Steggle insightfully observes, Cavendish's dramas that were performed at the Blackfriars—while not political per se—are part of his self-fashioning and situate him at the heart of professional theatrical culture before the Civil War.¹¹ This places Cavendish's authorial persona at the heart of his dramatic writing, even if the texts were revised. Cavendish's performed and printed dramas were all collaborative: Shirley may have polished Cavendish's text, but, as we will see, this play is consistent with Cavendish's political writings on how a prince should govern. First, I will briefly outline how some aspects of masculine virtue and virtuosity are represented in early modern intellectual culture and how notions of the ideal courtier are figured in Cavendish's work.

7 For a discussion of these entertainments, see Cedric C. Brown, "Courtesies of Place and Arts of Diplomacy in Ben Jonson's Last Two Entertainments for Royalty," *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 141–71. See also Crosby Stevens on the relationship between the space of Bolsover, theatrical literature, art, biography, and Jonson's engagement with how these elements intertwine to develop the Cavendishes' iconography, and Tom Rutter on the literary relationship between the Cavendishes and Jonson (both in this volume).

8 Worsley, *Cavalier*, 119–48.

9 For a biography of Margaret Cavendish, see Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle: Royalist, Writer & Romantic* (London: Vintage, 2004).

10 James Fitzmaurice, "Whimsy and Medieval Romance in the Life Writing of William Cavendish," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, 60–81, 80–81.

11 See Matthew Steggle's chapter in this volume.

Virtue, Virtuosity, and Nobleness

Governance and the ideal courtier in early modern Europe were predicated upon an understanding of masculine virtue. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), translated into English by Thomas Hoby and eventually first published in 1561, perhaps most famously articulates the qualities of a wise courtier:

The final end of a Courtier, whereto al his good condicions and honest qualities tende, is to become *An Instructor and Teacher of his Prince or Lorde*, inclining him to virtuous practices: And to be franke and free with him, after he is once in fauour in matters touching his honour and estimation, always puttinge him in minde to folow vertue and to flee vice, opening vnto him the commodities of the one and inconueniencies of the other: And to shut his eares against flatterers, whiche are the first beginninge of self leeking and all ignorance, either of other outward thinges, or yet of her owne self.¹²

The Courtier is a complex text, and this has led scholars to question how it was read and understood. Peter Burke, for example, suggests that it might have been read for pleasure, in addition to being instructive.¹³ Scholars have also illustrated how controversies regarding the text, author, and translator indicate that Castiglione's work garnered similar degrees of notoriety as Machiavelli.¹⁴ In the passage quoted above, the ideal courtier fulfills a didactic function. Flatterers should be avoided, as they have cognitive and affective consequences on the prince's passions. Courtiers are entrusted to focus the prince's mind upon virtuous reflection to enable an honest, stable, and secure body natural and to maintain harmony in the body politic. The homosocial bonds between honest courtiers thus underpin political stability. Companionship and trust are central to an ordered body politic, as is the ability to ignore flatterers. In her discussion of how ecclesiastical advice to a monarch sheds light on early modern kingship, Jacqueline Rose notes that early modern counsel occurred not only as an exchange between counsellor and counselled but also within particular forums, and it was inflected by political

12 *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure books. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London: Seres, 1561), sig. Z4v.

13 Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's "Cortegio"* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).

14 For a brief overview of the various critical receptions of *The Courtier*, see the introduction to W. R. Albury's *Castiglione's Allegory* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). Hoby began translating the text in 1551 at a time when Italian culture was esteemed by Protestants, but following the death of Edward VI in 1553, some of Castiglione's admirers became politically and theologically controversial figures. Hoby never fully succeeded in his attempts at reconciliation with the Marian and Catholic government and the text was not printed until the accession of Elizabeth. See Mary Partridge, "Thomas Hoby's English Translation of Castiglione's 'Book of the Courtier,'" *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 769–86.

and religious contexts.¹⁵ Although Rose is particularly focused upon advice-giving in sermons, and identifies and analyses the different modes of counsel that developed from humanist and religious intellectual thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, her study underpins how the need for the monarch to be virtuous and avoid flattery is returned to again and again throughout the early modern period. As will become apparent, Cavendish draws from these ongoing debates in his dramatic and political writings.

Virtue, therefore, lies at the heart of a well-ordered, organized, and harmonious state, but what does virtue mean in the context of the political and social world of the Stuart court and Cavendish's dramas performed at the Blackfriars playhouse? In the opening scene to *The Country Captain*, the eponymous captain, Underwit, announces that he has been promoted; this promotion occurred through recognition of his honour and without his resorting to bribery. Thomas, his servant, commends him for winning the captainship through his "desert and vertue," but Underwit counters that "the vertue of the commission is enough to make any man an officer without desert."¹⁶ As Vimala Pasupathi has observed, running parallel to the way in which an actor plays a part, the titular captain is imbued with power as a consequence of office, making him something that he is not.¹⁷ Pasupathi demonstrates how Cavendish utilizes Shakespeare and other printed books as a form of political commentary in the lead up to civil war and the light these texts shed on the status of Shakespeare and the Caroline book trade. A metatheatrical concern with drama is also integral to the play, which leads to questions regarding virtue and its fabrication.

To affirm his new role, Underwit seeks to look the part by purchasing the material artefacts of office, yet the play constantly returns to the ways that appearances can deceive. Underwit's stepfather Sir Richard Huntlove takes his second wife, Lady Huntlove, to the country, as he suspects her chastity is compromised by remaining in the town. He also invites Lady Huntlove's aspirant lover, Sir Francis Courtwell, who brings his kinsman, Master Courtwell. After a series of mishaps, Lady Huntlove and Sir Francis fail to have an assignation. The play ends with a repentant Sir Francis, and Master Courtwell is married to Lady Huntlove's unnamed sister. Underwit is married to Lady Huntlove's maid, Dorothy, whom he has been tricked into believing is the long-lost daughter of a nobleman. As Martin Butler notes, Huntlove admires Sir Francis, "a powerfull man at Court":¹⁸ In comparison to the behaviour of the other libidinous gallants in the play, Sir Francis's endeavours to cuckold Huntlove are rigorously censured.¹⁹ Ultimately, Sir

¹⁵ Jacqueline Rose, "Kingship and Counsel in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 54 (2011): 47–71 (esp. 70).

¹⁶ William Cavendish, *The Country Captain*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Malone Society, 1999), fol. 2a, lines 39, 41.

¹⁷ Vimala C. Pasupathi, "Arms and the Book: 'Workes,' 'Playes,' and 'Warlike Accoutrements' in William Cavendish's 'The Country Captain,'" *Philological Quarterly* 91 (2012): 277–303 at 277.

¹⁸ *The Country Captain*, fol. 8a, line 278.

¹⁹ Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 196.

Francis and Lady Huntlove are thwarted when he stages a riding accident to allow him access to her but is really thrown from his horse and injured. He interprets this accident as a warning, which leads him to repent of his past actions. In seeking to cuckold Huntlove, Sir Francis has followed vice and fled virtue; he has broken the homosocial bonds of friendship and proves less adept in the saddle than he assumes. He thus lacks the qualities required of an ideal courtier, and this is emphasized through his horsemanship.

Cavendish was one of the most celebrated horsemen of his day: his first horsemanship manual was printed in French in 1658 and with a second English-language manual following in 1667. Through authorship and virtuosity in the saddle, Cavendish refashioned exile to be a mode of courtly virtue and honour before refining his work at the Restoration.²⁰ Cavendish writes, “there is nothing of more Use than *A Horse of Mannage*; nor any thing of more state, Manliness, or Pleasure, than Riding.”²¹ He believed horses were rational animals and that mastery of the horse was fundamental to graceful movement in the saddle: the body of the man becoming one with the body of the horse exemplified a well-ordered state.²² Virtuosity in the saddle is therefore symbolic of more than a man’s dexterity in riding. In this context, Sir Francis’s being thrown from a horse in *The Country Captain* underscores the knight’s inability to play the courtier: unable to keep command of his horse, he is incapable of advising and steering the prince to good governance. Cavendish, however, adds a caveat:

I have known many Presumptuous ignorant Fellows get Falls; but, as, if a good *Horseman* by Chance be Thrown, he doth not Lose all his *Horse-manship*: For it is a Mistake as Ridiculous as it is Common, to take Sitting Fast on Horse-back for the whole Art of *Horse-manship*.²³

For Cavendish, not observing how a horse moves and not taking risks due to anxiety to keep firm in the saddle are as much equestrian sins as losing control and being thrown. As with good horsemanship, the ship of state requires good steering, but wise counsellors know the potential risks and limits of speaking truth to authority. Sir Francis’s fall leads him to repent his past misdeeds, implying a chastened courtier whose decision to flee vice and follow virtue offers a partial rehabilitation. In this respect, Sir Francis’s repentance not only evinces redemption from private vice but also the capacity to become a good courtier.

20 For a discussion of the relationship of the French- and English-language texts between each other, see Elaine Walker, *To Amaze the People with Pleasure and Delight: The Horsemanship Manuals of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (Xenophon, 2015). See also Elaine Walker’s chapter in this volume.

21 William Cavendish, *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses* (London: Milbourn, 1667), sigs. E1r–E1v.

22 For a Hobbesian reading of Cavendish’s horsemanship, see chap. 1 of Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

23 Cavendish, *A New Method*, sig. F1r.

Virtue is not only a quality that Sir Francis lacks. Virtue, the intoxicated Captain Sackbury insists, is “an Antient old gentlewoman, that is growne very poore, and nobodie knows where she dwells, very hard to find her out, especially for a Capt.”²⁴ These comments are made in a drunken scene where Sackbury claims to have sought and failed to find virtue in a brothel, but this statement is politically pertinent. Discontent over Charles I’s personal rule, war with Scotland, and unpopular reforms in Church worship were contributory factors to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642.²⁵ Virtue, grown poor, old, and lean, struggles to hold influence over pleasure-seeking courtiers. Order within the body politic breaks down, enabling discontent and intrigue to develop. An order of sorts is restored when Sir Francis falls from his horse, but the ancient old gentlewoman continues to be an elusive figure.

Virtue, then, extends beyond a consideration of the moral qualities of an individual or functioning as an internal compass for the enacting of good deeds; instead, it encompasses self-presentation and how an individual enacts their part. The virtues of Castiglione’s ideal courtier reach beyond the self to teach, instruct, and delight the prince. *The Country Captain* both supports and questions Castiglione’s view of courtly behaviour by taking a courtier away from the court and examining virtue in a non-courtly setting. The observations by Hutchinson that preface this chapter seem to suggest that Cavendish displayed all the virtues of a courtier in the country, but these qualities failed to translate to the court. Yet even in exile, as Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders note, he and Margaret Cavendish “maintained a defiantly aristocratic, ceremonial and theatrical presence despite precarious finances”; in Antwerp, the Cavendishes brought together exiled Royalists and the communities to which they had fled.²⁶ This culture of patronage was predicated upon the merging of new and old epistemologies, especially with regards to virtue, aesthetics, and virtuosity. Through collecting art, rearing handsome horses, and cultivating a circle that registered the importance of visual culture and ceremony, Cavendish established himself as a virtuous courtly connoisseur; he performed masculine virtue.²⁷

For Cavendish, virtuosity and virtue thus become the central tenets in the identity formation of the ideal courtier: as cognate terms, virtue and virtuosity are inextricably

²⁴ Cavendish, *The Country Captain*, fol. 45a, lines 1577–79.

²⁵ For an account of mid-seventeenth-century politics, see Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*.

²⁶ Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, “Gender, Geography and Exile: Royalists and the Low Countries in the 1650s,” in *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum*, ed. Jason McElligott and David L. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 128–48, 140. See also James Fitzmaurice’s chapter in this volume on Margaret Cavendish’s engagement with the intellectual culture of Antwerp.

²⁷ For more on the relationship between collecting, connoisseurship, and curiosity, see the introduction to *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, esp. 16–19. On the relationship between authorial self-fashioning and collecting, see Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Marjorie Swann, “‘The Complete Angler’ and the Early Modern Culture of Collecting,” *English Literary Renaissance* 37 (2007): 100–17.

linked. In this presentation of subjectivity, the fashioning of a cultural circle following Cavendish's flight after the Battle of Marston Moor is not the manifestation of a vain ambition and a foolish pride. Instead, it demonstrates the limits of virtue. Far from demonstrating Cavendish's cowardice and lack of honour, his decision to go into exile becomes a point at which he can recover from military defeat by investing carefully in the forms of self-fashioning that will bring him honour.²⁸ Cavendish thus emerges as an opaque figure whose writings and methods for self-fashioning seem predicated upon notions of virtue and virtuosity that draw from Castiglione's presentation of the harmonious relationship between wise counsellor and prince as a cultured circle. However, his writings also gesture to another sixteenth-century Italian influence: Machiavelli.

Political Pragmatism: Machiavellian Virtù

For Machiavelli, a prince may need to choose between virtue and self-preservation:

The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.²⁹

The moralistic view of authority is questioned in detail in *The Prince*: virtue is not presented as a prerequisite for holding and maintaining office; political power resides in activity and not in authority and legitimacy. Yet Machiavelli still holds virtue in regard. In the *Discourses on Livy* (pub. 1531), Machiavelli contends that after conquering half the world, Rome's sense of security led to its downfall:

This security and this weakness of their enemies made the Roman people no longer regard virtue but favour in bestowing the consulate, lifting to that rank those who knew better how to entertain men rather than those who knew better how to conquer enemies. Afterward, from those who had more favour, they descended to giving it to those who had more power; so, through the defect in such an order, the good remained altogether excluded.³⁰

While Machiavelli censures too much faith being placed in the individual virtue of a prince, he also criticizes an erroneous sense of security that leads to the abandonment of virtue in favour of rhetoricians who seek power for power's sake. Virtue, then, is not rejected, but instead he critiques the transferal of power to those who do not know how to use it and who propose laws that consolidate their power instead of working for the common good. As Fabio Raimondi comments, in Machiavelli, the transmission of virtue

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the methods adopted by Cavendish to restore his reputation after the Battle of Marston Moor; see Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham.

²⁹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1999), 49–50.

³⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H. C. Mansfield and N. Tarcov, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1:18, 50.

is predicated upon free votes and the proper use of constitutional mechanisms.³¹ But the English translation of “virtù” into “virtue” fails, perhaps, to encompass the semantic difficulties of Machiavellian *virtù*, which also extends beyond virtue and virtuosity to encompass action that is politically expedient.

Machiavelli’s reflections demonstrate the limits of civic virtue. Hutchinson’s observations regarding the character of Charles I chime with Machiavellian thought:

The face of the court was much changed in the change of the king, for King Charles was temperate and chaste and serious, so that the fools and bawds, mimics and catamites of the former court grew out of fashion, and the nobility and courtiers who did not quite abandon their debaucheries, had yet that reverence of the King to retire into corners to practice them. Men of learning and ingenuity in all arts were in esteem, and received encouragement from the King, who was a most excellent judge and a great lover of paintings, carvings, engravings and many other ingenuities ... But as in the primitive times it is observed that the best emperors were some of them stirred up by Satan to be the bitterest persecutors of the church, so this king was a worse encroacher upon the civil and spiritual liberties of his people by far than his father.³²

Hutchinson presents Charles as the ideal virtuous and virtuosic prince. Out of respect for his serious and chaste temperament, licentious and debauched behaviour ceased to be an overt aspect of courtly life. These personal qualities are coupled with a keen eye for collecting and ingenuity. Charles thus appears to exemplify the virtuous prince and so the harmony symbolized by the temperate body natural at the centre of a virtuous court feeds through to the orderly body politic. Yet, in assessing Charles’s personal qualities and the power he has to command respect at court, Hutchinson points also to his failings as a king. For Hutchinson, the very personality traits that lead Charles to have the appearance of being a just, wise, and noble king mean that he fails to embody these qualities: his actions where policy is concerned betray him to be a persecuting tyrant. Hutchinson continues to lay the blame for the causes of the Civil War on Charles’s marriage to the Catholic Henrietta Maria. For all his appearance of chaste, courtly governance, in relinquishing responsibility to his wife, Charles ceased to be a virtuous prince and instead performed the role of the tyrant.

Disorder within the body politic is therefore blamed upon disorder in the royal household, despite its appearance of orderliness, but what is particularly noteworthy about the passage quoted above is the juxtaposition of virtue, virtuosity, nobleness, and tyranny. In presenting Charles as a perfect governor except for one major flaw, Hutchinson presents the limits of princely virtue. Castiglione’s ideal courtier and the ideal prince thus becomes unsustainable in the context of court intrigue and political division. In some respects, Hutchinson’s critique of Charles runs parallel with Machiavelli’s observations. Machiavelli presents the fall of Rome as happening, in part, because of the complacency of the ruling class. On July 6, 1637 Charles I told his nephew that if it was not for the

31 Fabio Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, trans. Matthew Arminstead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 22.

32 Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 67.

misfortunes that had befallen the royal household of the Palatinate, he would be the “happiest King or Prince in all Christendom”; despite his personal rule causing disquiet and ongoing discontent growing stronger in Church and state, the *Calendar of State Papers* records this statement as “most true.”³³ With hindsight, Charles’s comment seems naive, but given how the Thirty Years’ War ravaged continental Europe, his observations may not be as ridiculous as they now seem: in comparison to his neighbours, Charles’s kingdoms had the appearance of relative stability.³⁴ Both Machiavelli and Hutchinson point to how an insular court that makes laws to consolidate power around those who have power (and seeks personal advantage from that power) can only cause the ruination of the state and the people over whom they govern. However virtuous Charles’s court may appear, this inability to allow the processes of power to function as they ought means that virtue is negated. Castiglione might assert that virtue is the route to political power, but Machiavellian *virtù* acknowledges that a leader needs to be versatile. Hutchinson’s assessment of Charles might appear to package him as the archetypal Machiavellian prince, yet Charles’s inability to respond to whatever fortune brings means he lacks the dexterity needed to govern. For Machiavelli, *virtù* enables a prince to adapt and to respond effectively to changing political events. If virtuosity is integral to virtue, then versatility is central to *virtù*. Machiavellian *virtù* is thus predicated upon a system of ethics that pushes the importance of the ruler having the political acumen to govern. As will become clear, these notions also inform Cavendish’s political writing.

This brief examination of Machiavelli and Castiglione only focuses upon *virtù* and virtue as they are relevant to understanding the configuration of patronage and power in Cavendish’s writing. What emerges from this discussion of early modern virtue is a complex system of ethics and political power where aesthetics and genuine emotional stability are an integral part of defining governance. Cavendish may have been dismissed by some contemporaries for being too much the poet immersed in the fantastical world of romance, but, as is becoming apparent, this self-fashioning was central to how Cavendish considered the ways in which a ruler presents him or herself to the subjects over whom they ruled. This is underscored in his plays and in the advice Cavendish gave to Charles II.

When Fortune Turns Foul: Courtliness and Advice to an Exiled King

According to its one editor, Thomas Slaughter, sometime in late 1658 or early 1659 Cavendish penned a long letter of advice to Charles II.³⁵ The death of Oliver Cromwell on

33 John Bruce, William Douglas Hamilton, and Sophia Crawford Lomas, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles I: 1637* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), 287.

34 For an account of the Thirty Years’ War, see Peter Wilson, *The Thirty Years’ War: Europe’s Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2009).

35 Thomas P. Slaughter, ed., *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of Restoration* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984). Conversely, Gloria Anzilotti dates the letter to 1651, but this view has

September 3, 1658 threw the state into uncertainty, which eventually led to an uneasy settlement and the recalling of Charles to assume the throne.³⁶ In anticipation of a restoration that was by no means certain, Cavendish reflects upon the failures of Stuart governance and sets out how he believes Charles should conduct himself if he wants to maintain power. Virtue, virtuosity, and versatility underpin Cavendish's counsel. Cavendish advises Charles to "hide [his] Armes, as much as [he] can, for people loves not the Cudgell, though [the] mastering of London, is some what perspicuous, & indeed cannot be helped."³⁷ As well as concealing arms, the king ought to keep command of the Church in addition to the state: the number of academics is to be reduced and the remaining scholars only to hold orthodox opinions; ministers should only preach once a week and not preach their own sermons unless they are approved by bishops; to prevent girls from being "Infected with a weavers Docterine" they are to attend approved schools and there should be no "petty or Gramer scooles, but such as the Bishops shall allow of & think Fitt."³⁸ Cavendish thus presents a blueprint for state control that encompasses the Church, before moving on to assess how the judiciary should be contained and how trade and pastime function to serve the commonwealth. Cavendish warns Charles II to avoid setting illegal taxes to solve the need for money, as it will only disgruntle the populace, and advises that his father and grandfather made too many Lords, which swelled the Upper House and made both it and the House of Commons factious. Cavendish also cautions against allowing the prerogative of the king to be questioned, rewarding enemies and not favouring friends, and unwisely choosing for office people who lack the aptitude for the role they are assigned.³⁹ In so doing, Cavendish suggests that the prince should take command of his own fortune, something that Machiavelli too proposes.

Unlike many early modern commentators, Machiavelli does not present Fortune as a neutral but capricious force. Instead, Fortune is malevolent and needs to be conquered. Cavendish thus seems to follow Machiavelli in seeking to contain Fortune, but there are also inflections that seem derived from Castiglione. Cavendish holds faction and flatterers at court responsible for the Civil War and lists ten errors that led to war. These errors all connect to the abuse of royal power that had become diluted due to the unwise delegation of duties. The sale of honours and a free press, in particular, are censured, despite press censorship being in operation before the abolition of the Star Chamber in 1641.⁴⁰ Cavendish's observations also shed light on virtue, virtuosity, and patronage as

been dismissed by Conal Condren. See Condren, "The Date of Cavendish's 'Advice to Charles II,'" *Parergon* 17 (2000): 147–50. Cavendish in fact wrote two letters of advice, the first in 1639 (MS Harley 6988, fols. 111r–112v).

36 For a detailed discussion of the Restoration and the complex politics of the period, see Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London: Lane, 2005).

37 Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 7.

38 Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 16–17.

39 Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 49–59.

40 Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

important elements for the maintenance of power. Castiglione's warning that a prince who fails to surround himself (or herself) with wise and courteous courtiers runs the risk of falling into ignorance that affects the body natural and, in turn, the body politic finds its mirror in Cavendish, who is more overtly preoccupied with how the absence of virtue affects the body politic. Ordering action above theoretical reading, Cavendish presents an ordered court, where rank and position are maintained, as the way to ensure stability and order in the body politic. This order is underpinned by valuing and rewarding loyalty.

Despite the Machiavellian undertone of the piece and elements that seem derived from Castiglione, most critics have followed the lead of Slaughter and have identified a Hobbesian influence.⁴¹ Thomas Hobbes was Cavendish's friend and client and was in the household of the Chatsworth branch of the Cavendish family.⁴² Hobbes dedicated the 1647 edition of his first book, *The Elements of Law* (first printed in Latin in 1640 and printed in English in 1651), to Cavendish.⁴³ Lisa Sarasohn presents a congenial sharing of ideas between patron and client: Hobbes gained honour from his relationship with Cavendish and reciprocated when in exile by boosting Cavendish's honour among some of the foremost European thinkers of the day.⁴⁴ A cross-fertilization of ideas between the two therefore seems inevitable.

Hobbes and Cavendish's relationship did not necessarily mean Royalists admired Hobbes. Quentin Skinner suggests that Hobbes went into exile four years before Cavendish because, after Cavendish was marginalized at court, Hobbes feared he no longer had a protector.⁴⁵ Hobbes, it would seem, was controversial even before he published *Leviathan* in 1651, and, as Skinner contends, he is the first to consciously argue that the person in possession of political power has a duty to maintain the state, which evolves as citizens surrender individual rights and subject themselves to the sovereign. In relinquishing these freedoms, humanist notions of active, virtuous citizenship are undermined and the assumption that, in a free state, sovereignty resides in the citizen body is challenged.⁴⁶ In order to live a contented life and to move from a state of

⁴¹ See Slaughter's introduction to Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*.

⁴² Timothy Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghost: Robert Payne, Ben Jonson and the 'Cavendish Circle,'" in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 92–114, 94.

⁴³ Norberto Bobbio, *Thomas Hobbes and the Natural Law Tradition*, trans. Daniela Gobetti (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 102.

⁴⁴ Lisa T. Sarasohn, "The Role of Honour in the Life of William Cavendish and the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, 197–215 (esp. 198–204).

⁴⁵ Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229.

⁴⁶ See Quentin Skinner, *Vision of Politics, Volume II: Renaissance Virtues Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Vision of Politics, Volume III: Hobbes and Civil Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

nature and continual war, a pact is made whereby the people submit their will to the sovereign to create unity. This results in the Leviathan, or the Commonwealth, or civil society. For Hobbes, the Leviathan is an “artificial soul” made up of the body politic and a covenant between sovereign and subject that gives the sovereign authority. If this covenant breaks down, individuals cease to be subjects and the Leviathan collapses back into a state of war.⁴⁷

Hobbes and Machiavelli, as David Wootton notes, appear to have little in common, but there are overlaps between their political theories as well as major differences.⁴⁸ This might suggest that Hobbes dismisses Machiavellian *virtù*, but Wootton contends that Hobbes’s separation of ethics and politics offers some correlation with Machiavellian politics. In particular, Machiavellian *virtù* and Hobbesian virtue are, for Wootton, one and the same thing and Cavendish is influenced by both Hobbes and Machiavelli.⁴⁹ Wootton’s elegant compromise between two conflicting theories of statecraft demonstrates that, however novel Hobbes may have appeared to some observers in the seventeenth century and however much later commentators have identified his writing as marking the beginning of new ways of considering governance and the state, he was writing in a pan-European context that was intensely concerned with how rightful governance ought to be conducted. In the 1650s, many Royalists and radical Parliamentarians looked to Machiavelli to comprehend Oliver Cromwell’s rise to power.⁵⁰ These interventions and reflections on the relationship between governance and the right to govern demonstrate an anxiety to comprehend the extreme political shifts experienced in the seventeenth century. In this context, it comes as little surprise that Hobbes might draw from Machiavelli even as he is making different observations about state formation and the role of civic virtue within the state. These allusions and intertextual resonances emphasize how intellectual and political thought does not operate in a vacuum, but, instead, intellectual turns are pre-empted in the concepts that come before. That Cavendish should be influenced by Hobbes, a man with whom he had close links and who had various connections to branches of the Cavendish family, and that Cavendish should also draw from a sixteenth-century political writer who was the subject of careful consideration in the seventeenth century, therefore, comes as little surprise.

47 See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a brief discussion of Hobbes’s indebtedness to Epicurean thought in his formulation of authority, see Lisa Walters’s chapter in this volume. See also Andrew Duxfield’s chapter on Margaret Cavendish’s appropriation of, and departure from, Hobbesian thought in *The Blazing World* and *The Unnatural Favourite*.

48 David Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, ed. David R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 210–42.

49 Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” 230–21, 233.

50 Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” 214.

“For Seremony & Order”:⁵¹ Chivalry and Queen Elizabeth’s Day

We have thus seen how Cavendish’s letter to Charles evinces a mode of political thought and reflection that is intensely concerned with how the parts of the commonwealth slot together and can be controlled. But Cavendish is not only interested in the intellectual mechanisms to maintain order; he is also concerned with how holiday pastimes and ceremony can be utilized to enhance monarchical honour. Unlike Hobbes, Cavendish does not see power and right as parallel systems, and yet he simultaneously acknowledges how divine right systems of government might break down. The prince thus needs to control faction, live within their means, and graciously promote and reward friends. A good prince evinces virtue and virtuosity through demonstrating care in choosing those to whom they will be a patron. Central to this is the importance of ceremony and order:

your Majestie will be pleased to keepe itt [i.e., ceremony] upp strictly, in your owne, person, & Courte, to bee a presedent to the reste of your Nobles, & not to make your selfe to Cheape, by to much Familiarety, which as the proverb sayes, breeds Contempte But when you appeare, to shew your Selfe Gloryously, to your People; Like a God, for the Holly writt sayes, wee have calld you Goods—& when the people sees you thus, they will Downe of their knees, which is worship, & pray for you with trembling Feare, & Love, as they did to Queen Elizabeth, whose Government Is the beste precedent for Englandes Govermente, absolutely; only these Horrid times muste make some Litle adition To Sett things strayght, & so to keepe them,—And the Queen would Say God bless you my good people,—& though this Saying was no great matter, in it selfe, yet I assure you Majesties, itt went very farr with the people.⁵²

Cavendish insists that everyone understands their place in the body politic and argues for the mystique of monarchy to be maintained. Frequently in the text, Cavendish cites Elizabeth I as the exemplary monarch. Such nostalgia for an Elizabethan past was not uncommon in the seventeenth century, and Cavendish frequently alludes to Elizabeth in his writing, but his idiosyncratic syntax and punctuation mean that we never fully learn what the little additions to Elizabethan ceremony are.⁵³ Instead, his main concern here is with how Charles can keep the support of the nobility and the gentry through the cognitive and psychological effects of ceremony.⁵⁴ Ultimately, it is the nobility and the

⁵¹ Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 45.

⁵² Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 45.

⁵³ Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson discuss the broader cultural context that led to the sentimentalizing of Elizabeth in *England’s Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also John Watkins on the positive and negative afterlives of Elizabeth in *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Julia Walker “Bones of Contention: Posthumous Images of Elizabeth and Stuart Politics,” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Images of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 252–76.

⁵⁴ Niall Allsopp has noted how the 1639 letter considers how custom is beneficial to the prince and his 1659 letter is more concerned with the psychological effects and “epistemic power” of custom. Allsopp insightfully examines how William Cavendish’s political views evolve, partly in

gentry and not the law or the Church that will keep him in power. The branches of the body politic thus all serve a specific role to bolster support for the king: it is not private virtue but *virtù* that will maintain authority. But Cavendish's admiration of Elizabethan practices is a recurring concern in his plays: explicit and implicit references appear in *The Triumphant Widow* (1677), where the titular character serves as a proxy for Elizabeth and (belatedly) follows the example of the deceased queen by opting for a single life, but perhaps the most sustained engagement with the cult of Elizabeth occurs in *The Variety* (1641). In focusing upon movement and costume as signifiers of status, Barbara Ravelhofer has shown how *The Variety* indexes Elizabethanism as a way to restore harmony in the body politic.⁵⁵ However, as Richard Wood illustrates in this volume, the play not only references the cult of Elizabeth through costume and dance but also in how the courtier is cast. In the play, Cavendish prefigures some of his later advice to Charles and also alludes to Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester: through their shared abilities in horsemanship, Cavendish and Leicester become situated within a Protestant chivalric tradition of courtly counsel and nobleness that challenges the reprinting of Elizabethan anti-Leicester libels in the 1640s.⁵⁶

The whimsical, romantic, and poetic disposition of Cavendish, which Clarendon damned with faint praise, thus forms part of Cavendish's wider political strategy, a strategy that is concerned with how one should rule and govern and how one should be perceived to be ruling and governing. Hutchinson's observations that prefaced this chapter demonstrate how Cavendish's strategies for governance had success in his community but not further afield. The twin notions of virtue and virtuosity as central to nobleness are recurring themes in Cavendish's creative writing and are also central to his advice to Charles II. Yet these presentations of courtly nobleness came under increasing pressure as seventeenth-century politics presented competing narratives of statecraft. The realities of seventeenth-century politics and poetics destabilize attempts by Cavendish to cultivate a public persona as the ideal courtier. Instead, Cavendish becomes presented by his critics as a figure locked in a nostalgic admiration for a past mode of courtly behaviour that might never have been.

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collaboration with Margaret Cavendish (*Poetry and Sovereignty in the English Revolution*, forthcoming. I am grateful to Allsopp for sharing his unpublished research with me). The centrality of ceremony to Cavendish's political thinking remains consistent, even as he fleshes out how it has the appearance of being trifling yet remaining vital to maintaining the mystique of office.

55 Barbara Ravelhofer, "Non-verbal Meaning in Caroline Private Theatre: William Cavendish's and James Shirley's 'The Varietie' (c. 1641)," *The Seventeenth Century* 21 (2006): 195–214.

56 See Richard Wood's chapter. See also Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 21–24 for a discussion of the circulation of anti-Leicester libels in the 1640s.

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Rachel Willie is Reader in Early Modern Literary Studies at Liverpool John Moores University, UK. Her publications include *Staging the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History, 1647–72* (Manchester University Press, 2015, paperback 2019, shortlisted for the University English Book Prize) and *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530–1700* (Oxford University Press, 2015, paperback 2018, winner of the Roland Bainton Prize in Reference Works), which she coedited with Kevin Killeen and Helen Smith. With Gabor Gelleri, she has an edited collection, *Travel and Conflict in the Early Modern World*, forthcoming from Routledge. She is currently Principle Investigator on the AHRC-funded Research Network, Soundscapes in the Early Modern World.
