“IN COUNSEL IS STABILITY”:

LITERATURE AND POLITICAL COUNSEL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(English)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2013

Date of final oral examination: 12/20/12

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Abstract

By investigating literary engagements in political counsel by More, Sidney, Bacon, and Milton, this dissertation understands literature and counsel as mutually developing practices that shaped early modern relationships by facilitating the dissemination of moral, political, practical, and other kinds of knowledge. Since counsel and literature shared the need to perceive matters and state them concisely, forcefully, and distinctively in a manner that would pleasingly surprise an audience, writers used literature to shape the political environment around them and to negotiate challenges and shifting understandings regarding counsel, monarchal power, the state, and political relationships. With modest gains in literacy and the rise of printed texts, literature began to engage broader audiences extending beyond traditional court boundaries in discussions of political counsel, a development which had profound consequences for the English "commonweal," particularly through the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Tracing interactions between literature and counsel among these four writers and political counselors offers insights into how writers imagined audiences and revised their literary and rhetorical conventions to influence readers politically and morally, an effort which in turn helped reshape the early modern political landscape.

More's *Utopia*, the focus of chapter one, reimagined a rich medieval tradition of counsel within a humanist framework by holding up a mirror to counselors that, by pushing readers onto uneven interpretive ground, offers ranging discussions about moral and political issues that a counselor might encounter. Sidney, the subject of chapter two, by making far-reaching claims in his court entertainments, *Defence of Poesy*, and the *Old Arcadia*, on who Elizabeth ought to be and how she ought to behave, recognized the

potential for writing to shape the English consciousness and English state. Chapter three examines how Bacon conjoined civil and moral aims in his *Essays* to imagine a literate English public capable of the pragmatic political and scientific agenda of Bacon's philosophical and scientific writings. The final chapter considers Milton's revolutionary political tracts, *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes* to understand how Milton transformed practices of counsel and relationships among people through insistence on the autonomy and personal moral responsibility of readers and monarchs alike.

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Introduction

Counsel and Literature

Counsel in early modern practices provides a significant challenge to critical and historical discussions of the topic because counsel encompasses such a wide range of practices. Early modern people understood counsel formally as a system of providing advice, information, and service within a patronage relationship and informally as a practice of providing the same among friends, associates, and acquaintances. Counsel facilitated the dissemination of moral, political, practical, and other kinds of knowledge among persons, and thus counsel offers a glimpse into at least some aspects of virtually all early modern interpersonal relationships. The list of practices that constitute counsel is expansive. Counsel might be shared in passing conversation, presented in a council meeting, or inscribed in texts. Counsel might involve reading, translating, annotating, indexing, or producing marginalia on someone else's behalf.[1] Written counsel might be of a more personal nature, delivered in letters, or it might take the forms of manuscripts, pamphlets, or books.[2] Counsel could include how-to manuals like Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* or weighty political or theological treatises. Counsel could be delivered

[1] See Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," for their discussion of early modern reading as a "transactional" activity which "envisaged some other outcome of reading beyond accumulation of information" (Jardine and Grafton 31). William Sherman also addresses the relationship between counsel and reading in *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*. In Sherman's more recent work, he notes how reading's etymological roots encompass "deliberating, advising, and governing" (Sherman, *Used Books* xv), further underscoring the close relationship among literary practices, counsel, and politics.

[2] See Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, and Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, for discussions of print practices in the seventeenth century. For a discussion of manuscript circulation, see essays by Douglas Bruster, Randall Anderson, and Arthur F. Marotti in Marotti and Michael D. Bristol, eds., *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*.

in speeches and sermons, or it might come in the form of poetry or fiction.[3] Not every human communication was necessarily counsel, but any time someone shared information or guidance with someone else, early modern people would have understood those persons to be engaged in counsel.

This project attempts to understand the relationship between the practices of counsel and of literature, particularly in areas where these two practices intersect on political concerns. Literary wit proved a powerful tool in voicing political opposition, and the texts and authors examined in this project variously attempted to use literary modes to frame counsel in manners that would make advice less threatening and more attractive to their audiences.[4] As Thomas Wilson suggests in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, a person who could master this skill could earn considerable respect, a valued commodity in the social practice of counsel:[5]

> Now then what is he at whom al men wonder, and stand in a mase at the vewe of his wit: whose doings are best esteemed? Whom we doe most reverence, and compt half a God among men? Even such a one assuredly that can plainly, distinctly, plentifully, and aptly, utter both words and matter, and his talk can use such composition, that he may appere to keepe an uniformitie, and (as I might faie) a number in the uttering of his sentence. (161)

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[3] For a recent discussion of sermons, see Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640*, especially the discussion of clerical advice (60–95).

[4] Early modern "wit" approximates more closely to "intelligence," an ability to perceive matters and state them concisely, forcefully, and distinctively in a manner that would pleasingly surprise an audience. For discussions of "wit," see Charles Speroni, *Wit and Wisdom of the Italian Renaissance*, and James Biester, *Lyric Wonder: Rhetoric and Wit in Renaissance English Poetry*.

[5] Wilson's text was first published in 1553 and is cited here from the 1560 edition.

Wilson's reaching rhetoric aside, the wit needed by a poet closely resembled the wit needed by a counselor. Early modern writers thus understood counsel and literature in remarkably similar terms, perhaps because the ubiquity of counsel made it natural that written texts should be understood through analogy to counsel, perhaps because the writers sought the esteem of counsel for their own works, or perhaps because share in efforts to win favor while also trying to inform and influence.

The quotation in the title of this dissertation, "In counsel is stability," is borrowed from Francis Bacon's "Of Counsel," and Bacon in turn credits it to Solomon. The phrase is used in my title with a touch of irony. The "stability" to which Bacon refers narrows counsel to a particular subset of political advice. Of the major writers discussed in this project—Thomas More, Philip Sidney, Bacon, and John Milton—all sought political roles, and none found counsel to be a highly stable profession. What could offer stability for the monarch and the state often proved frustrating and dangerous for those who sought to counsel. As much as counsel could be treated in lofty terms by early modern writers, idealizations of counsel often belied underlying problems—good counsel went unheeded; bad counsel could be masked as good; flattery could deceive, and those being advised sometimes proved unfit recipients of counsel. The challenges and disappointments of counsel pushed many people to experiment with alternative modes of presenting counsel. Literature, which offered writers the opportunity to imagine and construct situations apart from but analogous to those which they faced at court, developed rapidly through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England, not just as a means for entertainment but as a mode for conveying counsel. Many writers adopted the language and motifs of counsel; many featured the practice of counsel prominently in

their poetry, plays, and prose. When this counsel was political in nature, the language and portrayal of counsel invariably opened a range of political commentary regarding princely virtue, monarchal power, and problems of counsel. In doing so, many writers sought to engage with and shape the political structure around them.

Writers in the sixteenth century inherited the idea that literature, if it is good literature, teaches something as well as entertains. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratio*, an essential text on rhetoric for students in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, asserted that an orator's aims are to instruct, to move, and to delight—"*ut doceat moveat delectet*" (3.5.2). Before Quintilian, Horace had formulated in his *Epistula ad Pisones ('Ars poetica')* that poet ought to aim to inform or delight, or to perform some combination of both—"*Aut prodesse uolunt aut delectare poetae / aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere uitae*" (333–34). Quintilian's further insistence that the orator be morally good adds a moral dimension to what is taught. Sidney's expression in his *Defence of Poesy* that the end of poetry is "to teach goodness and delight the learners of it" captures this notion that literature counsels its readers in, as Sidney suggests just a few words later, "moral doctrine" (*Selected Prose* 132). Early modern literary practices thus intertwined with counsel in attempting to instruct their audiences, and Sidney argued that poetry is particularly effective as a vehicle for counsel:

> But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince, as the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon; or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil; or a whole Commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*? (*Selected Prose* 117)

Since early modern writers understood literature in terms of counsel, examining their literature through the lens of counsel can offer us a richer understanding of precisely how writers attempted to engage with and influence their readers. Counsel describes an essential relationship among early modern people, and to understand the relationships among writers, readers, and texts, we must examine how those texts are shaped by the conventions of counsel and how, in turn, writing revises those practices of counsel.

Over the past several decades, critics have given attention to the importance of these relationships in shaping early modern literature. Kevin Sharpe, in his effort to situate Caroline poetry and plays within the humanist tradition of counsel, observes the socio-political system in which literature participated:

> In a society organized around personal connections, in a commonweal founded upon patronage and clientage, personal relationships were often intrinsically and obviously political, as indeed political relationships were personal. Love poetry had a public and political dimension and must be studied as part of the discourse of politics. And, thus appreciated, it must be studied too as another aspect of the humanist literature of counsel, offered to all men but directed primarily at those of influence and authority in the commonweal. (*Criticism and Compliment* 272)

What Sharpe suggests could apply to most literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Recognizing literature as a mode of counsel is an important step toward recovering an understanding of how literary texts engaged early modern readers, but considerable work remains to be done examining the development of literature and counsel alongside one another as politics shifted during the Tudor and Stuart years and

how early modern texts were not merely understood as counsel, but were constructed in correspondence with conventions of counsel. Given that plays, poetry, and other literature developed considerably and were disseminated much more widely under the Stuarts compared to a century earlier, tracing how earlier writers built that tradition of literature as counsel remains an important project.

To the extent that many of the literate class, particularly in the sixteenth century before literacy rates began to rise significantly, were engaged in patronage and politics, the category of political counsel was particularly important to many early modern writers, and thus the challenges of court counsel have received considerable historical and critical scrutiny.[6] Further study of the relationship between literature and counsel could branch far beyond political concerns. However, since political counsel figured significantly among early modern writers, and because literature that reflected consciously on practices of counsel commonly intersected with politics, examining the interactions between literature and counsel within political domains offers us particular insights into how writers were struggling with and reacting to practices of counsel in shaping their literary conventions to influence readers. Of the four writers whom I primarily examine in this project, all four—More, Sidney, Bacon, and Milton—engaged in political counsel, and all four attempted to expand the efficacy and reach of their counsel through literary efforts in the forms of poetry, entertainments, prose fiction, dialogues, and essays, among others. As writers imagined audiences beyond the traditional boundaries of the court, literature adjusted to counsel to broader audiences, requiring different sets of

[6] See David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, especially 42–61, for a discussion of the complications of measuring English literacy. See also Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 19.

conventions. By examining these four writers alongside one another, I aim to trace how the aims to counsel an intended readership of literary works developed in close connection to conceptions of monarchy, government, and participation in political counsel.

This step toward imagining broader audiences opened the possibility of texts assuming new significations as any reader could become part of political discussions and literary expressions that once had been limited to a narrow class of counselors and clerks. Even if most people were not literate or engaged as part of this audience, that writers imagined them potentially part of the readership transforms how those texts behave, particular in fostering a common interest in political participation. Marshall Berman's observation that people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had "little or no sense of a modern public or community within which their hopes and trials can be shared" (17) does not echo in the intent interest in the "commonweal" by writers like More as he actively sought to shape the educations and perspectives of humanist advisors in England and across Europe, Sidney with his hopes tied to promoting international Protestantism and shaping the English monarchy to fit a national vision for England, Bacon in presenting to the increasingly literate public a moral and civil agenda for the nation, or Milton as he fiercely defended a free press in *Aereopagitica* or the republic in his other writings. To be fair, Berman does place these centuries on the early cusp of modernity, and it is certainly the case that early modern English writers struggle for a new vocabulary to describe their political, social, personal, moral, and economic situations. However, the writers in these early centuries of modernity were aware of the cultural upheaval around them, and their efforts to seize active roles in shaping progress and their

increasing recognition of a fragmented public marks a conscious awareness of the shifting political and literary space that early modern writers occupy.

While writing for wider audiences was a significant shift during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we also must recognize the constraints and pressures that often prevented what could be imagined for a readership from fully forming.[7] The printing press made publishing broadly technologically possible, but even decades after the printing press had arrived in England, literacy rates remained a barrier to reaching a truly "national" audience.[8] Even in London where a fairly literate population had taken root by the seventeenth century, literacy did not guarantee the circulation of expensive texts. Many writers, including Sidney, kept their texts within narrow coterie audiences. To the extent that early modern people understood literature as a mode of counsel, a common perception of the private nature of counsel may have discouraged many writers from imagining broader audiences. As counsel developed through the late medieval years and in early modern England, the term and the practice became closely associated with privacy and secrecy. The notion that one could counsel publicly to many people at once was not lost—written texts widely circulated in manuscript or print sometimes aimed to accomplish just that—but "counsel" commonly adopted a connotation of "secret" in addition to "advice."[9] Counsel often dealt in private matters, and one's closest

[7] For a discussion of reading practices during the couple of centuries prior to this, see Amtower 17–44.
[8] See, for example, Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* 74, for a map displaying English illiteracy in the early 1640s ranging from at least 22% among men in London to at least 76% among men in some rural counties. Illiteracy among women would have been considerably higher. Cressy uses the ability to sign one's own name as a measure for literacy, but a signature alone may not indicate ability to read in any appreciable sense.
[9] One can find many such usages connoting secrecy throughout early modern literature, such as, to offer just one illustrative example, when Hamlet urges Ophelia to listen to the actor speak the prologue of the play he has arranged: "We shall know by this fellow. The players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all" (3.2.141-42).

counselors were often one's closest intimates. Counsel thus tended to prize the ability to keep secrets when counsel was held between two persons or among an exclusive group. Counsel necessitated trust among those engaged together in it. Counsel could be given, or counsel could be kept, and it often needed to be both.

Intimacy was a valued commodity nowhere as much as in political counsel. Close access to a patron or monarch could be difficult to achieve, even for someone with rank. Successful advisors cultivated intimacy, and the career goal of a courtier would have been promotion to the "privy" council and gaining access to the "privy" chamber. These were the private, secret, closed places where counsel could be whispered directly into a monarch's ear. Changing literary practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries prompted writers to imagine new audiences for their works, which, I argue, produced instability in how people understood the roles and relationships of counsel and how they grasped their public roles. The practice of counsel shifted to include broadly disseminated activity that was intended to sway public opinion as well as intimate, closed exchanges between two or perhaps a small handful of persons that were meant to weigh upon a private conscience. For the monarchy, government, or party receiving advice, counsel could offer the escape from "the waves of fortune" that Bacon describes in his essay, but those offering counsel found the practice as often uncertain and treacherous as rewarding. When the receiving party was the monarch, success and stability in counsel depended greatly on the virtue of the monarch. As counsel shifted to become a more public activity involving a growing literate class in society, this shift demanded fostering public virtue, often through the same writings that aimed to counsel in political, social, or other modes.

For early modern writers, rhetoric and moral content were inseparable. This is in sharp contrast with some modern sentiments that attempt to divorce rhetoric from morality, such as Oscar Wilde expresses the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (3). Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, in their examination of the Italian humanist school of Guarino Guarini, raise an important question about the goal and outcome of the humanist rhetorical education, noting that "the pupil is not expected to develop original or independent ideas; he is not to express his own emotions, or to treat the topic in a fresh or striking manner. Rather, he is to execute a stylised set-piece in a stylish way" (17). With respect to the pedagogical practices, day-to-day teaching seemed rooted firmly in grammar and rhetoric, so that any moral understanding of texts was largely an afterthought:

> Presumably Guarino hoped that eventually his students would become fluent enough—mature enough as readers—for Cicero's moral outlook as conveyed by his structured moral argument to become accessible to them. Meanwhile he gave them intensive drilling in the grammatical and rhetorical ground-plot for such study. (23)

Despite the question about day-to-day teaching, however, heavily used classical rhetorical texts were uncompromising on the conjunction between morality and rhetoric. Quintilian in particular offered early modern students a firm insistence that rhetoric and moral virtue were inseparable:

> *Longius tendit hoc iudicium meum. Neque enim tantum id dico, eum qui sit orator virum bonum esse oportere, sed ne futurum quidem oratorem nisi*

> *virum bonum. Nam certe neque intellegentiam concesseris iis qui proposita honestorum ac turpium via peiorem sequi malent, neque prudentiam, cum in gravissimas frequenter legum, semper vero malae conscientiae poenas a semet ipsis inproviso rerum exitu induantur.* (12.1.3)

No man, unless he be good, can be an orator in Quintilian's formulation. To learn Quintilian's rhetorical system is to learn a moral system.

A problem for early modern writers and counselors alike was that for all the virtue they might possess, they needed audiences who shared that virtue. More's Hythloday balks at the prospect of entering a prince's service because he recognized that monarchs often failed in virtue. As the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries progressed, writing became an important tool for attempting to foster the appropriate moral qualities in a readership. As we shall see, Bacon's *Essays* attempt to educate readers in precisely this fashion, and the "golden" world that Sidney described in poetry could hardly be so golden without the moral qualities that the writing also expressed (*Selected Prose* 108). Milton attempted to fashion readers through his poetry with sufficient moral ability to exercise good judgment, and in *Areopagitica* Milton found in books the distillation of reason, such that "books are not absolutely dead things" but moral beings in themselves (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 720). Of course, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, books could be well written or poorly written, but this success or failure of rhetorical style reflected for the early modern writers and readers a deep sense of the moral value of the work as well. English writers were deeply invested in cultivating morally mature readers, and their writings express deep concern with the moral value of

rhetoric, in both the writing and in the reading practices. As a consequence of an educational system that broadly emphasized a method learning to imitate rhetorical style, to be well written in the minds of literate people meant to possess moral value, and thus witty texts could be used to challenge and train not only a reader's interpretive abilities but moral judgments as well. Just as to speak or write was to be moral, to listen or read was to be moral, and so texts had to counsel their own audiences in how to perform as good readers.

The need for good readers put considerable constraints on early modern writers, and many of their innovations and efforts to imagine and shape readers through counsel are attempts to throw off some of these constraints. As Roger Chartier has noted, texts in both their composition and transmission expand beyond the authorial "interpretation that ought to constrain reading" (x) to take on multiple, shifting meanings:

> As he returns in literary criticism or literary sociology the author is both dependent and constrained. He is dependent in that he is not the unique master of the meaning of his text, and his intentions, which provided the impulse to produce the text, are not necessarily imposed either on those who turn to his text into a book (booksellers-publishers or print workers) or on those who appropriate it by reading it. He is constrained in that he undergoes the multiple determinations that organize the social space of literary production and that, in a more general sense, determine the categories and the experiences that are the very matrices of writing. (28–29)

A writer cannot escape these dependencies and constraints any more than a counselor can toss off the similar dependencies and constraints involved in offering advice to others in a complex social space. Nonetheless, early modern writers often attempted to fashion readers according to their own will and intentions, an audacious act that, while never entirely successful, fostered transformations of writing and the political order in relationship with one another. Readers need counsel in order to be good and fit, and so early modern writers place heavy demands on readers to conform to the conventions and visions that the writers attempt to communicate.

The mixing of moral value and political ambition by early modern writers who sought to assert themselves as political advisors poses particular challenges to reading. Mere flattery and deceit risked turning a monarch bad. Literary production offered an alternative to formal office, and many early modern writers attempted to use their talents to impress potential patrons. As readers, we are placed in the position of a prince who, as Bacon puts it in "Of Counsel," must wonder whether those offering counsel, "instead of giving free counsel, sing him a song of *placebo*" (*Major Works* 382). A writer needed to win favor through a text or risk failing to successfully convey counsel at all. Flattery in a dedication or in the poetry or prose could help, but a writer also needed to prove honesty and humility. A text that offers seemingly honest moral and political counsel might also voice hints of flattery, and discerning mere flattery from honest counsel required careful discernment. Writers and counselors, as Laurie Shannon notes, often attempted to temper flattery with criticism to prove their credibility as counselors:

> A friend's honest counsel, crucial to texts emphasizing the discernment of true friends, must sometimes take the form of harsh or admonishing

> corrective speech. So embedded within the fabric of a likeness discourse (consent) we find the germ of protopolitical dissent. (22–23)

With texts such as More's *Utopia*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, Bacon's *Essays*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, we must thus be attentive to how those texts, as Sidney's *Defence* terms it, attempt to "teach" us something, how they ingratiate themselves to readers, what the authors may have hoped to gain from writing and publishing, and how the writers represent themselves as true friends and counselors to establish honesty and credibility. Conceiving of text-as-counsel opens a multivocal landscape in which the reader must be attuned to discern a virtuous exhorter working on behalf of its audience from a preening sycophant caught up in its author's own civic, political, or vocational ambitions.

For advice to be effective, early modern writers express broad agreement that faithful counsel must be able to achieve an oppositional stance to power. Bacon roundly rejects the counsel of flatterers and, in warning that the self can be the worst of flatters, observes that "there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self, as the liberty of a friend" (*Major Works* 394). Judith Ferster has argued in her discussion of the medieval mirrors-for-princes tradition that this struggle to correct power developed as one of the primary conflicts in English monarchical government:

> In fact, a great deal of the history of the English medieval government can be seen as a conflict between the king's search for more power, even to the extent of absolutism in some cases, and various subjects' search for the means to exercise their rights to participate in the political process and to resist what they say as injustice. (25)

In weighing the possibility of such resistance, Stephen Greenblatt's influential argument that genuine, radical subversiveness "is at the same time constrained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 30) offers a monolithic view of power that may capture an important element of practices of counsel. Counselors, acting by convention, do not intend to dispute or to rebel against the authority of a monarch. To the contrary, their practice consciously aims at reinforcing the monarch's power in a mutual relationship that also benefits the successful counselor through preferment and spoils. Monarch and counselor together might form a shared ruling class that is more properly the locus of power. Opposition is entirely contained within this power structure.

While political criticism and opposition was often contained within a system of counsel, we must also remain attune to the possibility of genuinely oppositional politics when we read texts as counsel. As David Norbrook criticizes, "a cultural theory ought not to lead to the logical deduction that the English Revolution cannot have happened" ("Life and Death of Renaissance Man" 108). While a writer like Bacon in his *Essays* may have expressed deep concerns about sedition, and while deposing and killing a monarch was a shocking event when it happened, David Rollison challenges that toppling monarchs was not uncommon and formed a genuine feature of English political tradition:

> Political discords, quarrels and factions, conducted 'openly and audaciously', constituted a—arguably *the*—dominant, and certainly the most novel, theme of English constitutional culture from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. The tradition of resistance and rebellion was a sign

> that significant numbers of people routinely lost faith—or never had any—in actually existing government. (205)

Rollison's observation of five deposed or killed kings during the two centuries leading up to the end of the War of the Roses, among various other challenges and rebellions, lends credence to the charge that opposition could challenge and topple power, although as Rollison adds, "Yet in an important sense that tradition was underpinned by 'reverence for government'—as common opinion thought it ought to be constituted" (205). As early modern England emerged, English politics had already developed a tradition of people demanding a government that functioned according to their conception of what government should be, and the potential for opposition to disrupt the center of power—the monarch and his closest advisors—was very real, even if the fundamental power structures and expectations for government remained largely unchanged as power shifted hands.

The English system of counsel functioned thus as a mutual exchange, but the system demanded responsiveness to the people and had the potential to turn destructively on itself. The king or queen held power to deem favorites and promote or demote people at court, and the success of one's counsel to the monarch hinged on this favor or disfavor. However, the monarch also had to be pliable, to bend in opinion enough to keep subjects happy. Although opposition sometimes had to be crushed in a more Machiavellian fashion, successfully bending to criticism could effectively bolster the monarch's authority. Bishop John Russell, Lord Chancellor, in his draft of a 1483 speech for the opening of Parliament, captures how courtiers at the cusp of early modern England understood counsel as inextricably bound with the monarchy in an organic exchange:

> What ys the bely or where ys the wombe of thys grete publick body of Englonde but that and there where the Kyng ys hymself, hys courte and hys counselle? for there must be digested alle maner of metes, not onely servyng to commyn foode, but alleso to dent…and some tyme to medicines, such as be appropred to remedye the excesses and surfettes committed at large. (xlvi)

King and counsel alike sit at the center of England in an image that is at once pregnant and gastric. King and counsel digest matters of state and give life to the body of England.

Early modern attitudes regarding monarchal power, however, were complex and varied. Russell's image and formulation is one that appealed to counselors, and we will see in chapter two echoes of Russell's conjoining of monarch and counsel in Sidney's attempts to advise Elizabeth I. This image, however, sits at odds with the *imperium* that was claimed by Henry VIII in, for example, the preamble to his 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals:

> Where by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one Supreme Head and King having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial Crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people divided in terms and by names of Spiritualty and Temporalty, be bounden and owe to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of

> Almighty God with plenary, whole, and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative, and jurisdiction to render and yield justice and final determination to all manner of folk resiants or subjects within this his realm, in all causes, matters, debates, and contentions happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint or provocation to any foreign princes or potentates of the world. (Tanner 41)

Amidst the challenges over canon law and the authority of Rome, Henry VIII left no room for counselors or any other check on his power. Henry appears absolute and answerable only to God. John Cramsie notes that Henry VIII had begun to claim this *imperium* long before conflict with canon law and Rome, and James VI and I in turn would attempt to wield similar language and power over England when he assumed the throne in 1603.[10] Charles I ultimately proved ineffective in maintaining such *imperium*, but he held firmly to such principles even to the point of entering into a personal rule without Parliament for eleven years.[11] Elizabeth's reign saw considerably less insistence on absolute power, although demands for loyalty remained high. The 1558 Act of Supremacy reiterated Henry's claim to power over all matters in the kingdom, declaring Elizabeth "Supreme Governor of this realm" (Tanner 130), a necessary statement to reverse Marian reforms and a powerful formulation of Elizabeth's authority. Elizabeth, however, exercised caution in claiming *imperium*, recognizing when she came to the throne her position as a woman and the need to surround herself by counsel that

[10] See Cramsie, "The Philosophy of Imperial Kingship and the Interpretation of James VI and I," in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, ed. Ralph Anthony Houlbrooke, esp. 43–45.
[11] On the personal rule of Charles I, see Hibbert 138ff and Cust, *Charles I* 104–96.

would bolster her authority.[12] The development of a strong Protestant resistance theory under Mary had called into question the far-reaching Henrician claims to power, and Elizabeth had to negotiate those who, like Russell, understood a natural organic relationship between monarch and counsel, those who advocated popular sovereignty, constitutionalism, and a monarch under the rule of law, and those who assented to *imperium* and absolute power.[13] The Tudors succeeded in brokering and maintaining power to a greater degree than the Stuarts, with their rigid insistence on absolutist ideas of power, accomplished. To be too authoritarian and to be too pliant could likewise pose dangers. Granting people the ability to influence royal prerogative and even to lodge sharp criticisms could help to reinforce royal power, and this practice also mutually shared power with those capable and fortunate enough to succeed as advisors. The practice rested on a knife's edge, however, and as much as counselors were invested in maintaining the system of power, the potential for people to topple a monarch remained very real. Deposing or killing a monarch was shocking and extreme, but it remained a possibility of the system from the perspective of the English nobility and people. As the English court negotiated these shifts in how monarchs understood royal prerogative, counsel had to adapt, for even those counselors who supported absolutist claims generally remained committed to the belief that the crown heeding good counsel would produce healthier government.

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[12] See Loades, esp. 124–32, for discussions of Elizabeth's authority upon her ascension, her demands of loyalty, and her use of counsel. See also Mears for the argument that Elizabeth's active policy-making dealt less in institutions and more in personal relationships that she developed with her formal advisors and other courtiers. See also McLaren, especially 69ff, for a discussion of the implications of resistance theory and other political views on counsel during Elizabeth's monarchy.

[13] See Franklin for examples of anti-tyrannical writings from François Hotman, Théodore de Bèze, and Hubert Languet. See also Rollison for a lengthy discussion of notions of popular sovereignty and limited monarchy.

While a sustained debate about monarchal power continued through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, opening new possibilities for resistance, critics of a monarch had to exercise caution when speaking out against the monarch directly. Direct criticism or opposition could earn one a treason sentence, or at least a severe loss of favor at court. As Grafton and Jardine have argued, humanist pedagogy "fostered the sort of personality traits that any Renaissance ruler found attractive: above all, obedience and docility" (24), an important, pragmatic feature that helped humanist education to become widely accepted by princes across Europe. Counselors needed to formulate opposition, but this opposition typically aimed more at ordering society along conventional practices than at toppling the system or monarch. In the tension between a monarch's desire for obedience and docility and the ambitions of subjects at court, a tension which certainly predates the early modern period, the conventional practice had developed of couching criticism in indirect terms. The most common practice in this respect was simply to lay blame elsewhere than on the king, instead blaming wicked counselors for the monarch's poor decisions or lack of virtue.[14] This practice of blaming counselors instead of the king, which we see dramatized in plays like Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* and William Shakespeare's *Richard II*, offered a rhetorical convention and an effective strategy through which to challenge exercises of royal power while still maintaining proper deference to the monarch. As Rollison notes, "the spectre of evil advisers had been conjured up in every public crisis since the 1250s, such that it had become a convention of public discourse and rebellion to avoid blaming the king if that proved at all possible" (433). Of course, given the history in late-medieval England of kings deposed after

[14] See Rollison, esp. 114–15, for the development in English history of this notion that "the king was not to blame."

facing such indirect criticisms, the convention plainly spilled over in many instances to attacks directly against the monarch, calling to question how genuinely the deference to the king was ever really meant. Rollison weighs Kevin Sharpe's caution against dismissing such language as merely rhetoric, for the concern that the monarch receive good counsel was as legitimate and reasoned in the thirteenth century as the concern for a national leader to be surrounded by good advisors is legitimate today.[15] An individual cannot govern alone, and poor or wicked counselors can severely harm the state. The goal behind criticizing a monarch's counselors often extended beyond merely rhetorically influencing royal prerogative by deftly communicating concerns and complaints—stripping away counselors from the king made space for new, better counselors. When people were not ultimately aimed at toppling a monarch, replacing the disliked advisors allowed critics to leverage power and influence at court. Royal critics thus maintained optimism that if only the king could receive good counsel, the king would be good.

Early modern writers understood this convention well, and the growing production of dramatic, poetic, prose fiction, historical, and other literary texts equipped writers with witty allegory and metaphor within which to couch their criticisms. Direct opposition sometimes met official resistance, but, as Annabel Patterson has noted, encoding criticisms in metaphors could show the proper deference to the censor's (and thus the monarch's) power, making the publication of indirect criticisms possible:

> There were conventions that both sides accepted as to how far a writer could go in explicit address to the contentious issues of his day, how he

[15] See Rollison 433.

> could encode his opinions so that nobody would be *required* to make an example of him. (11)

Political opposition via writing thus relied on literary wit to deflect and mask sharp criticism that might be seen as treasonous, and the delight fostered among readers by such wit earned a text favor and popularity.[16]

Ferster has made the argument that late-medieval England was already beginning to see a shift toward public participation in how people spoke about the constitutional responsibilities within government.[17] This process was almost certainly accelerated by the efforts of the Tudors to promote new aristocracy and new men—humanists—at court in favor of the old nobility. As English monarchs sought new kinds of advisors in an effort to bring stability to and greater administrative control over the English state, the growth of education to help provide people suited for these roles produced an environment ripe for shifting political relationships and expectations.[18] The development of these expectations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows writers struggling to imagine and forge new audiences and to react to new political environments. A text like *Utopia* thus offers particularly useful insights into how More explored this changing class of advisors early in the sixteenth century. Sidney's *Arcadia*, *Defence*, and participation in courtly entertainments show an ambitious but stymied counselor working vigorously to promote a strong national identity, within which Queen

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[16] See Lemon for a lengthy discussion of the risks of treason for published texts.
[17] Ferster suggests that members of Parliament "were being freed from the will of the aristocrats and committed instead to the will of the nation as a whole. In other words, 'common counsel,' the language about the community of the nation as a whole, was being used more frequently as the government was actually becoming more inclusive" (20).
[18] For the development of education in early modern England, see Cressy, *Education in Tudor and Stuart England*; Orme; Leach; and the essays "Early Tudor Humanism" and "Literacy and Education" by Mary Thomas Crane and Jean R. Brink respectively in Hattaway, *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* 13–26 and 95–105.

Elizabeth's marriage and shaping a literary tradition play prominent roles. While Sidney during his lifetime engaged only with coterie audiences, Bacon was among the early English writers to aggressively publish writings that imagined a growing literate class, and Bacon consciously explored the moral and political dimensions of using his writing to counsel a broader public along with the monarch. By the time Milton wrote in the turbulent 1640s and in the Restoration, the literate public in and around London had become a voracious audience for published texts. Although Milton also engaged in many conventional practices of counsel through his official writings, many of his later poetic works in particular display political engagement that leaves behind traditional, monarchical modes of counsel in favor of writing that seeks to encourage and train autonomous, sufficient readers capable of both the moral virtue and political acumen to assume active roles in a reshaped and still changing English political order. Taken together, these texts spanning more than a century and a half do not perhaps display a stark revolution in the practices of written counsel, for the dynamics of power and government are such that many age-old conventions inherited by More, Sidney, Bacon, Milton, and other early modern writers have, in turn, been passed to us today. However, the writings of these authors reveal a steady transformation of literary practices that revolved around imagining and engaging with a literate public, even if such a readership was actually small, that could reshape the political order as more and more people felt equipped and compelled to have a voice in the commonwealth.

Chapter one thus traces the challenges that More faced in the early sixteenth century, having inherited rich civic, educational, rhetorical, and literary traditions from Italian humanism, as he attempted to reimagine the practices of counsel within that

humanist framework. By publishing in Latin, More addressed his *Utopia* to the broadest audience—literate Europeans—which was still a relatively small audience limited to clerks, some nobility and gentility, and perhaps a few wealthy tradesmen in More's time. But by doing so, and by framing his work with a collection of humanist letters, More lifted his *Utopia* out of the medieval mirrors-for-princes tradition and instead set up a mirror for counselors. In the interplay among the prefatory letters, book one, and book two, More places readers on uneven interpretive ground that forces us to question all of the apparent counsel provided to us. More's struggles at the intersections of private activity and public authority in the debate with Hythloday over entering a prince's service and in the recognition of individual pride and greed as impediments to a Utopian state serve to counsel us on what it means to counsel. When Raphael Hythloday then presents to us a narrative that is fairly conventional in form—part treatise and part travelogue—but that is highly unconventional in the political and moral order that it describes, we are left to struggle with the fact that More is not necessarily advocating on behalf of many of the civic policies that Hythloday describes. Instead, I argue that More uses Hythloday's descriptions of Utopia to lay out for us, as would-be humanist advisors, what the relevant moral and political issues are that weigh on a wide range of problems that a counselor might encounter. In effect, More is training and shaping people to think in a manner that allows them to speak "*concinne et cum decoro*" (*Utopia* 96), or neatly and appropriately, elegantly and with grace. *Utopia* is not a scholastic treatise, despite Hythloday often speaking in such terms, but a pragmatic, rhetorical training manual, in a sense, that forces readers to think and react to the interpretive challenges that More lays before us.

In chapter two, I examine how Sidney reacts to disappointment, frustration, and exclusion in the middle years of Elizabeth's reign by turning to writing as a means to address serious political concerns. By tracing how Sidney's conception of writing as counsel develops through his *Discourse on Irish Affairs*, *The Lady of May*, the *Old Arcadia*, the *Defence of Poesy*, and the court triumph, *The Fortress of Perfect Beauty or the Four Foster Children of Desire*, I make a case that while Sidney distrusted writing as a less effective form of service than employment at court, Sidney's assertion of himself as a counselor marked a recognition of the potential for writing to shape the English consciousness and the English state. Particularly in the context of Elizabeth's marriage question in the late 1570s and early 1580s, with pressures for political and military involvement in the Netherlands and elsewhere on the continent as a further backdrop, Sidney employed his writing to demand a voice in Elizabeth's affairs and to seize a role as advisor that was otherwise denied to him during his career, effectively pushing against the acceptable limits of conventional practices of counsel and using coterie manuscript circulation and public entertainments to make powerful claims on who Elizabeth ought to be and how she ought to behave, carving out a broad role for counsel within the English monarchy.

Chapter three turns to Bacon's *Essays* to explore how the conjoining of civil and moral aims in a published text both imagines a newly literate readership and speaks to Bacon's broader social and scientific interests. Bacon is one of the early English authors to publish to an English public. At the time Bacon wrote, the literate public remained small, but the vision of Bacon's works in constructing a civil and moral framework around which he could shape his scientific agenda required imagining a broader English

audience than Bacon likely had. Bacon gives us in his *Essays* what is in many respects a highly conventional collection of advice. However, as Bacon revised his *Essays* and began publishing his philosophical and scientific writings, we can increasingly see how Bacon's choice of the essay form, borrowed from Michel de Montaigne, allows Bacon to adapt the essay into a rhetorical model—the aphorism—that underpins Bacon's pragmatism, empiricism, and much else in his political, scientific, and moral vision for Stuart England. Unlike Montaigne, Bacon is not the object of his *Essays*. Bacon's counsel is of the utmost concern, and the pragmatic conventionality of Bacon's advice provides an important foundation for Bacon's thought, particularly in how he understood the moral and political structure of the state and counsel's role in it.

The final chapter examines Milton's engagement in writing from the turbulence of the English Revolution in the 1640s through the Restoration to understand how Milton transformed practices of counsel by rethinking the fundamental relationships between people, whom Milton conceived as radically more autonomous and private than preceding centuries ever could have imagined. Milton boldly defended free, unlicensed printing in his *Areopagitica*, identifying that sort of radical freedom as the best and perhaps only environment in which individuals can exercise virtue. For Milton, the individual was thus endowed with severe moral responsibility, first to God but also within the social and political order. Particularly in later poetic works like *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, Milton addresses frankly the problems of counsel and attempts to refigure for a radical Protestant context the responsibilities implicit in a system of counsel. Prior generations were apt to rely on conventions blaming wicked counselors for monarchs' misdeeds, such that stripping away evil counselors would allow the virtue

of the royal person to shine through. Milton, however, used his writings to place blame squarely on those receiving counsel, charging faults to the person of Charles I, to the people of England, and to the figures of Adam and Samson, effectively upending conventional relationships and responsibilities in counsel. Writing in the wake of the English Revolution and Restoration, Milton addressed the problem of reconstituting a system of counsel when the conventional system had been destroyed and effectively argued that England had become a nation of little Adams or little monarchs, all responsible unto themselves and before God for their discernment, judgment, and actions. Milton's attempts to imagine and counsel fit, virtuous readers through his writings thus constitutes a particularly fraught and vital enterprise during the decade following the English Restoration.

Taken together, these chapters will trace how literary counsel developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a means to present moral and political counsel more effectively, playfully, and practically, as a means to speak when doing so was dangerous or otherwise impossible, and as a means of imagining and reaching to a broader segment of society. Each of these authors responds to different historical moments and addresses these several problems in the contexts of the politics and social conditions into which they wrote. In the progression from one chapter to the next, we shall gain an understanding of how early modern writers developed and redeveloped in bits and pieces a literary practice of counsel that in turn reshaped the English political order. The movement from More's satirical but idealistic model state for humanist counselors to Sidney's rough assertion of his own voice as counsel, from Bacon's aphoristic morality and civil vision to Milton's radical individualism, hardly offers a

complete representation of the transformations that England experienced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Alongside one another, these writers are, however, emblematic of the burgeoning interest in imagining a public readership, coupled with the fracturing and fragmentation of political and social institutions that accompanied this public shift. Engaging a literate population recognized political concerns that touched upon the interests of readers and of the commonweal. What had as recently as More's time been the province of a narrow class of nobility and clerks spread to become the interest of a literate public, even if only a small one mostly around London, who assumed a privileged role as audience to political advice and also could demand a voice in counsel as well.

Chapter One

Educating Utopia: The Rhetoric of Political Counsel

Thomas More's final words before his execution, "The king's good servant, but God's first," offer a curious contrast with the final words credited to More at his treason trial:

> …so I verily trust, and shall therefore heartily pray, that albeit your lordships have been on earth my judges to condemnation, yet that we may hereafter meet joyfully together in Heaven to our everlasting Salvation: and God preserve you, especially my sovereign lord the king, and grant him faithful counsellors. (Hargrave 68)

Facing imminent death, More's words predictably moved from the earthly to the divine. More expressed two similar thoughts at the conclusion of his trial, but in reverse order, starting with heaven, salvation, and God and ending with the king and his counselors. This gesture to the king's advisors may have been a politic move on More's part. The people presiding in trial over him numbered among the Henry VIII's closest counselors, and More's gesture toward them may have aimed to earn him favor.[19] Records do not offer us a glimpse of how those present at the trial reacted to More's statement.[20] Judgment had already been passed, however, and More spoke these words after his initial sentence of hanging, drawing, and quartering had been commuted by the king to beheading. Praying on behalf of the king that

[19] For a discussion of More's trial and execution, see Richard Marius, *Thomas More: A Biography*, 490–514.

[20] See Marius 507 for a discussion of how records from More's trial are complicated by incompleteness and heavy editing, redaction, and addition by those controlling the trial.

God grant Henry "faithful counsellors," when More was condemned to execution for resolutely maintaining his Catholic convictions, might have been understood by some present as an indictment on all of those in Henry's court who advised the king to break from Rome. From More's perspective, as the English court pressed ahead with divorce and rejection of papal authority, "faithful counsellors" for Henry VIII may have been in short supply.

The king's counsel and humanist contradictions

The decisions to receive counsel on the part of the monarch was a moral one. A king who accepted good counsel was virtuous, but no sovereign king could be forced to accept counsel. More's preoccupation with the king's counsel at the moment he faced a death sentence was a gesture of intense duty and loyalty that reveals a deep concern for the king's moral condition. As Erasmus playfully chides in the *Moriae Encomium*, however, princes preferred that which was pleasant to that which was true, and thus they distanced themselves from truth and from the counselors who spoke it:

> *Sed abhorrent a vero principum aures, dixerit aliquis, et hac ipsa de causa, sapientes istos fugitant, quod vereantur ne quis forte liberior existat, qui vera magis, quam iucunda loqui audeat. Ita quidem res habet, invisa regibus veritas.* (*Moriae Encomium* 125)

More, facing death, must have felt the sting of these satirical words that had proven all too true in his case. Something had gone terribly wrong in how Henry VIII employed counsel that would result in More's execution, and Henry's decision to

look after his own interests in securing a divorce and a separation from Rome rather than to the interests of his subjects offers some insight into the source of the moral breakdown. As Thomas Elyot argued in *The Boke of the Governour*, the king's duty included a selfless responsibility to his subjects:

> But they that be gouernours (as I before sayde) nothinge do acquire by the sayde influence of knowledge for theyr owne necessities, but do imploye all the powers of thery wittes, and theyr diligence, to the only preseruation of other theyr inferiours. (6–7)

Henry VIII had taken the Machiavellian interest to look solely to his own interests rather than the moral and mutual outlook on monarchal power articulated by Elyot. The king was sovereign, but the popular view remained that the king held a duty to protect and advance the public weal. To do so required that the king be moral, which entailed receiving counsel. Instead, More found himself in a reversal of roles. He was selflessly weighing the public good—the king's counsel—while the king looked to his own interests. For humanists, pursuit of private interests at the expense of the public good was a grave threat to the state. As Thomas Starkey argues in his *A Dialogue Between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset*:

> [Y]f al men knew and ponderyed right wel, they wold not so much regard the[r] pryuat wele as the[y] dow; they wold not so study theyr owne destruction. For thys ys sure (as now you plainly see and clerly perceive) that ouermuch regard of pryuate wele, plesure and profyt, is the manifest destruction of al gud, publyke, and iuste commyn pollycy. (65)

To be virtuous as a counselor or prince requires subjecting private interests and ambitions to the public good. By continuing to profess the public good through his concern with the king's counsel even just before his execution, More effectively protested his innocence and declared his loyalty. The gesture did not save him, but More's reputation following his death continued to be one of the perfectly faithful servant.

The persistent concern with counsel during the medieval and early modern periods may reflect in part self-preservation and ambition—counselors who wrote about counsel stood to gain if counsel was highly esteemed in the monarchy—and in part a genuine desire that the monarch be morally virtuous. Jacqueline Rose sums up the ambitious role figured for counsel at the start of the sixteenth century:

> The transalpine humanists whose milieu was the princely court found counsel to be a way to fulfil the Ciceronian vita activa. If their ancient preceptor was Cicero, their contemporary guide was Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), which insisted that frank counsel kept kingship from deteriorating into flattery. Counsellors praised a king's wisdom, bolstering his reason, not flattering him into enslavement to his passions. Thus a bad king was to be preferred to one with bad friends, and a country should thank counsellors more than kings for good rule. (49)

The virtue of a monarch hinged on an ability to receive good counsel, and a king's advisors in troubled monarchies were often set to take the blame, justifiably or not,

for a king's failures.[21] To have the king's ear was to have power, which produced no shortage of ambitious courtiers seeking advancement and admittance into the king's intimate, innermost circles of the Privy Council and privy chamber.[22]

Gaining advancement at court meant having the proper skills in order to effectively participate in what Elyot in *The Boke of the Governour* calls "the rule and moderation of reason" (1). The monarch was sovereign, but participated in a mutual system with the rest of society. In describing this, Starkey employs the images first of a ship sailing, with the different crew members carrying out their different roles, and then of a physical body functioning as one through its diverse parts, highlighting the dependence that monarchs had on their subjects:

> [S]o a cuntrey, city, or towne, then ys wel gouernyd, ordryd, and rulyd, when the hedys or rularys thereof be vertuse and wyse, euer hauying before theyr yes, as a marke to schote at, the welthe of theyr subiectys, euery one of them also dowyng theyr office and duty to them appoyntyd and determyd. And so consequently the hole polytuke body attaynyth the veray and true commyn wele. (57)

The emphasis in descriptions of the monarchy of this vein is the naturalness of the estate, and this natural order provided counselors a vital role in mutually supporting the other social estates that make up this functioning body.

For humanists, learning and counsel are thus naturally linked. Elyot asserts that the end of learning is counsel, and his handbook for princes and advisors offers a

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[21] See Rollison, esp. 114–15.
[22] For a discussion of the functioning of and relationship between the Privy Council and privy chamber under Henry VIII, see Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court*, 95–96.

guide on how to fashion a person for service to the state. Elyot's insights into monarchy and counsel in sixteenth-century England offer us a glimpse of the idealism in which Elyot and his contemporaries held the system of counsel. Latin, preferably learned naturally from the time a child was in the crib, formed an educational foundation, but Elyot rationalizes a much broader curriculum for counselors:

> And to be playne and trewe therein, I dare affirme that, if the elegant speking of latin be nat added to other doctrine, litle frute may come of the tonge; sens latine is but a naturally speche, and the frute of speche is wyse sentence, which is gathers and made of sondry learnyges. (116)

"Elegant Latin" was not enough. A conversant counselor needed diverse knowledge, and Elyot's *Boke* goes on to detail how music, dance, archery, and other subjects ought to be part of one's education. Notably, Elyot assigns a prominent place to literature, particularly poetry and drama, in educating princes and counselors. "By comedies good counsaile is ministred" (127), Elyot comments, and he strikes what appears in the text to be a fairly conventional pose in asserting the importance of reading books for the purpose of counsel and education:

> Verily there may no man be an excellent poet nor orator unlasse he haue part of all other doctrine, specially of noble philosophie. And to say the trouth, no man can apprehende the very delectation that is in the lesson of noble poets unlasse he have radde very moche and in diuers autours of diuers lernynges. (131)

Poetry is important, but even in reading poetry a person must be widely read in order to contextualize and interpret well. Elyot's outline of an educational system is one designed to produce good readers who, having received and understood good counsel from books and other sources, are themselves equipped to counsel.

Just as the monarch needed to be virtuous and receive counsel, the idealized system also demanded that counselors exercise virtue. To have received a moral, rhetorical education but to fail to develop the virtue of that education oneself called into question a person's qualifications to serve a prince:

> Who wyll nat reput it a thinge vayne and scornefull, and more lyke to a may game, than a mater seriouse or commendable, to behold a personage, which in speche or writyng expresseth nothing but vertuous maners, sage and discrete counsailes, and holy advertisements, to be resolved in to all vices, folowyng in his actis no thing that he hym selfe in his wordes approvethe and teacheth to other? (Elyot 266)

Hypocrisy in counsel could hint at ulterior motives behind counsel, and anxieties over unfit and ambitious counselors run throughout discussions about counsel. The question of ambition among advisors is an important one for More, and his concern for "faithful counsellors" at the end of his career, even after he had been sentenced to death, bookends similar concerns he raised in *Utopia* before More had entered into Henry VIII's service. For More, the challenge of giving good, meaningful advice depended greatly on an advisor's ability to present convincing advice. Rhetorical ability stood, in part, as a test of one's qualifications to serve a prince. *Utopia*, as a playful exploration of humanist ideals, statesmanship, and counsel, served, in part, as

an advertisement of More's own abilities. In addressing his text addressed primarily to other humanists who, like More, were variously positioned to counsel princes across Europe, More employs *Utopia* to counsel and instruct his readers by offering a compellingly slippery progression of rhetorical displays not only that engage readers in debates on how to best organize a state—"*de optimo reipublicae statu*" (*Utopia* 2), as the first half of the text's title advertises—but that educate us in the social and political complexities of participating in the system of counsel in early modern Europe.

More's rejoinder to the reader at the end of book two after Raphael Hythloday has finished expounding on details of the Utopian state presents a significant interpretive challenge if we expect *Utopia* to educate us. Hythloday wraps up his discussion of Utopia, calling it not only the "*optimam*" (best), but also the "*solam*" (only) state that can, by its own right, assume the name of "r*eipublicae*" (commonwealth) (*Utopia* 240). Hythloday's grandiose language, however, is immediately thrown into doubt as More pronounces that most of the laws and customs had been instituted in the country "*perquam absurde*" (really absurd). This initial judgment is then thrown into doubt by More's final comment:

> *Interea, quemadmodum haud possum omnibus assentiri quae dicta sunt, alioqui ab homine citra controversiam eruditissimo simul et rerum humanarum pertissimo, ita facile Confiteor permulta essea in Utopiensium republicae quae in nostris civitatibus optarim verius quam sperarim.*

> Meantime, while I can hardly agree with everything he said (though he is a man of unquestionable learning and enormous experience of human affairs), yet I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our own societies I would wish rather than expect to see. (*Utopia* 248–49)

More's competing judgments on the merits of the Utopian state, that it is at once instituted "most absurdly" and also offers a model for our own cities and states, leaves open what is worthy of emulation and what is meant as farce. Even in Hythloday's own declaration of Utopia as the "*optimam*" and "*solam*" commonwealth, the language that More offers us is slippery since commending a thing as the best of its kind when it is the only of its kind is no great praise.

In deploying this language of absurdity about Hythloday's account, More is also engaging with Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium*, which Erasmus had dedicated to More and which More borrows from in passages of *Utopia*. When More pronounces Hythloday's depictions of the Utopian state absurd, we have to read this against Folly's declaration concerning "wise fools":

> *Ingratum me Hercle et hoc hominum genus, qui cum maxime sint nostrae factionist amen apud vulgum congnominis nostril sic pudet, ut id passim aliis magni probri vice obiiciant. Proinde istos cum sint μωροτατοι receterum sophi ac Thaletes videri velint, none iure optimo μωροσοφος illos appellabimus?* (*Moriae Encomium* 26–27)

More, addressing a close circle of humanist writers who knew Erasmus' work and who were in on the humor, puts his readers on uneven interpretive ground. We

cannot take at face value the counsel that Hythloday offers, but we cannot entirely reject it either because somewhere in *Utopia* may be lurking a wise fool. This discourse is further complicated by the fact that, while Hythloday's account is labeled absurd, More's character in the first book argues in favor of counsel "*concinne et cum decoro*," using the same metaphor from theater than Erasmus employed to describe how we perform our various roles in life. More, in accordance with the pun on his name in Erasmus's text, seems to be the "wise fool," and yet his praise for some small aspects of Utopia leaves us suspended in the text's absurdities, struggling to find an interpretive framework from which to build understanding about what *Utopia* aims to counsel for us.

Hythloday's descriptions of Utopia, too, often prove contradictory. On the matter of education, which is vitally tied to the functioning of the political and legal systems in Utopia, Hythloday engages in a series of confusion descriptions. First, in discussing the Utopian disdain for ostentatious displays of wealth, Hythloday notes how all Utopians are educated well to reject showy riches:

> *Has atque huiusmodi opinions partim ex educatione conceperunt, in ea educti republica, cuius instituta longissime ab his stultitiae generibus absunt, partim ex doctrina literis. Nam etsi haud multi cuiusque urbis sunt, qui ceteris exonerati laboribus soli disciplinae deputantur (hi videlicet in quibus a pueritia egregiam indolem, eximium ingenium, atque animum ad bonas artes propensum deprehendere) tamen omnes pueri literis imbuuntur, et populi bona pars viri feminaeque per totam vitam horas illas quas ab operibus liberas diximus in literis collocant.*

> These and the like attitudes the Utopians have picked up partly from their upbringing, since the institutions of their commonwealth are completely opposed to such folly, and partly from instruction and good books. For though not many people in each city are excused from labor and assigned to scholarship full time (these are persons who from childhood have given evidence of excellent character, unusual intelligence and devotion to learning), every child gets an introduction to good literature, and throughout their lives many people, men and women alike, devote the free time I've mentioned to reading. (*Utopia* 154–55)

While citizens are soundly educated through instruction and books, devoting themselves to lifetimes of continuing education, the Utopians remain simple-minded on many matters. Hythloday observes the people's interactions with their legal system:

> *Nempe quum omnes leges (inquiunt) ea tantum causa promulgentur ut ab his quisque sui commonefiat officii, subtilior interpretatio paucissimos admonet (pauci enim sunt assequantur), quum interim simplicior ac magis obvius legum sensus omnibus in aperto sit.*
>
> As they see things, all laws are promulgated for the single purpose of advising every man of his duty. Subtle interpretations admonish very few, since hardly anybody can understand them, whereas the more

> simple and apparent sense of the law is open to everyone. (*Utopia* 196–97)

Although Utopians are said to learn from their reading, how much books contribute to their upbringing becomes a point of contention when Hythloday observes in the education of children and adolescents, "*nec prior literarum cura quam morum ac virtutis habetur*," that "instruction in morality and virtue is considered no less important than learning proper" (*Utopia* 230–31), suggesting that books may not be so useful in reinforcing a proper upbringing. Everyone is soundly educated, and yet they remain "*vulgus*" (*Utopia* 196), or simple-minded. Everyone devotes time to continued study throughout their lives, and yet the majority of people lacks much education and does not have much time for continued study. Books are instrumental in shaping Utopians' moral views on gold and fine clothes, and yet moral instruction apart from "letters" or learning proper is valued. If books provide moral instruction, they cannot be held distinct from moral instruction. The contradictions are rife.

In a similar manner, Hythloday lays out a system of political deliberation and counsel that seems, if not contradictory, at least convoluted. The Utopian system is put forth as working to prevent tyranny by dismissing chief executives suspected of trying to establish tyrannies and by putting to death senior phylarchs, or "tranibors," for engaging in debate on public policy matters outside the senate or popular assembly. At the same time, however, the Utopians appoint their chief executive for life, and the tranibors are elected annually, but rarely change—"*ceterum haud temere commutant*" (*Utopia* 122). The lesser phylarchs, or "syphogrants," meanwhile, are elected for only one-year terms. While the Utopian system does offer a model of

checks and balances among the chief executive, tranibors, and syphograntes, having the weakest elected representatives limited to a single year in office, while the most powerful chief executive possesses a life term, seems an odd way to combat tyranny. The commitment among syphograntes, too, to elect as governor the man they think best qualified, "*maxime censent utilem*" (*Utopia* 122), seems at odds with the practice of designating the oldest male member in every household as leader with no regard for who is best. Given that the whole island runs economically like one household—"*ita tota insula velut una familia est*" (*Utopia* 146)—political offices seem contrived and in conflict with the natural order elsewhere. The household is a patriarchy, and the island is a single household, and yet the island organizes politically around secret ballots, checks and balances, and elected terms, which seem antithetical to the notions of patriarchy or patrimony.

Furthermore, even as the tranibors are barred from discussing public policy outside the official chambers to keep them from "*coniuratione principis ac traniborорum, oppresso per tyrannidem populo, statum republicae mutare*," from "conspiring together to alter the government and enslave the people" (*Utopia* 122–23), the larger assembly syphograntes and the households which each individual syphogrant represents appear to engage in precisely such private discussion. Policy discussions are encouraged and allowed at the household level, but they are punishable by death for tranibors. The aim of preventing tyranny appears simple and sensible enough, but the means of doing so seem, in certain respects, backward from what they ought to be. The underlying farce in the system that Hythloday lays out for us is underscored when we realize that "syphogrant" more likely means "old man

of the sty" than it does "wise old man," and "tranibor" means "chief glutton."[23] The chief executive was, as we later learn, called "Barzanes," or "son of Zeus," in the original Utopian language, but is now called "Ademus," or "ruler without a people" (*Utopia* 130–31). These positions are instituted, to borrow More's phrase, *perquam absurde*.

Amidst this absurdity, then, we are forced to ask as readers what, if anything, More sees as worthy of establishing in European cities and states. The title page declares *Utopia* to be "*nec minus salutaris quam festivus*," or "no less beneficial than entertaining" (*Utopia* 2–3), but as amusing as the farcical elements may be, they leave the reader grasping to understand precisely how this book aims to instruct us. This struggle is precisely the effect that More intends, for it puts readers in the position of disputant, demanding that we engage with his "*libellus*" (*Utopia* 2), More's pamphlet, libel, or "little book," on equal terms. Our counterpart in this disputation is less the characters of Hythloday or More than it is *Utopia* itself. More constructs *Utopia* to confound and challenge readers, and this is especially so when we are among that coterie of readers who understand its satirical jokes. To read *Utopia* is to struggle against its satire and to be educated by the text in how to read the text and, more broadly, in how to interact in a political and social world every bit as complex as what we find in More's "truly golden handbook" (*Utopia* 3) As More's title page states, the task is how to best organize a commonwealth, with particular respect to the reader's own place within that commonwealth, and the descriptions of Utopia

[23] The play in "syphogrant" is between the Greek *sophos* (wise) and *sypheos* (of the sty). "Tranibor" appears to combine *tranos* (plain, distinct) and *boros* (gluttonous).

serve as a rhetorical testing ground through which readers can gain the experience needed to function well in that commonwealth.

Hythloday's scholasticism and the rhetoric of satire

More's rehearsal of the problem of counsel in book one offers us in some ways a means of better understanding the social and economic models discussed throughout the rest of the text, and in other ways these disputations over counsel only further problematize what we read. More constructs book one as a set of concentric circles that are part travel narrative and part humanist rhetorical disputation. More is on a diplomatic journey, and he meets Hythloday, who subsequently tells of other journeys undertaken in a less dutiful, more adventurous spirit. More, Giles, and Hythloday engage in a rhetorical disputation of their own around the question of entering into a prince's service, while Hythloday recounts within this conversation another disputation that he had in the home of Cardinal Morton regarding punishment for thievery, the keeping of standing armies, and enclosures. In this journey within a journey and disputation within a disputation, More provides for us a series of experiences "*nec minus salutaris quam festivus*" that aim to educate us pragmatically and to engage us in this humanist disputation so that we become active participants in unfolding and interpreting Hythloday's meaning.

Hythloday, as the "peddler of nonsense" that his Greek name marks him to be, may claim the voice of experience in declaring, for example, "*nam quod populi egestatem censeant pacis praesidium esse, longissime aberrare eos ipsa res docet*," that "they are absolutely wrong in thinking that the people's poverty guarantees

public peace: experience shows the contrary" (*Utopia* 92–93). Hythloday's point may even be one with which More wants us to agree. However, More is less interested in book one in teaching us what a counselor should counsel as he is in counseling us on how to counsel. Hythloday presents his adventures in the manner of a treatise, and for all of his experience and appeals to experience, Hythloday's method and ideals tend much more toward scholasticism, for which More upbraids Hythloday:[24]

> *Hoc est, inquit ille, quod dicebam, non esse apud principes locum philosophiae.*
>
> *Immo, inquam, est verum, non huic scholasticae quae quidvis putet ubivis convenire: sed est alia philosophia civilior quae suam novit scaenam, eique sese accommodans, in ea fabula quae in minibus est suas partes concinne et cum decoro tutatur.*
>
> "That is just what I was saying," Raphael replied. "There is no place for philosophy in the councils of kings."
>
> "Yes, it is true," I said, "that there is no place for this school philosophy which supposes every topic suitable for every occasion. But there is another philosophy, better suited for the role of a citizen, that takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand and acts its part neatly and appropriately. (*Utopia* 94–97)

More's term here in the Latin for Hythloday's mode of philosophy is "*scholasticae*," tying Hythloday directly to the medieval system of learning against which More and

[24] See Wooden 29–45 for a discussion of Hythloday as an object of anti-scholastic satire.

the humanist circle were reacting. Hythloday, as A. G. Harmon notes, engages in a rejection of the rhetorical humanist principle that More attempts to advance:

> In a way, Raphael is actually anti-rhetorical. His argument denies a need for mediatory rhetoric. Both Senecan and Ciceronian rhetorics take for the power to cast substance in an attractive way and thereby move the audience toward acceptance of whatever truth that substance stands for. The difference between them is a matter of which is the best style: simplicity or adornment. The belief at the very heart of rhetoric is that in some way the intended audience stands in either opposition to, or is apathetic about, what is being championed, and that the audience can be won over by the art of speech. (104–5)

Hythloday refuses to attempt to move people with his speech, and he is, in part, the pedantic schoolman, speaking ineloquently and out of the proper time and place in sophistic and stale treatises, the butt of Erasmus's jokes in the *Encomium Moriae*. As P. Albert Duhamel notes, "the explicit content of More's *Utopia* is the result of the application of that method of investigation employed by the scholastics in establishing and solving their 'quaestiones'" (103). This familiar scholastic method of arranging several propositions, followed by several common solutions, a constructive proof, and replies to the rejected solutions is the superficial pattern for virtually all of book one, and book two functions, at least on the surface, as an extended constructive proof, at the end of which More and Hythloday have no more time to work through objections and rejected solutions. The text is, on at least one level, a parody of scholastic methodology, with Hythloday the lead schoolman.

Hythloday grows larger than this scholastic satire in *Utopia*, but to the extent that these scholastic qualities are found in him, there is little that More, as a humanist, would seek to tie himself to in Hythloday.

More, of course, complicates Hythloday far beyond the scholastic satire, and this is particularly apparent in the debate over entering into a prince's service. Giles and More urge Hythloday to enter service, and Hythloday refuses. On the surface, this appears that it might be a typical dispute between *otium* and *negotium* of the sort that had been rehearsed widely among Italian humanists of previous generations, and this dispute served an important purpose in helping set the terms for how a state ought to be ordered and how an individual ought to perform within that state, whether that state took the form of a commonwealth or a monarchy. More's connection to these Italian writers was extensive, despite More never traveling in Italy. As Eric Nelson has noted:

> Virtually every member of More's circle—John Colet, William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre, William Lily, and, of course, Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536) himself — spent considerable periods of time in Italy, and even a cursory look through Erasmus's correspondence shows him to be familiar with virtually every major Italian author of the Quattrocento. (1033)

More engaged extensively with Italian humanists through letters, and his humanist circle gave him wide access to a range of Italian political theories. Quentin Skinner has noted that early Italian humanists, notably Petrarch and Dante, extolled the virtues of *otium*, whereas a subsequent generation, including Vergerio and Bruni,

expressed "the growing belief that a life devoted to pure leisure and contemplation (*otium*) is far less likely to be of value—or even to foster wisdom—than a life in which the pursuit of useful activity (*negotium*) is most highly prized" (*The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* 108). Toward the end of the 15th century, Pico had returned to praising *otium*. In addition to this humanist variation on the *vita contemplativa* versus the *vita activa*, Italian humanists differed, Skinner notes, on their visions of government, moving from the earlier civic-minded humanists who developed under the Italian city-republics to the later humanists who conceived of themselves in service to a prince. The former, Skinner observes, tended to address their writings to all citizens instead of specific magistrates and saw the purpose of government to preserve liberty, whereas the latter aimed their writings toward princes and, by consequence, toward courtiers and saw the main aim of government to maintain a state of security and peace.[25]

For More, the question of the use of education and value of service and counsel is a foregone conclusion. More sets up the traditional arguments in the dispute between his alter ego and Hythloday, but More is already settled that practical service and counsel is the proper life, and in More's humanist framework, rhetorical learning serves these pragmatic ends of morally and practically preparing one for counsel:

> To bring together royal will and royal goodness (inseparably united in God), moral restraints were needed: education for the young future king, counsel for the adult monarch. Thus counsel ensured rule was

[25] See Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* 108–23.

> good: it channelled and assisted, it did not impugn, sovereignty. Writers on counsel often reminded their readers that it was a counterpart to and not a contradiction of imperium. Their constraints on kings were not juridical but moral: the ought and the should not the 'must', backed with the threat of damnation if they were ignored. (Rose 53)

More engages with many of the same concepts and terms that he inherited from his Italian counterparts, but his dispute between practical service and pure philosophy refuses to stay fixed within those neat categories. Even before the text proper of *Utopia* begins, More leaps ahead to frame this debate and the subsequent text with his fictional letter to Giles. In that letter, More declares that he is overwhelmed with duties, both public and private, the same sort of duties to which Hythloday reports having no attachment, such that More has little time to put *Utopia* to paper:

> *Et danda omnino opera est, ut quos vitae tuae comites aut natura providit aut fecit causus aut ipse delegisti, his ut te quam iucundissimum compares, modo ut ne comitate corrumpas, au indulgentia ex ministris dominos reddas. Inter haec quae dixi elabitur dies, mensis, annus.*
>
> Besides, you are bound to bear yourself as agreeably as you can towards those whom nature or chance or your own choice has made the companions of your life. But of course you mustn't spoil them with your familiarity, or by overindulgence turn the servants into your

> masters. And so, amid the concerns I have mentioned, the day, the month, the year slips away. (*Utopia* 32–33)

More, unlike Hythloday, recognizes that good people must perform certain duties among the people around them, even if this business does intrude upon More's leisure and intellectual pursuits. Of course, that there has been any great delay in writing the text is not clear because there was no meeting with Hythloday and Giles from the start, so the extent to which business distracts from *otium* is thrown into doubt. More's subsequent musing on the width of the river Anydrus ("no water" in Greek) serves to underscore how absurd More's concerns are in this letter, in case we had missed the jest.

More's other major concern in this letter to Giles is with the accuracy of what he writes, which is another absurdity for a piece of fiction. More begins his letter making reference to the rhetorical parts of a composition, noting that he has not involved himself in any of the "*inveniendi laborem*" to flesh out his *inventia*, nor has he had time to think about the *dividia*—"*neque de dispositione quicquam fuisse cogitandum*" (*Utopia* 30). Instead, More insists that the truth is his only concern: "*et mea oratio quanto accederet propius ad illius neglectam simplicitatem tanto futura sit propior veritati, cui hac in rei soli curam et debeo et habeo*" (*Utopia* 30). More continues in this vein with a series of statements about the accuracy of what he writes, first claiming, "*Quod si exigereturut diserte etiam res non tantum vere scriberetur, id vero a me praestan nullo tempore, nullo studio potuisset,*" that "if the matter had to be set forth with eloquence, not just factually, there is no way I could have done that, however hard I worked" (*Utopia* 30–31). Eventually, More declares

that he will take the greatest care that there be nothing false in his book, "*ita si quid sit in ambiguo, potius mendacium dicam quam mentiar, quod malim bonus esse quam prudens*," "so if anything is in doubt, I'd rather say something untrue than tell a lie. In short, I'd rather be honest than clever" (*Utopia* 34–35). The final of these statements stands out: "*potius mendacium dicam quam mentiar*." The preceding observations on the composition of *Utopia* and its accuracy and eloquence are absurd. The entire work is fiction; there is no accuracy of facts in a fictional text and fantastical world. The text relies heavily on More's eloquence, which is highlighted on the book's title page: "*clarissimi disertissimique viri Thomae Mori*," "the most Distinguished and Eloquent Author Thomas More" (*Utopia* 2). More is heaping on himself the absurdities and contradictions that he will associate with Hythloday in the text of *Utopia*, but More's statement, "*potius mendacium dicam quam mentiar*," that he would rather utter a falsehood than lie, has a particular ring of truth in a fictional text. More would rather make a lie (fiction) than fail to speak what is true, and the fiction that More writes aims to be eloquent and honest. More deploys wit to establish *Utopia* as good counsel, and the text transfers onto readers the burden of making sense of that wit so that we may learn and profit from its counsel.

More's challenge to readers, then, is to engage with *Utopia* in a manner that unwinds its complex deceits, absurdities, and satires to find that truth inside, to borrow Erasmus's conceit from his *Adages*, the Sileni of Alcibiades, which are crude figures on the outside cleverly designed to open up to beautiful interiors. The debate in book one over the question of service proves to be one of these crude exteriors. More uses this dispute regarding service largely as a frame that allows More to

elaborate upon and dispute humanist goals for the English state. Stephen Greenblatt's reading of *Utopia* sees in the characters Morus and Hythlodaeus a "violently sundered" identity and culture (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 73), which More employs in a clever production of power. Greenblatt is right that book one offers us "a debate not simply over public service but over one's whole mode of being" (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 37), but his Foucauldian psychology of More, which in some respects appears to build on David Bevington's assertion that "Hythloday and *persona* More represent the two polarities of More's own mind" (498), deserves questioning:

> At stake…was not simply his career but his whole sense of himself, the dialectic between his engagement in the world as a character he had fashioned for himself and his perception of such role-playing as unreal and insane. In the debate that opens *Utopia* then, More isolates, on the one hand, his public self and, on the other, all within him that is excluded from this carefully crafted identity, calls the former *Morus* and the latter *Hythlodaeus* and permits them to fight it out. (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 36)

This violent dialectic of negation does not entirely square with the anti-scholastic satire that More constructs in Hythloday. More is not attempting to fashion himself as he is to fashion his readers by offering a complex text that, by challenging our understanding, counsels them in how to think as a humanist counselor. Hythloday's philosophy, even in the parts that seem sensible and agreeable, and his mode of presenting it are *scholasticae*, and Hythloday's defense of himself that, were he to

adopt More's approach, "*dum aliorum furori mederi studeo, ipse cum illis insaniam*," "while I try to cure the madness of others, I'll be raving along with them myself" (*Utopia* 96–97) is strikingly weak in the context of the aggressive debates around this time that More and Erasmus were having with the schoolmen, particularly with Martin Van Dorp, following the publication of Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae*.

More's 1515 letter to Dorp aims particularly at the improper use of language. In attacking Erasmus and his *Encomium*, More charges, Dorp engaged in the kind of sophistry of scholastics that twists language into obscure meanings:

> The rules of the dialecticians do not demand so much as persuade, for it is their duty to follow our custom in the use of language and to push us along in any direction with reasons that are true. Sophists, however, by their deceptive use of words, lead us to a spot where we find ourselves with surprise. It is a dull-witted form of cleverness and a stupid kind of ingenuity for men to proclaim that they are the winners in an argument and to decide the victory in favor of themselves, because we do not know in what sense they have secretly agreed to use our words, contrary to universal acceptance. (*Selected Letters* 24)

Of course, this accusation against Dorp about the misuse of language and secret understandings of words is subject to much satirical play in *Utopia*, where the title of the book and the names of most people and places demand knowledge of Greek, which remained a relatively rare language among scholars in western Europe. A Latin reader who missed the joke that Raphael may be a kind of healing, spiritual guide, but that he is also Hythloday, a "speaker of nonsense," were effectively

excluded from the coterie of readers for lack of knowledge in languages. More's demand that his readers be learned in Greek does produce in *Utopia* a secret use of words, but the trick is that More's secret is not "contrary to universal acceptance." Instead, More uses the Greek names as hints and guides, educating readers in how effectively to read and interpret a text in which absurdities and misuses of language are rampant, particularly around the character of Hythloday. The absurdities and deceptions from Hythloday are at once egregious and subtle, and the greatest of these is, as Warren Wooden has noted, the circular, question-begging device that diverts our attention from the question of Utopia's very existence: "Utopian customs must be sound and practical because they are so in Utopia, and Utopia must be real because it has such a wonderful system of sound and practical customs" (38).

The dismissive attitude that More exhibits for schoolmen in his 1515 letter to Dorp echoes in More's letter to Giles prefacing *Utopia* a year later about the reasons not to publish his text:

> *Plurimi literas nesciunt: multi contemnunt. Barbarus ut durum reicit, quicquid non est plane barbarum, scioli aspernantur ut triviale, quicquid obsoletis verbis non scatet. Quibusdam solum placent vetera, plerisque tantum sua. Hic tam tetricus est ut non admittat iocos, hic tam insulsus ut non ferat sales. Tam simi quidam sunt, ut nasum omnem, velut aquam ab rabido morsus cane reformident. Adeo mobiles alii sunt ut aliud sedentes probent, aliud stantes.*

> Most people know nothing of learning; many despise it. The clod rejects as too difficult whatever isn't cloddish. The pendant dismisses as mere trifling anything that isn't stuffed with obsolete words. Some readers approve only of ancient authors; many men like only their own writing. Here's a man so solemn he won't allow a shade of levity, and there's one so insipid of taste that he can't endure the salt of a little wit. Some are so flat-nosed that they dread satire as a man bitten by a rabid dog dreads water; some are so changeable that they like one thing when they're seated and another when they're standing. (*Utopia* 36–37)

The dual meaning of *literas* in English is important. More understood the word in Latin as both "learning" and "writing." To be learned was to be literate. The ignoramuses that More goes on to describe seem like they would often be people who could not read or write at all, and yet these are the people whose disapproval has More questioning his decision to publish. Of course, this is all rehearsed satire from More, and he is pillorying the kind of learned scholastics who might snipe and disapprove. These characterizations of ignorant people and pedants raise the question of whether or not Hythloday or even the Utopians would approve of *Utopia*. More requests that Giles ask Hythloday's advice on publication, indicating that he would be willing to suspend publication sans Hythloday's approval. It is not impossible that Hythloday might fall into that category of schoolman pedant, and Hythloday's description of the Utopians' reading interests—"*nam in Latinis praeter historias ac poetas nihil erat quod videbantur magnopere probaturi*," "except for the

historians and poets, there was nothing in Latin they would value" (*Utopia* 180–81)—might disqualify More's text from finding avid readers among the idealized people about whom *Utopia* is written. Of course, More's comments on readers are all part of the farce because More has already published, and this letter is written as part of the publication. More is rehearsing arguments in which he is not genuinely invested, and yet in his satirical wit he manages to disarm many of the readers who might be critical of *Utopia*. More is cautioning us about what kinds of readers not to be. *Utopia* is a satire, and it is not for those who are unwilling to be instructed by its wit.

To describe *Utopia* as a satire is not to say that the text remains satirical at every moment or that More turns Hythloday entirely into an object of satire. On the contrary, More cunningly places most of his confrontational and potentially controversial comments in Hythloday's mouth, such that if anyone in power in England were to object to *Utopia*'s serious social concerns with enclosing land for sheep production, wittily conveyed in Hythloday's declaration that sheep "*tam edaces atque indomitae esse coeperunt ut homines devorent ipsos*," that they "have become so greedy and fierce that they devour human beings themselves" (*Utopia* 62–63), More could justifiably deflect that criticism onto Hythloday as a satire, even while the sting of the accusation lingers. Placing words Hythloday's mouth is a clever act of self-preservation in a dangerous political world. Certainly we cannot take seriously the proposals of one who would commend the Polylerite people ("people of much nonsense" in Greek) for not enforcing a death penalty for thieves, even as the Polylerites pronounce an unbending sentence of death for seemingly lesser crimes such as giving money to or receiving money from a convict slave.

Hythloday's absurdities mark a frame around whatever he says, producing a narrative within More's narrative that can at once be both *salutaris* and *festivus*, both instructive and playful, both threatening and detached. This playful disputation back and forth in the text between seemingly contradictory elements effectively structures the counsel of the text and fashions readers. To read well, we must be attentive, moving forward and backward in the text, reconsidering everything in light of new understandings that we gain.

Framing counsel in the education of the state

More's complex framing of *Utopia*, first with the prefatory letters and then by locating narratives within a narrative, is common among humanists and would have been a familiar tactic to anyone with caution and ambition in a monarch's court. Counselors had to master the art of metaphor in which they would speak about one thing in order to reflect on another. Stephen Dobranski has noted the tendency of early modern writers to rely on prefaces to guide their readers in how to interpret a text, a practice that, Dobranski argues, reacted against the trend toward individual interpretation.[26] The risks to an author of free interpretation by a reader explain in part why humanist-trained writers were so particular in framing their works, whether with a simple preface, a series of letters, or an elaborate deception such as what we see in *Utopia*. Fears of misinterpretation, which themselves were serious, and which More reacts playfully against in his letter to Giles, were not merely designed by authors for the benefit of readers. Writers were often also concerned with the censor

[26] See Dobranski 33.

and, in rare cases, with how the monarch personally might react to a piece of writing. In More's case, *Utopia* is addressed to a humanist circle in Europe, but the publication could and did circulate much more widely, such that those who might feel accused of profiteering in England through enclosures might take offense. Framing a text offered a means of showing deference and respecting authority, of limiting the scope of a text, and, in some cases, of creating enough interpretive obscurity and uncertainty that writers could, as critics such as Annabel Patterson and Rebecca Lemon have noted, express subversive political or religious ideas without treading into treasonous ground.[27] Texts that did not clearly advocate a dangerous opinion could not easily be condemned, but the irony of such textual subtlety was that it generated a greater need for careful interpretation and invested individual readers with even more responsibility and license in dealing with the text.

More's framing offers counsel, but shields the counselor from the wrath that frank counsel could earn, effectively following the practice that Plutarch had laid out in his *Moralia*: "Demetrius Phalereus persuaded King Ptolemy to get and study such books as treated of government and conduct; for those things are written in books which the friends of kings dare not advise" (217). More's advice and criticism, where it is serious, remains insulated in a complex, satirical narrative that is framed within the larger work of *Utopia*, which in turn is addressed not to kings, as a mirror for princes would be, but to fellow humanists. Contrary to David Halpin's assertion that "More consolidated a specific tradition of social and political thought—one in which the dilemmas of society are considered and a prescriptive account provided of

[27] See Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion in Shakespeare's England*, and Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*.

the best way to resolve them" (300), *Utopia*'s consolidation of social and political thought eschews prescriptive dictums except for on the very surface. More's *libellus* is, in effect, a handbook for advisors, but it is a handbook that educates them in how to think, how to speak, and what to know about human nature, not specifically in what to do or say. More's task is educating us to be the sort of pragmatic advisors skilled in rhetoric to recognize what is and what is not "*concinne et cum decoro*" (*Utopia* 96). The question of whether or not to enter into a prince's service is already decided as soon as the dispute begins, for the debate between *otium* and *negotium* had already been rehearsed by Italian humanists, and Hythloday's rejection of service is suspect as soon as he makes it. The question at hand involves how to serve, how to advise, and how to educate people to function in the early modern society. More's game is less to present in Morus and Hythlodaeus a dialectical sundering of self and of culture, per Greenblatt's argument, as it is to rhetorically shape readers into able counselors. In doing so, More lampoons the scholastics for their abuses of language and philosophy while also challenging readers' discernment by placing legitimate arguments in Hythloday's mouth, safely distanced from More's own place and ambitions in England. Given Hythloday's rejection of service rooted in complaints about princely failures to heed sound advice and his insistence that the banishment of private property is the only means of structuring a well-ordered, peaceful society, More engages his satire to examine how one is to negotiate not only statecraft and the conciliar relationship, but every relationship within society among persons and between persons and the state.

Utopia's second book takes up the crucial task of fashioning in practice the ideal commonwealth, which More aims to achieve by educating his readers with pointed wit requiring the skills of a humanist education in languages and rhetoric to decipher. That ideal commonwealth, as the double title of *Utopia* indicates, may or may not be the land of Utopia. What we find in Utopia is, in many respects, a state formed around decidedly medieval and classical principles. As Duhamel has argued, the second book's two chief questions revolve around "the definition of the end of man and consequently of the state," which Duhamel suggests is drawn from Aristotle's *Politics*, and around "the definition of the norm of morality," which is patterned on the Book IX discussion of pleasure in Plato's *Republic* (108). Hythloday figures the latter in terms of human happiness and describes as the "*princeps controversia*," the "chief concern" for Utopians (*Utopia* 158–59). Hythloday's interests in the Utopian state are decidedly scholastic, and he goes about expounding upon Utopia in the method of a schoolman.

The Utopians, however, are depicted as something of a hodgepodge in their outlooks on education and knowledge. The people educate themselves in their native language, a practice that may have been more favored by humanists than by scholastics, and they learn a typical body of knowledge that was well known since classical times, including "*musica dialecticaque ac numerandi et metiendi scientia*" (*Utopia* 156), or music, logic, arithmetic, and geometry. Prior to Hythloday's arrival, they may have had much of the knowledge that Europe shared, but they relied on none of the Western philosophers and scientists as the basis for their education like

scholastics did. Utopians instead derived their knowledge from basic religious principles and reason:

> *Neque enim de felicitate disceptant umquam quin principia quaedam ex religion deprompta cum philisophia quae rationibus utitur coniungant sine quibus ad verae felicitates investigationem mancam atque imbecillam per se rationem putant.*
>
> For they never discuss happiness without joining to the rational arguments of philosophy certain principles drawn from religion. Without these religious principles, they think that reason by itself is weak and defective in its efforts to investigate true happiness. (*Utopia* 160–61)

Utopians may not have had Aristotle and Plato as philosophical touchstones prior to Hythloday's arrival, but they similarly seem to rely on their own religious principles as backing for reason. And with regard to picking through the minute meanings of words, while Utopians seem more given to moral philosophy than the natural philosophy of the schoolmen, they seem to share a fondness for disputation over definitions:

> *De bonis animi quaerunt et corporis et externis, tum utrum boni nomen omnibus his, an solis animi dotibus conveniat.*
>
> They inquire into the goods of the mind and the goods of the body and external goods. They ask whether the name of "good" can be applied

> to all three, or whether it refers only to goods of the mind. (*Utopia* 158–59)

While the Utopians have a voracious appetite for learning Greek, they have no interest in most Latin texts except for historians and poets. More assigns the same knowledge and interest in languages to Hythloday in his prefatory letter to Giles. While Latin had dominated medieval Europe and continued to dominate in More's time, humanists enthusiastically pursued Greek. Greek seems to contrast with Latin as an unadorned language that does not move people, one that expresses factual truths only. Humanists, on the other hand, practiced their rhetoric in Latin. The almost exclusive preference for Greek put the Utopians at odds with England and much of Europe through the sixteenth century as humanist educational gains made Latin an increasingly relevant language, as Arthur Leach has noted, for an increasing range of people in society:

> The diplomatist, the lawyer, the civil servant, the physician, the naturalist, the philosopher, wrote, read and to a large extent spoke and perhaps thought in Latin. Not was Latin the language only of the higher professions. A merchant, or the bailiff of a manor, wanted it for his accounts; every town clerk or gild clerk wanted it for his minute book. Columbus had to study for his voyages in Latin; the general had to study tactics in it. The architect, the musician, everyone who was neither a mere soldier nor a mere handicraftsman wanted, not a smattering of grammar, but a living acquaintance with the tongue as a spoken as well as a written language. (105)

For the Utopians to reject Latin was to reject the foundation of humanist education. It meant not studying the rhetorical texts of Cicero and Quintilian, which were basic texts in almost every humanist-influenced classroom.[28] As Erasmus wrote to Richard Whitford in 1506, "whereas if, in pursuance both of the authority of Cicero and Fabius and of the examples of the ancients, we were diligently practised from boyhood in such exercises, there would not, surely, be such poverty of speech, such pitiable hesitation, such shameful stammering, as we witness even in those who publicly profess the art of Oratory" (*Epistles* 407). These Latin rhetoricians mattered to humanists like Erasmus and More, and in this important respect regarding education and rhetoric, the Utopians, like Hythloday, appear troublingly backwards and scholastic.

Educating counselors "*concinne et cum decoro*"

If Utopia lacks rhetoric, given the investment that More and other humanists place in rhetoric, this poses a problem for how we read the descriptions of the state. More has already argued in book one in favor of a pragmatic, rhetorical approach to knowledge and philosophy in which one has the ability to speak elegantly in the right time and place, as More argues, "*suas partes concinne et cum decoro tutatur*" (*Utopia* 96). Borrowing concepts pushed in Erasmus's *Encomium*, More makes the case in favor of rhetorical learning:

[28] Although More undoubtedly influence by Cicero, the nature of Cicero's influence on More has been subject to critical debate. For an argument on More's anti-Ciceronian views, see Nelson 1029–57. For a contrasting view that More's rhetorical strategies parallel Cicero's, see Harmon 93–125.

> *Nonne praestiterit egisse mutam personam quam aliena recitando talem fecisse tragicomoediam? Corruperis enim perverterisque praesentem fabulam dum diversa permisces, etiamsi ea quae tu adfers meliora fuerint. Quaecumque fabula in manu est, eam age quam potes optime, neque ideo totam perturbes quod tibit in mentem venit alterius quae sit lepidior.*
>
> Wouldn't it be better to take a silent role than to say something inappropriate and thus turn the play into a tragicomedy? You pervert a play and ruin it when you add irrelevant speeches, even if they are better than the play itself. So go through with the drama in hand as best you can, and don't spoil is all just because you happen to think of a play by someone else that might be more elegant. (*Utopia* 96–97)

Although Hythloday's firmly rejects More's suggestion as acting like a madman among lunatics, what More says about acting the proper role in the proper time and place calls to mind the presentation of the Anemolian ambassadors in Utopia in book two. Nearby countries know to send ambassadors dressed plainly, but the Anemolians lacked the proper experience to know what role they were to play:

> *At Anemolii, quod longius aberrant ac minus cum illis commercii habuerant, quum accepissent eodem omnes eoque rudi corporis cultu esse, persuasi non habere eos quo nonutobantur, ipsi etiam superbi magis quam sapientes decreverunt apparatus elegantia deos quosdam*

> *repraesentare et miserorum oculos Utopiensium ornatus sui splendore praestringere.*
>
> But the Anemolians, who lived farther off and had had fewer dealings with them, had heard only that they all dressed alike and very simply, so they took for granted that their hosts had nothing to wear that they didn't put on. Being themselves rather more proud than wise, they decided to dress as elegantly as the very gods, and dazzle the eyes of the poor Utopians with the splendor of their garb. (*Utopia* 150–51)

The ambassadors prove an embarrassing failure because they do not adapt their appearances and roles, a failure which Hythloday chastises in book two, even though he ruled out the same action for himself in book one. Hythloday may recognize that people in service need to adapt to a variety of roles, but he will change no such costumes himself, or he is simply contradicting himself. It thus seems that there is a need for More's pragmatic method in Utopia, even if only for outsiders.

For the Utopian people, on the other hand, their peaceful concord seems to include everyone being capable of "*concinne et cum decoro*" for all behaviors. There is, inexplicably, no discord over the selection of the few scholars and philosophers exempted from manual labor. The patriarchal household is structured with deference to age, which never seems to result in conflict. Everyone can simply take what they want since there is plenty of everything because people do not hoard and almost everyone works. There is no private property to fight over. There is no private space. Homes are assigned every ten years by lot, but are open to anyone to enter at

any time: "*Quin bifores quoque facili tractu manus apertiles ac dein sua sponte coeuntes quemvis intromittunt; ita nihil usquam privati est. Nam domos ipsas uno quoque decennio sorte commutant.*" (*Utopia* 118). Territory exists simply as land to be worked: "*Quippe quos habent, agricola magis eorum se quam dominos putant*," since Utopians "consider themselves cultivators rather than landlords" (*Utopia* 112–13). Even the cities themselves are indistinguishable from one another. The leaders of Utopia, including syphogrants, tranibors, and the Ademus, all are chosen without apparent competition or discord. Even expressing desire for one of these offices could earn disqualification from them: "*Qui magistratum ullum ambierit exspes omnium redditur*," or "Any man who campaigns for a public office is disqualified for all of them" (*Utopia* 194–95). Conflicts, Hythloday notes, are infrequent. With this lack of competition or ambition over anything, Utopia seems to have limited the possibility of conflicts forming within society at all.

This veneer of perfection is part of what makes Utopia such a humorous text. Laws and punishments only come about because people sometimes commit abuses. That Utopia has punishments such as disqualification from public office suggests that conflict may not be entirely banished from the island. Still, what conflict there may be appears to be neatly contained. Except for dealing externally, which Utopians do quite aggressively, Utopians simply follow their customs and never have to dispute anything because they never lack anything. The absence of conflict in Utopia results in a place with few of the pressures and political intrigues that make counsel so important in More's world. In a society without discord, rhetoric seems to have little, if any, useful function. Public officials are even barred from engaging in

counsel outside their official chamber. In Utopia's idealized society where rational arguments prevail without adornment, and where the lack of discord makes argument unnecessary, rhetoric becomes an irrelevant art. If *Utopia* is a text meant to counsel us about counsel in a humanist rhetorical manner, this lack of conflict and counsel generates in the text the challenge of how to learn about counsel from a place that does not apparently need counsel.

More leaves us with two possibilities. First, while Utopia is free from discord, the differences between Utopia and our world do produce discord, and a rich environment for counsel grows in the wide gap between Utopia and ourselves. Hythloday puts forward Utopia as an alternative to the kind of statesmanship he observed with Cardinal Morton, and More reflects on the possibility of adopting some of Utopia's practices at the end of the second book. Even if Utopia has less need of rhetoric and counsel itself, using the ideal society as a mirror gives us opportunity to observe and correct deformities in our own world. Second, this apparently discord-free Utopia is a "no place," a political and economic body so rife with contradictions that it cannot exist. More plays on language to remind us of the impossibility of this state. In Amaurot, the capital city, for example, Hythloday offers a lengthy description of the Anyder, the river that flows through the city and connects it to the ocean by means of a convenient tidal river channel that sweeps in and out to sea every six hours, moving ships and sweeping the city's river clean. A spring forms a tributary that then supplies drinking water. Although the spring is not named, and although Hythloday speaks in detail of the water flowing through Amaurot in these rivers, Anyder in Greek is a "no water." There is plenty, and yet it

is also a complete lack. People cannot survive drinking from a waterless river, and so the concord in society that depends on this impossible plenty also seems impossible.

Utopia's political dealings, too, are fraught with contradictions. Utopians seem to have a set method for averting political conflicts and maintaining harmony, and Hythloday claims that they arrange their government to avoid tyranny. However, the Ademus, the powerful chief executive, is appointed for life. The tranibors, the powerful senators who rule by committee are elected annually, but are almost always reelected. Only the syphogrants, the weakest administrators, serve one-year terms. For people who change houses every ten years by lot, giving the longest terms in office to the most powerful officials is a strikingly strange arrangement if aim is to avoid tyranny. Policy issues are put to syphogrants, who are barred from discussing matters outside of the popular assembly, punishable by death, and yet the syphogrants also "*cum suis familiis communicata re post inter se consultant*" (*Utopia* 122), even though discussing public matters in the households, outside the official council, ought to earn a death sentence. Utopians never sign treaties, seeing them as an unnatural statement that neighboring peoples are "*hostes atque iniimicos invicem sese natos*" (*Utopia* 200), or born adversaries and foes, and Hythloday says that Utopians detest war. Yet the Utopians also seem more than happy to occupy uncultivated land in a neighboring country and even to go to war to seize such territory:

> *Nam eam iustissimam belli causam ducunt quum populus quispiam eius soli quo ipse non utitur sed velut inane ac vacuum possidet, aliis*

> *tamen qui ex naturae praescripto inde nutriri debeant usum ac possessionem interdicat.*
>
> They think it is perfectly justifiable to make war on people who leave their land idle and waste yet forbid the use of possession of it to others who, by the law of nature, ought to be supported from it. (*Utopia* 136–37)

The contradictions in Utopia are many, making it impossible to derive from Hythloday's superficial accounts any systematic understanding of what makes Utopian society work. More effectively sets up an idealized Utopia to be a mirror for England and other European states, and he also mires the idealized state with contradictions and impossibilities that construct for readers deformities on both sides of the mirror.

Hythloday's discussion of Utopian religion reveals how More plays between holding up Utopia as a mirror for European countries and how he imbeds the mirror with deformities. When Hythloday considers the Utopian principle that "*ne sua cuiquam religio fraudi sit*," that "no one should suffer for his religion" (More, *Utopia* 222–23), we must take this claim with a grain of salt, at least insofar as the question of More's commitment to it is concerned, because More aggressively persecuted Protestants during his time as Lord Chancellor.[29] Whether nor not More actually expresses with this Utopian principle support for a degree of religious tolerance, More disfigures the ideal principle before even offering it to the reader. Prefacing the principle of tolerance is a story of how Utopia finds excuse to impose limits on

[29] See Marius 386–406.

religious expression. When one Utopian convert became too aggressive proselytizing the Christian religion as the only and best religion, the threat of public riot earned him exile. The problem of how to maintain religious tolerance when a religious belief involves aggressively promoting religious superiority is ambiguous in the text, and this absurdity and ambiguity is the reader's invitation to consider at what point religious belief becomes such a subversive threat to society that it can no longer be tolerated.

When we weigh back and forth in the text, many of Hythloday's anecdotes about Utopia ought to leave us confused as to our response. Peter Giles in his prefatory letter to Jerome Busleiden even jokes about how Utopia's miracles leave him uncertain how to react: "*Tantum hic occurrit miraculorum ut ambigam quid primum aut posissimum admirer*," or "That description contains, in every part of it, so many wonders that I don't know what to marvel at first or most" (*Utopia* 26–27). We cannot have Utopia, nor do we probably want a lot of the absurdities in it, but the presentation of the marvels prompts attentive readers to see past the absurdities to reflect upon underlying lessons about statecraft and counsel. The impossibilities of Utopia communicate to us that rhetoric and counsel are necessary skills. The conflicts between More's England and Utopia offers much space in which to dispute specific political and social concerns, and the gross contradictions, ambiguities, and deformities in the Utopian commonwealth both signal to us that we should not accept these qualities and features of Utopia as genuine recommendations for organizing a state and invite us to imagine the analogous concerns in a European state that might necessitate counsel.

The contradictions in Utopia come to a point when Hythloday returns to the problem of greed near the end of the second book. In his understanding of human greed, Hythloday is guilty of stretching and literalizing axioms to the point of absurdity in Utopia. Hythloday takes from Christian teaching the claim that money is the root of all evil, and so Utopia eliminates private property and turns gold into a child's bauble that is to be laughed at by any mature person. If, as the mode of discourse professes, the aim is to establish the best order of the commonwealth, then the logical end of this axiom is to hold everything in common:

> *Descripsi vobus quam potui verissime eius formam reipublicae quam ego certe non optimam tantum sed solam etiam censeo quae sibi suo iure possit reipublicae vindicare vocabulum. Siquidem alibi de public loquentes ubique commodo privatum currant, hic ubi nihil privati est, serio publicum negotium agunt.*
>
> Now I have described to you as accurately as I could the structure of that commonwealth which I consider not only the best but indeed the only one that can rightfully claim that name. In other places men talk all the time about the commonwealth, but what they mean is simply their own wealth; here, where there is no private business, every man zealously pursues the public business. (*Utopia* 240–41)

As Hythloday wraps up his discourse on Utopia's structure, the absurd conclusions to which he takes his political theory grow apparent. Hythloday believes that Utopia "*cum ipso usu sublata penitus omni aviditate pecuniae*," that the society "has

abolished not only money but with it greed" (*Utopia* 244–45), but Hythloday's long list of conflicts and crimes that would be eliminated with the elimination of money remains incomplete. "*Fraudes, furta, rapinas, rixas, tumultus, iurgia, seditions, caedes, proditiones, veneficia*," or "fraud, theft, robbery, quarrels, brawls, altercations, seditions, murders, treasons, poisonings" (*Utopia* 244–45), and more might be curbed in a society without property, and yet other such transgressions like adultery are unmentioned, hinting that the root of the problem is not just money, but people wanting what they do not have and cannot have. Utopia puts great effort into making everything plentiful and fungible, such that one house is as good as another and everyone is housed, but people may still desire that which cannot be replaced or exchanged. Hythloday's final thoughts on why other nations have not adopted Utopia's excellent system plainly exposes a deeper problem in human nature:

> *Neque mihi quidem dubitare subit quin vel sui cuiusque commodi ratio vel CHRISTI servatoris auctoritas (qui neque pro tanta sapientia potuit ignorare quid optimum esset, neque qua erat bonitate id consulere quod non optimum sciret) totum orbum facile in huius reipublicae leges iamdudum traxisset, nisi una tantum belua, omnium princeps parensque pestium, superbia, reluctaretur.*
>
> And in fact I have no doubt that every man's perception of where his true interest lies, along with the authority of Christ our Saviour (whose wisdom could not fail to recognise the best, and whose goodness would not fail to counsel it), would long ago have brought the whole

> world to adopt the laws of this commonwealth, were it not for one single monster, the prime plague and begetter of all others—I mean Pride. (*Utopia* 244–47)

Hythloday departs the world of Utopia, for this observation destroys the premise on which Utopia is built. The problem is not just that money causes greed, which leads to a host of conflicts, ills, and sins. The problem is pride, an inward condition. If money is the problem, Utopia can ban money. If pride is the problem, what then? Hythloday has no practical answer, and his language instead appeals to the best counsel, divine counsel. Just as More facing execution turned between earthly and divine affairs in his comments, first at the end of his trial and again in his final words, More has Hythloday shift to the divine at the end of his discourse. Hythloday's invocation of Christ seem to be looking toward the second coming as the banishment of this pernicious flaw in human nature, pride, but his concerns ultimately fall back to earthly affairs of greed, poverty, and everything else. Of course, Christ declared that the poor would always be with us, and it is entirely possible that the fantasizing about an impossible Utopia is itself an exercise in human pride. It is even likely, as Engeman has argued, that Hythloday himself is particularly guilty of pride: "Pride, thought to have been vanquished with the abolition of private property (Hythloday 'abolished' his property early in life), re-emerges, as we have seen, in a desire for personal, intellectual recognition" (143). Hythloday's own refusal to engage in service to maintain the purity of his ideological commitments is its own form of pride. In Hythloday's attack on pride, we as readers are left with the sudden shock that perhaps we have, at Hythloday's misleading, been

thinking about the problems the text puts before us in the wrong way. Perhaps from the beginning we were misled by Hythloday's pride. *Utopia*'s final counsel is to send readers back through the text to rethink all the qualities of the Utopian commonwealth again in light of this recognition, to understand what it means to counsel in a world where people's minds are corrupted by pride.

More's reaction as Hythloday ends his discourse is, of course, that Utopia is structured *perquam absurde*:

> *Haec ubi Raphael recensuit quamquam haud pauca mihi succurrebant quae in eius populi moribus legibusque perquam absurd videbantur institute, non solum de belli gerendi ratione et rebus divinis ac religione, aliisque insuper eorum institutis sed in eo quoque ipso maxime quod maximum totius institutionis fundamentem est, vita scilicet victuque communi sine ullo pecuniae commercio, qua una re funditus evertitur omnis nobilitas, magnificencia, splendor, maiestas, vera (ut publica est opinion) decora atque ornamenta reipublicae.*
>
> When Raphael had finished his story, I was left thinking that not a few of the laws and customs he had described as existing among the Utopians were really absurd. These included their methods of waging war, their religious practices, as well as other customs of theirs; but my chief objection was to the basis of their whole system, that is their communal living and their moneyless economy. This one thing alone utterly subverts all the nobility, magnificence, splendor and majest

> which (in the popular view) are the true ornaments and glory of any commonwealth. (*Utopia* 246–48)

More's reaction seems to leave little in Utopian society that is not simply absurd, and More's final observation, "*ita facile Confiteor permulta esse in Utopiensium republica quae in nostris civitatibus optarim verius quam sperarim*," "yet I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our own societies I would wish rather than expect to see" (*Utopia* 248–49), compounds the absurdity. More, seeing that Hythloday had tired from talking, leaves off from raising any objections, and the discussion ends without any hint from More what parts of Utopia he values. More merely ends expressing a hope at a future opportunity to dispute these matters with Hythloday—"*Quod utinam aliquando contingeret*," or "Would that this would happen some day!" (*Utopia* 248–49). With More's rejection and acceptance of various principles in Utopia and a gesture to future discussion, the Hythloday's scholastic disputation morphs into a Ciceronian dialogue.[30] All aspects of Utopian society are left as matters of irresolvable debate, with the expectation on readers to read and reread to participate in these debates.

Descriptions of Utopia offer us witty pedagogical tools to consider, for example, what the proper counsel is regarding war. Certainly, no prince in Europe could afford to pay the vast sums of gold that Utopians provide to the mercenary Zapoletes, and the 700,000 ducats that the Utopians are reported to extract from neighboring countries they have conquered exceeded the income of monarchies in Europe by several times over. No country is going to allow a neighbor to simply

[30] See Harmon 104–5 for Hythloday's anti-rhetorical approach in contrast with Ciceronian dialogue.

take over uncultivated land without a conflict, so how does a country balance its finances with the need to govern its lands well and the desire to expand territory? The proper humanist answer to these questions may vary, and the text challenges us to imagine in reaction to these absurd scenarios what is the proper action or counsel in a range of different situations. There is no rhetorical certainty for what future political or social situations and demands might be, and so *Utopia* counsels us to an understanding of the rhetoric and morals of statecraft.[31] We need to know what to say and do at the proper times and places, and we need to understand how people are likely to behave in those times and places.

Utopia's absurdity is a starting place for humanist learning, the purpose for which is to enable readers to counsel. More brings us back to Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae*, and the responsibility to continue that discussion with Hythloday is thrust upon readers. If pride is the root of all mischief, as Hythloday concludes, then we are left to read backward to consider how human behavior in Utopia would change under the influence of pride. Where Hythloday has constructed a tangle of contradictions and absurdities, readers are thrust into the active role of disputing, and the text is elevated to our conversant. The text of *Utopia* is experiential. We may walk into the text like Anemolian ambassadors, proudly assuming that the text's most superficial qualities give us a complete knowledge of *Utopia*'s aims, and we would earn ourselves shame and derision. More has framed his text from the prefatory letters and throughout to warn us of the pitfalls of being a proud reader.

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[31] Halpin has suggested that *Utopia* offers a "way of thinking imaginatively and prospectively" about educational and social reform (299). While this is the case, my contention is that More's concern with probing the nature and practice of counsel runs deeper and offers the mechanism for shaping that "way of thinking."

The aim of *Utopia*, and indeed of a humanist education, is not to give us any flat, firm answer to a question of political or social structure, but to equip us with the interpretive flexibility to adapt our wit to any political time and place. We need to adapt the text pragmatically for a real world in which there is pride, greed, property, and whatever else Utopia has absurdly banished. Utopia is no time and no place. What it offers is counsel, "*concinne et cum decoro*," in how to think like a counselor.

Chapter Two

"For clerkly rede": Sidney and the Limits of Counsel

Sidney's relationship to writing as viewed through the lens of counsel presents a curious and complicated engagement in and retreat from literature as a means of political participation. Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* offers a rousing apology for literature, and his *Arcadia* and sonnets, published after Sidney's death, resonated more loudly among the generation of English writers that succeeded him than perhaps any other texts produced during Elizabeth's reign. As much as Sidney pursued writing, however, he sought a career and public life distinctly apart from literary production, advocating involvement in the Netherlands and attacks on Spain, planning to sail on a New World voyage with Sir Francis Drake, and joining in discussions for the formation of a Protestant League on the continent, among other activities.[32] Sidney aimed to be a government courtier, ambassador, and counselor in the pattern of his father, Sir Henry Sidney, and his patron, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, but he also dabbled as adventurer, scholar, and poet, perhaps never entirely finding fulfillment in any single role.[33] Sidney's comment in an August 1580 letter to Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, hints at the dissatisfaction Sidney felt toward his role at court:

> For my selfe I assure yowr Lordshippe upon my trothe, so full of the colde as one can not heere me speake: which is the cawse keepes me yet frome

[32] For a discussion of Sidney's involvement in negotiations for a Protestant League, see Alan Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life*, 179–191; on considering a voyage with Drake, see Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 272–73.
[33] On Sidney's dissatisfactions, see Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 3–7.

> the cowrte since my only service is speeche and that is stopped. (*Prose Works* 129)

In Sidney's statement that "my only service is speeche," a hint of complaint peeks from behind the words. Taken at face value, the letter reveals Sidney miserable with a cold and making excuses to his patron for his absence from court, but the timing and circumstances of this letter hardly allow us to take Sidney's words at face value. Sidney wrote these words near the end of a summer that he had spent with his sister at Wilton, following a tumultuous year at court. Sidney's strident opposition to Elizabeth's marriage to the Duke of Anjou, which had culminated about a year earlier with Sidney composing a letter to the queen in which he severely denounced Anjou and the marriage proposal, appears to have earned Sidney an uncomfortable place at court. The "colde" that Sidney complained was stopping his speech may have been as much a matter of Elizabeth's cold response to Sidney in the wake of his letter to her as it was a case of laryngitis.

Even as Sidney expressed regret that his "only service is speech," he was ambitiously composing large portions of the *Old Arcadia*. Sidney's dissatisfaction over his situation with counsel and service shows in that text, in which Sidney struggles between a desire to find a more productive means of service and the feeling that his ambitious prose romance offered a meager substitute for more direct service to the queen. At his frustrated moments, such as in the letter to Leicester, writing appears to have occupied only a lesser role within that larger practice of counsel in Sidney's mind, and literary pursuits seem to have occupied hardly any place at all except as a distraction. To be fair, Sidney's purpose in the letter to Leicester was to excuse his absence from court,

and speaking in cautious dissatisfaction and veiled terms about the "colde" was warranted in such a letter; Sidney's aim was not to express optimism regarding his current situation or his literary pursuits. Still, in spite of Sidney's pessimism toward "speech," Sidney put considerable and influential effort toward cultivating a relationship between literature and counsel that would promote literary works as a means to advise audiences, even monarchs. Particularly in the *Arcadia*, in establishing the powerful literary voice of a counselor, Sidney's fictional subject matter probed monarchal authority, expanded the demands and expectations on a monarch to accept counsel, and challenged sixteenth-century understandings of the relationship between counselor and prince.

Reconciling Sidney's pessimism toward writing with his literary achievements thus presents a challenge for Sidney scholars. Sidney never viewed himself chiefly or exclusively as a vocational poet in the way that later poets like Ben Jonson and perhaps John Milton desired recognition.[34] Sidney plainly understood the public effects his writing could have, but Sidney's concerns at court kept him a courtier poet, not a public poet, the rise of which did not develop in earnest until after Sidney's death, partly in reaction to the posthumous publications of Sidney's sonnets and *Arcadia* in the 1590s.[35] In his lifetime, Sidney was a courtier for whom literary pursuits fit among his many courtly accomplishments, and his desire as a courtier to see a strong England prompted Sidney to understand poetry as, in part, a means of defining Englishness.[36] A leading aim in his *Defence* is the establishment of English poetry to serve a role in the broader

[34] Duncan-Jones notes that while Sidney may have employed a "modesty topos" in talking about his poetic vacation, Sidney did likely fall into the role of poet at least accidentally, if not unwillingly (141).
[35] See Alexander Gavin, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640*, 76–127.
[36] See Duncan-Jones 143, 235.

development of English national identity. As much as Sidney recognized such national interests, his poetry provided Sidney with a sense of his own identity in the court world as well. Sidney spent considerable time feeling neglected in his desired role as a counselor, and poetry provided Sidney with a voice at court, even if the poetic voice did not always achieve the direct, active, and intimate influence on the queen that Sidney would have preferred.[37] In a letter, Sidney's father exhorted the young Philip, "Remember, my Sonne, the noble Blood yow are descended of, by your Mothers Side; and thinke that only, by vertuous Lyf and good Action, yow may be an Ornament to that illustre Famylie" (Collins 9). Sidney would reiterate this exhortation in similar language in his dedicatory preface of the *Old Arcadia* to his sister, ending with a prayer that she "may long live to be a principal ornament to the family of the Sidneys" (Sidney, *The Old Arcadia* 3), and Sidney's career suggests that he never forgot his family heritage as he consistently sought active roles within the Elizabethan state.

Sidney's literary works, then, must be understood in the context of the personal and political involvements in which Sidney struggled at court. As much as Sidney engaged in literary traditions and formal structures, focusing too narrowly on his generic and stylistic developments apart from his political engagement deprives texts such as *The Lady of May*, the *Arcadia*, or the court entertainment, *The Fortress of Perfect Beauty*, in which Sidney played a leading role and which, as Ephim Fogel, Richard McCoy, and others have speculated, he may have co-authored, of some of the most immediate reasons for which Sidney was writing.[38] Sidney's literary production did not merely grow out of

[37] See Ilona Bell, "Elizabeth and the Politics of Elizabethan Courtship," 179–91 for a discussion of the particular challenges of serving in Elizabeth's court.
[38] See McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry*, McCoy 58–66; Fogel, "A Possible Addition to the Sidney Canon," 389–94.

and reflect upon his court experiences and aims, but developed with the ambitious aim of becoming a primary means though which Sidney could engage with those political situations. Sidney, we shall see, displayed less interest in crafting his literary works as pointed answers to specific political dilemmas than in setting forth a case for the way in which such problems ought to be addressed within a monarchy predicated on a system of counsel. The political dilemmas of Sidney's time influenced and occupied his work significantly, but Sidney deferred offering direct answers on political problems, instead attempting to counsel readers by offering complex, stylized, unresolved disputations that push readers to deliberate on political challenges ourselves with Sidney advising us what our concerns ought to be.

Elizabeth's politics and her relationship to counsel

The context of Elizabeth's marriage negotiations during the late 1570s and early 1580s with François Hercule de Valois, the Duke of Alençon (and later Anjou) provides an important context for understanding the issues of marriage and counsel that Sidney weighs in his writing from these same years. Elizabeth had begun negotiations with Alençon in 1572 when similar negotiations with his older brother, Henri III of France, had collapsed. These initial marriage discussions with Alençon did not advance, but Elizabeth and Alençon, who had assumed the title of the Duke of Anjou in 1576, renewed the efforts in earnest in 1579 and did not formally end negotiations until 1583 after Anjou's botched attempt to take Antwerp by force resulted in the massacre of over 1500 of his troops.[39] These years of their final marriage negotiation coincide with the period of

[39] On Elizabeth's marriage negotiations, see Barrett-Graves 43–62; Loades 205–17.

much of Sidney's most important literary production, and Sidney's frustrating personal involvement in the marriage debate reckons this episode as a useful historical backdrop for the attitudes toward court and counsel displayed in Sidney's literary works. Moreover, the marriage debate offers us an opportunity to explore the development of counsel during the middle years of Elizabeth's reign as her monarchy underwent shifts in Elizabeth's presentation of herself as a queen from a young, inexperienced woman dependent on her counselors to the powerful Virgin Queen who could manipulate and dominate them. The realization following the collapse of the Anjou match that Elizabeth would never marry or produce an heir certainly changed Elizabeth's relationship with her counselors, leading her courtiers to begin looking elsewhere, notably to James VI of Scotland, for the succession.[40] But Elizabeth also carefully crafted and shifted her political manner and appearance to establish her authority. Upon Elizabeth's accession in 1558, she faced the challenges of being a woman, age 25, with a questionable legal claim to the throne. Inspiring confidence in her political authority was paramount to securing her monarchy. As Sara Mendelson and Debra Barrett-Graves separately observe, one method Elizabeth used to achieve this confidence among courtiers skeptical to serving a young woman was publicly depicting herself surrounded by wise counselors, to whom she was obedient.[41] Mary Thomas Crane has also looked at Elizabeth's motto, "video et taceo," to examine how Elizabeth invoked a system of counsel and, through silence, conveyed an image of female subservience to male counselors, even if the queen's actual relationship with counsel was much more complex.[42] Early in her reign, this image of

[40] On the relationship between Elizabeth I and James VI, particularly relating to succession, see Somerset 562–66. See also Loades 296–98.
[41] See Mendelson 201; Barrett-Graves 43.
[42] See especially Crane, "'Video et Taceo': Elizabeth I and the Rhetoric of Counsel" 6–12.

Elizabeth surrounded by counsel was carefully choreographed. Linda Shenk notes in Elizabeth's 1564 speech to Cambridge that she was flanked by her chief counselor, William Cecil, and the former royal tutor, now Bishop of Ely, Richard Cox, visually representing "the system of wisdom that guides and surrounds a learned monarch" (81).

By the latter half of Elizabeth's reign, in contrast, her hold on political power was secure, and so this image became unnecessary and even troublesome in that, while Elizabeth had previously invited educated counselors to flock to her, this counsel effectively put considerable constraints on Elizabeth's power and potentially fostered division at court. In practice, Elizabeth maintained only a close circle of select advisors, listening to very few people outside this circle and promoting equally few into it. David Loades observes that during the 1570s, "Elizabeth increasingly confined her search for counsel to those whom she had appointed for the purpose" (182). Similarly, Shenk notes an important shift in Elizabeth's discourse on counsel through her university speeches in 1564 and 1566 and later in 1592 from inviting scholars to her service, which would make her a recipient of wisdom, learning, and counsel, to standing alone as "the disseminator of knowledge herself" (90). As Elizabeth's reign progressed and she refused to promote into service many ambitious young men, she frustrated the aspirations of would-be counselors.

Sidney's youthful engagements in counsel

Sidney had embarked on a path to become a counselor as a young man, but the several years of Elizabeth's marriage negotiations marked an important period of transition in how Elizabeth publicly positioned herself in relation to counsel, which

proved a great source of frustration for Sidney's career. Sidney readily established himself as a rising star of the Elizabethan court, and the young man expected quick entrance into the highest echelons of political counsel. Sidney was the son of the pro-rex to Ireland, and he was widely lauded during his tour of the continent beginning in 1572.[43] Sidney received his first real employment under Elizabeth in a diplomatic mission to the continent in 1577 to offer condolences to the German Emperor Rudolf II and his mother on the death of the late emperor. This envoy was, at least on the surface, considered a remarkable success for the young man, as Sidney also demonstrated impressive political talents in seeking to warn the Spanish governor of Austria, Don John, against supporting Catholics plots against England, in meeting with Ludwig Elector Palatine and his brother Count Johann Casimir to measure the interest in forming a Protestant League, and in deputizing for Leicester as a godfather to William of Orange's daughter, Elizabeth.[44] During the trip, Sidney met again with his friend and mentor, Hubert Languet, who had overseen Sidney's education during his tour of the continent five years earlier, and Sidney also met in Prague with the Catholic convert Edmund Campion, who taught at the Jesuit College there.[45] Campion's favorable impressions of Sidney are particularly valuable in showing Sidney as a charismatic and adept personality not limited to the enthusiasm and dogma of international Protestantism. That Sidney, the heir to the queen's favorite, Leicester, could excite continental Protestants is little surprise; that he could excite a Catholic expatriate says much about Sidney's abilities to function beyond Protestant circles. Further, because Sidney had made such favorable impressions in his

[43] On Sidney's continental tour, see Brennan 54–62; Duncan-Jones 63–85.
[44] See Brennan 65–67; Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 165–93.
[45] See Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 175–77. See also Brennan 66, where he notes that Campion even regarded Sidney as a potential convert to Catholicism.

travels and missions, Languet appears to have held hopes for Sidney marrying a German princess, while William of Orange saw opportunities of strengthening his political ties with England through a marriage between Sidney and his daughter, Marie of Nassau.[46] Sidney's reputation expanded, and with this expanded his potential and expectations for a talented career in court politics.

Upon returning to England in 1577, Sidney defended his father's position in Ireland with his *A Discourse on Irish Affairs*, which marked an early effort by Sidney through his writing to earn a reputation as a capable political counselor. Because his father, Sir Henry Sidney, remained in Ireland executing his duties of the administration and governance of the English possession, for which he had come under attack from Irish lords, particularly Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond, the young Sidney was left at court to answer for his father's measures and approach.[47] When members of the Irish nobility brought their discontents over the elder Sidney's methods of taxation directly to the queen, Philip countered sharply with his *A Discourse on Irish Affairs*, responding to each of those complaints and arguing on behalf of his father for the aggressive protection of English financial, political, and religious interests in the neighboring island. Sidney's opinions and advice in the *Discourse* are unapologetically direct; Sidney does not attempt to fashion the subtlety and artistry that he would adopt in his literary efforts. Sidney figures his father's and his own relationship with Elizabeth bluntly: "Now only I hope it shall suffise, that a servante does not blame for openinge a way to save his princes treasure" (*Prose Works* 49). Counselors are supposed to have the monarch's interest at

[46] On the significant political implications of the proposed marriage with Marie of Nassau, see Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 185–86.
[47] See Brennan 50–52; Duncan-Jones 135–37.

heart, and this appeal to Elizabeth to trust the Sidneys backhandedly impugned that Ormond and other Irish nobles lacked such loyalty. Sidney acts as a servant and advisor to his prince, and he does so without pretense. Despite Sidney's advice, the matter dragged on, and the queen showed reluctance to trust Sidney or his father in the matter. Nevertheless, Elizabeth eventually sided with the Sidneys, putting the Irish spokesmen in the Tower, although this would prove not an unmitigated victory for the young Sidney when Elizabeth recalled his father from Ireland the following year in September 1578 under censure for extravagant taxation.[48] Additionally, while Sidney had spoken in place of his father with incomparable force, crafting his writing into a pointed act of counsel, the episode and Sidney's text also evidences Sidney's lack of deference for nobility, notably for Ormond, a point on which Elizabeth would later chide Sidney harshly. Indeed, Elizabeth had many grounds on which to suspect Sidney, whether because of Sidney's aggressive handling of Ormond and the Irish nobles, or his meetings with Campion, or his rising international fame, or his overestimation of the prospects of a Protestant League, or his potential marriage matches on the continent, or a combination of many factors. While Elizabeth's specific motivations are unclear, Elizabeth would deny Sidney further political appointments for the following six years until his appointment as assistant Master of Ordinance to the Earl of Warwick in 1583 and as governor of Flushing in 1585.[49]

Sidney's close connections to radical and vocal Calvinists may have earned Elizabeth's caution toward Sidney as much as anything else. Sidney counseling Elizabeth to engage in political alliances she was cautious to consider may have

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[48] See Duncan-Jones 137.
[49] See Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 252, 265ff.

convinced the queen that the young man was a political danger. Sidney's enthusiasm in his 1577 diplomatic mission to form a Protestant alliance is consistent with his broader involvement in international Protestantism. Despite Sidney's public optimism for a Protestant League, especially with the support of Casimir, Sidney wrote privately to Sir Francis Walsingham in May 1577 from Heidelberg, "I see proceedinges suche that my ho[pe] dothe every day grow lesse and lesse" (*Prose Works* 114). Counseling Elizabeth optimistically about a Protestant League when the actual prospects were grim undoubtedly earned Sidney distrust. Elizabeth's subsequent envoys confirmed that a Protestant alliance was much further from reach than Sidney had led her to believe, and Sidney's capabilities grew suspect. Sidney maintained close ties with many of the leading international Protestant voices, and those Protestants in turn put great hope in Sidney to advance their causes with Elizabeth.[50] However, Elizabeth likely recognized that promoting an international star within her court could have been a liability to the political balancing act that the queen tried to walk. A counselor who put the hopes of his international friends ahead of loyalty to the queen simply would not do.

As Claire McEachern has suggested, "English Protestantism was always aware of its membership in an international movement, its status as one godly nation among others (often more godly)" (*Cambridge History of Early Modern Literature* 327). McEachern's connection of English Protestantism with the expansionist rhetoric of Richard Hakluyt, Sir Walter Raleigh, and others advocating English exploration and trade offers an important context for Sidney's actions. Sidney was engaged with international Protestant

[50] Leading among these who put great hope in Sidney was Languet. On Sidney's involvement in the formation of a Protestant League, see Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 179–202. On Sidney's broader involvement in European Protestantism, see Howell 31–46.

circles, and he was involved in England with Hakluyt, Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, and others who strove, as Helgerson terms Hakluyt's project, "to describe the world and show the English active in it" (170–71). Sidney's plans to slip out of England to the New World with Drake could have enriched Sidney personally, but the voyage also could have served to counter Spanish Catholic interests.[51] Though this plan, like so many others, was frustrated by Elizabeth, Sidney, at home and abroad, associated with people who were intent upon being "active" in the world, and Sidney likewise sought participation in the Protestant and English landscapes.

While Sidney had good reason to support Protestant interests, this aspect probably limited his usefulness to Elizabeth as a counselor. Sidney had witnessed the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris in August 1572 during his tour of the continent, which undoubtedly affected his perspective on Protestant-Catholic struggles.[52] Much scholarship as far back as James E. Phillips' work connecting George Buchanan with Sidney's circle has placed Sidney within the context of international Protestant activism.[53] Recent works by Edward Berry and Blair Worden have illuminated more fully Sidney's political and personal interactions with Hubert Languet, Phillipe de Mornay, and other vocal Protestants.[54] While Sidney's voice is perhaps more politically tempered than the monarchomach urgings of Languet and de Mornay, which we shall see in how the *Old Arcadia* refrains from rejecting or overthrowing even a weak prince even as the narrative challenges his authority, Sidney remained an action-minded Protestant

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[51] Although Stewart and others question the complete accuracy of Greville's portrayal of Sidney's New World plans, see Greville 70ff.
[52] See Stewart, *Philip Sidney* 89.
[53] See Phillips 23–55. For a more recent discussion on Sidney's involvement in this circle, see Stillman 126.
[54] See Berry, *The Making of Sir Philip Sidney*; Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*. For a discussion of Sidney's interactions with international Protestants while on his continental tour, see Duncan-Jones 63–85.

who recognized his duty to advance Protestant ideals in the political sphere. Elizabeth, however, needed loyalty to her, not to international Protestantism, and these ideals cost Sidney considerably in his ambitions as a counselor to the queen.

Sidney's literature and counsel during the Elizabethan marriage crisis

The rejections of his attempts for political involvement during the late 1570s and early 1580s provided Sidney with opportunities to invent his political voice in literary contexts. Sidney found opportunities to escape the pressures of court during this period when he was frustrated from political advancement, such as during his time at Wilton in 1577 and again in 1580, which provided Sidney with the leisure and circumstances to develop his writing both in terms of literary achievement and political counsel. As Michael Brennan observes, Sidney's "embryonic emergence in late 1577 as a courtier who envisaged literary writings as a key tool for both self-analysis and political discourse seems to have owed much to his finding a congenial second family home at Wilton House far away from the pressures of court life" (73). Wilton and the company of his brother, Robert, and sister, Mary, certainly offered Sidney a relaxed and fertile space from which to write, but we can also see Sidney's turn to literature as a substitute for formal employment, an attempt to construct a conciliar relationship with the queen where such a relationship at court had proven difficult to achieve.

Sidney's May 1578 performance of *The Lady of May* marked a shift in Sidney's approach to Elizabeth from discursive letters or treatises to poetry and fiction as means of conveying counsel.[55] Because Elizabeth became increasingly skeptical of Sidney's

[55] The May 1578 date for *The Lady of May* is not certain. See Doran, "Juno Versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581" 269.

ambition and his popularity in England and especially on the continent, Sidney was left with little opportunity for public service, and so he developed his poetic endeavors to strive toward the political voice that Sidney felt he deserved. As Brennan has observed, *The Lady of May* offers a not-so-veiled discussion about Elizabeth's potential military role in the Netherlands, and thus the text offers a new way for Sidney to think about service and counsel via literary production.[56] Sidney's flowing dedication to Elizabeth in *The Lady of May*, in which Sidney locates the queen in that place "where ears be burnt, eyes dazzled, heart oppress'd" (34), aimed to win the queen's appeal, and Sidney is able to give life and shape to political dilemmas and other questions and challenges that are intended to instruct and advise Elizabeth's behavior and government. Although Sidney professes to "feed mine eyes, mine ears, my heart on you" (40), the poet in turn seeks to "feed" Elizabeth with wholesome counsel.

The interruption of Elizabeth during a walk at Leicester's Wanstead home was a typical mode of presentation for such entertainments, but *The Lady of May* also reaches far beyond mere entertainment as the text counsels Elizabeth to make a stark choice about her marriage options and the tenor of her Protestant monarchy in the late 1570s.[57] The entertainment's choice between the two suitors is stark, even if which suitor Sidney ultimately recommends is unclear. The forester Therion is lively and offers much service, but he is occasionally a threatening and violent figure. The shepherd Espilus is milder and wealthier, but his only service is feeding his sheep and composing "dolefull verses" (*Major Works* 126). The question posed to Elizabeth is "whether the many deserts and many faults of Therion, or the very small deserts and no faults of Espilus be

[56] See Brennan 73ff.
[57] See McCoy 56–57.

to be preferred" (*Major Works* 128). Katherine Duncan-Jones associates the Espilus figure with Leicester and suggests that Sidney was arguing against radical change figured in the violent and criminal Therion.[58] The figure of Therion forces Elizabeth to make a decision, in part, between her interests as a woman and as a queen—a woman should reject a potential husband who beats her, but a powerful queen also demands men capable of impressive service. Therion's violence to the maid establishes him as a double-edged sword for Elizabeth in that his service is considerable, yet his violence also risks Therion dominating and subsuming the authority of a queen who would accept him. Could Elizabeth accept Therion into service without losing her authority and bringing harm to herself and potentially the monarchy? Therion is the gamble, but he also brings greater rewards. As such, the entertainment may, contrary to Duncan-Jones's reading, intend to recommend Therion, associating him with Leicester and by extension promoting Sidney as Leicester's heir and nephew.[59] Therion's active, aggressive, and violent approach reflects the more assertive England that Sidney desired in continental affairs, and Espilus' wealth and lack of service may figure in the Duke of Anjou. Alternatively, both Therion and Espilus may figure as Leicester, counseling Leicester and the queen respectively on what kind of courtier he might be and she might accept. Given that the French envoys appear to have been present for the entertainment, the message seems pointed, regardless how we associate the entertainment's figures with Leicester and Anjou. Despite the entertainment's encouragement otherwise, Elizabeth shrewdly selected Espilus over Therion. Subjecting herself to Therion's threatening power and submitting to the

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[58] See Duncan-Jones 148ff.

[59] Numerous critics support Therion as the preferred choice in the entertainment. Edward Berry argues that choosing Therion would fulfill the "festive nature" of the May game occasion ("Sidney's May Game for the Queen" 256). See also Orgel 198–203.

entertainment's counsel were part and parcel for Elizabeth. Sensitive to the pressures put on her by counselors, Elizabeth's response declared that she would not submit anyone who posed a threat to her, either in counsel or in marriage.

During the following year, while Leicester's position at court was compromised by the news of his marriage to Lettice Knollys, whom he had secretly married only a few days prior to *The Lady of May* entertainment, Sidney continued to press his opposition to the Anjou marriage with two bold actions. The August 1579 encounter with Edward de Vere, the earl of Oxford, on the tennis courts was as much a calculated derision of the Anjou match by snubbing one of its prominent supporters as it was a hot-headed spat between two ambitious young men of differing ranks. Sidney and Oxford accosted one another on the tennis court, and Sidney refused to yield to his superior in rank. While Greville's account of this event avoids mentioning the name of this "Peer of this Realm, born great, greater by alliance, and superlative in the Princes favour" (Greville 74–75), the context and audience of this outburst leaves little doubt as to Sidney's intents. The French ambassadors were present at the tennis court, and the marriage negotiations were ongoing. Along with Oxford's prominent father-in-law, Lord Burghley, Oxford was a supporter of the marriage to Anjou, and although Oxford would later publicly renounce Catholicism by exposing as treasonous several Catholic friends to Elizabeth in 1580, at this time he was rumored to maintain Catholic sympathies.[60] Sidney's defiance of Oxford, which drew insults of "Puppy" and a subsequent challenge for a duel, plainly counseled to the French and to Elizabeth her subjects' strident unwillingness to capitulate to supporters of the French marriage.

[60] See Pearson 99–117.

Writing from Antwerp, Languet recognized the dilemma for Sidney in resisting or backing down from the Anjou faction, even as he expressed dismay and fears for Sidney's safety:

> You can derive no true honor from it, even if it gave you occasion to display to the world your constancy and your courage. You want another stage for your character, and I wish you had chosen it in this part of the world…. Since your adversary has attached himself to Anjou's party, if your wooer shall return to you with a crowd of French noblemen about him, you must be on your guard, for you know the fiery nature of my countrymen. (Sidney and Languet 165)

Elizabeth also recognized the danger of the situation and intervened to prevent the duel. The queen thoroughly upbraided Sidney for disregarding "the difference in degree between Earls, and Gentlemen; the respect inferiors ought to their superiors" (Greville 79). Sidney could not have failed fully to grasp the subtexts of Elizabeth's chiding. In part, Elizabeth was reminding Sidney that his inferiority to Oxford made him even more inferior to Elizabeth. To the extent that Oxford's title was, as Greville records Elizabeth stating, one of the crown's "own creations," Elizabeth expected Sidney to remain firmly under the order of authority, lest "the Gentlemans neglect of the Nobility taught the Peasant to insult upon both" (Greville 79). Further, the queen was flatly rejecting the counsel of Sidney's brash, defiant, Therion-like performance. Wishing to be a counselor, Sidney may have acted in what he considered the interests of the queen, but those interests were not for Sidney to define, and his perceived lack of deference and loyalty troubled her. Elizabeth's response was, in essence, the same as she had given to *The*

Lady of May. The queen demanded loyalty and respect, and she would not tolerate any threat or insult, even to one of her nobles. Sidney may have sought to counsel the French ambassadors and Elizabeth on the unpopularity of and resistance to a marriage with Anjou, and the shock value of the dispute may itself have contributed to how loudly Sidney's message was heard, but an insulting spat that defied noble deference proved an overly transgressive and improper vehicle for Sidney's message.

However, for those dedicated to maintaining a Protestant England that could stand in defiance of Catholic powers in Europe and the New World religiously, politically, and militarily, the rising prospects of a marriage to Anjou marked such dire circumstances that barely a month later Sidney confronted Elizabeth in writing about the marriage in his "Discourse…to the Queenes Majesty Touching Hir Mariage With Monsieur." Elizabeth's close advisors included prominent opponents to the marriage, notably Walsingham and Leicester, but Sidney penned in his name alone one of the most direct and decisive acts of opposition to the French match that we have recorded from anyone in the anti-Anjou faction.[61] Sidney's arguments in the letter assume a clear distinction between the estate of Elizabeth and the person of Elizabeth, effectively establishing a public, political space figured in the monarchy alongside a private, domestic space figured in Elizabeth's body. Sidney aimed to counsel Elizabeth both publicly in her role as monarch and privately in her position as a woman, a division in counsel between public and private that would figure prominently in Sidney's subsequent literary production. On both accounts Sidney concludes the marriage to Anjou would be

[61] The other notable act of opposition was John Stubbs' publication, *Discouerie of a gaping gulfe whereinto England is like to be swallowed by another French mariage*. While Stubbs did not share Sidney's family rank and prominence, his act of publishing the text earned Stubbs considerable attention. For a comparison between Stubbs' text and Sidney's, see Duncan-Jones 161–64.

poisonous, divisive, and wounding to Elizabeth's interests, with imagery that underscores the violence to Elizabeth's person and state that this marriage would constitute:

> …your country as well by long peace, and fruits of peace, as by the poison of division, wherewith the faithful shall by this means be wounded, and the contrary enabled, made fit to receive hurt; and Monsieur being every way likely to use the occasions to hurt, there can almost happen no worldely thing of more evident danger to your Estate Royall: for as for your person (indeede the seale of our happiness) what good there may come by it, to balance with the losse of so honnorable a constancie, truly yet I perceave not. (*Prose Works* 54)

While Sidney is plain in describing the "poison," "wound," "hurt," and "danger" of a marriage to Anjou, Sidney cautiously prefaces these fears by crediting Elizabeth as "being an absolute borne" (*Prose Works* 51). The subsequent division between the state and person of the prince, however, generates an observation about the source of Elizabeth's power deriving from her subjects and from the popularity she cultivated by successfully fulfilling the monarchal role:

> Your inward force (for as for your treasure indeed the sinewes of your Crowne your Majesty dost best & onely know) doth consist in your subjectes generally unexpert in warlike defence, and as they are divided into two mighty factions & factions bound upon the never ending knott of religion…your Estate is so inwrapped as it were impossible for you without excessive trouble, to put your self out of the partie so long mainteined…. These therefore as their sowles live by your happy

> government, so are they your chefe, if not sole, strength. (*Prose Works* 52)

The "sinewes" of Elizabeth's power derive from the happiness of those she rules, and Sidney does not soften his language in subtlety or indirectness—if the people are subjected to "the agent Monsieur & his desseings" (*Prose Works* 52), Elizabeth may have a justifiable revolt on her hands.

Sidney's conception of sovereign power deriving from popular support may have aligned closely with the anti-absolutist stances of Languet, de Mornay, Buchanan, and other radical Protestants with whom Sidney associated. Sidney defers to call Elizabeth "absolute borne," but his description of her power suggests that he may see her otherwise. For the practice of counsel and for what Sidney hopes to accomplish in his letter, this distinction is significant. An absolute monarch may receive counsel from trusted advisors, but a monarch relying on popular consent must maintain the support of the people, implying that the queen ought to receive counsel from among a broader number of her subjects. If happy subjects are the queen's chief strength, then her refusal to consider and accept their counsel would diminish her estate. Sidney's letter is thus as much a demand for a manner of and role in government as it is a warning against marriage, and the potential danger to Elizabeth's political body is partially rooted a failure to heed counsel and consider popular will.

Even as Sidney distinguishes the ways in which the French marriage "be both unprofitable for your kingdom & unpleasant to you," he also notes that Elizabeth's body and the state intersect in "children" (*Prose Works* 55). In England's hereditary monarchy, the state and the person of the prince blur together in the procreative act, and

Sidney extends this sexualized, procreative intersection between state and person to make an audacious decrial of Anjou:

> His will to be as full of light ambition as is possible, besides the frenche disposicion, & his owne education, his inconstant attemptes against his brother, his thrusting him self into the low countrey matters, he sometime seeking the king of Spaine daughter sometime your Majesty are evident testimonies of a light mind carried with every wind of hope…. (*Prose Works* 53–54)

McEachern has noted the way in which "Sidney's pun, linking the genital and the political, registers in peculiar association of English ideological integrity with Elizabeth's physical inviolability" (*Poetics of English Nationhood* 132), but the pun goes further in also imagining an alliance between England and the Low Countries. An inconstant suitor raping the Netherlands combines the French marriage with Sidney's desire for military involvement in the Low Countries, and the imagery inescapably implies that Anjou would violate Elizabeth's body in the same manner that he violates the Netherlands. Sidney's sexual punning as clever rhetoric to establish an alliance between Elizabeth and the Low Countries. Sidney harbored a keen interest military involvement in the Low Countries as a means of supporting Protestantism against Catholic Spain. Sidney's conflation of the marriage and the Netherlands in this sexual imagery counsels that Elizabeth should lend her support to defending the Low Countries just as she defends her own chastity. The juxtaposition of these issues of marriage and involvement in the Low Countries and the sexual language in these descriptions of Anjou open a sexual-political space in which the distinction between the state and the person of a female monarch

breaks down, and as we shall see in the *Old Arcadia*, this troubling violation at the point where state and sexuality come into contact provides Sidney with a rich space in which to offer his counsel to Elizabeth and to explore the challenges and pratfalls of doing so.

In pressing upon Elizabeth unsolicited counsel, however, Sidney walked a very fine line between fulfilling an accepted role at the court and engaging in threatening behavior that could earn a severe response from the queen. A problem with politically aggressive counsel, such as the advice to ally with the Netherlands, is that while it asserted a riskier, more prominent role for England in European politics, that aggressive counsel also potentially intruded upon Elizabeth's domestic, private person. Elizabethan courtiers could not advice the public body of the monarch without also counseling the private body of the queen. Particularly as the most important body and space for counsel in Tudor England were the Privy Council and the privy chamber, violence and aggression spilling over into an intimate, private space associated with the feminized, private body of the queen proved incongruent. The conundrum for counselors of a monarch with two bodies produced particularly acute challenges for counsel when the private body was female. Advice had to appeal to both the office and the person of the monarch. Reconciling aggressive, threatening political counsel and action with the queen's femininity may have failed in *The Lady of May*, but Sidney constructed his letter to the queen regarding her marriage in a conscious attempt to appeal to both bodies. The inviolable chastity of Elizabeth would not be an image actively cultivated at court for at least another two years, but Sidney's choice to shape his rhetoric around such imagery opens a complicated tension with the act of counsel in which Sidney aims to engage. Elizabeth's closest advisors could speak directly into Elizabeth's ear, and Burghley even

had access to her privy chamber. Counsel's intimacy meant that political advisors might enter into the monarch's private space. As Sidney sexualizes the queen's body, he almost certainly would not wish to imply that counselors could be a threat to Elizabeth's chastity and constancy, but in arguing for his own inclusion in that space (instead of Anjou), Sidney may have accidentally subverted his own efforts at counsel. Whether Elizabeth took counsel from Anjou, Oxford, Leicester, Sidney, or anyone else, the ambitions of these men might have proven threatening to Elizabeth's person and state. Happy subjects, as Sidney argued, may have been Elizabeth's chief strength, but ambitious men could also subvert royal power. Marriage would certainly have been a much more symbolic relinquishing of power, but counselors could also diffuse and diminish power as much as they could buttress and enhance it.

How fully Elizabeth read such tensions into Sidney's letter is unclear, but the letter did not earn Sidney favor. Certainly Sidney did not receive punishment on par with John Stubbs, whose *Discouerie of a gaping gulfe whereinto England is like to be swallowed by another French mariage* earned Stubbs and his publisher, William Page, the loss of their right hands, but there remains disagreement over Elizabeth's response. Duncan-Jones has called Elizabeth's reaction "something of an enigma" (163), while Worden suggests that Sidney's opposition to the marriage "certainly risked his career and possibly destroyed it" (*The Sound of Virtue* 42). Sidney's status at court may have helped prevent this fate, and, as Greville observes, Sidney's letter was privately addressed to Elizabeth, "to whom the appeal was proper" (72), which notably differs from Stubbs' highly public text. Nonetheless, in reflecting upon the question, "whether it were not an error—and a dangerous one—for Sir Philip, being neither magistrate nor counselor, to

oppose himself against his sovereign's pleasure" (71), Greville recognizes that Elizabeth's reception of Sidney's letter could have proven detrimental to Sidney, especially given that Sidney's name alone was attached to the letter. While Greville notes that "howsoever he seemed to stand alone, yet he stood upright; kept his access to Her Majesty as before; a liberall conversation with the French, reverenced amongst the worthiest of them for himselfe" (74), the danger to Sidney was apparent to Sidney's associates. More than a year later, Languet, in a letter to Sidney from Antwerp in October 1580, expressed serious concern about the effect that the letter might have on Sidney's person and career, calling the harsh words against Anjou "by no means a safe proceeding, and inconsistent besides with your natural modesty" (Sidney and Languet 187). Languet's interest in seeing Sidney reconciled with Anjou led him to minimize Sidney's responsibility for the letter to the queen, as Sidney had been "ordered to write as you did by those whom you were bound to obey" (Sidney and Languet 187). Whether or not Sidney valued Anjou's opinion, he certainly craved Elizabeth's, and his letter, contrary to Greville's fairly rosy assessment, did risk Sidney's advancement under and access to the queen.

While Sidney's favor with the queen did not improve as a result of the letter, the letter was but one of many events that hurt Sidney's career. Sidney's reputation in England and abroad had already earned him the suspicions of the queen, and Sidney's employment was already nonexistent since his diplomatic envoy in early 1577. Supposing that Sidney was forced to retreat from court in disgrace due to the letter and the Oxford incident, fails to account fully for the timing and circumstances of that

retreat.[62] Letters and other evidence suggest that the fallout and tensions from the Oxford dispute carried on for months, so Sidney's departure from court the following spring could tie to the Oxford affair. However, as Duncan-Jones notes, Sidney remained at court for some months following the letter and the Oxford dispute. If royal disfavor had been sharp, Sidney's departure would have been swift. Though we lack firm evidence, the fact that Sidney remained active at court for some months, despite continued tensions with Oxford and over the marriage, implies that Elizabeth's response was measured.

The picture that Loades has drawn of Elizabeth as a woman always struggling to appear in control, to which demanding male counselors could pose a threat, may offer one explanation of Elizabeth's varying sharp and tempered anger:

> If she made a habit of accepting the advice offered, particularly if it was always from the same quarter, she would give the impression of having surrendered control. She was well aware that many of her advisers, including those most loyal to her, wanted and expected her to do so. So she faced a difficult problem over just about every issue of importance. If her councillors were divided, then she could make a decision without prejudice. But if they were largely in agreement, then she had to perform a delicate balancing act. (183)

Elizabeth often prevaricated, often engaged in spectacle, and often used emotional displays to distract from or redirect serious concerns. The question of marriage was a serious one, and accepting advice from any party urging a particular marriage match could have been disastrous to Elizabeth's grip on power. Elizabeth likely used Sidney's

[62] See Duncan-Jones 163–67.

letter and the Oxford dispute to her advantage by equivocating between the pro- and anti-marriage factions. By chastising Sidney, Elizabeth encouraged the French, Burghley, Sussex, Oxford, and other marriage supporters; by not rejecting Sidney outright with banishment or the Tower, Elizabeth maintained hope among Leicester, Walsingham, Pembroke, Hatton, Sidney, and others opposing the marriage. The letter demonstrated to the French the strong opposition to the marriage within England, which served as an excuse for not settling the marriage quickly, while Elizabeth's anger at the letter indicated a continued interest in the Anjou match. The possibility of marriage also distracted and delayed Anjou, whose intervention in the Netherlands could have forced Elizabeth's hand and commit to English political and military intervention in the Dutch states. Toying with a marriage match was much less expensive than raising an army. Sidney's counsel may not have been solicited, but the letter offered Elizabeth the political convenience of helping to prolong the Anjou courtship without a commitment to marriage. Because the decision to marry ultimately rested with Elizabeth, the hopes, fears, and uncertainties about her marriage allowed Elizabeth to manage court politics for several years.

Counselor to queen: pastoral space and political transgressions in the *Old Arcadia*

What is apparent is that amidst these questions about Elizabeth's reaction to Sidney is that Sidney did spend considerable time at Wilton during the summer of 1580, and Sidney completed much of the *Old Arcadia*, which he had likely begun composing in late-1579 and 1580, during this time with his sister. Contrary to Duncan-Jones' assessment, however, this period during which Sidney developed his literary talents was not a transition "from the world of active politics to that of literature" (167). Rather,

Sidney was exploring the potential of his literary pursuits to behave as active political engagements. In the introduction to his *Forms of Nationhood*, Helgerson identifies a generation of men born from 1551-1564 who "participated in what retrospectively looks like a concerted generational project" (1). The project to which Helgerson refers involves the reestablishment of English poetry, but more importantly Helgerson argues, "these poets sought to articulate a national community whose existence and eminence would then justify their desire to become its literary spokesmen" (2). Sidney was certainly part of this project, but the literary project also went further for Sidney: even as Sidney assessed and promoted English poetry in, for example, his *Defence*, he also sought a public role for literature that mimicked established traditions of counsel. The *Arcadia* represents Sidney's effort to reflect upon and counsel regarding the marriage dispute, and in doing so Sidney attempted to position literature as a safe space, away from court, in which the text could counsel on serious matters while maintaining the light airs of an entertainment.

The *Arcadia* ends in a condition of moral uncertainty that forms both a resolution and an anti-resolution. The objective of this uncertainty is to engage readers in a dialectic of counsel, pressing the audience into action to weigh moral judgments where the text shies from doing so. The text's explorations and questions of virtue, politics, genre, poetics, and other issues prod us to seek a conclusion more definite than the uncertainty that the text offers on the surface. The narrator moralizes of Gynecia's undeserved accolades for virtue, "so uncertain are mortal judgments, the same person most infamous and most famous, and neither justly" (*Old Arcadia* 360). At the same time, however, the uncertainty brings the *Arcadia* full circle, for Sidney begins the *Arcadia* with the same

mortal uncertainty motivating Basilius, who is "desirous to know the certainty of things to come, wherein there is nothing so certain as our continual uncertainty" (*Old Arcadia* 5), to seek the oracle at Delphos that sets the entire plot in motion. Sidney brings us back to the beginning, and yet resolves little of what happens between, instead drawing upon readers to provide judgments.

For Sidney, the lack of resolution in the *Arcadia* is entirely appropriate to the personal and political contexts and aims of the work. Amidst his blunt handling of the delicate issue of the marriage match to the French Duke of Anjou, Sidney's lofty expectations to fulfill the role of counselor to Elizabeth had been roundly frustrated. Having withdrawn to Wilton, Sidney enacts a politically, morally, and aesthetically unsatisfying and artificial resolution in literature where no genuine resolution is to be found at court. The *Arcadia*'s end meets generic requirements of a restoration and of the anticipated marriages of the princesses and princes, but even the marriages do not feel quite right following an attempted rape, and the condition of Basilius' restored rule is questionable. If the Phagonians were willing to rebel in the second book for the lack of the duke's public presence, how much less confident in Basilius must Arcadians be following his public humiliation in book five? The lack of resolution offers Sidney rich ground in which to explore difficult questions of counsel and the monarchy, and, following the pattern of good counsel, final judgments are left to those being counseled.

Sidney's retreat to Wilton likely marked recognition from Sidney of the dim immediate prospects for advancement under Elizabeth, and despite the desire for his writing to perform as counsel, Sidney expressed skepticism that his writing could function actively in the same manner as political employment. Given Sidney's desire for

active political engagement over ennui, writing the *Arcadia* must have felt frustrating at moments, even as Sidney strove to shape his writing as a means to engage with in the counsel from which he was otherwise excluded. Sidney's doubts as to the worth of his own project in comparison with more tangible action are plain in the *Old Arcadia*'s preface to Sidney's sister. Sidney refers to the work as "this child I am loath to father," and the *Old Arcadia*'s dedication is full of similar perplexing statements about its "deformities" (*Old Arcadia* 3). Sidney seems intent to limit the readership of his "monster" to Mary alone, calling on her not to circulate the work—the *Arcadia*'s "chief safety shall be the not walking abroad" (*Old Arcadia* 3).

Sidney's comments represent in part the false humility of *sprezzatura*, making the skillful accomplishments of the *Arcadia* seem easy and trivial, but as Edward Berry has noted about such a stance, "Self mockery may be playful, however, and at the same time self-expressive" (*The Making of Sir Philip Sidney* 69). As much as Sidney may have doubted the efficacy of his work to engage in political counsel, Sidney's modesty is part of the counselor's pose, appearing imperfect and ill-formed in contract to the person to whom the counsel is being addressed. Additionally, addressing his sister alone in the prefatory letter, Sidney consciously positions his work among a larger readership through his dedication, and the prefatory letter to his sister is crucial to understanding the contexts in which Sidney intended his *Arcadia*. Rebecca Lemon, in discussing the case of Hayward's dedication of his *Henry IV* to Essex, has noted of the early modern practice and process of selecting a dedicatee that an author or publisher typically attempted to identify the work with persons or people of the appropriate qualities or stature to match

the work.[63] Often the dedicatee was a person who was meant to receive praise and counsel through the work, or with whom the author sought or received employment. For Sidney, however, Mary Herbert was none of these. Further, Sidney downplays the serious aspects of the work, comparing it to "no better stuff than, as in a haberdasher's shop, glasses or feathers" (*Old Arcadia* 3), which locates the work in a space of feminine vanities and amusements. The mention of "glasses," even though contextualized as an object of vanity, also calls to mind the mirrors-for-princes tradition of advice writing. Sidney emphasizes the entertainment value of *Arcadia* in his dedication to his sister to downplay the counsel that the text offers, and yet the entertainment of the narrative frames the counsel that the counsel offers. Finally, the end of the dedication clearly commends and exhorts virtue in his sister that she "may long live to be a principal ornament to the family of the Sidneys" (*Old Arcadia* 3), again mingling the language of "ornament" with moral counsel and instruction.

Sidney's prefatory letter is also notable for maintaining an intimacy around the work, keeping it closed to a small circle of readers and allowing Sidney to emphasize the frivolity of the work. A dedication to Elizabeth would have been too high-reaching and direct, while a dedication to Leicester may have afforded the work too much gravity and would have set the text in a context apart from Sidney's goals insofar as these goals wended toward Elizabeth. Leicester was also embroiled in a marriage controversy at the time, having secretly married Lettice Knollys, earning him Elizabeth's wrath, which would have been incoherent with the *Arcadia*'s story. For the *Arcadia*, the gender of the dedicatee matters. By addressing the work to a female, Sidney emphasizes the roles of

[63] See Lemon 36.

Philoclea and Gynecia in his plot, not to mention the gender confusion brought about by "he-she" Cleophila (*Old Arcadia* 38). At the same time, Sidney uses the dedication to establish conflicts among the *Arcadia*'s contexts and its themes: the text is frivolous and playful because it is addressed to a female, and yet the presence of the female addressee also opens the important discussion of female virtue that becomes significantly contested in the *Arcadia*. When Sidney exhorts his sister as "a principal ornament to the family of the Sidneys," the sister's virtue transfers to the larger family, just as the virtue of Basilius's daughters deeply reflects on his political authority. Importantly, too, the dedication's tones of intimacy allow Sidney to subtly refocus the work's counsel to Elizabeth. Sidney touches upon the most personal matter of Mary's own pregnancy during this time when he employs "pregnant" language to describe Sidney's process of creation. The "pregnant" language, in particular, conveys an implicit discourse of sexuality, which, given Sidney's rhetorical tropes of sexuality in his arguments to Elizabeth against the Anjou match, may further project anxieties over the potential Elizabeth-Anjou union. More certainly, given Sidney's poor standing in court at the time and the nature of the *Arcadia* in terms of its whimsical generic features and playful treatment of gender and monarchy, a dedication to Elizabeth was impossible, and so Sidney establishes a categorical association via a woman of high standing, his sister, who had recently been active in Elizabeth's court, to contextualize the *Arcadia*'s political and moral disputations and address its counsel to Elizabeth.

The characterization of the *Old Arcadia* as disputational also provides an important context for understanding how the work attempts to participate within the Elizabethan political structure of counsel. Disputation between contrasting ideas in

friction with one another structured situations and dialogues within the humanist educational system. Thomas More could thus sustain a relatively neat—if absurd—debate between the figures of the philosophical Raphael Hythloday and the pragmatic courtier Thomas More. As Sidney started his tour of the continent in 1572, however, this division between philosophy and rhetoric had received a heavy challenge from Petrus Ramus whose conception of logic, *ars bene disserendi*, argued that logic and elocution are one and the same. To be logical, for Ramus, was to discuss something well. As Grafton and Jardine describe, logic and philosophy were turned into useful arts in Ramus's approach, such that "proficiency in that range of arts skills…will make the product of his school an able and active member of contemporary society" (163). Ramus was as controversial as he was influential, but he had a strong following among Protestants and among ambitious courtiers, as well as among the mercantile classes, who saw value in Ramus's insistence that "education should prove 'useful'" (Grafton and Jardine 168). Although Sidney only met Ramus briefly in Paris before Ramus was murdered in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, Sidney's debts to Ramus are apparent in the *Arcadia*'s construction of a series of murky and conflicting interests and perspectives, all of which display relevance to public life, a primary aim of the Ramist method and of humanism generally. But, as I have suggested, none of these conflicts seems to ultimately find resolution.

The text's disputations remain just that—disputations—and Sidney's rhetorical elegance embodies the *Old Arcadia*'s arguments more so than any particular discussion of princely authority or moral virtue. The characters, situations, and events are intended to amuse even as they engage the reader in crucial moral, social, political, poetic, and

spiritual questions: Is it proper for a prince to be advised by shepherds? Is it proper to be advised by poets? Is it proper for princes and courtiers to put on guises of lovers, of women, or of shepherds? What problems arise in the political order when princes and courtiers resort to disguises? What determines who is fit to rule? How is virtue distinguished from the appearance of virtue? What justice can be done when a prince abandons his responsibility, leaving the state in turmoil? Although the text does provide us with answers to some questions—plainly Dametas is not fit to advise a prince, and without doubt the guises of Pyrocles and Musidorus demean their princely status and lead to serious problems and crises on any number of levels—these obvious answers rarely settle the disputations fully or satisfactorily. Although Dametas is unfit to serve a prince, the *Old Arcadia* questions the extent to which anyone is fit to serve a prince so misguided by his own fancies as Basilius. Similarly, while the guises of a woman and a shepherd are below the princes, they are among the few guises acceptable in Basilius' court given that their own princely guises are not welcome. There is no easy answer to the problem of how to advise a ruler who refuses counsel or how to participate in a court shut to young men of worthy status. We err if we treat Sidney's conception of instruction as providing us with answers or offering us immediate philosophical, political, spiritual, or moral truth. Sidney does not reject such truths, but the text provides us primarily with the situations and questions that will push us to contemplate the moral, political, social, poetic, and spiritual issues that Sidney represents.

The lack of certainty in the world of Arcadia is not unproblematic for Sidney, especially in book five where Sidney finally ought to be able to pass firm judgments within his text. Euarchus steps into the narrative and assumes the authority to pass these

judgments, even if this action is unsatisfactory personally, politically, and literarily. The validity of these judgments is cast into greater uncertainty with the miraculous return of Basilius, who effectively voids all that Euarchus has justly determined. Sidney's rhetoric constructs for us a world in which living virtues are examined, tested, and found wanting, and yet in which serious threats to political and moral virtue can be swept aside so that we are challenged to question how harmful the situations actually were. Sidney's conception of learning, his artistic sensibilities, and the political necessities of not affirming so much that the text offends all lead Sidney to favor the disputation over the answer, and *Old Arcadia* remains suspended in the uncertainties of these debates that Sidney sets forth. The literary setting allows Sidney to imagine all of these problems of morality and state, providing readers the experience of such situations, while protecting us from serious danger with the *deux ex machina* ending. We know such endings are not likely outside of the *Arcadia*'s literary confines, but the problems in Arcadia are nonetheless instructive.

This disputational approach may also explain some of Sidney's dissatisfaction with his creation, such as he voices in his prefatory letter, for Sidney remained committed to identifiable goals within Elizabeth's court and Protestant Europe while his poetic mode constantly struggled with the constraint of not being able to address Sidney's personal and political concerns directly. In the first eclogues, the appearance of Philisides, an alter ego for Sidney points to Sidney's complaint: "Philisides…neither had danced nor sung with them, and had all this time lain upon the ground at the foot of a cypress tree, leaning upon his elbow with so deep a melancholy that his senses carried to his mind no delight from any of their objects" (*Old Arcadia* 64). Philisides occupies something of a liminal

space within this pastoral setting—as we learn later, he is not native to Arcadia, and he must be roused into joining the festivities and songs performed at Basilius' country estate. In the third eclogues before Philisides presents his Ister Bank poem, he expresses an obvious unease with his occupation within this community:

> Philisides knew it no good manners to be squeamish of his cunning, having put himself in their company, and yet loath either in time of marriage to sing his sorrows, more fit for funerals, or by any outward matter to be drawn to such mirth as to betray (as it were) that passion to which he had given over himself, he took a mean way betwixt both and sang this song he had learned before he had ever subjected his thoughts to acknowledge no master but a mistress…. (*Old Arcadia* 221)

Philisides' loathing "in time of marriage to sing his sorrows, more fit for funerals" certainly echoes the flat response Sidney received for his denouncement of Elizabeth's potential marriage. Sidney's letter to Elizabeth concerning marriage conjoined the spaces of the queen's public, political estate and private, domestic person, and the *Arcadia*'s plot functions by generating confusion between a public court space and a private household space, both of which are intricately bound up in further confusion about gender in the *Arcadia*. For Sidney, literature became a mode of compromise, a mean between the demands placed upon him to take active role within this "company"—Elizabeth's court—and his own failure to secure an active role within that court.

Sidney mires the *Old Arcadia* in a conflict between rural simplicity and courtly wit that is heightened by a series of transgressions and interruptions. The pastoral space of Arcadia, rather than being an idyllic retreat, is constructed through a series of complex

transgressions as the court moves to the country, counselors become rulers, men transform to women, and simple shepherds' songs turn into complex political counsel with referents both inside and outside the text. Kathryn DeZur has noted Sidney's use of "castle" imagery to tie together sexual and political concerns: "Women must be able to defend their 'castles,' the metaphor Sidney uses throughout the text to indicate the household, the female body, and the polis" (94), and the use of "parley" and "disguise" creates an opposition between the "castle" of women's chastity on one hand and the cunning of language and artifice on the other. Pamela attempts to divert Dorus' speech, "lest in the parley the castle be given up" (*Old Arcadia* 94), and Philoclea likewise later confesses, "my castle…seemed weak," thus inviting Cleophila's "disguised forces" (*Old Arcadia* 106). Cleophila and Dorus beguile their ways into Basilius' court and domestic space, and then their disguised and rhetorical artifice effectively defeats each member of Basilius' household, the duke and duchess included. To borrow language from Sidney's letter to Elizabeth, we have foreign princes "thrusting" themselves into Arcadia, into that sexual space in which court and domestic concerns intersect, eventually reducing Basilius' household to the point that no one may effectively hold the throne.

This castle imagery and Sidney's concerns with counsel intersect in the person of Gynecia. Gynecia's treatment in the *Arcadia* is somewhat exceptional in that, unlike other characters, Sidney explicitly prophesies the nature of her demise from the outset:

> [Basilius] married Gynecia, the daughter of the king of Cyprus; a lady worth enough to have had her name in continual remembrance if her latter time had not blotted out her well governed youth, although the wound fell

> more to her own conscience than to the knowledge of the world, fortune something supplying her want of virtue. (Sidney, *The Old Arcadia* 4)

At the beginning of the narrative, Gynecia is still chaste in her actions, and in her interactions with Cleophila she does prove her ability to read signs and to speak plainly in ways that her husband and daughters cannot. Being receptive to counsel and being virtuous go hand-in-hand, and Gynecia has the potential to be both. But unlike with any of the other depictions at the narrative's outset, Sidney undermines any hope of virtue for Gynecia by projecting forward in the narrative to Gynecia's eventual willingness to surrender her chastity to an illicit passion for Cleophila. Gynecia's appearance of virtue is rescued only by a literal assault on Basilius' castle. The "confused rumor of a mutinous multitude" (*Old Arcadia* 108) interrupts Gynecia's impassioned expression of desire to Cleophila, which serves as a figurative assault on Basilius' castle. Rebellion in Arcadia has been brewing since the opening paragraph, for the failure of Gynecia's chastity becomes a revolt from within Basilius' own household just as the Phagonian rebellion is a revolt from within the dukedom. Echoing Sidney's concerns about Elizabeth's potential marriage to a foreign prince, if the Phagonians' revolt presents a tangible threat to Basilius' estate, Gynecia's willingness to surrender herself to a disguised foreign prince is an equal or greater threat to that estate. Sidney presents a comical, confused scene, but the serious threats have analogues outside the narrative as Sidney establishes an alternate world in which he is able to rehearse problems of leadership, counsel, marriage, and sexuality for his readers.

Sidney, with his personal memories of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre undoubtedly in mind, regards those under the Duke of Anjou with as little respect as he

holds for Phagonians, complaining in his letter that Anjou would bring into England "the motionners & ministers of his minde onely such yong men as have shewed (they think) evill contentement a sufficient ground of any rebellion, whose ages geveth them to have sen no commonwealth but faction, & divers of them which have defiled their handes with odious murders" (*Prose Works* 54). Gynecia's and Elizabeth's sexuality decidedly does matter to the state, and Sidney uses the Phagonian revolt to link a private, domestic space with public, political concerns. Not only does such a move speak into the Elizabethan marriage debate that was swirling as Sidney was writing, but the conjoining of private and public, domestic and political imagines the kind of intimate courtly space ideal for counsel. Sidney's vision of counsel encompasses, in effect, the privy chamber, a space which, unlike her father, Elizabeth had kept largely closed to her courtiers.[64] Literarily, Sidney attempts to construct a space where such counsel is possible, where the narrative is able to guide and educate the reader regarding the moral problems that Sidney regards as important.

As Sidney establishes a strong voice of counsel in the *Arcadia*, he also offers a weak center of political power. The Phagonian rebellion against Basilius' estate extends the *Arcadia*'s commentary on counsel and on the Elizabethan marriage debate and reveals the dubious center of power in the *Arcadia*, as the relationships between princes on one hand and advisors and subjects on the other devolve into chaos. Prior to the Phagonian rebellion, a peculiar juxtaposition of spaces and objects in Basilius' rural retreat exposes the inherent contradictions that later become pointedly apparent during

[64] For a discussion of Elizabeth's relationships to counselors in various settings such as the Privy Council and privy chamber, see Natalie Mears' chapter, "Elizabeth I and the politics of intimacy," in her book, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms*, 33–72.

the Phagonian revolt when Cleophila jumps into the duke's seat. The country estate is meant to create an alternative space to the court, one in which Basilius and his family can escape the dangers of the oracle that Basilius presumes are connected to the court itself. In pastoral conventions, the retreat is meant to be a space, like literature, in which counsel may be freely shared, but Basilius fails to use his estate in this manner. Basilius' apparent relinquishment of authority at the narrative's start seems at odds with the degree of power still projected by the duke's seat when Cleophila occupies it. Basilius' retreat forces the princes into disguises instead of freeing them from false outward shows, and Cleophila's proper role counseling and protecting the duke, were Basilius' court functioning well, is now degraded. Counsel hangs under false pretenses, and the only possible way to protect the duke is seizing the duke's seat in the midst of a rebellion, an act that could be mistaken for usurpation as much as it could be understood as service. If Basilius is no longer ruling Arcadia and admits no one into his court except for shepherds, Basilius' purposes in maintaining this seat are dubious. The seat seems like it ought to be an irrelevant artifact in this place of the country estate, and yet Cleophila's ability to command authority from the seat is clear evidence otherwise. Cleophila's occupation of this locus of authority, which is a holdover of Basilius' courtly identity that has no place in this pastoral retreat from that political world, responds to the common rabble's attempts to call Basilius to task for his political failings by overrunning his estate.

Before the rebellion breaks out, Basilius has entrusted governance of the country to his advisor, Philanax. In his pursuit of Cleophila, Basilius has abdicated his marital position as husband in favor of being an effeminate and fawning lover. As the "chastity"

of Basilius' estate is threatened by this mob, the female figure of Cleophila rather than the male figure of Basilius protects the women until they reach shelter, and it is only later that Basilius, "having put on an armour long before untried, came to prove his authority among his subjects" (*Old Arcadia* 109). This authority, however, never materializes in Basilius as Cleophila instead subdues the rebellion with a further transgression and usurpation by physically leaping into "the judgement seat of the duke" (*Old Arcadia* 113) and making an impassioned speech to the mob that is full of the self-fashioning and pageantry that Basilius has failed to provide. Basilius' attempt to recreate his court and household in the common pastoral space has only resulted in that common space revolting against his authority and person, and the only savior of his estate is the deeply transgressive figure of a woman, yet not the domestic female so much as an Amazon warrior who is actually a foreign prince who has been plotting from the start to usurp Basilius' domestic control over his daughters. Basilius' estate, a contradictory conjoining of authority and the rejection of that authority, along with the Phagonian trespassing into this space, exposes the challenges of counsel in a space with so many complications of genre and authority. When service to a ruler can be confused with rebellion, we are left to consider counsel's limits, both in a courtly setting and in the mode of literary expression.

Had Basilius been a strong, active prince from the start, all this transgression and confusion could have been avoided. However, a strong prince does not necessarily entail an absolute ruler. Cleophila's speech, while serving in one sense to protect Basilius' throne, also ultimately undermines his sole arbitration of power. Anyone who is capable of performing the proper spectacle seems able to occupy the space of the throne, and

Cleophila's actions suspend Basilius' authority as she wins popular support through her speech. Cleophila's panegyric to Arcadia's "excellent monarchy" (*Old Arcadia* 114) has its effect on the Phagonians (and also perhaps works to dispel any doubts as to Sidney's own loyalties to Elizabeth), but the shape of the Arcadian state and monarchy comes to reflect the shades of Sidney's politics. Basilius ought to be a better ruler, but his rule depends on his ability to shape popular will and earn support, which necessitates wisely receiving counsel. Sidney is very much interested in participation and action within a prince's court, and he seems to advocate a diffuse center to that monarchal power that shares authority with the prince's elite counselors. Sidney's view is certainly not democratic, for power still is consolidated in a hierarchy with a monarch at the top, but such that the monarch's subjects are, as Sidney wrote to Elizabeth, a monarch's "chefe, if not sole, strength" (*Prose Works* 52).

The idea of Elizabeth's strength being comprised by her subjects is particularly illustrated in the Ister Bank poem's beast fable, in which each of the animals contributes its strength in order to construct a monarch, man, to rule over them. With the collapse of man's rule into tyranny, the fable becomes a cautionary tale that those endowed with special gifts (i.e., the nobility and educated courtiers) must engage in vigilant and active roles in governance in order to temper and balance monarchal power. As a beast fable about tyrannical rule, the Ister Bank poem is the very sort of engaged, interruptive, active counsel that Sidney desired to make at court. Many critics have complained variously that the poem is out of place. Worden questions, "Why is a song about tyranny sung at a wedding? The fable not only interrupts the nuptial celebrations. It introduces issues—the origins and rise of monarchy, the breaking of nobility, the techniques of tyrannical

rule—that are not raised elsewhere in the *Arcadia*" (*The Sound of Virtue* 266). Jan van Dorsten takes note of one nineteenth-century edition that chose to omit this section of the *Arcadia* entirely for much the same reason (231). Because of the tribute to Languet prefacing the beast fable, Worden suggests the likelihood that Sidney inserted the tribute and possibly even the fable in its entirety after Languet's death in September 1581. Worden rightly connects the concerns of this poem to the Anjou marriage match, arguing this point on the basis that Anjou's tyranny inserted into England "would destroy the Englishness which the poem embodies" (*The Sound of Virtue* 269), but this still leaves unsettled how the Ister Bank poem fits into the structure of the narrative, leaving it an awkwardly inserted political commentary.

Taken, however, in the context of a narrative deeply engaged in counsel and in the problems of kingship and counsel, Philisides' song about revolt, tyranny, and kingship is most timely in the narrative, and the poem is intricately woven into the sexual-political context of the *Arcadia*. The tensions at the marriage celebration rightly precipitate a poem about tyranny and revolt—Nico and Pas, ruffians echoing Chaucer's Miller and Reeve, have just gotten into a serious cuckolding dispute with Pas declaring, "I will strike Nico dead with the wise words shall flow out of my gorge" (*Old Arcadia* 220), leading the party very nearly to physical blows. Philisides is called upon as an outsider to quell tensions with a song. Once again Philisides, "who as a stranger sat among them, revolving in his mind all the tempests of evil fortunes he had passed" (*Old Arcadia* 221), occupies a liminal position within this company, being invited in from the outside. Philisides' choice to shift attention away from marriage might be calculated to avert the threatening fray. Indeed, Philisides' poem disrupts the nuptials, but the marriage

celebration has already been disrupted, and, in a larger sense, the narrative of the *Arcadia* is one predicated upon interruptions and disruptions, beginning with the disruptive force of the oracle that leads Basilius into retreat, moving into the disruptions of the princes' entrances into Basilius' household and the lion's and bear's disruptions of pastoral repose and of Cleophila's Petrarchan advances toward Philoclea, and continuing into the interruptions that the Phagonians present to Gynecia's tempting of Cleophila and later to Musidorus's rape of Pamela. By this moment in the *Arcadia*, readers ought to expect Sidney to interrupt tense moments with shifts in the narrative meant to comment on the political and moral state of affairs, which is precisely what the Ister Bank poem offers us.

At this moment in the *Arcadia*, the topics of tyranny, revolt, and kingship are pointedly relevant. The cuckolding dispute occurs in the third eclogues, after Pamela has quietly accused her father of an "unreasonable restraint of her liberty" (*Old Arcadia* 152) and allowed herself to be ravaged by Musidorus, and after Pyrocles has set up false trysts with Gynecia and Basilius while actually sleeping with Philoclea. Basilius' entire household, himself included, is in revolt. Further, at the moment of consummation between Pyrocles and Philoclea, Pyrocles recalls Philisides singing a blazon, and this song effectively interrupts the sexual activity and prevents readers from observing the moment. Even though Philisides is not physically present with Pyrocles and Philoclea, the intrusion of his song into the narrative places his voice at the center of the sexual intrigue swirling in Arcadia. Just as Sidney tied together sexuality and politics in his letter to Elizabeth, sexual activity in the *Arcadia* always has a political dimension as well.

The political relevance of the Ister Bank poem outside of the text is heightened by the introduction of Hubert Languet into the third eclogues as the source for this beast

fable, establishing a definite referent outside of the Arcadian world and in Sidney's own life and politics. Languet, a candidate for authorship of the Huguenot resistance tract *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, was deeply rooted in international Protestantism and mentored young Sidney during his travels on the continent.[65] As Worden suggests, Sidney may include Languet at this moment partly as a memorial to his recently deceased friend. The tribute to Languet is a moving one:

> Languet, the shepherd best swift Ister knew,
> For clerkly rede, and hating what is naught,
> For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true.
> With his sweet skill my skill-less youth he drew
> To have a feeling taste of him that sits
> Beyond the heav'n, far more beyond our wits. (*Old Arcadia* 222)

That Languet is the figure credited with teaching Philisides the beast fable adds a strong political dimension to the marriage and cuckolding dispute in the third eclogues. We should not make a case for Sidney's intent with the Ister Bank poem based on his association with Languet alone. Ascribing political views based on personal associations can be misleading. As we have seen, Sidney maintained associations and friendships with Catholics as well as radical Huguenots. Sidney had many close connections to resistance theorists, and yet the circle of his patron, Leicester, also included Adrian Saravia, one of Leicester's strongest supporters in the Low Countries who went on to set out one of the earliest accounts for absolutism and divine right, both in ecclesiastic and

[65] See Martin N. Raitiere, *Faire Bitts: Sir Philip Sidney and Renaissance Political Theory*, 103–41. Raitiere assigns authorship of the *Vindiciae* to Languet and argues that Sidney repudiates the tract's politics. The other likely candidate for authorship is de Mornay.

monarchical contexts.[66] Association does not guarantee similar beliefs, and while Sidney was deeply influenced by Languet, the extent to which he fully embraced Languet's politics cannot be estimated merely from their friendship. Sidney's simultaneous friendship with the Catholic exile Campion casts Sidney as a very independent-minded Protestant. While the Ister Bank poem does appear to express many of the views contained in the *Vindiciae* about tyranny and resistance, expressing views does not necessarily entail endorsement, and so we are left to read carefully how the Ister Bank poem fits into the narrative in order to understand what Sidney attempts to counsel through it. Even Philisides' own perspectives on the beast fable are unclear, and Philisides' character in the *Arcadia* is problematic in that he is such an isolated character whose perspectives may or may not be recommended to us and who may or may not correspond perfectly to Sidney himself.

Still, despite these objections, the careful fitting of the Ister Bank poem within the thematic structures of the *Arcadia* indicates that we must take the fable's political implications seriously. The beast fable's warning to animals appears vaguely akin to the *Vindiciae* and other Huguenot literature calling for resistance against tyrants by crown counselors and lesser magistrates.[67] The beasts err in giving up their speech—the necessary ability for performing counsel—when they assent to form man as king, and the fable reminds animals suffering under tyranny to "in patience bide your hell, / Or know your strengths, and then you shall do well" (*Old Arcadia* 225). The power of man over the animals as monarch is rooted in the gifts that each animals contributes, which reiterates an argument that Sidney has already introduced in the book two. There, Dorus,

[66] See Nijenhuis 56–107.
[67] See Walzer 74–87 for a discussion of Hugenot resistance theory.

attempting to exalt his lowly position before Pamela and Mopsa, makes a case for the source of princely power: "a virtuous prince requires the life of his meanest subjects, and the heavenly sun disdains not to give light to the smallest worm" (*Old Arcadia* 88). This is not, however, to say that every subject deserves a role as advisor, nor that subjects have authority over the monarch, for Sidney is plain that clownish figures like Dametas and the Phagonians, while having a place in the state, ought to have no role in statecraft. But people, including Dametas, are capable of speech, which the Ister Bank poem specifically identifies as the sacrifice that animals made in establishing their absolute monarch. Sidney may have once disparaged that "my only service is speeche" to Leicester, but here, in a fable at the heart of the *Arcadia*, speech is given an exalted position. Sidney and others at court still possess speech, and this feature in the beast fable calls attention to the idea that a state, to avoid tyranny, must place a strong reliance on counsel and on established roles for counselors.

Sidney's language introducing Languet also wittily situates Languet and the fable that Philisides claims to have learned from him squarely within the *Arcadia*'s concerns about counsel. Sidney's first commendation of Languet is for the mentor's "clerkly rede" (*Old Arcadia* 222), a pun that echoes deeply through the *Arcadia*. The most literal definition of "rede" is counsel, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, a meaning absent in modern usage.[68] For Sidney, however, the play on the word's homonyms could just as easily have brought to mind "read" or "reed," tapping both into the literary

[68] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, "rede." The word appears throughout the sixteenth century in a variety of spellings, including "rede," "red," "read," and "reed," among others. In the phonetic spellings of the period, the modern words "read" and "reed" also appear in this full range of spellings, making them distinguishable in writing only by context. Notably, the modernized edition of *The Old Arcadia* maintains two different spellings, "red" and "rede" in the two instances where the word appears.

qualities of learning and counsel as well as into the pastoral context of the eclogues, reeds being the iconic pipe instrument of the pastoral setting. Additionally, Sidney uses "rede" in only one other instance in the *Arcadia*, in a scene from the first eclogues that already has structural ties to this one in the third eclogues. Philisides' use of "rede" to identify his close mentor contrasts with Geron's complaint about Philisides in the first eclogues:

> Thou heardst e'en now a young man sneb me sore
>
> Because I red him as I would my son.
>
> Youth will have will, age must to age therefore. (*Old Arcadia* 69)

The use of this archaic term, which appears only in these two instances in the *Old Arcadia*, draws attention to Sidney's developing concerns with counsel generally in the first eclogues and more specifically counsel in monarchical contexts by the time of the Ister Bank poem in the third eclogues. Geron utters his invective in the first eclogues at a moment after the debate about love has been interrupted by Histor, who draws us back to the predicament of the princes by recounting in prose tales of Pyrocles and Musidorus and the dangers from which they must rescue the queen Erona. Geron rejects Dorus' call to hear this pressing news again, and instead demands that melancholy Philisides to stand and join the eclogues, chiding Philisides' stubborn will and vanity that are preventing the older Geron from providing the young man with "counsel" (*Old Arcadia* 65). Sidney's narrative discredits Geron from the moment he appears, observing that Geron "wished all the world proportioned to himself" (*Old Arcadia* 57), and in the ensuing dialogue, Geron, whose advice in some respects almost brings to mind Languet's constant chidings to young Sidney, proceeds to counsel Philisides to put aside his passions for an "active

mind" and to "let thy mind with better books be tamed" (*Old Arcadia* 67), which Philisides dismisses in scornful disrespect:

> Hath any man heard what this old man said?
>
> Truly, not I who did my thoughts engage
>
> Where all my pains one look of hers hath paid. (*Old Arcadia* 67)

This comment draws Geron's ire for Philisides, leading him to speak to his dogs, "as if in them a man should find more obedience than in unbridled young men" (*Old Arcadia* 68), and to comment on his attempts to "red" Philisides "as I would my son."

When Philisides echoes "rede" in the third eclogues, identifying Languet as the mentor and nurturing teacher who has provided him with education and counsel, Philisides is directly confronting and correcting Geron's presumption to offer him counsel. In contrast to Geron, Languet offers genuine "rede." Not surprisingly, following Philisides' beast fable, Geron spouts immediate and sharp criticisms of Philisides, complaining that "he never saw thing worse proportioned that to bring in a tale of he knew not what beasts at a banquet when rather some song of love, or matter for joyful melody, was to be brought forth" (*Old Arcadia* 225), perhaps contradicting his earlier complaint in the first eclogues that "it was a pity wit should be employed about so very a toy as that they called love was" (*Old Arcadia* 57), but certainly nursing his grudge against and taking revenge upon Philisides. Geron's complaint reinforces the connection to the first eclogues, and it also helps dispel criticisms that the Ister Bank poem is inappropriate to the context of a wedding or to the issues and concerns of the *Arcadia*. Sidney recognizes through Geron the same complaint that subsequent critics have observed about the impropriety of the Ister Bank poem at a wedding, which ought to

indicate to us that Sidney includes this poem with a definite purpose. Sidney's linking of this poem to the interruption of the debate about love in the first eclogues, as well as locating the poem amidst the sexual and political rebellions in Arcadia, places the beast fable structurally at the center of the *Arcadia*'s concerns.

The content of the poem also plainly speaks to the issues of kingship and counsel. The beast fable opens in an idyllic world where animals "Like senators a harmless empire had" (*Old Arcadia* 222). In a cry of discontent that echoes the Hebrews calling for a king in 1 Samuel 8, however, the animals, except for the owl, "With neighing, bleaing, braying, and barking, / Roaring, and howling, for to have a king," persuade Jove to create man (*Old Arcadia* 223). The qualities that the animals contribute to man include many positive traits, but others, such as the flattery of the dog, the wolf's "secret cruelty," the stork's "to be appearing holy," and the crocodile's false tears, take on very Machiavellian qualities. The animals, in surrendering their speech to man, seem to eliminate themselves from any participation in government, handing man what seems to be a virtually absolutist dominion over the animals. Philisides notes how man, "Not in his sayings 'I', but 'we' / As if he meant his lordship common to be" (*Old Arcadia* 224), initially gives at least lip service to the idea of a commonwealth, but soon factions and cruelty takes hold. More animals join the owl, "in deserts sought their rests" (*Old Arcadia* 224), prompting man to begin hunting and murdering these creatures, while the weaker animals who remained are enslaved. As Philisides arrives at the poem's end, he breaks from the narrative to address a warning:

> But yet, O man, rage not beyond thy need;
> Deem it no gloire to swell in tyranny.

> Thou art of blood; joy not to make things bleed.
>
> Thou fearest death; think they are loath to die.
>
> A plaint of guiltless hurt doth pierce the sky.
>
> And you, poor beasts, in patience bide your hell,
>
> Or know your strengths, and then you shall do well. (*Old Arcadia* 225)

Sidney chooses to end Philisides' fable first with a plea to the tyrant, but then with a reminder to the animals that opens at least some potential to resist or balance against tyranny. The animals have two choices: patiently suffer or "know your strengths." Man, after all, is composed of these strengths, perhaps suggesting that even a tyrant is nothing without his subjects. Given the strong emphasis at the start of the poem on "rede," Sidney seems to imply that the strong, aristocratic strengths of the animals could serve to counsel and correct the king. The animals have given up their voices, and there is no doubt who the ruler is, but the animals still have strengths. Those strengths may be used to support the king, or they may be used to resist the tyrant.

People, of course, have not given up their voices, which can make the counsel of this fable to Sidney's audience less certain. We, it would seem, should use our speech, which becomes a strong justification for Sidney's actions counseling the queen at court. Sidney was consciously aware of the threats to English polity and identity with a marriage to Anjou, and having been ill received in his opposition at court, Sidney now voices such concerns in the *Arcadia*. In the use of disguise and rhetoric by the two princes to assault Basilius' estate, we see a deep mistrust of language, yet Sidney also employs a literary medium to convey his political counsel, and the Ister Bank poem

makes a strong case for maintaining formal counselors as an antidote to tyranny. Although Arcadia does not function perfectly as a direct allegory for England, in his representation of Arcadia, Sidney is rewriting how one is to think of the "nation," and the figuring of counsel becomes a significant part of Sidney's imagined state. When Sidney opens the *Arcadia* with a description of the country, the people, and its prince, Basilius is described as "a prince of sufficient skill to govern so quiet a country" (*Old Arcadia* 4). While this may seem to commend Basilius' leadership and his position at the center of the Arcadian state, the irony of this depiction becomes apparent with the advice of Basilius' trusted subject Philanax, who counsels Basilius against retreat to a country estate: "it comes of a very ill ground that ignorance should be the mother of faithfulness. Oh no, he cannot be good that knows not why he is good, but stands so far good as his fortune may keep him unassayed" (*Old Arcadia* 8). As the ruler of a quiet country where previous rulers have set down laws and people are not disposed to breaking them, Basilius' virtues have not been tested, and the advisor Philanax represents the most sensible voice in the Arcadian state, raising immediate questions about Basilius' firm hold on the seat of power from the beginning of the narrative.

In Sidney's attempts to explore the challenges and possibilities of counsel, Philanax holds a central position in books one and five, and Philanax's advice in book one in particular appears to reiterate Sidney's own advice to Elizabeth that her "inward force," the source of her power in the state, "doth consist in your subjectes." Philanax argues, "Let your subjects have you in their eyes" (*Old Arcadia* 7). The spectacle of royal performance generates authority within the state. Roy Strong has observed, "The Elizabethan monarchy did not only need powerful verbal and visual images to hold a

divided people in loyalty; it also demanded the development of an elaborate ritual and ceremonial with which to frame and present the Queen to her subjects" (*Cult of Elizabeth* 114). To the extent that it is necessary to consolidate power within the state and to prevent the breakdown of the state into the murderous "faction" that Sidney identifies as existing under Anjou, royal spectacle is necessary to control the potentially disruptive elements within the order of the state. As David Norbrook has suggested, "Sidney does not view the social order as a naturally harmonious, organically ordered body but as a precarious union of warring elements" (*Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* 91). Philanax makes clear this sound counsel in a forceful plea from the start of the *Old Arcadia*, and in the revisions of the *New Arcadia*, Sidney notably shifts Philanax's spoken counsel into a written letter, a move which carries a range of potential implications for Sidney's developing understanding of counsel given that Sidney's service had first been limited only to speech and now, at the time he composed the *Old Arcadia*, had shifted to writing. While Sidney plainly expressed frustration with the limits on service placed on him, the formality of this written advice makes Philanax's concerns much more difficult to ignore in the text and also may hint at Sidney's growing appreciation for the role of the written word in counsel. On the other hand, by removing the counsel from a private discussion between the prince and counselor, the diminished intimacy suggests a more tepid relationship between Basilius and Philanax and that the counsel is somehow riskier and less likely to receive favor—as Plutarch's *Moralia* states, "those things are written in books which the friends of kings dare not advise" (217).

Philanax's role in book five becomes a crucial connection back to the problems and failures of counsel in book one. Given Philanax's warnings, the fall of the Arcadian

state into decay as Basilius ignores counsel and absents himself from the function of royal spectacle is no surprise. By book five, Arcadia is in ruins. The prince, by all appearances, is dead; his wife, if the accusations are to be believed, has poisoned him, and foreign princes have ravished their daughters. With Basilius' house broken, a foreign monarch now sits in judgment over the sordid affairs, and Basilius' once good advisor, Philanax, though remaining loyal, appears blinded by hatred and sorrow such that he may even have become a dissembling manipulator as he presses his tears to help convict Pyrocles and Musidorus of murder and rape. The recognition that two other noble houses may be cut short by the justice exacted against the two princes adds to the gravity of the situation, and Sidney as a writer is left with the challenge of reconciling the weighty political crisis at the end of the *Arcadia* with the comedy that has preceded it.

However, just as Sidney fills the early comedy of the *Arcadia* with serious political concerns, Sidney also relieves the tense political situation in book five with comedy. In his legal role as prosecutor against the two princes, Philanax, still serving Basilius and the Arcadian state, directs his counsel toward the ear of Euarchus. Euarchus' position in the last book, temporarily sitting in judgment over the Arcadian crisis, is an extremely compromised one. Euarchus' name labels him for us as the "good king," and yet such labels have been deceptive throughout the *Arcadia*. The narrative can call Pyrocles and Musidorus exemplars of princely virtue, but relatively little that we observe in their actions calls to mind virtue, and so we must question how well-earned Euarchus' name is. To his credit, Euarchus takes a very cautious and respectful stance in assuming the Arcadian seat of judgment, and the nature of his authority is one rooted in popular assent, even if his judgments are absolute. When accepting the Arcadian

protectorate, Euarchus reminds people, first, that he is "a creature whose reason is often darkened with error" and, second, to remember "that you do not easily judge of your judge; but since you will have me to command, think that it is your part to obey" (*Old Arcadia* 315). Euarchus recognizes his limitations and the nature of his power within the state, but even these recognitions do not prevent him from making judgments in error, for none of Euarchus' judgments are validated upon Basilius' revival at the end of book five.

Philanax may be acting with good intentions, and his arguments partly resonate with anti-absolutist conceptions of monarchy associated with Sidney. Nonetheless, Philanax becomes one of the chief reasons that Euarchus is led into error. In a reversal from book one, where Philanax offered the correct counsel regarding Basilius' situation but the duke failed to listen, Euarchus listens and judges almost solely with the letter of the law and Philanax's counsel guiding his decisions. The problem is that Philanax, like Euarchus, is "a creature whose reason is often darkened with error." For Sidney as a Protestant deeply influenced by Calvinism, no individual is capable of comprehending the moral complexities of earthly affairs, let alone counseling on the governance of those affairs flawlessly, and thus the need for a more circumspect system and network of counsel that distributes authority among a noble class, which at least has better potential to avoid the pitfalls of an autocratic tyrant. Between Philanax and Euarchus, slipping into tyranny becomes a distinct possibility in book five. Philanax's interpretation of events gets as much wrong as it does right, and Philanax relies on the power of his rhetoric to establish a case that is contrary to the actual state of affairs. In so doing, Sidney satirizes Philanax's role as counselor. When Philanax offers to his audience "a short and simple story of the infamous misery fallen to this country—indeed infamous, since by an

effeminate man we should suffer a greater overthrow than our mightiest enemies have ever been able to lay upon us" (*Old Arcadia* 336), we laugh at how ignorantly correct Philanax is, for to an even greater degree than the cross-dressing of Cleophila, we know that the effeminacy of Basilius in shirking his princely duties into a domestic space and later in fawning after Cleophila has effected the overthrow of Arcadia. As in his early advice to Basilius to remain strong in the face of the oracle and not to retreat from his duties, Philanax speaks the truth, but this is now an ironized and bitter truth that Philanax himself does not fully comprehend.

Sidney, however, does not entirely repudiate Philanax, for while Philanax is incorrect that the princes have murdered Basilius, the princes have nonetheless committed multiple transgressions against Basilus's estate. On points of law, Philanax's arguments carry considerable weight. Euarchus accepts Philanax's basic premise that Musidorus and Pyrocles are not "absolute princes" with a shrewd justification that, for Sidney's audience, also bears on the treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots:

> …whatsoever they be or be not, here they be no princes, since betwixt prince and subject there is as necessary a relation as between father and son, and as there is no man a father but to his child, so is not a prince a prince but to his own subject. (*Old Arcadia* 349)

Sidney likely could have left the argument here with the denial of privileges to foreign princes, but Euarchus makes a further claim against the conception of an absolute prince itself, especially in cases where a prince has done personal harm to another prince:

> …they that will receive the benefit of a custom must not be the first to break it, for then can they not complain if they be not helped by that which

> they themselves hurt. If a prince do acts of hostility without denouncing war, if he break his oath of amity, or innumerable such other things contrary to the law of arms, he must take heed how he fall into their hands whom he so wrongeth, for then is courtesy the best custom he can claim; much more these men who have not only left to do like princes but to be like princes, not only entered into Arcadia, and so into the Arcadian orders, but into domestical services, and so by making themselves private deprived themselves of respect due to their public calling. (*Old Arcadia* 349)

In their private transgressions, the princes have voided their claims to absolute privilege that would place them above the law, and this reduction of themselves to private individuals is even more pronounced because Musidorus and Pyrocles have acted in their private interests while also undermining the authority and privilege of another prince. As in his letter to Elizabeth, Sidney makes a case for distinguishing the public prince from the private person, and Euarchus turns this distinction into a rejection of absolute claims to authority in cases where a prince ceases to act in the interest of the public office. The office of the monarch may be absolute, as Euarchus' judgments must be, but the person holding that office is not. This separation of public office and private person greatly limits monarchal power. While the office may be absolute, the person is not. A person will err, and thus a person needs good counsel lest moral failings render that person unfit for office.

The sudden, *deus ex machina* resolution of the *Arcadia* does little to undermine Philanax's and Euarchus' arguments about the nature of monarchal authority. Euarchus'

judgments were made correctly in terms of their interpretation of the law, but are ultimately repudiated on Basilius' magical revival since the facts of the case turned out to be otherwise than Philanax had presented them, and so the punishments that almost happen mirror the most severe crimes that also almost happened, such as the rape of Pamela, which was providentially interrupted by a band of Phagonian clowns, and the death of Basilius, which turned out to be only the appearance of death effected by a potion. In effect, as I initially suggested, the fiction mimics a providential ending, resolving the plot in happy marriages, but leaving the pressing psychological, moral, and political issues, and notably Philanax's and Euarchus' rejection of absolute monarchy, unresolved. In constructing the *Arcadia* in this manner, Sidney has fantasized an alternate space for courtly counsel, and he has shaped his own text to function as counsel in precisely such an intimate space. Keeping with the disputational mode common to sixteenth century rhetoric, Sidney's specific counsels are often circumspect, leaving, to some degree, the disputations that he has set before us unresolved, challenging readers to make their own judgments. The text certainly counsels its readers on a range of issues and draws our attention to moments such as the Ister Bank poem and Philanax's legal arguments and Euarchus' legal judgments, but the application of the counsel outside of the text remains uncertain. Arcadia is not a perfect mirror for England. Even within the text, judgments remain uncertain, for Philanax and Euarchus are in error as much as they are right and Gynecia's virtue is as much infamous as famous. Sidney's text seeks to counsel in political and moral virtues, but the text also recognizes that counsel is limited as much by the failures of the audience, who may fail to heed the text's advice, as by the

imperfections of the counselor, who alike are creatures "whose reason is often darkened with error."

Speaking in one voice: Sidney's reiteration of monarchal authority

Despite the anxious frustrations expressed in the *Old Arcadia*, both with respect to the Anjou marriage match and the efficacy of his literary efforts to actively participate in court counsel, Sidney did not sway from writing out of frustration. *The Lady of May* and his letter to Elizabeth touching on her marriage may not have drawn their intended outcomes, at least insofar as earning Sidney employment was concerned. Duncan-Jones notes in her introduction to Sidney's *Old Arcadia* that dozens of manuscripts may have been in circulation in the 1580s, and the literate circles at court would have been a prime readership, especially if Sidney was using his sister's recent place at court as a door through which to get his text into Elizabeth's privy chamber where, if the women surrounding the queen were reading the manuscript, Elizabeth may have heard about it.[69] Even if a manuscript did not reach as high in the court as Elizabeth, the *Arcadia* was being read, and the text does seem to imagine Elizabeth and those around her as readers. The aim of the text to counsel, of course, appears at odds with the false humility with which Sidney toys in his preface to the *Arcadia*, where Sidney places trust in his sister to "keep it to yourself, or to such friends who will weigh errors in the balance of goodwill," such that the text's "chief safety shall be the not walking abroad" (*Old Arcadia* 3). While Sidney almost certainly did not want the text to be kept secret, whether or not Elizabeth or any of her chief advisors were among the coterie audience of the *Arcadia* is

[69] See Duncan-Jones, ed., *The Old Arcadia* viii.

speculative at best, and the text would seem to have failed in any conciliar objectives were its concerns not heard at court.

Whether the *Old Arcadia* achieved a desired effect at court or not, Sidney took up Philanax's counsel on behalf of Elizabeth upon his return to court—"Let your subjects have you in their eyes" (*Old Arcadia* 7)—to provide Elizabeth and her subjects with a powerful spectacle. In effect, Sidney continued to utilize his literary pursuits within the system of counsel, and in addition to the spectacle of presenting Elizabeth with a jewel-encrusted whip, Sidney also helped stage a prominent entertainment.[70] This court triumph, performed in 1581 before Elizabeth and the French ambassadors involved in the marriage discussions and recorded in detail by Henry Goldwell, offers us a glimpse of Sidney reintegrating himself into the court via a literary text that communicates to and counsels Elizabeth, even as the performance functions as a spectacle that appears to have been firmly under Elizabeth's control. This entertainment, known as *The Fortress of Perfect Beauty or the Four Foster Children of Desire*, is a complicated text, both because of the people whom we know were involved in its production and staging and for those whom we may speculate were involved.[71] McCoy has described the entertainment as treating the marriage question more "subtly and deferentially" than Sidney's previous attempts, while still managing to be "extravagantly self-aggrandizing" and "aggressive" (59). The basic device of the triumph is the attempt of four forlorn challengers attempting to assault the fortress of perfect beauty, an image that echoes the rebellious Phagonian assault in the *Old Arcadia*, but also that, unlike the comic contempt held for

[70] See Duncan-Jones 192–93.
[71] Henry Goldwell's account of this entertainment is collected in Nichols, Vol. 2, 310-29. Goldwell's account was also combined with other details of the banquet preparations in Holinshed, Vol. 3, 1315-21.

the *Arcadia*'s clowns, justifies the assault within the accepted conventions of a courtly challenge. These challengers, like the Phagonians, as Philanax puts it, lack the image of a prince "in their eyes" (*Old Arcadia* 7) to subject them. However, the four challengers' pursuit appears noble in its courtly convention, and its threat to Elizabeth, even though the challenge is predestined to fail, is contained to the relationship between Elizabeth and her courtiers rather than spilling out into the general, raucous revolt of the Phagonians. Sidney is generally credited with writing parts of the triumph, as is John Lyly, and the leading performers in the spectacle were Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, Frederick Windsor, Baron of Windsor, Sidney, and Greville.[72] The former two had been supporters of the Anjou marriage, as had Burghley who worked with Sussex in organizing the entertainment. Susan Doran takes these facts to suggest that the triumph received royal sponsorship and identifies it as the first official adoption of the cult of the Virgin Queen.[73] Doran's argument may well be correct given that by 1581 Elizabeth's interest in the marriage had been cooling in response to public opposition. Elizabeth may well have commissioned this entertainment as a public display and, as Doran terms it, "official statement of policy" to the French that Anjou's suit would be refused, and thus Elizabeth made certain to involve various court factions in the entertainment, including those who had been in opposition, as a demonstration of the court's "united desire to protect [Elizabeth's] chastity against the pretensions of Anjou" ("Juno Versus Diana" 273–74).

Elizabeth's active or tacit involvement in the preparation of this entertainment certainly affects how we interpret the counsel that it offers. As Doran suggests, the co-

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[72] See McCoy 58–59.
[73] See Doran, "Juno Versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581" 274.

participation of courtiers both supporting and opposing the Anjou match in a triumph that, at least in current critical appraisals, appears to counsel against the marriage seems unlikely unless some higher power orchestrated the collaboration. However, the particular content of the triumph may not have been controlled by Elizabeth, which is suggested by the text of the entertainment as well as by the circumstances of its announcement and performance. On Sunday, April 16, which was the same day that, according to Holinshed, the French envoy arrived at Dover, the "challengers" sent a boy to announce their "first defiance" to the queen as she left her chapel (Nichols 313).[74] The timing of this initial challenge, at a moment when presumably the court buzzed anticipating the new envoy's arrival but before the French ambassadors would have been in Elizabeth's company, strongly suggests that the entertainment is targeted at Elizabeth more so than at the French, and the timing of the initial challenge on the day of the French arrival in Dover seems hardly coincidental. The boy's speech further hints at Elizabeth's non-participation in planning the triumph. Goldwell's account records that the boy called out the challenge "without making any precise reverence at all," yet the boy also excused himself in case the challenge was poorly received by appealing to Elizabeth "that malice cannot fall from so fayre a minde upon the sely messenger, whose mouth is a servant to others direction" (Nichols 313). This statement may have been no more than a stylized gesture to Elizabeth's fairness and authority, but it could just as easily indicate that Elizabeth had little forewarning of such a challenge.

Significantly, the boy's speech announced that the triumph would take place eight days later, on April 24. Goldwell, however, notes that the entertainment, "by her

[74] See Holinshed, Vol. 3, 1315.

Majestie's commandment" (Nichols 315), was deferred three times, first to May 1, then to May 8, and finally a week later to Whitsun Monday and Tuesday when the triumph was eventually performed. The reasons for this postponement are unclear, but the postponements raise crucial questions about how this performance functions as an address to the queen and to the French, and about the degree of Elizabeth's involvement in its planning and production. Goldwell lists only "for certain urgent occasions" (Nichols 315). We know from Holinshed that Elizabeth ordered at the end of March the construction of an outdoor banqueting house in Westminster at the enormous cost of over 1744 pounds, and this construction was completed within three weeks and three days by April 18.[75] The date of the completion of banqueting house, which was decorated with flowers, holly, ivy, fruits, and other perishables, may imply that the banquet took place soon after. Additionally, postponing the banquet welcoming the French envoy for three weeks would seem strange given that preparations were already completed. Between the accounts of Holinshed and Goldwell, there is an unexplained gap regarding the banquet and the entertainment. Holinshed describes the construction of the banqueting house and states that the triumph was a part of this banquet, after which Holinshed's text reprints Goldwell's account. Goldwell notes the same location for the entertainment, a place adjoining Elizabeth's house at Whitehall, as Holinshed records for the banqueting house, but mentions a gallery at the end of the tiltyard as the setting for the triumph. These may be imperfect accounts of the same setting, or Holinshed and Goldwell may be describing two different events. Perhaps Elizabeth held a banquet as scheduled on April 24 and 25,

[75] See Holinshed, Vol. 3, 1315.

followed by the triumph three weeks later, or perhaps the banquet and triumph were both postponed together for three weeks.

While the "urgent occasions" that resulted the series of postponements could have been as simple as inclement weather, the postponements also could indicate a tense or awkward state of affairs the negotiations with the French, or they may suggest an attempt by Elizabeth to defer an entertainment sprung on her by her subjects until an occasion when it more suited her designs or until she was able to exercise a greater degree of authority over it. Certainly if the initial challenge had been unexpected by the queen, the delays worked to Elizabeth's advantage by allowing her to set and manipulate the literal and political stage for its production. At the very least, "urgent occasions" that drew royal commands to postpone the triumph hint at events more significant than poor weather. As such, Elizabeth's official approval of the triumph, while possible, is not certain. Certainly the entertainment would not have gone forward without Elizabeth's permission, but whether or not Elizabeth had been aware in advance of the initial challenge presented by the boy is unclear. How involved Elizabeth was in the preparations after that is similarly uncertain. Even if the triumph did receive tacit or official approval, the text and staging of the entertainment nonetheless makes significant demands on Elizabeth at the same time that it would have sent a clear message to the French envoy that Elizabeth was not to be had. And if Elizabeth did not have a hand in shaping the triumph, the entertainment's counsel to Elizabeth, figuring her as an unassailable virgin and idealized Beauty, is even bolder. As the four challengers attempt to conquer Elizabeth's fortress, the courtiers imply the possibility that they may hold captive and control the queen. As Sir Thomas Perot and Anthony Cooke, two of the

defenders who ride out to counter the challengers, characterize the assault in their speech, "We content to injoie the light, yee to eclipse it; we to rest under the feet, yee to run over the head; we to yeeld to that which nothing can conquer, you to conquer that which maketh all men captives" (Nichols 321). Yet in the ironic figuring of Elizabeth in relation to both the challengers and defenders, even as the four challengers attempt to win favor from Perfect Beauty by assaulting her castle, the defenders also attempt to win her favor by praising her as impregnable, making comparisons between Elizabeth and the sun and other similar metaphors. Further, even as all in the entertainment ultimately acknowledge Elizabeth as perfect and impregnable, this image of her is one that Elizabeth's courtiers are constructing for the queen and placing upon her.

The public display of this triumph counsels Elizabeth in what she ought to be at a moment when the marriage negotiations were not formally concluded, offering the public and unanimous voice of Elizabeth's court to define her qualities and actions as a monarch. The public unanimity that the entertainment displays is particularly striking given the private disagreements at court over the marriage question, in which Sidney and other participants in the triumph had variously taken sides. The triumph may be sending a message about the marriage, but its further implication is, as in the Ister Bank poem, that a monarch's court and counselors have as much a hand in defining and producing the monarchal image and authority as the monarch herself. Conversely, if Elizabeth was complicit in the planning and construction of such imagery for herself, the spectacle of her courtiers foisting the perfect, impregnable image of the Virgin Queen upon her serves only to mimic their involvement and to reinscribe Elizabeth's own authority. Given the lack of evidence for Elizabeth's prior knowledge and involvement, both cases remain

tantalizingly rich possibilities, and each implies a very different relationship between Sidney and the queen in his return to court.

For Sidney and the other courtiers, at least, they almost certainly would have hoped to convey counsel to Elizabeth through the entertainment, regardless of her speculated involvement in its planning. How closely Elizabeth attended to this counsel, versus simply basking in the panegyric entertainment, is a matter of speculation, and the failure of counsel to achieve immediate, tangible results is a problem that Sidney never resolved. This limitation of counsel is one reason that Sidney throughout his career seems to have sought more active employment that went beyond counsel and actually accomplished deeds. Sidney was as often frustrated from these ventures, such as his planned trip to the New World with Drake, as he was in his role as counselor, but in his literary pursuits Sidney leaves open the possibility that poetry can effectively extend beyond mere didactic counsel in its ability to imagine a "golden world" to Nature's "brazen" (*Selected Prose* 108). In his biography of Sidney, Greville observes that Sidney's primary aim in life was not that of a poet:

> But the truth is: his end was not writing, even while he wrote; nor his knowledge moulded for tables, or schooles; but both his wit, and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinion, but in life, and action, good and great. (21)

Greville is correct that Sidney preferred action to writing. Sidney complained as much, and his literary production tended to be its greatest when his employment under Elizabeth was least, with the *New Arcadia* and his translations of the Psalms left incomplete when Sidney finally received political advancement during the last few years before his death.

Yet there is also a sense in which Greville misreads Sidney, even as his words seem to echo Sidney's own comments in the *Defence*. Sidney offers the Greek notion of *architektonike*, "which stands (as I think) in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well doing and not of well knowing only" (*Selected Prose* 113). Knowledge is important, but it is more about what one does, and Sidney's literary efforts and the *Defence* attempt to theorize precisely how poetry is able to effect such purpose and action and how writing is able function as counsel and service for a man whose role was restricted to little else for significant periods during his career. Literature, and specifically the *Arcadia* in setting forth a world without limits, becomes a means for Sidney to articulate the complexities of court politics and society that could not be communicated through more direct means. The *Arcadia* is able at once to transgress boundaries of political, social, and moral propriety while also educating us what those boundaries are; the text is able to rebel against tyranny and inept exercise of power and likewise engage in a panegyric to monarchy and an affirmation of the Elizabethan monarchal center of power in the same voice. Literature's "rich tapestry" (*Selected Prose* 108), to borrow another phrase from the *Defence*, in its ability to balance complex questions, authorizes Sidney as an advisor to his readers, and the chief limit to the efficacy of the counsel that a work like the *Arcadia* can offer is the same limit Sidney faced in his more direct acts of counsel: that he performed the counsel imperfectly, or that his readers misinterpreted or rejected the counsel out of their own limitations or designs.

Chapter Three

Begin with doubts, end in certainties: Toward a Method of Advice in Civil England

Francis Bacon's *Essays or Counsels: Civil and Moral* mark, in many respects, a highly conventional treatment of the best practices of relationships, learning, public behavior, religion, counsel, and a range of other subjects. Bacon's advice throughout the text is clear and perceptive, but unlike the political advice in Machiavelli's *The Prince* or the reflections and insights in Montaigne's *Essays*, the quality and practicality of the advice in Bacon's *Essays* are, for the most part, equaled by how much the advice lacks a revolutionary quality in its substance. Geoffrey Tillotson has observed:

> Wisdom is notoriously impersonal, and Francis Bacon…was notoriously wise… He seems often, indeed, to have written with his head severed and placed cleanly before him on the table, an inch or two beyond the farther edge of his manuscript. It was a "curious" head, severed bloodlessly, a microcosm indefatigably contrived, an enormous packed head. And peering into it, Bacon would find his wisdom cold, firm, convenient—a wisdom which could be pocketed for use like a bunch of keys. (81)

This dogged attention to practicality is likely what gives Bacon's *Essays* such a conventional feel, which may account for how little critical attention the *Essays* tend to receive. The advice that Bacon offers has value because it has been distilled through people following it again and again, convention proven by empirical practice. Much of what Bacon composed is the sort of material that was likely drawn from commonplace books, and it is material that, insofar that the *Essays* reflect common wisdom and

understandings, could have been written by any number of Bacon's contemporaries.[76] While Bacon's more heralded scientific writings share a similar emphasis on practicality, the scientific program that they propose is revolutionary, whereas the aphorisms and the reflections on relationships, authority, and learning of the *Essays* are largely conservative and conventional. The sheer conventionality of the *Essays* makes them an interesting study in what the safe, respected practices of counsel were in Bacon's time. This chapter, however, aims to move past the highly conventional advice that Bacon offers to reflect upon how the act of publication shaped Bacon's imagination for his audience, how Bacon's aphoristic style provided a rhetorical vehicle for Bacon's moral counsel to readers, and how Bacon used his *Essays* as an intellectual foundation on which Bacon constructed his later scientific and philosophical writings.

Aphoristic style may have been typical of jottings in commonplace books, but to publish a book organized around such a style was uncommon. Publication itself, for that matter, had perhaps outgrown the sense of novelty by the 1590s, but aggressively publishing one's works was an innovation for Bacon's generation. Andrew Pettegree has observed:

> The English publishing trade had developed considerably in the last decades of the sixteenth century, both in terms of output and the range of work it was prepared to take on. But its overall shape and character was still discernibly different from that of the major continental print industries. (339–40)

[76] For recent discussions of early modern commonplace books in the context of literary readership, see Schurink 453–469 and Brayman Hackel 175–95.

The start of the 1590s saw published literary works like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sidney's *Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella*, in addition to numerous other sonnet sequences, and dramatic plays increasingly saw publication as the decade progressed. Pettegree notes, however, while the average yearly output in print by the last decade of Elizabeth's reign was double that of the first year of her reign, "the bedrock of this growth was the market for religious books," particularly bestsellers like Bibles, prayer books, sermons, and catechisms (218). Literary works, manuals, essays, treatises, and particularly news and pamphlets were developing slowly in England compared to elsewhere on the continent. Nigel Wheale has described the shift:

> Writing and publication were therefore in transition between pre-modern attitudes, where authors generally composed at the request of patrons and for circulation among a known community, and the modern anonymous market for multiple copies produced by the printing press. (12)

In the generation preceding Bacon, when Sidney was writing, publication remained uncommon, while in the generation after, as Milton came of age in the midst of the English Revolution, publication abounded, which places Bacon on the cusp of a transformation in print culture in England. As the life of Sidney's manuscript writings show, an author's works could be made very public long before going to press or even without going to press, and Margaret Ezell's caution at conflating "published" with "public" lest we overlook the "'public' moments of readership, when the text is circulated and copied" (38). Still, authorized publication displays an intention to make a text much more public, and an act of publication, especially when the practice was still nascent and manuscript circulation remained common, raises questions about the motives behind that

intention. Why Bacon chose to publish a book of advice in this aphoristic style when he remained a gentleman lacking advancement and office, why he chose to republish after gaining office, how he viewed the audience of his *Essays*, and what he hoped to offer to that audience are fundamental questions that deserve consideration if we aim to locate Bacon's *Essays* within the period's developing understanding of counsel.

One quality that differentiates Bacon's writings from those of Sidney or Milton is that Bacon's are largely insulated from any specific political crisis. Bacon experienced his own dramatic fall from power when he confessed to accepting bribes as Lord Chancellor, and Bacon may have hoped, like many writers, that his subsequent publications, including the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* and the final edition of his *Essays*, earned him some royal favor. Bacon takes up general political concerns and questions in his writings, and his scientific writings lay out a vision that has strong implications and exhortations for government action, but neither Bacon's *Essays* nor his scientific writings seem motivated by particular political events, not even by Bacon's own trial and fall from power. This is not to say that Bacon did not advise on specific political issues. He did. Bacon, however, performed such counsel in relatively conventional manners, struggling to find patronage, serving first in Parliament, and finally receiving advancement under James. Bacon did fall afoul of royal favor at moments for his advice, such as when Bacon voiced criticism in Parliament over the Triple Subsidy Bill, which raised Elizabeth's ire and cost Bacon advancement until James ascended to the throne nearly a decade later.[77] Bacon's example may have proven a cautionary tale for other aspiring parliamentarians who would use their positions to advise and criticize the queen.

[77] See Marwil 74–75; Bowen 69–71.

Parliament did purport to maintain the role of advising the queen, and Bacon wrote to Burghley that his opposition was performed in royal service: "I was sorry…that my last speech in Parliament, delivered in discharge of my conscience and duty to God, her Majesty, and my country was offensive" (*Works* 233–34). Elizabeth "positively enjoyed receiving divided counsel, because it increased her freedom of action" (Loades xvii), but in this case, coming from Parliament, she did not, and Bacon felt the sting of having crossed Elizabeth for the remaining decade of her reign.

Bacon received rapid promotion under James, who offered a somewhat different relationship with counsel from Elizabeth. J. P. Sommerville has noted that while England lacked consensus regarding monarchal authority, the continentalist ideas that he brought with him from Scotland, which emphasized divine right and absolutist principles, put James at odds with many in England, particularly common law theorists.[78] In *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, James noted "the mutual duty and allegiance betwixt a free and absolute monarch and his people" (*The True Law of Free Monarchies* 52), which while still laying claim to absolute imperium also recognized a mutuality that could be partially fulfilled by counsel. In practice, James operated his court differently from either Henry VIII or Elizabeth. Whereas Henry VIII had established the privy chamber as an intimate political space and Elizabeth, as a woman, had made privy chamber access more exclusive, James separated his bedchamber, almost entirely comprised of Scottish courtiers, from a more formal and ceremonial privy chamber that mixed English and Scottish members of court.[79] As Chancellor, Bacon could provide counsel directly into

[78] See Sommerville 55–70.
[79] See Stewart, *The Cradle King* 174–75.

the ear of the king, much as had been the practice for centuries, but only in carefully constructed court spaces.

In recognizing the need for mutuality between king and subjects, James appears to have understood that the realpolitik "required the careful construction and maintenance of a cultural accord between monarch and political nation" (Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England* 25). James understood this construction and maintenance as requiring communication with the political nation, which he accomplished through pageants, displays, and his own writings. As Sharpe has noted, James perceived "the centrality of writing to his exercise of rule" ("Reading James' Writing" 18), and the king published extensively, including poems, a psalter, *Daemonologie* (a treatise against witchcraft), *The True Law of Free Monarchies, A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, and his book of advice to his son, Henry, *Basilikon Doron*. James operated a different kind of court from his Tudor predecessors that sometimes frustrated English courtiers, but James shared with Bacon an understanding of the importance and potential of printed texts to construct civil society.

Bacon did perhaps attempt to sway the king and his favorites through impressive public dedications and flattery in laying out his visions for scientific progress, but Bacon addressed comparatively little of his writing to the monarch throughout his career. As Chancellor under James, Bacon already had the ear of the king. He had no marriage crisis like Sidney or political revolution like Milton to occasion his writings, and his periods of disfavor early in his career under Elizabeth and after his downfall do not seem to distinctively motivate Bacon's writings. What does seem to motivate Bacon's writing is a moral, scientific, and political project on behalf of England that reimagined the

English readership and anticipated a scientific and political landscape for the nation that would require considerable political engagement beyond the traditional circles of court.

The essay and its audience: shaping a "public man" of counsel

Bacon's literary debt in writing and publishing his *Essays* to Michel de Montaigne is considerable, even though in presenting various topics for reflection and discourse, Bacon does not follow Montaigne in the modern turn of revealing "my own self," but instead takes a more conventional route of offering "civil and moral" advice on a range of topics dealt with in largely impersonal terms. Montaigne's *Essays* groundbreaking and modern text constructs an ethos around Montaigne's personality: "I have set myself no other end but a private family one," Montaigne assures us in his introductory address to readers. Montaigne cheekily denies that any of what he writes is for the learning and edification of others: "I myself am the subject of my book: it is not reasonable that you should employ your leisure on a topic so frivolous and so vain" (lxiii). Montaigne fully intends that people should indulge in the frivolity and vanity of the work, but Bacon, for all the debt he owes to Montaigne for the essay form, engages in no such playful denials or frivolity. Montaigne developed a lyric prose that speaks from a self-reflexive "I," but Bacon's concerns are much more outward and public. The focus of Bacon's *Essays* is not on Bacon, and his writing offers few direct revelations about Bacon as a person. Instead, the aim is to offer plain, practical advice. Bacon's audience remains the focus of what he writes as Bacon attempts to impress upon his readers valuable lessons and aphoristic wisdom.[80]

[80] On aphorism in early modern literature, see Crane, *Framing Authority* 137–61. Crane focuses on aphoristic poetry as works "that were public (not private), written (not spoken), middle-class (not

Bacon does, however, seem to follow Montaigne in his choice of audience. In Bacon's written texts, advice often shifts to an audience outside the monarchy. There is an everyman quality to the imagined readers of both authors' *Essays*. The evolution of Bacon's dedications from the 1597 to the 1612 and 1625 versions offers interesting insight into Bacon's own rise at court and ambitions. The original version of the essays was dedicated to Bacon's brother, Anthony, who at the time was secretary to Essex. In 1612, Bacon had written a dedication intended for Prince Henry, who died suddenly before the edition could be published. Bacon dedicated the 1625 edition to George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, the king's favorite. The aims and politics of dedications were complicated. Some authors were simply seeking financial reward, even if such rewards were meager and difficult to obtain:

> By the 1590s the number of authors seeking patronage for their works had grown to the point where dedications were devalued currency, no longer the acknowledgement of a writer to a bountiful protector, and more often the desperate appeal for any recompense at all. (Wheale 63–64)

Others selected dedicatees with the objective of gaining preferment from a patron. Bacon's very modest dedication for his first edition, while setting a personal and familiar context to the writing, would have gained little either monetarily or in terms of attention from a patron. Following the success of the first edition, however, the progression in dedications reveals on Bacon's part a rising ambition for and estimation of the *Essays*. In

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aristocratic), epigrammatic (not lyric), and which, instead of purporting to express a present self, were intended to reveal the process of gathering and framing through which a subject was consciously produced." Aphoristic poems were part of "an educational process…explicitly connected to the social and political aims of their authors" (137). Bacon's *Essays* and other aphoristic prose share many elements of the poetic tradition that Crane describes.

1597, Essex had already attempted to secure Bacon the vacant office of attorney general, which Elizabeth instead awarded to Edward Coke, followed by Coke's old post of solicitor general, and finally gave Bacon property at Twickenham as consolation when that position also failed to materialize.[81] Why Bacon offered the modest dedication to his brother instead of to an established patron, or to someone Bacon hoped would become a patron, or to someone wealthy enough to pay Bacon for the dedication is curious. Bacon's dedication situates the work within the Essex circle, but the dedicatee is also a family member, and perhaps Bacon did not regard the slight volume worthy of someone high-ranking. Bacon observed to his brother in the dedication, "I have played myself the inquisitor, and find nothing to my understanding in them contrary or infections to the state of religion or manners, but rather (as I suppose) medicinable" (*Major Works* 545). Bacon did not seem to fear objectionable content, and he recognized the pragmatic use of the *Essays*, which may help explain the dedication to his brother.

As Richard Cust notes, the "public man" of the late Elizabethan and Stuart years developed as a simple, plain person, "untainted and uncompromised by association with the 'court' and therefore qualified to speak for the cluster of interests and concerns associated with the 'public' or 'common weal'" ("Public Man" 117). Although Bacon was born well, given his rise through the Commons he likely identified with aspects of this "public man," particularly before he began receiving rapid advancement under James. Part of the reason for that advancement may have been Bacon's success in casting himself in the role of counselor, which Bacon accomplished, in part, through his writing. Markku Peltonen observes that for writers educated in a humanist tradition that

[81] See Zagorin 9–10.

stressed to them the value of the *vita activa*, "the question of how men could expect to lead the active life and fulfill their truly noble qualities in practice" was often answered by projecting "the venerable image of a counsellor" (*Classical Humanism* 172). Publishing a compilation of counsel allowed Bacon to cultivate this image. For this class of the "public man," the writing of advice texts was very much in vogue. Indeed, advice texts even helped define this class of people: "Advices constitute one of the principle literary and rhetorical genres through which the notion of 'public man' was constructed, interpreted and disseminated" (Cust, "Public Man" 119).

James VI and I, in the *Basilikon Doron*, engaged in this kind of "public" exercise by publishing advice to his son. James originally published the text in Edinburgh in 1599 and had only seven copies printed. The small initial publication suggests that James originally intended the *Basilikon Doron* as a formal advice book only for his son, Henry, to whom James assumes a role "as a faithfull Praeceptour and counsellour unto you" (*Political Writings* 2). James consciously assumes a tone of humility for the work, apologizing "if I in this Booke haue beene too particularly plaine" (*Political Writings* 9), and goes on to instruct Henry in being a good Christian, performing as monarch, and in managing daily affairs. In counseling his son in kingship, James insists upon fostering a virtuous self and court:

> But it is not enough to be a good King, by the scepter of good Lawes well execute to gouerne, and by force of armes to protect his people; if he ioyne not therewith his vertuous life in his owne person, and in the person of his Court and company; by good example alluring his Subjects to the loue of vertue, and hatred of vice. (*Political Writings* 33)

The king is absolute, but virtue in the monarch alone is not enough; for a king to have a happy rule requires virtuous subjects as well.[82] On this point, James may consciously be imagining an audience beyond that of only his son puts responsibilities on subjects as well. Indeed, upon taking over the English throne in 1603, the advice book was republished in London and sold thousands. In 1599, James already had his sights set on the English throne, and he may have had publication to an English audience in mind when he composed the volume to his son.[83] John Cramsie has noted the particular challenges that James faced in assuming the English throne:

> James's success as the first ruler to unite and hold the three kingdoms crucially depended upon moulding a multi-ethnic collection of nobles, officers, counsellors and clerics into loyal servants who would uphold the Stuart *imperium* across Britain and Ireland. (53)

By the time James became king in England he plainly recognized the need to communicate with his subjects about what kind of monarchy his would be.[84] The *Basilikon Doron* offered James an opportunity to advise not only his son, but people across three kingdoms regarding the *imperium* he would wield.

Bacon's *Essays* take up the concern of attempting to fashion a morally virtuous public readership of the sort that James recognized a monarch needed. Bacon lacked a son to whom he could address his 1597 version of the *Essays*, and so the dedication to

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[82] James, however, seems unwilling to imply, as Sidney stated, that the people are "your chefe, if not sole, strength" (Sidney, *Prose Works* 52). James tempers this advice on virtue as he returns to the gritty workings of statecraft, telling his son, "But aboue all vertues, study to know well your owne craft, which is to rule your people" (*Political Writings* 44).

[83] On turning *Basilikon Doron* into a text for English audiences, see Wormald 36–54. On the resolution of the Elizabethan succession in favor of James, see Doran, "James VI and the English Succession" 25–42.

[84] See Knalfa 235–64 for a discussion of how James maintained consistent views of law, government, and monarchal authority throughout his political writings.

Bacon's brother served as an alternative to ground the text in public humility. By 1612, however, Bacon held office as solicitor-general, and his considerable revisions and additions to the *Essays* and the success of the first edition removed any reticence at dedicating to a high personage. Though the dedication to the king's son never materialized because of Henry's untimely death, the selection reflects Bacon's status and ambitions, and it may also hint at a growing estimation of the text's value as counsel. Despite Bacon's claim that distractions of service caused him "to write certain brief notes, set down rather significantly than curiously" (*Major Works* 677), his choice in the dedication would seem to gesture toward the tradition of mirrors for princes and other advice literature aimed at monarchs. Bacon, however, remains conscious of the "dispersed" quality of the writing, and his aborted dedication makes pains to stress that the *Essays* "may be as grains of salt, that will rather give you an appetite than offend you with satiety," and that they be "of a nature whereof a man shall find much in experience, and little in books; so as they are neither repetitions nor fancies" (*Major Works* 678). This aim neither to repeat what has already been recorded in books, nor to produce material of pure imagination is a delicate balance, and Bacon relies on experience to accomplish this challenge. This is not the sort of book that a prince might find written to princes in the past, and yet it is also not something completely new and divorced from that tradition of counsel because it relies on experience influenced by that tradition. This aim to offer something new and distinct, and yet also to remain conventional, is a delicate balance for Bacon, and it is fundamental to how Bacon positions himself as a counselor friendly to the crown while advocating for a progressive agenda that otherwise might seem more threatening to royal interests.

By 1625, Bacon had dramatically fallen from his position as Lord Chancellor, and his return to the *Essays* for a third revision displays the steadily expanding regard with which Bacon seems to have held the text, this time renaming it from simply *Essays* to the weightier title, *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral*, emphasizing the intertwined categories of study that Bacon identified for human affairs, the former having to do with public interactions and the latter involving the private individual. With the dedication to the king's favorite, Bacon remained attentive to the royal circle, perhaps hoping in part to rehabilitate his own image and likely aiming also to impress wisdom upon the person who most held the king's ear. Bacon had risen and fallen in the span of fourteen years under James from a struggling MP lacking appointment to Solicitor-General in 1607, clerk of the Star Chamber in 1608, Attorney-General in 1613, Privy Counselor in 1616, Lord Keeper of the Seal in 1617, and Lord Chancellor in 1618 before being dismissed from office over a bribery scandal in 1621.[85] Bacon had grown accustomed to advising the king on matters of rule, and the 1625 *Essays*, with their dedication to Buckingham, may aim to recapture some of this intimacy within James' inner circle, or at least to ensure that the king received quality counsel by addressing the text's moral and civil advice to the person who did have the king's ear. For himself, Bacon was barred from holding further public office, and a book dedication was unlikely to earn him reinstatement.

Curiously, however, despite the dedications aimed at the royal circle, much within the *Essays* does not appear to regard Elizabeth or James as its primary audience. Of the 58 essays in the 1625 edition, only a small handful, such as "Of Empire," "Of Counsel,"

[85] See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon*; Marwil 104–48.

and "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates," among others, seems to be intended specifically for a prince's counsel. Many other essays touch on issues of government, but are fashioned for a much more general audience. In adding "Counsels" and "Civil" into the 1625 text's title, Bacon consciously situates his worth within the advice literature tradition, but Bacon's *Essays* ultimately function less as a mirror for princes and more as a guide for common, literate readers. The 1625 *Essays* starts with "Of Truth," "Of Death," and "Of Unity in Religion," universal topics, before moving on to essays on revenge, adversity, simulation and dissimulation, parents and children, marriage and single life, envy, and love, all before arriving at "Of Great Place," the eleventh essay of the collection and the first to deal with matters of power and authority that touch upon princes. Through the *Essays*, the act of counsel is, in a limited sense, democratized. Bacon does not turn aside from the advice-for-princes tradition—politics remain important, but he emphasizes in "Of Counsel" how counsel constitutes a fundamental element of human relationships:

> The greatest trust between man and man is the trust of giving counsel. For in other confidences men commit the parts of their life their lands, their goods, their child, their credit, some particular affair; but to such as they make their counsellors, they commit the whole: by how much the more they are obliged to all faith and integrity. (*Major Works* 379)

Much of the essay, and of the *Essays* as a whole, speaks to political matters of monarchs and their counselors, but Bacon addresses a much broader audience than the court. While the literacy gains through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were limited, they were sufficient to create a growing market to address through publication:

> In 1500 at the beginning of the Tudor period probably 90 per cent of the male population in Britain were unable to read or write, and perhaps just 1 per cent of the women could be counted as literate—even among the clergy in the fifteenth century nuns were likely to be illiterate. By the 1680s male illiteracy in Britain still stood at 70 per cent, female illiteracy at 90 per cent, though with the obvious and significant exception of London. These figures are broadly comparable to rates throughout northern Europe, but this 20 per cent increase in male literacy, and the 9 per cent increase in female literacy, was all that was required to sustain the European cultural renaissance. (Wheale 2)

London was far more literate than Britain as a whole, and, as Wheale later notes, the five percent of society that constituted the nobility, gentry, professions, and major trades was becoming almost universally literate among men. Although growing numbers of yeomen, other tradesmen, craftsmen, and apprentices were learning to read, particularly in London, this elite, dominant class remained the primary consumers of published materials until at least the English Revolution. Bacon's audience for the *Essays* thus consisted of chiefly a small, elite, male sector of the population, a point which becomes apparent put in the context of Bacon's comments about common people in "Of Praise":

> If [praise] be from the common people, it is commonly false and naught; and rather followeth vain persons than virtuous. For the common people understand not many excellent virtues. The lowest virtues draw praise from them; the middle virtues work in them astonishment or admiration;

> but the highest virtues they have no sense or perceiving at all. (*Major Works* 442)

Bacon may have held commoners in low regard for their ability to participate meaningfully in public life, but the literacy gains outside the nobility, particularly in London, were establishing a more diffuse ruling class and produced an expanding market for printed materials. Bacon may have found few readers among the common classes, particularly outside of London, but even among the elite classes that formed the bulk of his readership, Bacon addressed a much wider audience than could be achieved through manuscript circulation at court. Bacon's conscious step away from coterie circulation and to publication effectively recognized a growing public sphere in which the political questions once treated chiefly by princes and their advisors had grown in relevance for a much larger portion of society. As Ian Box has concluded:

> In the view of the *Essays*, public service has moral status because it furthers a collective good and provides an opportunity for the display of those virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, and fortitude associated with the *vita activa*. (278)

The developing political order demanded common virtue, not only virtue of the monarch, and thus Bacon's *Essays* aim to offer this moral counsel to civil society. In doing so, Bacon imagines a civil public whose moral instruction must extend far beyond obedience to the monarch. Public persons need public virtues, and Bacon's imagined audience whom he sought to counsel had educational, economic, political, and social concerns that extended outside the court, which had dominated discourse about political counsel for

centuries. Bacon does not divorce himself from court interests, but his audience appears not entirely reliant on them either.

Many aspects of Bacon's advice in the *Essays* may be conventional. When Bacon observes that "friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections, from storm and tempests; but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts" (*Major Works* 393) the sentiment is highly eloquent, but, like many of the aphorisms in the *Essays*, this wisdom identifying friendship with counsel is typical of the advice tradition stretching back at least to Solomon's proverbs, in particular Proverbs 12:26 or Proverbs 27:9. However, in imagining an audience that extended beyond noble patrons and toward the middle of society, an audience desiring education, seeking advancement, and faced with relationships to both superiors and inferiors, Bacon substantially revises the advice literature tradition that had developed out of the middle ages and through the humanists, focused on advice to princes. Bacon maintains a keen eye for the necessity and practice of courtly counsel, and "Of Counsel" touches almost entirely on questions of counsel to a prince. "Of Friendship," in contrast, vastly expands the domain of counsel:

> And certain it is, that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another, is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. For there is no such

> flatterer as is a man's self; and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self, as the liberty of a friend. (*Major Works* 394)

Bacon's counsel touches on private life as well as public life, and it matters to people of all ranks just as it matters to princes. This type of common advice book would mushroom during the seventeenth century, published on myriad topics, but when Bacon first published his *Essays*, the nod toward a popular audience marked a distinct shift in the social locus of counsel.

While the system of relying on a close circle of advisors persisted alongside the rise of literary culture, a textual tradition of public advice was also developing. It was growing faster in the imagination of writers than it was in terms of an actual literate population, but what was imagined produced the texts that offered more and more people literate utility. As people encountered texts that could prove useful to them, this advice via texts grew increasingly democratized as a growing literate population from a broader cross-section of society sought to counsel on everything from the highest state affairs to the minutiae of everyday life. Whereas previously advice for any person was limited to a circle of intimates and acquaintances, the rise of print culture made addressing any literate person, or even the imagination of potentially literate persons, increasingly possible. The political implications of a literate population were considerable:

> By the middle of the sixteenth century two centuries of investment in a vastly increased range of educational provision had expanded Europe's reading public, in ways both clearly measurable and some less evident. This brought huge opportunities for the entrepreneurs of the publishing world. For Europe's rulers it also brought some obvious dangers. As

> Europe's readers had access to an ever greater range of books, some readily affordable, so they gained the means to engage in new ways with the great controversies that had now engulfed European society. It was a combustible combination. (Pettegree 199)

England, in many respects, lagged behind many parts of the continent in embracing print and engaging in these controversies. Pettegree notes the "cautious development of print in the field of public information" (342) in the sixteenth century and even extending into the seventeenth century in England. While religious and political tracts published on the continent by Protestants during the Marian exile and by Catholics after Elizabeth's ascension had been common, publication of news and regarding immediate political matters was undeveloped:

> Despite the evident hunger for information, the English crown did not encourage the development of domestic news print, and London printers would certainly not stray into this area without encouragement. In England printed texts played a relatively marginal role in attempts to influence public opinion. (Pettegree 341)

What was true of news print in England was true of political discussions in print generally, and Pettegree notes that one of Charles I's great errors heading into the civil war was using the Stationer's Company to maintain London's monopoly on publication in England because as London became a hotbed for Parliamentarian sentiment, Charles was left without means to rally loyalists via print. When Bacon published the *Novum Organum* in 1620, he was keenly aware of the power of print, ranking it alongside

navigation and gunpowder as important mechanical inventions that had changed the world in the past couple hundred years:

> Again, it is well to observe the force and virtue and consequences of discoveries, and these are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world; the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have followed innumerable changes, insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries. (*Works* 8.aph. 129)

Publication was rapidly progressing toward an active role in shaping public opinion, and although this function was not yet fully developed even by the end of Bacon's career, Bacon was consciously aware of how his printed works attempted to shape human affairs and how much more far-reaching influence printed texts could have in many contexts over traditional spoken and written counsel limited to only a few ears and eyes.

Advice and aphorism: the pragmatic foundation of Bacon's *Essays* and thought

Bacon sits at a transition in the practice of counsel. Bacon certainly aimed his writing to advise and to influence patrons and monarchs, but increasingly throughout Bacon's lifetime writing was no longer understood chiefly as an extension of counsel to a coterie of associates. In many respects, this approach of engaging in traditional counsel

while also pursuing progressive developments in print reflects Bacon's politics more generally. Daniel Coquillette has argued that Bacon and his contemporary jurist Edward Coke were not far removed in their views on fundamental constitutional issues such as royal prerogative, and Bacon's enterprise to engage a much broader cross-section of society with his writings hints as a whiggish streak underlying Bacon's projects. As Coquillette has observed of Bacon, "His loyalty to the Crown was never entirely at the Commons' expense" (16), and Bacon managed to express on the surface highly conventional, conservative wisdom in his *Essays*, even as the form and publication of them hinted at revolutionary qualities. With publication, writing targeted a broader audience of largely unknown persons. The tightly knit circle of persons remained vital and fundamental to the practices of political counsel, but the potential of a large literate class rising meant that people, by virtue of their literacy, expected to have a voice. Publication was becoming a distinct practice from traditionally intimate counsel that would prove over subsequent decades to serve very different ends as public exchanges of ideas would come into conflict with traditional political counsel to spark dissention and unrest leading up to the English Revolution.[86]

On the levels of friendship and acquaintance, people have always counseled one another, but imagining a literate society to participate in acts of public counsel through written texts marks an important shift in how texts are used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bacon could not have anticipated the English Revolution, and there were many other factors and missteps contributing to that failure of the English monarchy, but the expansion of literacy, especially in and around London, resulting in an

[86] See Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England*; Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*; Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People* esp. 416–64.

engaged political class distinct from the monarch, played a forceful role. While Bacon may not have been able to foresee the conflicts of counsel to face the generation following him, he did see such conflicts in his own time at court with the rise and fall of Essex and the tensions over Buckingham and other of James's favorites.[87] Bacon steps out of that intimate political discourse with his published texts into a wider public discourse. Bacon hints at a keen awareness as well of how his own text is participating in this broadened conception of counsel, and his estimation of the ability of the *Essays* to provide effective counsel is, at times, conflicted. A few lines after extoling counsel as one of the fruits of friendship, in the same paragraph Bacon weighs other means of self-correction and seems to undermine the project in which his *Essays* are engaged: "Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead" (*Major Works* 394). Bacon realizes the need for intimacy in counsel, which is an important quality of princely counsel and which Bacon finds satisfied in friendship as well. The ability of a "flat and dead" written text to provide effective counsel poses a problem. However, in "Of Counsel," Bacon also recommends the counsel of books: "It was truly said, 'optimi consiliarii mortui'; books will speak plain when counsellors blanch. Therefore it is good to be conversant in them, specially books of such as themselves have been actors upon the stage" (*Major Works* 382). The best counselors are the dead, according to the Latin phrase that Bacon quotes from Alphonso of Aragon, and reading books of morality is also "a little flat and dead." This dead quality of books proves both its virtue and impediment. The good counsel of a friend can be immensely valuable, but Bacon also considers the problems of dissemblers and flatterers who give bad counsel. Books are

[87] On the fall of Essex, see Loades 257–82. On James' favorites, see Durston, *James I* 14–23.

consistent and do not dissemble, and the writings of those who have the experience to have gathered and digested wisdom, that is, of those who "have been actors upon the stage," ought to be particularly regarded. Later, in "Of Studies," Bacon takes a more circumspect view of the use of books: "Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested" (*Major Works* 439). Books are not good for every purpose, but they have their uses.

The questions, however, of how books can advise a person and what forms that written advice should take still pose problems for Bacon's project. A friend or a prince's counselor is able to advise because they have the ability to engage in conversation, provoke responses, and speak directly to persons and situations. They, in short, have life and breathe to their counsel. How a "dead" book can achieve similar results in providing counsel without being able to engage in "talk and discourse" is difficult to discern in Bacon's *Essays*. Knowledge and rhetoric possessed moral qualities, and one can see these transmitted through books. Still, Bacon sees value in "talk and discourse, which lays challenge to the aims of the body of Bacon's work, from his portion of the *Gesta Grayorum* and his earliest version of the *Essays* up through *The Advancement of Learning* and the *New Atlantis*, as these texts seek to counsel readers in private behavior, relationships, politics, scientific endeavors, and a range of other issues. Additionally, even to the extent that words escape the "flat and dead" trappings of books, Bacon admits in the *Novum Organum* to skepticism of language itself to promote understanding, or at least language often becomes an impediment to understanding:

> For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies. (*Works* 8.aph. 43)

Bacon's recognition of the problem of people being overruled by their preconceptions expresses a skepticism that language is sufficient to resolve the problem, even to the point that words can ultimately add to confusion and controversy. Bacon later observes in the *Novum Organum*, "even definitions cannot cure this evil in dealing with natural and material things, since the definitions themselves consist of words, and those words beget others" (*Works* 8.aph. 59). Bacon maintains hope that these "Idols of the Marketplace," which Bacon so terms because language is the primary mode of exchange between persons, can be "renounced and put away with a fixed and solemn determination, and the understanding thoroughly freed and cleansed" (*Works* 8.aph. 67). Bacon's hope in the *Novum Organum* is that this process can be achieved through a refined scientific method. The *Essays*, however, present a different challenge, for the substance of advice and of the *Essays* is these exchanges between persons in words. For anyone hoping to use language to sway the opinions of a monarch, a public audience, a friend, or anyone else, this conundrum that language can mislead and deceive as much as it also promotes understanding presents a significant obstacle to the enterprise of counsel.

Bacon is plainly invested in writing's ability not only to inform readers, but to sway their perspectives and shape their understandings, which is a much more challenging task. Bacon would use many of his writings in the forms of treatises and a utopia to advocate a scientific agenda, but the *Essays* represent in some respects a more ambitious project spanning three decades of Bacon's career to shape how people behave concerning their "manners" and their "business," the two areas in which Bacon suggests that counsel is useful. For this project Bacon relies on aphorism to perform the work that needs to be done on those whom Bacon seeks to advise through his *Essays.*

Bacon, in the first book of *The Advancement of Learning*, identifies in aphorism the element of life that is precisely what may be missing from "dead" books:

> …so knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations, it is in growth; but when it once is comprehended in exact methods, it may perchance be further polished and illustrate, and accommodated for use and practice; but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance. (*Major Works* 146)

This quality of observation that is in process, still growing and developing into a body of knowledge, Bacon suggests, gives aphorism the ability to engage with readers in ways that will spur them to further inquiry. Bacon constructs his own aphorisms with highly stylized, artistic flair, but he nonetheless views in the aphoristic form bare, unadulterated observations that are, as yet, not constructed into rhetorical arguments. The incompleteness of the aphoristic structure, without the pretense of, as Bacon argues in the *Novum Organum*, embracing "the entire art" (*Works* 8.aph. 86), leaves room for further inquiry and growth in knowledge. Bacon returns to the function of aphorism in the second book of *The Advancement of Learning*:

> …for Aphorisms, except they should be ridiculous, cannot be made but of the pith and heart of sciences; for discourse of illustration is cut off; recitals of examples are cut off; descriptions of practice are cut off; so there remaineth nothing to fill the Aphorisms but some good quantity of observation: and therefore no man can suffice, nor in reason will attempt to write Aphorisms, but that he is sound and grounded. (*Major Works* 234)

In Bacon's equation aphorism with observation, Bacon aims for counsel and wisdom of a scientific, empirical quality, unvarnished with idols, rhetoric, and embellishment. At the same time, aphorism works in the person encountering it by functioning as observation, as knowledge still in a growth process. The immediate and sudden juxtaposition of observations is, Bacon suggests in the *Novum Organum*, the core of our process of understanding:

> The human understanding is moved by those things most which strike and enter the mind simultaneously and suddenly, and so fill the imagination; and then it feigns and supposes all other things to be somehow, though it cannot see how, similar to those few things by which it is surrounded. But for that going to and fro to remote and heterogeneous instances by which axioms are tried as in the fire, the intellect is altogether slow and unfit, unless it be forced thereto by severe laws and overruling authority. (*Works* 8.aph. 47)

The person encountering the aphorism is jolted by its concise wisdom, such that we are able to observe through its bare structure as if we were making empirical observations.

This feigning process in the imagination may echo Sidney's *Defence*, but Bacon finds in such feigning a foundation of intellect and understanding and a starting place for methodological inquiry extending far beyond poetic theory. The mind is spurred to observe further, to imagine illustrations, examples, and connections, to test the truth of the aphorism, and to follow its advice.

Bacon's choice of aphorism is not surprising in light of an anecdote recorded by William Rawley of Bacon as a thirteen-year-old boy at Trinity College, Cambridge developing intense dislike for Aristotle.[88] The arc of development of the *Essays* over three decades, however, challenges Bacon's dedication to aphorism as a form for the *Essays*.[89] Bacon's revisions of many of the individual essays display a maturation and development from the rough aphoristic style that could have been copied straight from a commonplace book to a more refined, developed mingling of aphorism and epigram with added exposition, reflection, and organization of disparate kernels of wisdom into coherent, unified essays. "Of Studies" offers a useful example of how Bacon approached his revisions. The 1625 version of the essay is about half again longer than the 1597 version, and the individual sentences, each its own aphorism, which had been arranged in separate paragraphs that juxtaposed a series of thoughts about learning without particularly identifying any systematic organization or connection, develop into three longer paragraphs topically arranged. Bacon observed in his *Maxims of the Law*, published in the same year as the 1597 *Essays* that "this delivering of knowledge in distinct and disjoined aphorisms doth leave the wit of man more free to turn and toss, and

[88] See Bacon, *Works* 1.4. See also Jardine and Stewart 31–38 for a detailed account of Bacon's education, including their skepticism about Rawley's anecdote.
[89] See Clucas 147–72 for a discussion of Bacon's commitment to aphorism across his philosophical and scientific writings.

to make use of that which is so delivered to more several purposes and applications" (*Major Works* 544). This describes the 1597 "Of Studies" very well as the reader is left to question the individual aphorisms as they jump from the purpose of studies to the appropriate amount of study, from the function of study with observation and experience to the role of reading and books, and finally from reading, writing, and wit to the use of different subjects of study to develop various qualities of wisdom, wit, subtlety, depth, gravity, and argumentativeness. Three aphorisms in succession touch upon reading and books, but any coherent structure to the design is left for the reader to generate through reflection on the disparate kernels of wisdom. Counsel develops not just through the kernels of wisdom themselves, but through the exercise of making sense out of the juxtaposed pieces. The *Essays* are not merely providing knowledge and wisdom plain and unadorned, but initiate readers in an experience of struggling with how to order and shape fragments of moral knowledge into coherence.

Much of the "disjoined" quality, however, is absorbed by 1625 into the more structured paragraphs that move from a first paragraph on the purpose and function of studies to a second paragraph on reading and books, followed by a third paragraph that bridges from reading to the role of specific studies in addressing certain defects of the mind. The revised essay contains most of the same aphorisms, but Bacon sews these together with commentary and exposition that produce a more sustained, structured reflection on the topic. Bacon observes in the second book of *The Advancement of Learning* the pull between systematic exposition, which has many advantages in understanding topics, and aphorism, which, Bacon argues, invites action. By boiling away illustrations, examples, discourse, and descriptions, a counselor employing

aphorism is able to offer more penetrating observations that prompt the listener to reflect upon and inquire into the truth of the statement: "Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to enquire farther; whereas Methods, carrying the shew of a total, do secure men, as if they were at furthest" (*Major Works* 235).[90] Bacon's challenge in the 1625 *Essays* is thus, in the midst of adding slightly more discourse, description, examples, and systematic treatment, to maintain the aphoristic quality of incompleteness, prompting action from the reader, and the effectiveness of the counsel in Bacon's *Essays* proves to be their ability to express conventional wisdom unsystematically with penetrating clarity and sense of utility.

The effect of aphorism in Bacon's *Essays*, then, is the translation of observation into an experience for the reader via text. Discovering a grammar capable of recording and conveying observation in meaningful ways remained a persistent aim throughout Bacon's literary career, particularly in his scientific writings. Bacon's scientific process begins with observation, but observation on its own has no shape, order, or form of expression. Writing structures observation, and, as we have seen, Bacon regarded aphorism as uniquely valuable in recording observation for its ability to concisely express observations in the barest language, while through juxtaposition with other aphorisms to maintain a representation of the unstructuredness of observation that allows the mind to experience observations and forge connections during the process of reading. If the starting point of Bacon's method is observation, then the subsequent step is writing, followed by reading juxtaposed with more observation. The complementary acts of

[90] On Bacon's use of "method," see Wallace 169.

writing and reading become a mode of public engagement, and Andrew Barnaby and Lisa Schnell observe the communal attributes on which Bacon's method depends:

> In situating the methodical approach to knowledge within its experimental context, the Baconian dialectic of knowing—the balancing of discrete acts of observation and judgment with the requirements of public witness and verification—posits the necessity of shared responsibility and knowledge. (23)

In certain respects, Bacon was not forging anything particularly new in this design for public witness; to the contrary, Bacon was attempting to draw the production of knowledge out of cloistered scholasticism and private pursuit and into the moral and social environment of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Pettegree has observed:

> Much of public life in sixteenth-century Europe was built around the principle of bearing witness. Crowds gathered to hear a proclamation, to view a procession or to witness an execution. They heard sermons in church and gossiped in the marketplace. Much decision making and opinion forming was conducted in public, in groups, in the open air. Local populations were alerted to great events by the ringing of bells, the lighting of bonfires, or the gathering of crowds. (342)

Bacon's scientific method, in a sense, aims to gather crowds for the purpose of producing shared knowledge, for "a social process in which private knowing as the origin of knowledge cedes its privileged space to a publicly oriented act of authorization"

(Barnaby and Schnell 22). Writing is this public witness, and reading is this public authorization.

Empirical pragmatism describes the underlying quality of Bacon's philosophy and writings and of his political viewpoints and approaches, and this quality also defines how Bacon perceives the roles of the advisor and the book in a civil state. Shared public knowledge had the potential to effect progress in society and in science. The process of observing and recording has value because it has the potential to produce useful results that could move people closer to understanding and manipulating the causes of things in nature. In Bacon's understanding, as he argues in the *Novum Organum*, "Truth, therefore, and utility are here the very same things; and works themselves are of greater value as pledges of truth than as contributing to the comforts of life" (*Works* 8.aph. 124). Bacon saw many potential tangible benefits to the "comforts of life" that could be obtained by his methods, but the utilitarian aspects of his empirical pragmatism were ultimately a means of uncovering truth, the pursuit of which Bacon felt had largely stalled in English and European society. In order to set a foundation for inquiry, Bacon starts with counsel that immerses the audience in a reading experience meant to shape our moral virtues and intellectual outlook.

Imagining counsel: princely advice in the *Gesta Grayorum*

Bacon observed in English society a wide range of shortcomings in terms of the investments in science and education, and even while he was preoccupied with matters of government under James, Bacon continued through his literary output to counsel remedies for these deficiencies that amounted to a broad vision for government and

society. Bacon's complaints are many, and they are scattered throughout his works. Regarding science, Bacon in the *Novum Organum*, for example, charges that "The study of nature with a view to works is engaged in by the mechanic, the mathematician, the physician, the alchemist, and the magician; but by all (as things now are) with slight endeavor and scanty success" (*Works* 8.aph. 5). Most learning, Bacon argued, was left to chance, and education was too fixed on arranging what was known instead of on developing "methods of invention or directions for new works" (*Works* 8.aph. 8). At the start of the second book of *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon offers a pointed observation that is plainly targeted at James of how this backwardness and the failures to invest in such methods and education were limiting the progress of society and undermining the monarch's estate:

> For hence it proceedeth that princes find a solitude in regard of able men to serve them in causes of estate, because there is no education collegiate which is free; where such as were so disposed might give themselves to histories, modern languages, books of policy and civil discourse, and other the like enablements unto service of estate. (*Major Works* 171)

This question of service to the monarch's estate had served as a call for educational reforms since at least early among the humanists, and Bacon touts the value that his program offers to a monarch like James for developing capable advisors and administrators to manage England's affairs.

This sort of counsel and service to the prince, advising on how to shape the overall project of a monarchy and the state most effectively, develops into a consistent voice throughout Bacon's career. In the *Gesta Grayorum*, a record of the 1594-95 revels

at Gray's Inn, Bacon contributed a device of a set of speeches from six counselors to the "Prince of Purpoole," the lord-of-misrule figure overseeing the revels and standing in as a monarchal figure. As Brian Vickers notes, however, while Elizabeth was not present at the revels, several members of her Privy Council, including William Cecil, attended.[91] Bacon took the opportunity to lay out many of the ideas and concerns that would develop and repeat in expanding form over his career, including the establishment of libraries and various houses of learning for investigating nature, mechanical arts, and technology, and a roadmap for establishing and maintaining virtuous government. The Prince of Purpoole initiates the speeches by requesting six counselors "to advise with you, not any particular action of our state but in general, of the scope and end whereunto you think it most for our honour and the happiness of our state that our government be rightly bent and directed" (*Major Works* 52). The first two advisors appear to revisit the humanist debate between soldier and philosopher as the first counselor advises war as a means to increase fame, reputation, virtue, and power, while the second counselor rejects this urge "to become as some comet or blazing star which should threaten and portend nothing but death and dearth, combustions and troubles in the world" (*Major Works* 54) in favor of the philosophical and scientific agenda that would eventually develop into Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*. Perhaps not without coincidence, that larger, unfinished project aimed to include six parts in imitation of creation—"Wherefore if we labor in thy works with the sweat of our brows, thou wilt make us partakers of thy vision and thy sabbath" (*Works* 7.260), Bacon prays at the end of his introduction to the vast project—and Bacon's device from the *Gesta Grayorum* contains six parts as well, also followed by a

[91] See Vickers' note in Bacon, *Major Works* 532, n. 51.

kind of Sabbath, or in this case a festivity, that suspends the prince's decision as to which of the labors counseled in the previous speeches he favors most. The subject matter of each of the six parts of the *Instauratio Magna* do not align neatly with the counsels of the six *Gesta Grayorum* speeches, and yet the speeches do offer seeds that would grow into Bacon's scientific project.

In the *Gesta Grayorum*, Bacon moves past the counsels of war and contemplation (a version of the argument between *vita activa* and the *vita contempliva* that traditionally defined debates about counsel, including in More's *Utopia* and Sidney's *Arcadia*) to consider also the advice of building great monuments, the charge to consolidate absolute power in domestic affairs, and the recommendation to form a good, virtuous government, before finally arriving at the sixth counselor's advice to leave all the rest to those capable advisors and instead enjoy revels and other pastimes. In accordance with the festive occasion of the Gray's Inn revels, the prince chooses the final speech as his own course of action, but he does so in a way that keeps open all of the previous advice for further consideration by underscoring that the pastimes are merely a temporary diversion from the weightier advice offered:

> …we should think ourselves not capable of god counsel if in so great variety of persuading reasons we should suddenly resolve. Meantime it shall not be amiss to make choice of the last, and upon more deliberation to determine of the rest; and what time we spend in long consulting, in the end we will gain by prompt and speedy executing. (*Major Works* 60)

The temporary choice of the last counselor's advice is, effectively, not a choice among the virtues of each counsel at all, and the speeches themselves do not clearly seem to

recommend one course of action over any of the others. Each successive speaker rejects what previously has been advocated, but Bacon offers what he seems to regard as sensible advice in each of the speeches.

Bacon seems most dismissive of the martial advice of the first counselor, but it is mistaken to presume that subsequent criticisms of a particular counsel amount to rejection of that counsel. The second counselor is particularly dismissive of war, advising the prince not "to become as some comet or blazing star, which should threaten and portend nothing but death and dearth, combustions and troubles of the world" (*Major Works* 54). Further, the fourth counselor warns of the financial dangers of war as a prince is "constrained to spend the strength of your ancient and settled provinces to assure your new and doubtful, and become like a strong man that by taking a great burden upon his shoulders maketh himself weaker than he was before" (*Major Works* 57). Bacon places counsel for war first precisely so that the subsequent advisors can temper this counsel, arguing in favor of reason and well-ordered government over that of war. Elsewhere, Bacon also warns in "Of True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates" against "fearful and pusillanimous counsels" (*Major Works* 397). Nonetheless, Bacon's first counselor does strike a chord that greatness in history is often measured on the battlefield, and while Bacon recognizes that much can be lost in war, in "Of True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates" he also describes war as healthy to the body of the estate:

> No body can be healthful without exercise, neither natural body nor politic; and certainly to a kingdom or estate, a just and honourable war is the true exercise. A civil war indeed is like the heat of a fever, but a

> foreign war is like the heat of exercise, and serveth to keep the body in health; for in a slothful peace, both courages will effeminate and manners corrupt. (*Major Works* 402)

In the *Gesta Grayorum* then, Bacon may well be rejecting the singular counsel of war by tempering this counsel with advice also to engage in philosophy and learning, buildings and monuments, well-ordered government, and virtue. The advice is circumspect and pragmatic. A great leader needs the "visible memory" of buildings, statues, and monuments to be remembered in history as much as the same prince needs wars, and all of this may be for naught without the learning, good management, and virtue to keep the state sound and ordered. These counsels observe a practical reality that leaders require a well-rounded estate, and the only rejection, if there is one, is of the notion set out in the prince's initial request that there be a single direction of government "most for our honour and the happiness of our state" (*Major Works* 52). The Prince of Purpoole's indecision at the end of the six counsels thus serves not only to shape the advice in a manner appropriate for the revels in which the speeches were presented, but also functions to shape the exercise of counsel around balance and pragmatism.

The festivities counseled in the final speech of Bacon's *Gesta Grayorum* device assume a curious role in Bacon's counsel. The speech has the privileged position of being last, meaning that it receives no criticism from the other counselors, and the prince adopts this course of action, though only for the "meantime," vowing "upon more deliberation to determine of the rest" (*Major Works* 60). Bacon seems plainly aware of the value of festivities to the state in that his device makes use of such an opportunity to offer counsel on government to an audience that included several of Elizabeth's highest

officials. Bacon, however, places limits around the festivities, with the prince declaring them for this time only, after which he promises "prompt and speedy executing" (*Major Works* 60) of the rest. In the *Essays*, Bacon advises similar limitations on masques and triumphs: "These things are but toys, to come amongst such serious observations. But yet, since princes will have such things, it is better they should be graced with elegancy than daubed with cost" (*Major Works* 416). Bacon dismissively ends the essay, "But enough of these toys" (*Major Works* 417). Festivities serve for Bacon limited use as interludes, and he quickly aims to return to more serious activities.

The sixth counselor's final recommendation in the *Gesta Grayorum*, however, engages in a curious phrasing that may provide a more serious edge to the final speech in defining Bacon's philosophical approach. After recommending that the prince leave all of the other tasks to lieutenants, surveyors, universities, counselors, and other deputies, the sixth counselor concludes, "And in a word, sweet Sovereign, dismiss your five counsellors, and only take counsel of your five senses" (*Major Works* 60). On the surface, this advice could be epicurean in nature, calling upon the prince to pursue pleasure as the highest good. Taking counsel of one's five senses, however, also describes empirical inquiry. This is counsel rooted in observation, and the prince recognizes that it would be unwise to "suddenly resolve" the other counsels. Stephen Gaukroger has observed of Bacon's larger intellectual project that "Bacon's proposals are as much about reforming behaviour as about following productive procedures" (12). The first five counselors in the *Gesta Grayorum* recommend one specific activity or another; the sixth offers a change in how we think and behave. The prince's first step in deliberating on the other counsels is to engage his five senses. Plainly, this language

points to the sensual pleasure of the dancing and reveling in which the prince participates that night, but whether this distracts from the other, more serious counsels or hints at a process of consultation and judgment starting with observation is left ambiguous. Given Bacon's determined emphasis on observation as a tool for gaining wisdom and knowledge, however, were the prince starting with his five senses as a means to determine the wisdom of the other counsels, the prince would be taking some of the best possible counsel.

The *Gesta Grayorum* entertainment thus offers a model early in Bacon's career for the kind of counsel and pragmatic intellectual processes that would remain largely consistent over the following three decades. In criticizing and keeping in suspension the various counsels in this entertainment, Bacon both engages with traditional categories of counsel, looking to the roles of action, contemplation, memorializing, sound government, virtue, and festivities in shaping the monarch's public appearance in the state, and points toward a new model for public engagement, particularly in his calls for the research institutions of a library, a garden, a museum, and a laboratory. In doing so, Bacon was effectively rethinking not only of a public servant or advisor, but of the early modern political state's role in shaping progress and learning. Some of the advice may, at moments, appear sycophantic in playing to the prince's high estimation of his own greatness, particularly in the building of monuments to himself, but even in this there seems to be a pragmatic quality in Bacon's advice. The sycophant's arts were needed in dealing with mood-driven monarchs under whom political advancement often depended more on favoritism than on ability. To the extent that the counselors are still able to

guide the prince toward sound action, the appeals to greatness succeed in their rhetorical roles.

Writing in the house of wisdom: Bacon's pragmatic, empirical vision of the ideal political state

Bacon had already lost royal favor in the previous year before the *Gesta Grayorum* revels after alienating Elizabeth by opposing the triple subsidy. Sharing space at Gray's Inn offered Bacon an opportunity to influence some of Elizabeth's closest advisors in ways that he could not in his role in Parliament. Even after Bacon did advance in office under James, he still appears to have toiled, often ineffectively, to shape the king's policies. Bacon's letters and other writings later in his career reveal to us how Bacon struggled under James to influence the king by going through the ear of his favorite, Buckingham. Jonathan Marwil has documented the extent to which Bacon, though persistently attempting to counsel James throughout his reign, was often limited, even in the role of Lord Chancellor, to work through Buckingham.[92] In trying to flatter both James and Buckingham while also being diligent to the needs of the state, Bacon often met with disappointment:

> With regard to office and wealth, things that meant much to him, Bacon could not reasonably complain about his years of serving the King: he had prospered. But there was often an oblique sense of frustration over his failure to influence policy. He performed many duties, but recurrently felt he deserved, by virtue of his position and talents, to do more. He was

[92] See Zagorin 20–23.

> neither as close to the King nor as powerful as he imagined he ought to be, and thus was always signaling his loyalty and readiness. "All your Majesty's business is *super cor meum*." (22)

James' favorites, Buckingham in particular, achieved a high degree of intimacy with the king, which is a prerequisite for effectively advising the monarch under the models of counsel that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries inherited.[93] Bacon desired to counsel and, in particular to shape policy. Being forced to work through Buckingham and lacking the king's affection himself limited what Bacon could accomplish. Bacon had risen to one of the highest offices in the land, which was a compliment to Bacon's ambition and abilities, but in the end Bacon did not have the king's ear enough that a plea via Buckingham accomplished anything to save Bacon from becoming a victim of corruption charges. Bacon appealed his innocence to Buckingham:

> I know I have clean hands and a clean heart; and I hope a clean house for friends or servants. But Job himself, or whosoever was the justest judge, but such hunting for matters against him as hath been used against me, may for a time seem foul, specially in a time when greatness is the mark and accusation is the game. And if this be to be a Chancellor, I think if the great seal lay upon Hounslow Heath, nobody would take it up. But the King and your Lordship will, I hope, put an end to these miseries one way or other. (*Works* 14.213)

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[93] As Durston notes, the Jacobean court faced significant criticism for reasons that included "the dominance of James's entourage, the excessive reliance of the king upon his most prominent male favourites, and the abuse of the patronage system, particularly during the period of Buckingham's preeminence" (*James I* 17). For counselors, intimacy with the king was highly valued, and the distortions of James' court were such that favorites choked access to the king by other counselors, Bacon and members of the Privy Council included.

Bacon ultimately performed very poorly in clearing his name of the charges with the House of Lords, and Bacon would continue to beg his innocence and ask through Buckingham for James's support.[94] For all his pleas, compliant duty, and well-intentioned counsel, Bacon was not a favorite personally connected with the king enough to be worth saving. Bacon, as a counselor, had never been as effective at court as he hoped to be, and appealing to James with service, policy, and sage advice instead of aiming to flatter his personality proved Bacon's undoing. Bacon's charge in "Of Counsel" that "counsellors should not be too speculative into their sovereign's person. The true composition of a counsellor is rather to be skilful in their master's business, than in his nature; for then he is like to advise him, and not feed his humour" (*Major Works* 381) proved with James to be one piece of advice in which Bacon miscalculated. Bacon's downfall is perhaps captured most aptly in the final kernel of wisdom that Bacon offers in "Of Friendship": "I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part: if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage" (*Major Works* 396).

Bacon was keenly aware of the problems of flattery, which his *Essays* reflect upon at numerous moments in dealing with topics of friendship, counsel, and praise. Bacon understood that a degree of flattery and praise was necessary toward a monarch to remind of the greatness of office, and he was fully aware in the next breath how such language could ring false: "Praise is the reflection of virtue. But it is as the glass or body which giveth the reflection" (*Major Works* 442). Bacon seems to have maintained hope that genuine friendship and service could prevail over flattery, and, in some respects, Bacon may have sought in writing a bulwark against the flattery of the court. Bacon's

[94] See Bowen 209; Zagorin 23.

Essays are decidedly conventional in respect to holding traditional practices of counsel in high regard, referring to them as "the greatest Trust, between Man and Man" (*Major Works* 379) and "the best preservative to keep the mind in health" (*Major Works* 394), but Bacon also conveys skepticism at how these relationships can prove fickle and degrade into flattery. Bacon, although he expressed further skepticism of the ability of books to counsel—"Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead" (*Major Works* 394)—nonetheless turned to writing as a more stable space in which he could contemplate and advise the state on civic engagement and morality generally in the *Essays* and on educational and scientific agendas elsewhere. A book may be dry and lack the intimacy and dynamism of a friend's counsel, but especially in situations prone to flattery, such as with counsel to a monarch, Bacon employed his writing as a more stable and, hopefully, honest mode of counsel. Many of Bacon's publications after his political downfall, of course, also aimed to redeem his public reputation by impressing James and Buckingham with his progressive vision for the state and his wisdom, including his dedication of the 1625 edition of the *Essays* to Buckingham. However, as Peltonen, quoting Richard Tuck, notes, Bacon's conception of public life in his writings "had more of a republican than a princely spirit to it," and Bacon's insistence that "the good of the commonwealth…ultimately hinged more on the counselors than on the prince" (*Cambridge Companion to Bacon* 299) may not have been the flattery that James would have wanted to hear. Ultimately, writing proved a mode for Bacon to reach not just a monarch, but a wider and growing literate audience. As much as Bacon's later writings make active appeals to James, they also imagine a broadly conceived civic life developing beyond the court. Bacon never entirely gave up trying to redeem himself

publicly, but Bacon's writings look beyond the conditions in the English court to more pragmatic grounds for service to the state, emphasizing soundness, virtue, and an ambitious agenda for intellectual and social improvement. Bacon's appeals for this agenda, while often addressed to James, would find a much broader, more receptive audience outside the court through publication. Bacon did not reject conventional counsel—he had been, after all, one of James' highest officials, and Bacon made specific appeals to James' political and religious views in *The Advancement of Learning*, which he subsequently cut from his Latin revision of that work meant for a broader European intellectual audience—but Bacon struggled to find a pragmatic means to both contemplate and promote his ideas for learning. Gaukroger has noted the broader political dimension of Bacon's project:

> Bacon's aim is to shape political power around political understanding, and he will argue that this political understanding should ultimately take into account broader forms of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. His point is not to redefine epistemology but to underpin the responsible use of power. (18)

Bacon's project needed broad political commitment to succeed. Bacon, banned from court at the end of his career, could achieve the project alone. Bacon's essays and treatises became the vehicles through which he was most effectively able to advise the English state, in no small part because the audience of Bacon's writings reached far beyond James and ultimately stretched far beyond Bacon's lifetime.

The afterlife of Bacon's writings began almost immediately upon Bacon's death in 1626 as his literary executor, William Rawley, set about to secure Bacon's reputation,

first by publishing a collection of 32 Latin commemorative poems in that same year and subsequently by publishing editions of Bacon's treatises, including some unpublished works.[95] Rawley made the decision to bill the *Sylva Sylvarum*, published in the following year, as part of the *Instauratio Magna*, although whether Bacon intended this or not is unknown, and appended to the end of this text was the *New Atlantis*. The *Sylva Sylvarum* offers a miscellany of topics on natural history drawn from antiquity and Bacon's own observations and experiments. Rawley's note to the *New Atlantis* insists that the brief tract, "his Lordship designed for this place; in regard it hath so near affinity (in one part of it) with the preceding Natural History" (Bacon, *Major Works* 785). The work, which ranks with the *Gesta Grayorum* device as Bacon's most fictional in the sense that the *New Atlantis* imagines a utopia as a setting, is described as unfinished, and Rawley expresses the aims of the text in terms that attempt to sew together the breadth of Bacon's interests:

> This fable my Lord devised, to the end that he might exhibit therein a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvelous works for the benefit of men, under the name of Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Works. And even so far his Lordship hath proceeded, as to finish that part. Certainly the model is more vast and high than can possibly be imitated in all things; notwithstanding most things therein are within men's power to effect. His Lordship thought also in this present fable to

[95] See Bowen xii–xiii.

> have composed a frame of Laws, or the best state or mould of a commonwealth…. (*Major Works* 785)

The "College of the Six Days' Works" echoes the six counselors of the *Gesta Grayorum* speeches and the six parts of *Instauratio Magna*. This name for the institution hearkens to the creation and the natural world, with the collegial quality of knowledge shared among people, and the "Works" point to the human-devised machines that the place aims to produce. This second title and the first title, alluding to the wisdom and perhaps riches of Solomon, play between one another to define a place rooted in wisdom and seeking a practical understanding and manipulation of nature.

The *New Atlantis* is a vision of a land governed by the observational and social principles that Bacon advocated. Curiously, however, the party aboard this ship sailing into the unknown is greeted with a denial to land when they first arrive at the island of Bensalem, which would seem to conflict with the principle of shared knowledge that permeates Bacon's scientific works. As troubled as the narrator and his party are by this rejection, the narrator notes that the people greeting them were "without any cries or fierceness" (*Major Works* 457) and were "full of humanity" (*Major Works* 458). After a humanitarian appeal on behalf of the ship's sick and a request for supplies, the party is again greeted, this time by a turbaned Spanish-speaking official who asks them if they are Christian, but who, through his gesture pointing to heaven and drawing his hand to his mouth instead of performing a sign of the cross, indicates that he is not Spanish Catholic. With a promise that they are not pirates and have not shed blood in the past forty days, the party is invited to land, but restricted to a Strangers' House, and the experience at Bensalem is one of steadily earning the trust to be invited deeper into the secrets and

knowledge of this place. Bacon's lifetime vision and project is represented in this place, and when the narrator is finally invited to speak with the Father of Salomon's House, the Father is quite open in discussing the purpose and design of the House:

> The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible. (*Major Works* 480)

The caution that Bensalem shows toward strangers is natural and judicious, for as the Father explains the design and secrets of the House with its artificial microcosm of nature, mines, hospitals, gardens, zoos, biology laboratories, breweries, bakeries, kitchens, drug dispensaries, manufacturing factories, furnaces, foundries, optical laboratories, precious stones, acoustic laboratories, perfume laboratories, engineering shops, mathematical laboratories, and even a shop of illusions, sleights of hand, and other tricks, all of these riches provide good reason to be cautious and protective. In the ability to effect "all things possible," knowledge possesses considerable power, and the Father recognizes the dangers of this power and protects the secrets from those who might misuse or abuse them.

Those persons at the pinnacle of the scientific order at Bensalem, then, occupy positions of immense authority. Knowledge that is "practical and useful," Gaukroger observes, "plays a hitherto unrecognized role in power" (17). The Father's description of the three "Lamps," who direct new experiments "more penetrating into nature than the former," the three "Innoculators," who execute and report these experiments, and the three "Interpreters of Nature," who "raise the former discoveries by experiments into greater observations, axioms, and aphorisms" (*Major Works* 487), paints a picture of an

elite group of people working in consultation with the various other offices to advance learning and shape progress in fantastic, yet attainable ways. Interestingly, however, the Father identifies this last group, the "Interpreters of Nature," but then goes on to add that there are many novices, apprentices, servants, and attendants as well, and with this acknowledgement the Father adds a profound statement about the control of knowledge within Salomon's House:

> And this we do also: we have consultations, which of the inventions and experiences which we have discovered shall be published, and which not: and take all an oath of secrecy, for the concealing of those which we think fit to keep secret: though some of those we do reveal sometime to the state, and some not. (*Major Works* 487)

Once again, we see Bacon placing aphorism and observation at the pinnacle of refined knowledge, but in Bensalem this knowledge is controlled carefully, not by the state or by a monarch, but by a learned community in counsel with one another. Salomon's House only shares with the state what the community of scholars sees fit to share, making them not servants to the state, but independent brokers of knowledge and power. This is, on a fundamental level, a radical rethinking of the locus of power within a state, and Bacon's vision in the *New Atlantis* is a marked divergence from the dutiful counsel to the business of the state that had defined Bacon's career. Having carved out this independent, self-counseling authority outside of monarchal control, Bacon, not surprisingly, never got around to publishing the *New Atlantis* before he died. The vision of Salomon's House is

fantastic, but the text contains little that would have flattered James, Buckingham, or anyone else interested in maintaining royalist control.[96]

Despite the revolutionary design of Salomon's House, the role of writing in this place to record, report, and witness experiments and observations is consistent with Bacon's other works. Knowledge may be tightly controlled in Salomon's House, but writing remains part of the method to refine knowledge, and publication is a means to share with the world. For Bacon, reading and writing themselves became integral parts of his scientific enterprise, in the most basic sense to function as a more reliable memory and in a further sense to refine and shape experience to better perform inquiry, much in the same manner that Bacon aimed his *Essays* to refine a reader's moral and civil engagements. As Bacon argues in the *Novum Organum*:

> But even after such a store of natural history and experience as is required for the work of the understanding, or of philosophy, shall be ready at hand, still the understanding is by no means competent to deal with it offhand and by memory alone; no more than if a man should hope by force of memory to retain and make himself master of the computation of an ephemeris. And yet hitherto more has been done in matter of invention by thinking than by writing; and experience has not yet learned her letters. Now no course of invention can be satisfactory unless it be carried on in writing. But when this is brought into use, and experience has been taught to read and write, better things may be hoped. (*Works* 8.aph. 101)

[96] See Peltonen, *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* 298–300 for the argument that Bacon's political philosophy inclines toward republicanism.

Reading and writing underpin science, making the process something that can be communicated, translated, and repeated, which provide to Bacon's experience a legitimizing function for, in the words of Barnaby and Schnell, "guaranteeing the mind's relation to material reality as the relation between them could be reduced to a kind of scientific legibility and organized as a system of writing" (4), eventually achieving Bacon's promise in *De Augmentis Scientiarum* of the proper "analogy between words and things, or reason" (*Works* 4.441). As Barnaby and Schnell go on to explain:

> For Bacon, then, the visualizing of knowledge is to be rendered as writing—as description, as a representation of perception, as tabulated record—for it is only in writing that the act of experiencing the world itself becomes knowable and so open to correction. What Bacon appears to have understood, in short, is that if knowledge of the world must come through sensory experience, such experience in itself does not constitute knowledge; rather, knowledge requires the use of language, both for its conceptualization and, subsequently, for its dissemination and verification among others. (19–20)

Bacon's expression of "experience…taught to read and write" curiously sets an exchange of literate reception and production within the experimental procedure and empirical process. Experience transforms into text with a precise grammar such that the text is able, in turn, to reproduce experience. A text that is able to communicate in this manner would seem to achieve a quality beyond the "little flat and dead" description that Bacon offers in the *Essays* in discussing books of morality. Indeed, texts that are able to faithfully and meaningfully reproduce experience would seem to have a life of their own, able variously

to relate observation, experimentation, morality, and more as vividly as experience could and sometimes, in the case of boiled-down aphorisms, perhaps even more vividly.

Bacon's *Essays* thus are an integral part of this larger scientific project on which Bacon was embarked, and editions of the *Essays* were the first and last works of Bacon that he personally saw through to completion and publication, forming bookends of sorts on his corpus of works. In places, the *Essays* do touch upon common topics of education, customs, and other topics that occupy *The Advancement of Learning*, the *Novum Organum*, the *New Atlantis*, and other works, but the *Essays* largely diverge into other topics of counsel, friendship, travel, riches, religion, envy, and love that Bacon does not consider so significantly elsewhere. Bacon, however, constructs his *Essays* in an aphoristic manner consistent with his determined aim for a society that progressed based on methodological observation and with the fundamental recognition underpinning Bacon's notion of progress that humans do not, at any given moment, know or understand nature as fully as we might. The counsel of the *Essays* involves imagining readers capable of moral, literate engagement, just as it attempts to engage its audience in a reading experience intended to a systematic organization of moral and scientific knowledge precisely by refusing to provide readers with that systematic frame. The unstructured, unmethodological quality of aphorism in the *Essays* aims to shape the reader in these skills of observation in all areas of life, offering readers a moral and civil education to prepare them for the sort of empirical, pragmatic labors that underpinned Bacon's vision for society.

Chapter Four

Advice in Revolution: Milton and the Transformation of Political Counsel

Thomas More, Philip Sidney, and Francis Bacon variously assented to the view that counsel offered a stabilizing structure to the state. *Utopia* attempts to engage with the problems of counsel and fashion able counselors through its satire. Sidney's Ister Bank poem offers a vision of limited monarchy in which counsel both bolstered and circumscribed monarchal authority. Bacon's corpus of writing put moral and civil counsel at the foundation for ambitious scientific and political enterprises. The intervening years between Bacon's death and the start of John Milton's public career, however, saw anything but stability as long-running disputes over the proper role of counsel between Commons and king produced a fracturing of the political order. Milton's hurried return from his tour of the continent in 1639 on the cusp of the English Civil Wars landed him in the middle of a turbulent decade of war and politics that challenged established practices of counsel, especially in an increasingly open public sphere with a burgeoning of published texts.[97] As Lois Potter has noted, while many among the flood of texts that started pouring out of printing presses from the early 1640s were what we might regard as controversial or subversive, the larger effect felt by the elimination of Star Chamber in 1641 was the collapse of copyright restrictions, and "the books most often printed illegally were not subversive texts but the perennial best-sellers—psalters, primers, and so on" (4). Texts like anti-Marian writings or the

[97] On Milton's return from his continental tour, see Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 120ff; Campbell and Corns 131. As Campbell and Corns note, the precise date of Milton's return is unclear, although they offer August 1639 as the most probable date.

Marprelate tracts of the previous century had to be printed abroad or in secret and then smuggled around England, but censorship was often not particularly strict provided that a text, as Annabel Patterson explains, "encode" its messages just thinly enough to show proper deference.[98] Ultimately, those in the Stationers' Company wanted to print whatever would turn them a profit. The collapse of the Stationers' Register in after 1641 certainly did allow controversial political and religious publications to be printed freely in England, but people in England were publishing and reading materials on a wide range of topics. The nearly 26,000 items, many of them short pamphlets, that George Thomason alone collected from the 1640s and 1650s dwarfs the fewer than 12,000 licensed publications in England during the 45 years of Elizabeth's reign.[99]

Publishing advice and disseminating widely texts of advice posed significant challenges to the style of writing and conventions of counsel, but for Milton such acts fit into his conception of himself as a poet and prophet to the nation. Polemical writing in the 1640s adopted a combative, controversial style, and Milton's own writing often reflects this, but the extent to which writers attempted to advise the public about political and religious disputes demanded the fashioning of common interests and intimacy within the conventions of counsel while also struggling with the republican and democratic implications of writing to a broad audience. Counsel circulated in pamphlets and broadsheets no longer had the advantage of speaking directly into the ear of the target audience or even to a controlled, close circle of courtiers. The growing literate population, especially in London, was inevitably more diverse in the interests and

[98] Patterson asserts that the "more successfully a society impressed on its writers that it was dangerous for them to speak their minds without inhibition, the more they were likely to encode their opinions" (29–30).
[99] See Wheale 56, 67.

concerns of the people. Attempting to maintain the common interests and intimacy that were implicit in conventional practices of counsel was a necessary challenge for writers speaking to a broader audience. As Cecile Jagodzinski explains, "publishers, printers, and paying readers are the new coterie. How does the author negotiate with these new audiences? How can he achieve some of the intimacy of the coterie, attain to fame, and not offer himself (and his possibly seditious thoughts) to the power of the anonymous crowd?" (8–9). Jagodzinski builds her argument on the premise of a sociological shift toward privacy and individuality: "Secrecy and concealment are no longer treasonable but the prerogatives of private life. The mistrust of solitude and aloneness has been transformed into the valuing of private, physical, psychological space" (6). This valuing of the private stands seemingly at odds with an increased public interests and concern for the public weal, and yet the emphasis on privacy may have grown out of the need to keep counsel in a public life. People were feeling the need more than ever before in England to engage as private persons in discussions of public policy, such that the odd public-private existence of the person of the monarch was shifting in certain respects onto everyone who took up an interest in civic issues. If monarchs had the need for private chambers and secrecy to conduct the business of state, then private persons engaged in public interests might have shared the desire to "keep counsel."

Reading can be performed as a highly private act, and thus engaging with texts offered a means to participate in the construction of private psychological spaces.[100] A published text, however, was accessible to a broader public. Milton's imagining of free, autonomous individuals as his readership, even as he published to a national or

[100] As Amtower has noted, prior to the sixteenth century, even among the literate, "reading was frequently a performed and shared community experience rather than a private one" (37).

international audience, produced a complicated exchange between the imagined readers, individual and public. A reader in the act of reading could simultaneously construct a private space and a public space, as the counsels of the text were required to function on both levels. William Kerrigan has said of Milton: "Milton believed himself a prophet. The traditional idea became inseparable from the self who had received that tradition. He spoke as a prophet, rarely of the prophet, and this belief in intimate impulse and divine favor sustained him through most of his life" (11). In at least one respect, Kerrigan's argument fits neatly with the pressures and conundrums that Milton had to face in writing to a rapidly expanding public audience. A judge is a judge over all of Israel, and a prophet speaks to the entire nation, at moments to the people and at moments to its leaders. Milton could not simply write to a small coterie, just as his political sensibilities compelled him also to counsel the individual. Publication became the chief medium through which Milton negotiated these roles of prophet in Kerrigan's argument and of counselor in my own. Milton, of course, did address his writings at times to specific audiences, such as to Oliver Cromwell or to Parliament, but in these instances Milton is necessarily concerned with the broader public reach of his message, just as his writings published to no specific reader in particular imagined the individual as reader.

Milton addressed his message at moments to the "fit though few," and in publication Milton constructed those few through counseling them in their private reading experiences. In doing so, Milton attempted to fashion a public of free individuals. Joad Raymond has described how pamphlets and broadsides helped shape a public consciousness during the 1640s:

> In 1641 London a conversation began that radically expanded, in size and dynamism, the intellectual, social and moral community of religious and political debate. Satirical pamphlets appeared by the dozen, as delays in printing news decreased, and the spin on the news, its manipulation in order to encourage a particular interpretation or response, increased. (*Pamphlets and Pamphleteering* 202)

Milton participated in this emerging public sphere, and he became one of its greatest apologists with his blast in *Areopagitica* against the licensing of printing. Thomas More engaged with a small, international coterie of humanist scholars and counselors; Philip Sidney wrote a private letter to the queen touching upon the political matter of her marriage, circulated in manuscript to a close circle a romance struggling with many of the same political issues that he encountered in that marriage crisis, and staged entertainments to a similarly small court audience; Francis Bacon offered practical, aphoristic moral and political counsel as a foundation for establishing a broader national and scientific project. For Milton, writing on timely religious and political concerns to a wide and varied readership proved different from whispering in the monarch's ear. Communicating on a mass scale, whether to a broad European audience in Latin or through only a few hundred broadsides circulated in London, shifted counsel from an intimate act to one that demanded rhetorical imagining and fashioning of individual readers in order to reestablish the intimate pose, shared values, and common interests that made effective counsel possible.

Moreover, publishing on contemporary politics raised the complication that doing so, especially with specific and immediate advice about current events, made every

literate person a citizen with a stake and voice in government. This dynamic had the potential to radically alter the relationship between the individual and state in England, which is precisely what happened during the 1640s, and an understanding of individual autonomy became a driving impetus behind the arguments in Milton's prose and poetry alike. As Lana Cable has argued, Milton's poetics engage in an act of self-authorship that "enables iconoclastic redefinition of the individual, and of the world within which individual action acquires significance" (254), and Janel Mueller has importantly noted Milton's role in pressing for a reshaping of English society and government despite official prohibitions on such public discussions. Milton, Mueller states, "put himself in the vanguard of those addressing long forbidden questions linking the composition of English society with the government of the English state" (267). While Milton published to a broad audience, his arguments and subject matter turn most forcefully upon a vision of the individual, which becomes Milton's foundation for a vibrant public sphere. The individual, inward, and private form Milton's poetic milieu, and especially in Milton's poetry, public good emanates chiefly from private virtue, or, as Mary Ann Radzinowicz has put it, Milton asserts "the necessity of individual liberty as a precondition for national liberty" (83), since for Milton, liberty and virtue are so closely intertwined. Achinstein concurs, "In a republican view, failures of virtue cause a people's decline of liberty" (*Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* 126). By placing responsibility upon readers and by focusing on the inward, individual condition within society, Milton brought to the forefront this question of individual sovereignty within the state during the decades when England was radically and tumultuously struggling to resolve problems of monarchal authority and counsel as a nation.

By imagining a readership of many little monarchs, each responsible for one's own moral and spiritual condition, Milton heightens the urgent need for individuals to participate in counsel. Barbara Lewalski has argued that Milton's texts attempt to counsel autonomous readers how to recover a social and political order free from tyranny:

> …during the last seven years of his life Milton emphatically did not abandon politics to retreat to a 'paradise within,' as is sometimes supposed. Instead, he took up—sometimes covertly but often with surprising openness—the role of oppositional educator. In both poems and prose texts he sought to advance his readers' moral and political understanding, in an effort to lead them to internalize the virtues and the love of liberty that alone could enable them—in God's good time—to reclaim religious liberty and a free commonwealth. ("To Try, and Teach the Erring Soul" 175)

Milton certainly attempted to fashion his readers as virtuous citizens, but doing so in the wake of the English Revolution was complicated not only by the Act of Oblivion's prohibition against remembering but by the breakdown that had occurred in the essential political and social relationships constituted by counsel. Readers who do not perceive what real counsel is cannot be counseled well. Thus, in order to counsel readers in liberty and virtue, Milton first had to retrain readers to understand what proper counsel among autonomous equals is.

"To judge aright": *Areopagitica* and the reader's moral burden

Milton took up the guise of literary counselor from early in his career, and following the collapse of Star Chamber and the Stationers' Register, he offered a powerful case in support of texts counseling readers in virtue.[101] The title page of Milton's *Areopagitica* announces the text's audience as Parliament, although the opening sentence of the pamphlet hints at the broader vision that Milton has of his audience: "They who to states and governors of the Commonwealth direct their speech, High Court of Parliament, or, wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they foresee may advance the public good" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 717). The sentence describes the aim of those who would advise the government and the nation, and by beginning the text with no formal address to Parliament, but instead with the aims and interests of advisors, Milton places the concern of counsel and the advisor's position in the state at the forefront of his essay against censorship and, in an important sense, addresses the text to the same "they" who desire to advise through their speech and writing. And while what follows in *Areopagitica* does address Parliament directly, the essay's primary appeal may be more to the literate London public who seek to advise one another and the government since the liberty from licensing and freedom to express ideas in print most directly benefit those who write, publish, and read.

Milton's decision to publish *Areopagitica* to a broad audience instead of making an appeal narrowly to Parliament reflects the radical shift in politics in the 1640s as a growing public sphere tasked itself with commenting upon and advocating for all matters of government, and the printed text was instrumental in fomenting this emergent, vocal

[101] On the functioning of the Stationers' Register, see O'Callaghan 86–88.

citizenry. Milton's participation in a growing, literate engagement with public audiences adopted and transformed a conventional mode of political engagement—counsel—to serve the public's needs in communicating on matters of the commonwealth. As such, examining the texts that Milton writes as exercises in counsel gives us fresh insight into how seventeenth-century writers were adapting to the demands of shifting political relationships.

Jagodzinski has argued how print, and particularly the experience of reading, bred a new sense of privacy and personal autonomy in the seventeenth century, and Jagodzinski goes on to observe the tension and balancing act between the private act of reading and the public act of publishing.[102] Milton was highly conscious of this connection in a text between private autonomy and public action, and Milton ultimately conceived public action rooted only in the responsibility that is necessary to autonomy. In practice, Milton exercised this, writing as a private individual to counsel Parliament and the nation on the matter of licensing printing, and Milton's recognition of the public presence of a book ties deeply to his conception of the private individual:

> For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them…. [W]ho kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 720)

[102] See Jagodzinski 23–48.

Identifying books as a distillation of reason is a powerful statement for Milton who, as he argued elsewhere, saw reason as the basis of a person's relationship with God. Milton's metaphors here are very slippery in that a book is not a living thing and yet also is "not absolutely dead." Books seem capable of preserving, containing, and conveying the life and soul of the person behind them, and destroying a book kills the very thing—reason—that humans need in order to apprehend God. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker have observed how for Protestants generally in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries literate activities and religious experience intersected: "The reformed experience centered on the individual conscience, the heart of each believer; the journey of faith was a continuous process of interiorizing the word. And that interiorization often involves strenuous acts or writing and reading" (11). For Milton, too, faith, individual autonomy, and reading all are bound up together at the intersection between the public and private spheres. In *Of Education*, also published in 1644, Milton states:

> The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 631)

To know God "aright" is to know for the right reasons, and on the basis of reason, which Milton regards as the essential quality that God gave to Adam at creation, "freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 733). As Milton's Father repeats in book three of *Paradise Lost*, "Reason also is choice" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 3.108), and to be reasonable is to choose God, which

constitutes *the* choice that an individual can make. Jesse Lander has made the argument in *Inventing Polemic* that reason essentially reduces all choices to two alternatives, such that "the act of choosing itself creates a dyadic structure: all unchosen alternatives constitute a set poised against that which is chosen" (184). In a radical sense, the only choice that ultimately matters, or the choice from which the substance of all subsequent choices flows, is the one to choose God or not, and reason, Milton argues, defines this choice. Milton thus bridges public and private in describing reason. Reason forms the basis for the most private, inward activity of knowing God, and yet Milton also describes reason bound as the pages in books, implying that the activities of writing and reading may be, in some respect, essential to our individuality and to salvation. To destroy a book is to kill reason; to kill reason is to eliminate choice, and without choice there is no salvation or even an identifiable person in Milton's understanding.

While Milton described texts as having active lives of their own, and while he also recognized the potential for "bad" texts that lack virtue and are filled with corruption, Milton's argument in *Areopagitica* remains relatively unconcerned with texts themselves insofar as they are recommended by their virtue or vice, and even less concerned with the moral conditions of their authors, and instead places heavy weight upon individual readers to judge rightly within texts. Lander's observation that "Knowledge in *Areopagitica* is described as being brought about by social interactions—both harmonious and conflictual—and at the center of this process are the book and the printing press" (190) is important to keep in mind, and Milton does not deny the moral capacities of author, text, or reader in this social interaction: "Where there is much desire to learn," Milton argues, "there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many

opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 743). Texts, Milton suggests, and especially controversial texts, are a vital source of learning and knowledge, and Milton engages in optimism of the meeting of "good books" and "good men" to produce virtuous knowledge. But the potential to readers for pitfalls remain, and *Areopagitica* locates Milton's concern for moral responsibility not in the author or text, but in the reader. Sabrina Baron has suggested that "what Milton argued for in this work was free access to reading materials of all sorts—in short, the freedom to read" (218). Christopher Hill has noted the significant implications that Milton's argument has culturally, politically, and theologically:

> The argument of *Areopagitica*—'that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by things contrary'—assumes that men are free to choose good or evil. So the cultural crisis which became a political crisis becomes a theological crisis as well. (154)

The maxim that Milton borrows from Dionysius Alexandrinus sums up well the open license but also responsibility given to the reader: "Read any books whatever come to thy hands, for thou art sufficient both to judge aright and to examine each matter" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 727).

Sufficiency does not, of course, guarantee that a person will judge rightly, and Milton notably adopts the same language of sufficiency, reason, and choice in *Paradise Lost* with the Father's description of humanity. Fewer than ten lines before the declaration that "Reason is also choice," the Father reiterates Milton's perspective of personal autonomy in *Areopagitica* by assessing humans as "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 99). Milton's choice of verb

tenses in this line expresses a counterfactual or post-factual sense to Adam and Eve standing against sin, so clearly their sufficiency did not guarantee that they would judge aright, but only that they could have. And because it is the reader who is challenged by texts and the reader who must judge their virtues and vices, the reader bears the burden of responsibility to stand or fall in rightly or wrongly judging and examining their spiritual, political, or other values. As Stephen Dobranski has suggested of Milton:

> Instead of accepting the idea of textual predetermination, Milton empowers all individuals as potential authors or "creators"—writers and readers alike—who must judge and choose for themselves. (208)

This is the message on which Milton attempts to counsel Parliament and the public in *Areopagitica*, for while Parliament may have had the power to license printing if it so wished, a power that had been held for decades by Star Chamber and the Stationers' Register prior to this time, intervening to control published texts effectively stripped individuals of their autonomy in society, removing from them the possibility of virtue.

A text thus poses a significant challenge to a reader that can be on par with temptation. A good book that is read properly presumably will not tempt, but it still requires the learned judgment of the reader to approve of the knowledge and counsel that the text offers. Given the uncertain position of a reader before approaching a text, even a "good" text tests the reader:

> Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 728)

As a consequence, no book deserves to be censored before publication because readers are burdened to judge for themselves the moral value of a text, and a censor making such a determination before a text ventures into public is to usurp an individual's personal responsibility to discern and to exert a tyranny over the reader. Milton's polemic mocks the prospect of such tyranny, questioning, "who shall prohibit them? Shall twenty licensers?" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 732), and in the same vein Milton compares censoring books with the absurdity of banishing sin:

> Suppose we could expel sin by this means; look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and yet remove them both alike. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 733)

To banish sin has the consequence of eliminating our personal autonomy and free will since sin and virtue both hinge on this matter of choice. Implicit in Parliament's decision to regulate printing, Milton advises, is the belief that texts possess moral value.

In negotiating the text's dynamic between public and private, however, Milton is careful to delineate that "books are not temptations" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 731), and the rationale for this rests in an understanding of reading as a private, inward act. Sin, by contrast, requires outward action, and so books, even those "promiscuously read" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 729), cannot truly tempt one to sin. Instead, Milton argues for the individual autonomy to judge what is worthy of admission into the mind:

> For those actions which enter into a man, rather than issue out of him, and therefore defile not, God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood

> of prescription, but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 727)

The text thus exists in a tight balance between its public presence as a published document and the private experience that it provides to readers. In the former context, the text is able to engage readers with moral, spiritual, political, and other manner of knowledge; in the latter, the text provides an inward trial of virtue and judgment with relative safety from sin. The reader may not actually undergo a fall for failing to properly weigh the counsel of a text, just as Adam and Eve do not fall for failing to heed Raphael's advice or failing to recognize the danger of Satan's. Virtue and sin ultimately require outward action, but misreading and virtue and sin alike reflect on a person's inward condition, and thus personal autonomy and responsibility are bound up in both. One may not sin in reading a book, but the reader certainly confronts his or her potential to sin. Texts dispute and advise controversially, but the moral decision-making to judge aright resides entirely with the reader. Milton, as a private citizen, walked a fine line in making this argument to Parliament, for Parliament or any government authority is generally tasked with making decisions on behalf of others. Milton questions the efficacy of any attempts at censorship, but he stops short of rejecting government authority altogether, instead counseling Parliament that the best interests of the commonwealth, those common interests that free individuals share, are preserved only when Parliament preserves liberty for the people.

For Milton, liberty is the necessary condition for virtue, and the need for virtue in turn demands, in a literate society, capable writers who can produce the texts that will counsel readers in moral concerns. Milton disputes that texts can tempt us—texts are not

agents capable of intentionally putting before us moral dilemmas, but texts are also not entirely dead objects either. Texts do pose moral dilemmas, but responsibility is with readers to pick up books, interpret those dilemmas, and formulate a virtuous response. What could serve as a moral exhortation for a virtuous reader could as likely be turned into temptation by a reader who lacks virtue. Licensing printing would put the government censor in the awkward and impossible position of trying to account for how different readers' minds might generate moral responses to texts. The more pragmatic alternative is simply to leave individuals to be responsible for their own virtue, and to the extent that texts are able to fashion and counsel fit readers to be capable of virtue, censoring books would effectively censor potential virtue along with potential vice.

"Published by authority": *Eikonoklastes*, *The Second Defense*, and the problems of a government spokesperson

For Milton, his argument for personal autonomy and responsibility in *Areopagitica* carried political ramifications far beyond the question of licensing books. Indeed, this understanding of human autonomy became for Milton a justification for the regicide and, through the language of liberty, the defining condition of the English Republic. The execution of Charles I on January 30, 1649, was a shocking act, and accomplishing this execution of a monarch required a radical rethinking of the relationship between the king and those, like Parliament, who presumed to advise him.[103] Less than two weeks after the execution, Milton, still writing as a private citizen,

[103] See Cust, *Charles I* 466ff for Charles' trial and execution and 44-81 and 104ff regarding Charles' interactions with Parliament and the slide into personal rule respectively.

defended vigorously Parliament's action to prosecute a tyrant as lawful in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*:[104]

> For as to this question in hand, what the people by their just right may do in change of government or governor, we see it cleared sufficiently, besides other ample authority, even from the mouths of princes themselves. And surely they that shall boast, as we do, to be a free nation, and not have in themselves the power to remove or to abolish any governor supreme or subordinate, with the government itself upon urgent causes, may please their fancy with a ridiculous and painted freedom fit to cozen babies; but are indeed under tyranny and servitude, as wanting that power which is the root and source of all liberty, to dispose and economize in the land which God hath given them, as masters of family in their own house and free inheritance. Without which natural and essential power of a free nation, though bearing high their heads, they can in due esteem be thought no better than slaves and vassals born, in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting lord, whose government, though not illegal or intolerable, hangs over them as a lordly scourge, not as a free government—and therefore to be abrogated. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 771)

Just as Milton built his case for unlicensed printing around a conception of individual autonomy and liberty, Milton takes the argument further in the *Tenure* to claim this same liberty as a basis for flinging off tyrants. Unlike in *Areopagitica*, Milton is no longer

[104] On Milton's decision to publish regarding the execution of the king, see Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 223–24; Campbell and Corns 195–99.

concerned with appealing to Parliament, for Parliament had already acted. The serious task at hand involved influencing public opinion and challenging those who questioned Parliament's authority to put a monarch on trial. Milton answered that individual liberty gives every person the right to oppose a tyrant, a stance that likely could have many in Parliament uneasy since the same argument could just as easily be used against them.

The selection of Milton as government spokesperson is both sensible and curious.[105] Milton had proven that he was able to write powerfully and extensively in support of Parliament, but his radical notion of individual autonomy could ultimately prove a challenge to Parliament's own rule. As a government spokesperson, Milton assumed a conflicted role distinct from the one that he had taken when counseling Parliament and the public as a private citizen. With this official post, Milton may have become more propagandist than counselor, and his purpose, at least from the perspective of Parliament, was not to advise them on matters of state so much as to defend Parliament's actions to the people and to the international community.[106] Milton took up the task of defending Parliament's action and struggled with how to combat popular opinion at home and on the continent through a series of texts that were, in at least two important respects, reversals of typical conventions of advice. Parliament's historical role had been to advise the monarch. In the absence of a monarch, Parliament presumed to continue advising, but counsel now flowed to the people and to an international community. Rather than shape decision making and circumscribe power, Parliament's counsel now served to justify actions and cultivate popularity in a bid to legitimize its own power. Milton, speaking with government authority, often sought to advise the

[105] See R. Fallon 23ff; Campbell and Corns 203–6; Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 236–39.
[106] See Raymond, "The Literature of Controversy" esp. 206–7.

people, and so the flow of advice moved counter to convention and political expediency. Parliament, after all, held power, and yet the pressing need to influence public opinion illustrates how Parliament's grip on power was tenuous at best. Per Milton's own rationale, the people could do to Parliament what Parliament had just done to Charles.

To say that advice conventionally flowed from subject to ruler is not to say that monarchs did not often give advice. Elizabeth in her speeches often took a tone of advice, even if Elizabeth and her audiences might not have found complications in understanding her words in such a manner.[107] James's *Basilikon Doron*, too, is a book of advice addressed to the king's son, advice books being "one of the principle literary and rhetorical genres through which the notion of the 'public man' was constructed, interpreted, and disseminated" (Cust, "Public Man" 119). To conceive of the monarch's role as advising Parliament and the people, however, would have constituted a radical reversal of the power dynamic between the Crown and Parliament. The extent to which the Commons ought to counsel the monarch was developing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cust notes the growing "notion that it was parliament's function to provide the prince with advice not only on legislation, but on all other matters of policy which affected the well-being of the commonwealth" ("Public Man" 130–31). By the 1640s, this shift had taken hold, at least in the minds of the parliamentarians who increasingly sought to assert the power of the Commons over that of Charles. With this reversal in power came the need to justify unprecedented government actions to a public commonwealth and to a broader international community, and so the use of Milton as a

[107] See Shenk, esp. 84, where she describes Elizabeth as "a successful participant in the humanist tradition of learning," making the queen's speeches in learned tones resonate as counsel.

spokesperson to compose and publish texts advising the public is a unique development following the execution of Charles I.

The imprint "PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY" at the bottom of the frontispiece of *Eikonoklastes* thus carries significant weight in redefining advice during the years of the Interregnum. Milton, like most other people publishing in the early 1640s, had published *Areopagitica* unlicensed, and he enjoyed anonymity in publishing many of his anti-prelatical tracts.[108] Now, however, Milton in his role in the government oversaw that very licensing system, and his own writings spoke with the imprimatur of official authority. The English Revolution's defining act, the regicide, had been forced through a Rump Parliament by a select group of conspirators, despite the action proving unpopular with much of English society.[109] In its image and spirit, however, the republic, to some degree, required public involvement and public opinion to derive its authority, and so the necessity arose for the government to advise the public on matters of state, particularly on the matter of the regicide. Prior to the seventeenth century, the monarch may have sought to shape popular opinion through public proclamations and handbills, sermons, or public entertainments and displays, but the growing necessity to use published texts to advise subjects how to think and behave had begun to grow, particularly in and around London, as people achieved literacy. To publish nothing was the cede ground to political opponents. Monarchs in courtly circles undoubtedly volunteered friendly and sometimes not-so-friendly advice to courtiers, but for public concerns the authority of a royal command typically superseded the need for most conventional practice of counsel. However, Milton and the republican government faced an unprecedented need to shape

[108] See Campbell and Corns 133–37.
[109] See Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 223ff.

public opinion following the regicide. Milton wrote "by authority," but whether this authority carried the same weight as royal edict was unclear. In order to advise people, the new government's spokesperson had to work much harder through his text to establish legitimacy and earn trust, and Milton's polemical invectives against Charles I decidedly aim to sway public opinion away from the image of the deceased king as a saint, and image which threatened to delegitimize Parliament's rule and Milton's voice as its spokesperson.[110] What Milton attempted to advise was far removed from the policy matters that might normally be counseled in government. Milton as spokesman chiefly aimed to advise public opinion with respect to the deceased king and new government.

Just as Milton's stance of speaking from authority to advise and influence the public marked a reversal of convention, Milton's rhetorical pose of heaping blame upon Charles I marks a further shift away from conventional practice. Monarchs were not typically assigned personal blame for abuses of government. Granted, Milton could accuse Charles I of wrongdoings because a national and international public, and not Charles, were the target audiences of Milton's writings, and perhaps also because Charles I was dead and no longer king in the post-monarchical republic, but to directly blame a monarch for abuses is a crucial move on the part of Parliamentarians during the 1640s, and one that Milton exploits in his defenses of Charles I's execution. The nobility had long found ways of ridding themselves of undesirable monarchs: Edward II, Richard II, and Richard III could be hurried from office by covert murders, dubious depositions, wars, and the like. David Rollison makes the astute observation, "When Charles I was executed in 1649 he was the fifth monarch since the *Magna Carta* to be deposed and

[110] Achinstein makes the reasonable argument that Milton was not just trying to destroy the image of Charles, but "meant to destroy the institution of monarchy in England" ("Milton and King Charles" 142).

killed by his subjects" (429) to argue that England actually participated in a long national tradition of eliminating tyrants. However, the role of the Commons in prosecuting the king and the abolition of the monarchy were new, and never had a king been publicly tried and executed for crimes against the commonwealth.

The rhetorical conventions of criticism toward a monarch that had been passed down to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were shaped to deflect criticism and accusation away from the monarch. Rather than charge the king with wrongdoings and mismanagement, royal critics (typically aspiring nobles who found themselves out of favor) employed the rhetorical convention of aiming blame at the monarch's most intimate advisors. A king's policies could, to varying degrees, be debated, but the person of the king was largely sacrosanct, and so the king's closest advisors regularly took the brunt of criticism directed toward the king. As Thomas N. Corns has suggested, "before 1640, the predominant political ideology had represented the monarch as a semimystical figure, uniquely privileged by God to govern the kingdoms of the British Isles. Alternative voices were not heard, and criticism of the monarch, even into the early and mid- 1640s, took the oblique line of criticizing, instead, the monarch's chief ministers," but where Corns goes on to regard the prosecution of Charles I as essentially "a continuation of the process of prosecuting allegedly bad ministers" (*Uncloistered Virtue* 68), I argue that this act, while a continuation in one respect, also constituted a sharp departure from convention. The understood subtext of such accusations may have been that the king was the target of any criticisms, but the convention of blaming advisors instead of the king was not significantly undermined until the trial and death Charles I. John Milton's revolutionary prose writings stemming from this event, such as *The Tenure*

of Kings and Magistrates, *Eikonoklastes*, and the *First* and *Second Defenses*, began to rewrite the conventional relationship between king and advisor in terms of a Protestant conception of individual agency and personal responsibility, which we have seen expressed in Milton's pamphleteering and which Milton continued to advocate even in the Restoration through his poetic writings. In doing so, Milton was reconfiguring social and political relationships constructed around counsel and reshaping what it meant to practice counsel.

The conventional practice of criticizing a king's advisors is perhaps most plainly demonstrated in popular early modern dramas. These dramas may manipulate historical events in some respects, but with regard to the common rhetoric of deflecting royal criticism onto advisors, the dramas offer useful illustrations. Christopher Marlowe in *Edward II* has plenty of scathing depictions of Edward II, but Edward II's critics in the play remain hesitant to attack Edward's person publicly and directly. Lancaster, Mortimer, and others instead aim their charges at Gaveston, the king's intimate. As Lancaster states:

> My lord, why do you thus incense your peers,
> That naturally would love and honour you,
> But for that base and obscure Gaveston?
> Four earldoms have I, besides Lancaster—
> Derby, Salisbury, Lincoln, Leicester;
> These I will sell, to give my soldiers pay,
> Ere Gaveston shall stay within the realm:
> Therefore, if he be come, expel him straight. (Marlowe 1.1.97–104)

Lancaster's argument is that, were it not for Gaveston, there would be no arms raised against the king.

Marlowe's Edward, of course, sees through this rhetorical convention, for when the rebellious nobles arrive to forcibly remove Gaveston from the court, the king recognizes that an attack against the king's intimate is an attack against the king himself:

> Nay, then lay violent hands upon your king:
> Here, Mortimer, sit thou in Edward's throne;
> Warwick and Lancaster, wear you my crown.
> Was ever a king thus over-rul'd as I? (Marlowe 1.4.35–38)

Edward's charge of usurpation has the threat of undoing the "service" that these less-favored advisors (or so they see themselves) are doing for the king, and so Lancaster must follow up Edward's statement by asserting himself as an educator-advisor with a reminder of the proper king-subject relationship: "Learn, then, to rule us better, and the realm" (Marlowe 1.4.39), and Canterbury follows up a few lines later with "Be patient, my lord, and see what we your counsellors have done" (Marlowe 1.4.42–43). Through the reestablishment of their own advisor roles to the king, the rebels are able, at least temporarily, to force Edward to accept begrudgingly the banishment of Gaveston. Their advice to the king about how to react to their action constitutes de facto criticism, but the advisors preserve an indirectness in these complaints.

Even the death-by-poker event at the end of the play leaves the treatment of the king's person fraught with complications—the murder is not treated as a public spectacle, or at least not until Marlowe dramatizes it a couple centuries later, and the stabbing is done in a body part, as Lightborn says, "lest that you bruise his body" (Marlowe

5.5.112)—no visible external mark is to be left on the king's body. Of course, the location into which the hot poker is inserted decidedly comments upon Edward's presumed sexual transgressions as king, and the murder of a king, done howsoever secretly, will inevitably be discovered to the public, as Mortimer and the murderers well know. But the challenge for the king's opponents is how to rid themselves of Edward without attacking him personally, either in criticism or physical bruises, and they find the solution for this by attacking the king invisibly, targeting his advisors in one case or a hidden body part in another. All of this suggests the complicated way in which, even when the monarch is very much the target of attack, those opposing the king still operate from the contradictory posture of keeping their attacks hidden from public view. Shakespeare also takes up this rhetorical convention in the accusations Bolingbroke lays against Richard II. The playwright dramatizes very clearly for us what grievances Bolingbroke has against Richard, yet while Bolingbroke is insistent that he has come to claim his inheritance and title, he avoids a specific charge against the king, and instead declares his opposition to some of Richard's closest advisors:

> But we must win your grace to go with us
> To Bristol castle, which they say is held
> By Bushy, Bagot and their complices,
> The caterpillars of the commonwealth,
> Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away. (Shakespeare 2.4.163–67)

Of course, in plucking away these pesky allies of the king, Bolingbroke is weakening the king himself, and these advisors to Richard recognize that they are not the primary targets of Bolingbroke's ambitions. Green suggests that "our nearness to the king in love is near

the hate of those who love not the king" (Shakespeare 2.2.127–28), and Bagot goes on to express, "If judgment lie in them [the commons against the king], then so do we, because we ever have been near the king" (Shakespeare 2.2.133–34). This proximity, nearness, and love for the king suggests the sort of intimacy that was a defining characteristic of an advisor, and quite contrary to Bolingbroke's claims, Richard's advisors recognize that they are only targeted because Richard himself is a target. Still, Bolingbroke keeps his rhetorical pose, at least throughout the first half of the play, Bolingbroke never admits that he is after Richard's crown, and he speaks in equivocal language about his intentions. Bolingbroke is firm about wanting his title and inheritance—"I come but for mine own" (Shakespeare 3.4.196)— and about weeding out the king's bad advisors, but ambition for the crown is not openly voiced until the Act 4 deposition scene when such an ambition is already after-the-fact. Until that moment, Bolingbroke acts very much within the convention of not openly confronting the king with charges, and even in the deposition, it is not Richard's accusers, but Richard himself who is required to read "these accusations and these grievous crimes committed by your person and your followers against the state and profit of this land; that, by confessing them, the souls of men may deem that you are worthily deposed" (Shakespeare 4.1.223–27). When Richard dashes his reading glass on the ground, the charges remain, quite significantly, unvoiced in the play.

These examples from Marlowe and Shakespeare help illustrate the extent to which Milton twisted and shattered this convention of accusing the king's advisors but not the king. Counsel served vital private and public interests, but one could not shift culpability for bad counsel onto advisors. Instead, Milton introduces to political counsel a radical account of individual agency that holds a person (in the case of the English

Revolution, Charles I) culpable for giving ear to bad counsel. Even during the first rumblings of the Revolution in the early 1640s with the start of the Long Parliament, assigning blame chiefly to the king's counselors still very much dominated the discourse, as is seen in Parliament's *Grand Remonstrance* of 1641. After listing a number of complaints, Parliament names the guilty parties:

> The Actors and Promoters hereof have been,
>
> 1. The Jesuited Papists, who hate the Laws as the Obstacles of that Change and Subversion of Religion, which they so much long for.
>
> 2. The Bishops, and the corrupt part of the Clergy, who cherish Formality and Superstition, as the natural Effects and more probable Supports of their own Ecclesiastical Tyranny and Usurpation.
>
> 3. Such Counsellors and Courtiers as for private Ends have engaged themselves to further the Interests of some Foreign Princes, or States, to the Prejudice of his Majesty and the State at Home. (Rushworth 439)

At this same time, Parliament began making moves to purge some of the most despised of Charles I's advisors from the government and church: Laud, Finch, Windebank, and Strafford were among the most prominent.[111] In fact, one of Parliament's demands later in this document is that they have oversight of whom the king chooses as counsel:

> That His Majestie be humbly petitioned by both Houses, to employ such Counsellors, Ambassadors, and other Ministers in managing his business at home and abroad, as the Parliament may have cause to confide in, without which we cannot give his Majesty such Supplies for support of his

[111] See Durston, *Charles I* 216–19.

> own Estate, nor such Assistance to the Protestant Party beyond the Sea as is desired. It may often fall out that the Commons may have just Cause to take exceptions at some Men for being Counsellors, and yet not charge those Men with Crimes, for there be Grounds of Dissidence which lie not in proof. There are others, which though they may be proved, yet are not legally Criminal…. That his Majesty may have Cause to be in love with good Counsel and good Men, by shewing him in a humble and dutiful Manner, how full of Advantage it would be to himself, to see his own Estate settled in a plentiful Condition to support his Honour, to see his people united in Ways of Duty to him, and Endeavours of the publick good, to see Happiness, Wealth, Peace and Safety derived to his own Kingdom, and procured to his Allies by the Influence of his own Power and Government. (Rushworth 451)

The conventional presumption is that the king can do no wrong. The *Remonstrance* calls for the king to "be in love with good Counsel and good Men," and if only the king will thus surround himself and devote himself to humility and duty, the king's estate would be one of plenty and happiness. The convention constructs an idealistic image around the good king with his good counselors that could never be fully achieved in practice, but the flip side of this idealism carries an implicit threat. Just as happiness flows from good counsel, the king's estate is threatened to its core when wicked counsel takes hold. Convention eschews voicing these threats directly, and thus Parliament directs any specific criticism on those "some men for being Counsellors." Blame falls on the

advisors, and if Parliament could ensure that the king has good counsel, the conventional hope is that Charles I would embrace good counsel and become a good king.

In taking up this conventional guise of the king's innocence, however, Charles I's opponents in Parliament remained quite aware that the convention could be turned around to attack Charles personally, and the reply that Charles I offered to the *Remonstrance*, that he judged no guilt among any of his advisors for any of the charges that Parliament had levied, provided Parliamentarians with precisely what they needed to begin attacking Charles I personally.[112] They still refrained from blaming Charles I outright, even in the midst of outbreaks of armed conflict in 1642, but Parliament pressed Charles in the May 1642 "A Declaration of both Houses recapitulating the Messages, &c. between them and the King" on his declaration of innocence for his advisors:

> The King is pleased to disavow the having of any such evil Counsel or Counsellors, as are mentioned in our Declaration to his Knowledge; and we hold it our Duty, humbly to avow there are such, or else we must say, That all the ill Things, done of late in his Majesty's Name, have been done by himself; wherein we should neither follow the Direction of the Law, nor the Affectation of our own Hearts; which is, as much as may be, to clear his Majesty from all Imputation of Misgovernment, and to lay the Fault upon his Ministers…. (Rushworth 693)

Logic demanded that if Charles I's advisors were guiltless, and that if abuses of government had been committed, then those crimes fell upon Charles himself. Parliament explicitly offered Charles I the opportunity to admit the guilt of these advisors

[112] See Cust, *Charles I* 315–16 for a discussion of Charles' response to the Grand Remonstrance.

in order to protect himself, with the harsh possibility laid open that if Charles continued to defend his advisors, Charles would force Parliament to hold him chiefly and personally responsible for the abuses that they had charged against his government. Moreover, in a statement that was quite stunning and prescient in 1642, Parliament determined that if Charles I himself were guilty of abuses of government, then Parliament would be freed of any legal duty to the king. Parliament's implicit claim in declaring that they would be freed from following "the Direction of the Law" is to separate the king from being the law or, because of his abuses, even from standing for the law. Whatever deference the king deserved, the king's abuses dissolved, and Parliament would, in consequence, have to establish law separate from Charles.

This challenge to Charles I's legal standing in the state is precisely what happened by the end of the decade, and arguably the armed conflict that had already begun to break out in 1642 when Parliament composed the above declaration effectively expressed the rejection of Charles I's legal authority. Except when militarily forced to do so, Charles I refused to accept advice from Parliament, and through the 1640s he struggled to regain the personal rule of the previous decade, when he governed completely without Parliament.[113] The continued antagonism between Charles I and Parliament led Charles's fiercest Parliamentarian opponents to recognize during the years of the Civil War that Charles I must be held personally responsible for his actions, and his trial and execution marked emphatic rejection of the practice of deflecting blame away from the king and onto his advisors that Parliament's May 1642 declaration had begun to question.

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[113] On the period of Charles' personal rule, see Cust, *Charles I* 104ff. In particular, note 148-70 where Cust details Charles' cultivation of an "image of virtue" through masques, prayers, and other modes of performance during the years of the personal rule, an image that would resurrect significantly with the *Eikon Basilike* after Charles' execution.

As the trial and execution of Charles I sealed a rejection of this convention in practice, Milton became chiefly responsible for articulating Parliament's revised image of the king. After Parliament's execution of Charles I on January 30, 1649, Milton was assigned the task of writing a justification of the regicide in response to the popular propaganda piece, *Eikon Basilike*.[114] One strategy that Milton uses in his argument is, as Achsah Guibbory has suggested, to portray him as a plagiarist, with the effect of impoverishing Charles's words and, because these words are a prayer, his spiritual condition as well.[115] However, the effects of this accusation of plagiarism are not limited to Charles's spiritual condition. By abusing Sidney in stealing Pamela's prayer, Charles I has undermined his own authority and the authority of *Eikon Basilike* as a text. Charles I falsely appropriates the words of others, and thus his text is incapable of counseling readers, by implication, as well as Milton's own text does. Furthermore, the tactic blames Charles I not only as an author, but perhaps more importantly as an irresponsible and corrupt reader who is unable "to discern the affront rather than the worship of such an ethnic prayer" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 794). Not only are Charles's words, or what he puts forth in public, false, but his inward ability to discern is corrupt, making Charles I thoroughly unreliable as a source of spiritual, moral, or political counsel.

But in a larger sense, the very fact that Milton laid these and other charges directly upon Charles I in rejection of deference and convention speaks even more loudly to the undermining of Charles's image. The sense of personal virtue and responsibility that Milton had already formulated in his previous writings such as *Areopagitica* lent

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[114] See Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 248ff.
[115] See Guibbory 288.

well to the demands that a king be held personally accountable for his actions in the state. *Eikon Basilike*, which purported to be written by Charles I himself, popularized the image of Charles as a martyr and helped reassert an understanding of the king as rightly inviolable.[116] Milton's response, *Eikonoklastes*, very much attempts to shatter the icon of Charles I constructed in *Eikon Basilike*, and one "image" that Milton takes to task is this convention of excusing the king for his bad advisors. In answering the propaganda and rhetoric supposedly spoken by Charles I in *Eikon Basilike*, Milton consciously recognizes his stand against popular convention:

> As he [Charles I], to acquit himself, hath not spared his adversaries to load them with all sorts of blame and accusation, so to him as in his book alive, there will be used no more courtship than he uses; but what is properly his own guilt, not imputed any more to his evil counsellors. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 783)

Milton's notion of "courtship" here is notable, for Milton implies the mutual treatment of a king and his subjects. However the king treats others, so the king deserves to be treated himself. Since *Eikon Basilike* loaded blame on Charles I's adversaries, Milton is justified in blaming Charles. In shattering the saintly image of Charles I, Milton establishes that the king is a man like any other, and in demanding that the king's opponents receive the same courtesy as the king, Milton twists convention: Charles I's willingness to blame others and to deny them the "courtesy" of deflecting guilt away from them becomes a strong case for holding Charles I to personal responsibility as well.

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[116] On the complex imagery represented in the *Eikon Basilike*, see Wheeler, esp. 134, where she observes how the layers of imagery "turn Charles into an object of worship, not as a king, but as an exemplary human being."

Milton goes on to make precisely this argument that Charles I was personally responsible for the ills of the state. Bad advisors were not primarily to blame for Charles's misdeeds, but Charles I himself was culpable for choosing bad advisors and performing bad actions: "For who knows not that the inclination of a prince is best known either by those next about him and most in favor with him, or by the current of his own actions?" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 787). In the same chapter, Milton reverses convention and reflects the abuses committed by the king's favorites back onto Charles I personally:

> And yet the worst of misdemeanors committed by the worst of all his favorites in the height of their dominion, whether acts of rigor or remissness, he hath from time to time continued, owned, and taken upon himself by public declarations as often as the clergy, or any other of his instruments, felt themselves overburdened with the people's hatred. And who knows not the superstitious rigor of his Sunday's chapel, and the licentious remissness of his Sunday's theater—accompanied with that reverend statute for dominical jigs and maypoles, published in his own name, and derived from the example of his father, James? Which testifies all that rigor in superstition, all that remissness in religion, to have issued out originally from his own house and from his own authority. Much rather then may those general miscarriages in State, his proper sphere, be imputed to no other person chiefly than to himself. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 791)

Milton blasts the notion that Charles I's advisors could have deserved the chief blame for the problems of religion and state that had developed under Charles's rule. The depiction of activities licensed under the Book of Sports, which were particularly objectionable to Calvinists and radical Protestants, is damningly laid at the feet of Charles, for he personally participated in these sports, theatrical spectacles, and pagan rituals.[117] By licensing his personal excesses for the entire nation, Charles is personally responsible for the policies of his government. Milton flips the conventional rhetorical stance toward the king: rather than the king being excusable because of his bad advisors, now the king is responsible because of his bad advisors, for the king himself chooses those advisors, and he is also responsible for those advisors' actions to the extent that, as a tyrant, he directs them.

Milton presses this logic even further in his *Second Defense of the English People*, published in 1654, arguing that tyrants are responsible not merely for the poor company they keep, but for the vices and crimes of those same advisors:

> But if every good man is a king, as was the glorious teaching of a certain school of ancient philosophers, it follows by the same logic that every bad man is a tyrant, each in his own degree. For a tyrant is not something great (let him not be puffed up by the very name), but something utterly base. And to the degree that he is the greatest of all tyrants, to that same degree is he the meanest of all and most a slave. Other men willingly serve only their own vices; he is forced, even against his will, to be a

[117] Cust observes how the Book of Sports was intentionally meant to weaken puritanism and bolster traditional hierarchy (*Charles I* 144). See also Durston, *Charles I* 162–63.

> slave, not only to his own crimes, but also to the most grievous crimes of his servants and attendants, and he must yield a certain share of his despotism to all his most abandoned followers. Tyrants then are the meanest of slaves; they are slaves even to their own slaves. (*Complete Prose Works* 563)

Milton's case for personal responsibility holds individuals accountable for their own weaknesses, but a monarch is not merely a private person. If, as in the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* depicted in 1651, three years before the publication of Milton's *Second Defense*, the king's public body exists as a composite of those under his rule, then the king, being "greatest of all tyrants," also becomes subject to responsibility for the faults and abuses of his subjects and followers.[118] And thus where Milton goes on in the *Second Defense* to drag out all sorts of tabloid filth about Alexander More, whom Milton presumed to have written a response to his *First Defense*, all of the slander against More about affairs and dissolute living (and there is a lot of sordid, harsh language reserved for More) reflects back on Charles I himself since Milton figures More as a servant of the deceased king. Not only is the tyrant responsible for his own abuses, but in the unitary exercise of power stemming from his personal rule, Charles I deserves personal blame for every abuse committed by his loyal subjects.

This rhetorical move on Milton's part, however, is not without serious implications and risks. In the latter parts of the *Second Defense*, Milton turns to advising

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[118] See Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* 185ff for a discussion of the *Leviathan* frontispiece in conjunction with Hobbes' political theory. In particular, Skinner notes, "Whereas the king in the frontispiece of the *Eikon Basilike* remains indefeasibly sovereign even in defeat, the artificial person of the sovereign to whom everyone 'looks up' in *Leviathan* is represented above all as an unrivalled protective force" (192).

Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, who had been handed control of England after Parliament's failures at effective government, and the same arguments that Milton makes about Charles I could just as easily turn against Cromwell. Milton avoids explicitly connecting Cromwell to Charles I in the text, but one of his primary exhortations for Cromwell is to surround himself with good counsel:

> These trials will buffet you and shake you; they require a man supported by divine help, advised and instructed by all-but-divine inspiration. Such matters and still others I have no doubt that you consider and reflect upon, times without number, and also the following concern—by what means you can best, can not only accomplish these momentous ends, but also restore us to our liberty, unharmed and even enhanced. In my judgment, you can do this in no better way than by admitting those men whom you first cherished as comrades in your toils and dangers to the first share in your counsels—as indeed you do—men who are eminently modest, upright, and brave, men who from the sight of so much death and slaughter before their very eyes have learned, no cruelty or hardness of heart, but justice, the fear of God, and compassion for the lot of mankind, have learned finally that liberty is to be cherished the more dearly in proportion to the gravity of the dangers to which they have exposed themselves for her sake. (*Complete Prose Works* 694)

Milton, writing in 1654 after Cromwell had forcibly dissolved the Rump Parliament and had been appointed Lord Protector for life by the subsequent Barebones Parliament,

recognized that Cromwell was the chief authority in the state.[119] Although Cromwell was supposed to rule within the limitations placed on the Lord Protector by the Instrument of State, the new constitution that Parliament had implemented as part of appointing Cromwell to his office, with Parliament as dysfunctional as it was, Cromwell effectively had the power rule as a monarch, by his personal will, as long as he maintained the powerful support of the army. While this circumstance left Milton anxious about the return of *de facto* monarchical rule, Milton's praise of Cromwell, which effectively turns into a panegyric to the sort of good counselors Cromwell will appoint if he is wise, defers to Cromwell's authoritative role in the Protectorate. Among those "first to share in [Cromwell's] counsels," Milton likely included himself, and recommending and establishing himself as an advisor to the Lord Protector further recognizes Cromwell's unique position of power within the newly formed British Protectorate. In the act of publishing his text, Milton imagines Cromwell as his audience and announces himself to a broader readership as an advisor. Short of outright censorship, nothing can prevent him from assuming this public role. Milton's rejection of the rhetorical convention that had commonly helped define the relationship between king and counselor is not a rejection of counsel itself. Even if a ruler is held personally responsible for his failings in office, that ruler still requires advisors. Milton makes space to be critical of Charles I while still seeing the need for advisors to Cromwell. Just as Milton made Charles culpable for receiving bad counsel, Milton places the responsibility upon Cromwell to surround himself with good counsel. The function of counsel within a mutual system that both reinforced and circumscribed monarchal power receives a significant challenge, for no

[119] See Gaunt 98.

longer is the health of the government rooted in a system that could moderate weakness or excesses of kingship. Counsel is a necessary tool for good government, and the monarch or protector is responsible for the counsel heard and heeded. Clawing away bad counselors cannot address the deeper problem that those bad counselors are present only because the person whom they serve is corrupted. In Milton's formulation, if a head of state proves bad, then few options are available except to depose or kill the flawed leader.

Importantly, Milton's stance on the king's responsibility fits neatly with his broader belief in individual conscience. Milton was a radical opponent against Anglicans and Presbyterians who wanted to maintain a national church, arguing that individuals should be free to their consciences to choose their beliefs and religious practices.[120] In Milton's political writings, as well as in the freedom that God describes having given to Adam and Eve in book three of *Paradise Lost*, Milton takes a similarly radical perspective of human freedom that underpins his case for individuals, kings and commoners alike, being personally responsible for their actions. As Milton sharply points out with his harsh accusations against Charles I and with the harsh punishments placed on Adam and Eve, heavy personal responsibility comes with such freedom of action. Milton's logic in the *Second Defense*, that if every good man is a king then every bad man is a tyrant, carries a severe consequence for every individual. As Milton later argues, "since a tyrant is not our enemy alone, but the public enemy of virtually the entire human race, he can be killed according to the same law by which he can be attacked with weapons" (*Complete Prose Works* 658).

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[120] To put Milton's religious tolerance in context, see Rumrich, esp. 151, where Rumrich notes Presbyterian fears about Milton's tolerant views.

Milton's notion of personal freedom and conscience probably would not have appeared attractive from the perspective of any authority, for the logic that every tyrant is a public enemy of the human race who can be killed according to law decidedly threatens anyone exercising power. In counseling Cromwell to recognize these freedoms for people, a response from Cromwell that Milton's politics effectively subverted all authority would not have been unwarranted. Any person abusing authority over others could theoretically be punished as a tyrant. As such, Milton encountered an extremely difficult balancing act as counselor in the *Second Defense*. On one hand, Milton wrote from his political and spiritual convictions about individual freedom and responsibility, but in order to make his appeals to Cromwell effective, Milton also had to recognize and defer to Cromwell's position, power, and authority. Milton accomplishes this by turning upon an age-old convention—he praises Cromwell's counselors. Just as critics might attack a ruler's wicked advisors, Milton imagines the "eminently modest, upright, and brave" counselors whom Cromwell ought to have surrounding him. The praise for Cromwell himself is more muted, but by appointing good counsel, Cromwell would earn the higher praise placed on those advisors as well. Still, for all of the conventional posturing before power, Milton's insistence on liberty and personal responsibility looms large, and Milton's counsel attempts to fashion Cromwell into the leader that Charles I was not. For Milton to justify the regicide by placing Parliament's grievances on Charles I's personal conscience, the logic that a monarch is personally responsible for bad counsel seems necessary, and perhaps the extension of this logic is one reason why the regicide was so profoundly unsettling to so many people. Milton places a significant responsibility for virtue on us all, a demand for goodness that no leader is likely to

achieve, and Milton's argument for violent resistance against tyrants could have produced considerable instability in government. In the wake of the English Revolution, counsel remained important, but the ability of counsel to provide stability even in times of a weak monarch had taken a serious blow. The mutual moral responsibility for the state that the system of counsel relied upon had been replaced, if Milton's argument held sway, with a unitary authority figure whom the people could keep, depose, or kill based on their judgments of that leader's virtue or vice. Virtue in a leader is more important than ever, and yet counsel seems less positioned to ensure that virtue.

Combatting oblivion: divine, devilish, and earthly advice in Milton's Restoration poetry

By the end of the 1650s, the English people had largely rejected the Revolution, and the Restoration opened the problem of how to reestablish a political balance in the English monarchy to ensure that the Revolution would not repeat in a short time. Steven Pincus argues, "The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 did not put an end to the public discussion of civic issues. Indeed, the state did much to facilitate the expansion of the discussion of political economy" (217). Among these activities, Pincus notes the licensing of coffee houses and development of the post office as a public institution facilitating private and commercial interaction. However, the failure of the English Republic and collapse of the Protectorate, making way for the Restoration, did call to question many of the political values that had been forged in the turbulence of the 1640s. Milton did not bow readily to the coming Restoration, publishing two editions of *The Readie and Easie Way* in February and April of 1660, counseling the English people in

the first against returning to the tyranny that they had thrown off and in the second, after General George Monck had effectively secured the Restoration and just weeks before Charles II would be restored in May, lamenting:[121]

> …we may be forced perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought, and spend over again all that we have spent, but are never like to attain thus far as we are now advanced to the recovery of our freedom, never to have it in possession as we now have it, never to be vouchsafed hereafter the like mercies and signal assistances from Heaven in our cause, if by our ungrateful backsliding we make these fruitless…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 884)

Milton was unwilling to abandon his principled belief in individual liberty, which he saw as the lifeblood of the republican commonwealth, but as Charles II prepared to assume the throne, Milton's counsel to the English people fell flat, and Milton was helpless to stop the Restoration.

Following Milton's publication of *The Readie and Easie Way* in the final weeks before the Restoration, Milton's public reputation began to undergo a reformation that sought to turn Milton into an exemplar of silence, servitude, piety, and expiation who had withdrawn from politics into a private, and thus innocuous, religious existence. Marvell, in arguing for toleration for dissenters in the second part of *The Rehearsal Transposed* in 1673 and in seeking to protect his friend, colleague, and fellow poet, cited Milton as an example of someone whose nonconforming views posed no threats to the state:

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[121] On the negotiations that resulted in the Restoration, see Stroud 152–54. On Milton in the weeks leading up to the Restoration, see Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 357–97. For the cultural and literary implications of the Restoration, see MacLean 3–30.

> At His Majesty's happy return, J. M. did partake, even as you yourself did for all your huffing, of his regal clemency and has ever since expiated himself in a retired silence. (160)

Marvell's description of Milton's "retired silence" is strikingly odd given that in the preceding six years Milton had published the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, *The History of Britain*, and *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*, which sounds like neither retirement nor silence. Similar arguments have persisted in Milton criticism, however, perhaps most recently articulated in Blair Worden's contention that in the shift away from prose and back to poetry, "Milton does not merely return to his right hand, from prose to poetry: he withdraws from politics into faith," reevaluating the place of the Revolution in providential history, such that by 1671, "the time of *Paradise Regained*, a poem written at the prompting of a Quaker, the retreat from politics is complete" ("Milton's Republicanism" 244–45).

Much subsequent criticism has sought to rethink this perspective on Milton. Milton's contemporary supporters, such as Marvell, obviously meant the argument that Milton retreated from public to private and from politics into religion as a protective defense for the poet. Figuring Milton as a harmless, pious old man who had fallen out of touch with the serious concerns of this world may have served to protect Milton against his own inclinations from the Restoration authorities, but critically the persistence of this view makes little sense given that Milton continued to publish poetic material that, arguably, ought to have raised the hackles of the Restoration monarchy. Milton did retreat from publishing pamphlets, treatises, and defenses of the sort that he did in the 1640s and 1650s, and royal decree in 1660 had called for the suppression of Milton's *Pro*

Populo Anglicano Defensio and *Eikonoklastes*, which certainly served as a warning to Milton to cease publishing such prose polemic.[122] However, Milton's Restoration poetic works continued to insist on radical moral autonomy and attempt to counsel readers on the same values that Milton employed to justify the Revolution, throwing doubt on the image of Milton as a pious, harmless poet.

By casting Milton as devoted to religion, his contemporaries effectively sanctified Milton and, to a degree, sanitized the significantly controversial aspects of his writings, but the very idea that anyone in the seventeenth century could escape from politics into religion must have struck people then and ought to strike people now as sheer fantasy. Religion and politics had always been intertwined, and Milton's own engagement in religious polemic from early in his career is itself strong evidence that any religious writing is, by very nature, political.

Of course, the Restoration was fond of constructing precisely these sorts of fantasies that would suppress disputes over politics and religion, particularly those disputes that stemmed from the Revolution. That people would accept such an argument and, in doing so, overlook or willfully fail to recognize the pointed political criticisms and aims of Milton's religious poetry is not surprising. The Act of Free and General Pardon, Indemnity, and Oblivion, commonly referred to as the General Pardon Act of 1660, initiated the Restoration with what now can only be looked back upon as a bizarre attempt to put "All Acts of Hostility, Injuries, &c. between the King and his Parliament…in perpetual Oblivion." The Act legislates:

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[122] See Campbell and Corns 308. However, as Campbell and Corns note, while these two works of Milton were suppressed, his later Latin defenses and arguably more radical *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* were not.

> …any action, attempt, assistance, counsel or advice, having relation unto, or falling out by reason of the late troubles, or in the late wars or publick differences between the late King and parliament, or between his now Majesty, or any of his subjects…shall in no time…be called in question, whatsoever be the quality of the person, or of whatsoever kind or degree, civil or criminal, the injury is supposed to be; and that no mention be made thereof in time to come, in judgment or judicial proceedings. (Pickering 427–28)

The act further stipulates fines of forty shillings up to ten pounds against anyone who utters words "any way tending to revive the memory of the late differences, or the occasions thereof" (Pickering 428). The Restoration, as Achinstein has put it, "did not end the war over memory" ("Samson Agonistes and the Politics of Memory" 170), and if Achinstein's assertion that "knowledge of the past is not a fact but an activity that is continuously changing" ("Samson Agonistes and the Politics of Memory" 169), then we can see plainly how contentious actions of cultural memory could be in the contested years of the Restoration and why the Restoration monarchy took such interest in controlling acts of memory through legislation that even sought to stifle the thoughts of the private self. This act importantly sought to provide protections of pardon and indemnity, but rather than uncovering and preserving a record of the past couple decades of strife, the Restoration act attempted to legislate forgetfulness, or, if this is not possible, at least silence. Given the Restoration's desire to obliviate events of the English Civil War and the subsequent English Republic and Protectorate, that people would also

consign Milton's political pen to oblivion, even as that pen continued to write, is no surprise.

In this sense, the act of advice in Milton's Restoration writings also constitutes an act of memory. Corns has argued that Milton used *Eikonoklastes*, in part, to challenge the memories of readers to recall how Charles I actually behaved, and Milton engages in a more subtle reconstitution of memory in his later poetry.[123] Milton stubbornly refused to forget the Republic or to relinquish his values, and his poetry stands athwart the Restoration shouting, "Remember!" The defiant act of remembering and the act of advising merge as Milton records histories that, although they cannot speak directly of the Revolution, recount its beliefs, its spirit, and its dangers and weaknesses that led to its downfall. But for Milton, the specific history of the Revolution ultimately matters much less than its spirit preserved in the mind. As Corns, citing *The Readie and Easie Way*, has suggested, "Republicanism, in Milton's writing, is more an attitude of mind than any particular governmental configuration" ("Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth" 41), but this is not to say that Milton does not reflect specifically and deeply on the structures and practices of government, counsel included. Milton's post-Restoration poetry reflects consistently and deeply on voices of advice, and on the functions and roles that advice and advisors serve for the individual, rational mind of an elect, justified Protestant. Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* offer two notable examples of Milton consciously reflecting on the purpose, value, and nature of advice, even as his own writings seek to counsel and shape readers into fit moral persons capable of standing against tyranny.

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[123] See Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue* 213.

Samson Agonistes is a curiously structured text.[124] The main character is, of course, Samson, drawn from the book of *Judges*, and yet the plot of Milton's poem figures much more on the book of *Job*. This decision on Milton's part shifts the emphasis of the text considerably away from the actions of Samson to the counsel that he receives and the reactions that he gives to that counsel. David Loewenstein has noted the "intense inwardness" of *Samson Agonistes* as the work "looks painfully back to the past, registers the sharp disruption between the glorious past and the tragic present, and depicts a militant saint who, moved by the Spirit, acts 'of [his] own accord'" (*Representing Revolution* 269–70). This inwardness and reflection is a function of the way in which the text represents and engages in counsel. Just as the character Job is tested with calamities and then by his wife and friends who come to him in a series of speeches offering counsel about how he should understand his condition and how he ought to react toward God, Milton's Samson must endure and reflect upon the moral and spiritual value of counsel from a succession voices. By constructing *Samson Agonistes* on the pattern of Job, Milton conflates two biblical stories to generate tension over Samson's own culpability for his condition. Is Samson blind and humiliated because he turned his back on God, or is his condition instead a test from God that will lead Samson to greater rewards? While the question of what Samson has done to deserve his condition does not go ignored in the text, the pressing moral questions that Milton poses for Samson prove forward-looking rather than retrospective. Samson is at fault for his condition, but Milton renders the culpability of Samson for his depraved condition largely immaterial in the face of the

[124] Regarding the dating of *Samson Agonistes*, in speaking about the poem, I assume a Restoration context. Whether the poem's composition can be dated to the 1640s or to the Restoration, Milton published to a Restoration audience. The reading experience of that audience based on Milton's decision to publish during the Restoration is more relevant to my argument than the possible date of composition is.

question of what Samson ought to do now. Milton's observance of the unities of space and time situates the poem in a present moment, and any retrospective concerns about Samson's fault in disobeying God largely figure into the immediate contemplations about how Samson might redeem himself from those failings.

While *Samson Agonistes* does not end with *Job*'s dramatic *deus ex machina* of God appearing and conjuring images of the leviathan and the foundations of the earth, Milton's poem nonetheless achieves a spiritual resolution in Samson's recognition of God's will and sovereignty and his decision to act as a vessel of that divine will, regardless of the consequences to himself. In this resolution, we observe Milton, who in his shared blindness allies himself in the character of Samson, announce a firm stand on the side of God's will against the Philistine culture of the Restoration.[125] As Samson complains:

> Have they not Sword-players, and ev'ry sort
> Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,
> Jugglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummers, Mimics,
> But they must pick mee out with shackles tir'd,
> And over-labor'd at thir public Mill,
> To make them sport with blind activity? (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1323–28)

The problem, however, is what Samson can do in bondage against this debauched culture. Milton describes Samson in his final moment "With inward eyes illuminated / His fiery

[125] Derek Wood has noted the complications of drawing close "correspondences" with a character Milton may be presenting negatively (170). While Wood argues that Milton is rethinking his politics in the Restoration, the festive sports described in Samson's complaint correspond plainly with similar sports under the Stuarts, and Milton shows no interest in redeeming such activities.

virtue rous'd" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1689–90), appealing to a radical Protestant inward light as inspiring the idea of destruction of the Philistine temple. In describing *Samson Agonistes* as a "personal drama," Phillip Donnelly has noted the political implications of the poem's inward focus: "For Milton, even the most avowedly solipsistic story necessarily entails comprehensive claims that result from merely speaking into a world of consequence; subjectivism conceals a political agenda that dare not speak its own name" (203). The question that the text poses is how an individual might be able to respond to a situation that demands a response, but that dwarfs even mighty Samson in scope, let alone the broken Samson we encounter in the moment of the poem. Joseph Wittreich questions the conundrum of Samson's lines, "But I a private person," "I was no private but a person rais'd" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1208, 1211), to challenge in what capacity Samson acts.[126] Samson may be acting in private revenge or as a judge on behalf of the people of Israel, a suggestion complicated by the fact that the deaths of Samson and thousands of Philistines does not deliver Israel from bondage. If the destruction of the Philistines is a public good on behalf of Israel, the working of this action derives private virtue and autonomy, and Samson's thought process through the poem offers an unfolding of counsel and discernment.

The specific counsel that Samson ultimately acts upon, which is to bring violent destruction on the Philistines, has been subject to much recent critical debate. Feisal G. Mohamed's position that we should consider the implications of Samson's violence rather than dismiss them.[127] The question of the extent to which Milton portrays Samson's violence as just or even heroic is complicated by the biblical text from which

[126] See Wittreich 123.
[127] See Mohamed 337.

Milton draws. While God did restore Samson's strength to allow his final act of vengeance, Samson proved a poor judge over Israel, failing to show discernment in his personal life and failing to deliver the people from bondage. Having failed to live up to his potential, Samson's demise might be seen as God abandoning Samson to die much as he had lived. Milton seems to turn away from this possibility, however, at the moment when Samson determines his course of action. Samson has weighed the counsel that has paraded before him, and he has judged the words of others, but his final action seems to spring not out of that counsel or judgment, but spontaneously from "Some rousing motions in me which dispose / To something extraordinary my thoughts" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1382–83). The crucial bit of counsel in Samson's case is never voiced in the poem, for it comes from God, who appears to animate Samson's mind and perfect his judgment in preparation for the defiant public act that God has placed before him. Samson is credited for acting, and God, as mystical counselor to Samson, for inspiring and empowering. Up to this point in his life, Samson has failed to discern good counsel, such that Samson in bondage appears as a tragic, immoral anti-hero. Although we may find some anxiety about the violence from the reaction of the Messenger, the only living character in the poem to have witnessed the "horrid spectacle" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1542), the Chorus and Semichorus interpret the event as plain evidence of God working through Samson his virtue on behalf of Israel:

> So virtue giv'n for lost,
> Deprest, and overthrown, as seem'd,
> Like that self-begott'n bird
> In the *Arabian* woods embost,

> That no second knows nor third,
> And lay erewhile a Holocaust,
> From out her ashy womb now teem'd,
> Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
> When most unactive deem'd…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1697–1705)

Mohamed's point that we should not dismiss the violence of the text is well taken, and the text valorizes Samson's action as "Heroic" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1711) and as a sign of restored virtue. John T. Shawcross has argued that the poem works "to point out the errors of some of the republican thinkers and the means to nullifying such errors" (49). To the extent that Milton leaves any moral or spiritual judgment on Samson's action ambiguous, the poem may invite readers to weigh the relative merits of the counsel given to Samson and, importantly, Samson's discernment of that counsel.

Ultimately, however, the poem unambiguously asserts that its audience should take counsel in Samson's death. Manoa's exhortation to Israel puts Samson's death into a context of counsel for readers:

> To *Israel*
> Honor hath left, and freedom, let but them
> Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
> And which is best and happiest yet, all this
> With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,
> But favoring and assisting to the end. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1714–1720)

Milton echoes Manoa's call to take hope in Samson's death in the poem's final speech as the Chorus answers fears about the seeming loss of "highest wisdom" in the world: "Oft he seems to hide his face, / But unexpectedly returns" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 1749–50). Samson's violence offers a figurative sign of God's faithfulness to restore his people, but that violence is not necessarily the counsel that the text offers to readers, particularly given that Samson's violent end achieves little for Israel. Milton rehearses considerable tension in Samson's decision—as Stephen Fallon has suggested, "The heroes of Milton's poetry display their heroism not by gradual habituation to virtuous action, but by exercising strenuous choice at moments of crisis" (187). The burden is on Samson's judgment to perceive the flaws in critical voices, to hear God's voice, and to act accordingly. Milton, however, never sits in doubt of Samson's proper course of action. What is less clear is how Milton's Restoration readers, who share in the loss of honor and liberty that Israel experiences, ought to act in their condition. Milton dramatizes a godly militant enduring scorn and questionable advice before ultimately acting according to what inward light reveals as godly and right. The act is symbolically heroic; in practical terms it failed, just as the Revolution did for England, to deliver Israel from bondage.

Like *The Readie and Easie Way*, *Samson Agonistes* counsels powerfully for the English Protestant individual's recognition of God's will in opposing an un-Christian, corrupt system of monarchy. Milton dramatizes Samson weighing the counsel of various voices as a means of drawing attention to what the poem itself counsels. Samson's violence is an option, but the moral and spiritual emphasis at the end of the poem suggests that Milton uses Samson's death as a sign to inspire spiritual hope and moral

virtue in readers. Milton had certainly found a way through his own writing to pursue virtue sans physical violence, which might downplay how literal Milton's counsel for violence is in *Samson Agonistes*. Ultimately, Milton's call to godly virtue is constructed in the poem as the voice that Samson alone hears from God, and responsibility shifts to readers to perceive and act upon what is right. Milton's poem has challenged us to weigh counsel alongside Samson, and the success of any specific political counsel for Milton hinges on how well his poem has reshaped readers to be receptive to good counsel in the Restoration.

The moral uncertainty at the end of *Samson Agonistes* offers readers rich possibilities to take counsel from the text. Readers cannot miss Milton's call to virtue and wisdom, but what this means a reader ought to do in the day-to-day unfolding of life is considerably more challenging to parse. *Paradise Lost* ends in a similar position for readers. Whereas *Samson Agonistes* provides us final closure to Samson's life, shifting the moral uncertainty and sundry counsels with which Samson had contended onto readers, *Paradise Lost* offers little certainty either for readers or for Adam and Eve in terms of the next proper course of action: "They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, / Through *Eden* took their solitary way" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 12.648–49). Michael has provided some degree of teleological closure by outlining human history, and Eve has received similar information through an inward revelation from God that may be akin to Samson's "inward eyes illuminated," but Adam and Eve leave the garden in a state of great uncertainty about where they will go next. This condition helps establish *Paradise Lost* as a text that seeks to counsel and that regards counsel as a primary subject of inquiry. Throughout much of *Paradise Lost* counsel is a

practice fraught with perils, and in analyzing the Fall, the text investigates similar questions of agency and responsibility as Milton weighed with regard to Charles I in *Eikonoklastes* and the *Second Defense*.

When confronted with their sin, both Adam and Eve mount defenses by those who counseled them to eat. Adam engages in a long evasion on the question of whether it would be right for him to point the finger at Eve, as if his "evil strait" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 10.125) entirely involved accepting blame or blaming another, but his intent to shift the fault onto Eve becomes clear:

> This Woman whom thou mad'st to be my help,
> And gav'st me as thy perfet gift, so good,
> So fit, so acceptable, so Divine,
> That from her hand I could suspect no ill,
> And what she did, whatever in itself,
> Her doing seem'd to justify the deed;
> Shee gave me of the Tree, and I did eat. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 10.137–43)

In Adam's account, what blame might not land on Eve falls on God for creating her. Eve, despite the benefit of having heard God's response to Adam, does in fewer words essentially the same as Adam: "The Serpent me beguil'd and I did eat" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 10.162). In attempting to substitute "This Woman" and "The Serpent" respectively as the objects of inquiry for their own sin, Adam and Eve trap themselves and compound their sin by blaming counselors for their own moral decisions. God meting out judgment on those who advise ill in no way exculpates Adam or Eve of

personal responsibility. Milton reiterates his arguments from the *Second Defense* in assigning blame for the Fall. God is not a tyrant, and so God is not responsible for the angelic rebellion or for human sin, even though God's subjects commit these failures. Adam, on the other hand, does debase himself in the Fall, and so he also ultimately bears responsibility for Eve's sin along with her own responsibility for that sin, just as Eve likewise admits her fault for Adam's sin. The pair are coequals in respect to their agency and sin, and since they have sovereignty over their actions, blame cannot be deflected onto those from whom Adam and Eve received advice.[128]

For Milton, this question of personal responsibility depends greatly on the problems of counsel, and Milton portrays several distinct snapshots of counsel in *Paradise Lost*. Some instances of counsel are explicitly labeled as such, while others offer more implicit contrasts. The frequency of specific words in the text does not capture fully how counsel is being investigated, but Milton's choice of language does reveal something about how he figures counsel differently in relation to the various geographies and personalities in *Paradise Lost*. The language of "counsel" and "advice" appears most frequently in books one and two, as the demons debate their course of action, and books five, six, and seven, during Raphael's visit to Adam and the events of the War in Heaven. Curiously, after appearing more than a dozen times in book two alone, the terms "counsel" and "advice" appear not once in book three where the Father and Son interact in Heaven. Indeed, books three, four, eight, and eleven make no mentions of "advice" or "counsel." The language reappears briefly in book nine—Eve

[128] On the question of Adam and Eve as "coequals," see Anthony Low, *The Reinvention of Love*, esp. 186–89. Low argues that while Adam and Eve are "not entirely equal," their inequality is "relatively slight" as the two possess corresponding strengths and weaknesses (186-87).

solicits Adam to "advise" on her plan to divide labors in the garden, and then Adam later "counselled" that the pair cover themselves in fig leaves after the Fall, followed by more counsel between Adam and Eve in book ten as they attempt to negotiate a post-lapsarian reconciliation between themselves. In each of these instances, advice and counsel are understood in the conventional sense of one person giving an opinion or information to another with regards to a course of action, but the fact that counsel appears in Hell and on earth, but not in Heaven at all, challenges us to reflect upon what does happen in the exchanges between the Father and Son and why Milton explicitly assigns the action of counsel to Hell and earth only.

Between the deeply flawed counsel of Hell and the perfect counsel of Heaven, earthly counsel hangs precariously as having the potential to engage in either. For Milton, demonic counsel and divine counsel are largely uncomplicated. This is especially the case in Heaven where there is no advice per se, but only revelation of secrets. Receiving and keeping such secrets is an important aspect of counsel, but there is no real deliberation or questioning. The same, of course, may be said of the counsel in Pandemonium, where Satan has already rigged the debate before it begins in order to advance his agenda, and this layer of pretense marks an important difference between Heaven and Hell. David Loewenstein has noted how Satan's political language "is neither stable nor consistent; at one moment he sounds like a bold revolutionary, at another like a conservative royalist" ("The Radical Religious Politics of *Paradise Lost*" 350). Satan's language is degraded such that words become slippery, and perceiving Satan's intent becomes, at moments of dissembling, impossible. The demonic advice opens a serious gap between the false intentions of the speaker and the failed perceptions

of the listeners, but even in this the counsel remains less problematic for readers than disturbingly absurd: what is being urged is blasphemous; the characters of the demons offering the advice are corrupt; the motives of everyone involved in the counsel stem from pride; the pretext for the counsel is entirely false; the rhetoric of the advice proves empty, and the discernment of the fallen beings receiving the counsel fails to recognize all of this. Milton's hope is that in presenting Satan in this manner, he will be able to counsel readers to understand what counsel should not be, in effect shaping our moral vision and our understanding for how moral and political relationships between persons ought and ought not to be formed.

In judging the moral value of what is displayed in Hell, the text and narrator leave little uncertainty. Before the War in Heaven, Abdiel's uncorrupted faculties rightly label Satan's argument "blasphemous, false, and proud!" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 5.809). In Hell, the narrator may compliment the erstwhile heavenly beauty of the demons, but unequivocally pans their corrupt rhetoric, such as when Belial is about to speak:

> But all was false and hollow; though his Tongue
> Dropt Manna, and could make the worse appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest Counsels…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 2.112–15)

The degradation and corruption of counsel renders everything we see in Hell a meaningless pageant designed to accomplish nothing more that establish Satan's tyranny. Belial may be earnest in advocating "peaceful sloth," but whether he recognizes how he has been coopted or not, Belial's counsel serves not to deliberate a course of action but to

reinforce Satan's power. The demons think that they are offering useful advice, while instead Satan is manipulating them in a charade, which stands in contrast to the unambiguous and transparent relationship that the Son maintains with the Father. As readers, we may not apprehend or appreciate the transparence that the Father and Son experience, but the Father and Son do not share the imperfections that fallen humans, fallen readers, and fallen angels share. Between Father and Son exists no uncertainty. In Hell, both those giving and receiving advice are wrought with flaws; in Heaven, the actors are perfectly tuned in their meanings and understandings.

While the false counsel of hell may prove disturbing and troubling to the outside observer, counsel only becomes genuinely problematic when it is human. Much as in Hell, the imperfections of the counselor and counseled and of the language itself open rifts and failures in the process, but earthly counsel adds the moral challenge that some counsel can be honest. Counsel in hell always deceives, and yet the corrupt perceptions in hell prevent anyone from realizing that they are deceived. On earth, however, counsel is fraught with uncertainty, especially following the Fall, as corrupted wills compound human limitations in knowledge and perception. The counselor may be trustworthy or not; the counsel may be honest or not; the language used to convey the counsel may be appropriate or may color with a false appearance, and our abilities to discern through all of these challenges likewise suffer imperfections. As Milton said of the understanding in *Of Education*, "…our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature," and Milton roots this epistemological problem in language, which is "but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be

known" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 631). Language is crucial to learning, and learning to the exercise of reason, but to the extent that language remains an imperfect medium to convey knowledge, earthly counsel retains the potential to fail. Adam leaves off with Michael in book twelve with satisfaction in the counsel he has received, but he qualifies this with recognition of his human limitations:

> Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,
> Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
> Of knowledge, what this Vessel can contain…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 12.557–58)

Earthly counsel is marked by the contingency of human imperfections. Unlike in Heaven, good counsel can be misunderstood; unlike in Hell, bad counsel can be recognized and rejected. Importantly, how much "this Vessel can contain" is subject to uncertainty.

Because earthly counsel can be understood in greater or lesser part, but never in its whole, and because the value of that advice can be judged rightly or wrongly, Raphael and Michael face significant challenges in conveying their messages to Adam. Peter Herman has built on Michael J. Allen's critique of Raphael as a "pedagogical failure if judged pragmatically" to note Raphael's oblique, elliptical, and indirect responses to Adam that always leave it "up to Adam to draw out the implications" (61–62). This argument, however, entirely misses the rhetorical and pedagogical strategies that Raphael employs to communicate God's warning:

> Attend: That thou art happy, owe to God;
> That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself,

> That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
>
> This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 5.520–23)

Raphael bookends these lines with "Attend" and "be advis'd," explicitly marking his message as counsel. Herman is right to note that Raphael mentions nothing of Satan's immediate threat, but we should not rush to mark this as a failure in Raphael's delivery of counsel. Raphael employs some shrewd pedagogical and rhetorical moves to draw Adam into this important conversation. A blunt message of warning would have done nothing to elicit Adam's participation in the conversation. Raphael hooks Adam with the conditional "if ye be found obedient" and the oblique "some are fall'n" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 5.501, 541) in order to provoke Adam's interest and curiosity. Raphael's counsel would mean nothing if Adam did not attend, and pedagogically and rhetorically Raphael is a success. Adam will listen more attentively because Adam has asked the questions and recognized the need for Raphael's counsel.

Adam and Eve are yet sinless and obedient, but they are not slavishly servile and they do not receive counsel in the way that knowledge is passed in heaven. Michael Schoenfeldt has noted the way in which obedience in *Paradise Lost* functions on human autonomy and reason:

> Milton certainly new that obedience could parade as political servility or a foolish formalism, two forms of behaviour he abhorred; but he also knew that it could manifest the higher good of which humans are capable. Obedience, moreover, became for Milton a principle of political resistance; it involves not just doing what you are told, but using reason to

> figure out what authority you are supposed to follow, and to ascertain what you are supposed to do according to a higher moral code. (379)

This process of figuring out what authority we are supposed to follow is what the poem enacts for us through its depictions of counsel. Readers gain experiential knowledge of good and bad counsels by seeing them performed in the text. Good counsel, and especially divine counsel, must be translated and interpreted, which requires a combination of the skill and wit of the counselor and the perceptions and judgments of the receiver. Adam and Eve rely on imperfect human language and senses, which Raphael runs up against when he struggles "lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 5.573) to express advice. Counsel must be performed in a manner that gets the parties engaged in intimate, frank exchanges, and Raphael must work gradually to conform Adam's mind to the knowledge that God wants to communicate. Adam and Eve are naïve; what they need is experience. Raphael's counsel attempts to rehearse for them that experience so that humans will not merely be warned but will be sufficiently experienced to resist temptation. Raphael's advice is good, and Raphael counsels in the manner that Adam needs. That Adam and Eve prove unable to heed Raphael's advice is not the fault of the angel any more than their success in withstanding temptation would have been the angel's doing. Were it so, Adam and Eve would not be moral creatures capable of virtue. They are moral creatures, and thus Raphael counsels them, and their virtue Adam and Eve each "owe to thyself."

Milton returns to this language of "counsel" and "advice" once more, in book twelve. The language of advice appears only once, in the final speech of the poem as

Adam returns to Eve after having listened to Michael's account of human history, and Eve receives him:

> Whence thou return'st and whither went'st I know;
> For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,
> Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
> Presaging, since, with sorrow and heart's distress
> Wearied, I fell asleep. But now lead on;
> In me is no delay…. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 12.610–15)

In a sense, the advice that Eve receives in her dream is also conventional in that she receives in the dream apparently much of the same information that Adam has learned from Michael. However, all other counsel in *Paradise Lost* is spoken between characters, while the advice to Eve is mediated to her through a dream. The "also" in the line makes plain that Adam has also received counsel in the history conveyed to him, and this long view of history pointing toward eventual redemption is, in some respects, the best counsel that Milton can offer in the political climate of the Restoration. People must remember the goodness of divine purpose and simply wait for that future promise.

As with Samson's recognition near the end of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton at the end of *Paradise Lost* turns to a sense of inward light. But to a degree that Samson's experience does not, the function of a dream as a conduit of God's counsel rests curiously at the end of *Paradise Lost*, leaving us to ponder the imaginative potential of a dream. Indeed, literature itself seems to stand astride both a more conventional sense of advice as a rhetorical act spoken or written between persons, such as what Michael has just related to Adam in words, and an experiential fantasy of the sort that Eve receives, which enlists

our imaginations to engage with fictive, moral situations that treatises and histories may not be able to explore in quite the same way. In reading the words of Milton's poem and then in the dramatized imagining of the character's voices, expressions, emotions, and actions, we gain both kinds of experience that Adam and Eve separately receive in books eleven and twelve. *Paradise Lost* becomes for the reader a treatise in human spiritual history as much as it is also a spiritual dream. The counsel that the reader receives is complete and perfect, which only heightens the extent to which, like the sullied Charles I, we have none other on whom to shift blame.

Milton saw in the English Revolution the moral, social, and political issues that, for him, are essential to humanity, and so when he came to reflect upon the Revolution in his Restoration poetry, Milton shed the specific events of the Revolution, making direct allegories impossible to draw, and instead explored these crucial issues through the defining moment of humanity: the Fall. The Fall depends fundamentally on questions of free will, personal responsibility and sovereignty, and culpability for sin, which are precisely the same questions that Milton and the Parliamentarians rationalized through in assigning blame to Charles I for his abuses of government. Charles I could not hide behind divine right and deflect his actions onto God for making him king, nor could he blame those who counseled him, but Milton's concern in *Paradise Lost*, as with much of his Restoration poetry, is more broadly with values of liberty that he saw underpinning the English Revolution, and not with allegorizing Satan, Adam, or anyone else as a Charles-figure. Milton appealed explicitly to such liberty in *The Readie and Easie Way* and decried the degradation of language and counsel that would happen under a restored monarchy:

> Which how a people and their leaders especially can do, who have fought so gloriously for liberty, how they can change their noble words and actions, heretofore so becoming the majesty of a free people, into the base necessity of court flatteries and prostrations, is not only strange and admirable, but lamentable to think on. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 886)

"Court flatteries" are the negation of good counsel that Milton declared he was offering in the tract released just before Charles II returned to England. Counsel hinges on people being free both to offer and to act upon it, which Milton believed is not possible under the "prostrations" of a monarchy. In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve thus develop as prototypes not for Charles I but for all of us, and Milton presses us to remember the essence and spirit of human sovereignty that motivated a rejection of Charles I's tyranny in the first place.

Milton's deep concern with the reader's counsel throughout *Paradise Lost* reveals that Milton is ultimately less fixed on dwelling in retrospective and more concerned with preserving those moral and spiritual values in the political present which might offer hope for spiritual and political renewal in the future. The poem ends with Adam and Eve looking ahead to life outside the garden and to the struggles of human history, and the urgent question at the poem's final line is what the pair should do next. They have received counsel and are ready to step into the world, but should they do? The radical moral contingency into which Adam and Even step when they emerge from the garden leaves them—and us—very much needing to rely on good counsel. The poem's insistence on individual responsibility and autonomy in the Fall pulls forward the similar

arguments that Milton had made in *Areopagitica*, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Eikonoklastes*, and the *Defenses* to make those concerns for individual liberty relevant to the political present in the poem as Adam and Eve depart the garden. The past and history are also at issue in the poem—Raphael recounts the War in Heaven to Adam, for example, and the entire poem is a history of a past event—but these past events find relevance in how we understand them to shape our political present, affirming Achinstein's critical perspective that "knowledge of the past is not a fact but an activity that is continuously changing" ("Samson Agonistes and the Politics of Memory" 169). As such, the past for Milton is always connected to futurity and autonomy, that is, to what a person is to do next. History counsels us. But to forge this connection between past history and future action demands an able reader who can interpret and apply the counsels that the past offers to the ever-changing situations and choices that the individual faces. Raphael's and Michael's recountings of history counsel well, but the moral contingency and responsibility that Milton places upon Adam in the present demand a sustained moral choosing of virtue. The tale of the War in Heaven warns Adam of the threat of Satan, and so Milton's focus shifts away from Satan's fall and onto how Adam will read these events and apply his knowledge to subsequent actions. The moral burden weighs upon the Adam as a "reader" of this history, as someone who takes counsel from it, and the entire poem shifts the same dilemma to us as readers. Adam and Milton's readers alike need experiential knowledge in how to read counsel. By demanding our active role in reading and interpreting, Milton cultivates for us a specific awareness of our human sovereignty and personal culpability in order to reconstitute relationships rooted in genuine counsel. For the writer seeking to counsel the reader, this

human condition of sovereignty and responsibility combined with naivety and sinfulness produces considerable risk and possibility. Milton establishes himself as a powerful counselor to all people not merely on the politics of the moment but on how we think, speak, listen, and relate to one another. The risk is in the wit of the writer or the fitness of the reader failing to establish the goodly virtue that Milton's rhetoric struggles to produce. The potential reward is reshaping a generation or more of readers who are capable of perceiving and heeding good counsel predicated on individual virtue rather than on the hierarchies of court and monarch.

Epilogue

The radical individual moral contingency with which Milton leaves us at the end of *Paradise Lost* marks a distant journey from the early humanist concerns of counsel with which More grappled. In tracing the engagement of writing as counsel to shape readers, particularly on political concerns, we see common anxieties about the problems of counsel and a shared desire to train readers in what good counsel ought to be. Hythloday concern over princes rejecting wise counsel, thus necessitating counselors capable of rhetoric, is rooted in More's aim of fostering educated humanist counselors who could advise princes well. More's anxiety is not far removed from the rejection of sound counsel that Basilius delivers to Philanax, from Bacon's insistence upon the need for good counsel for monarchs, or from Milton's concerns with Cromwell's use of counsel in the *Second Defense* and with the sufficiency of counsel leading up to and after the Fall. The firm belief that people need good counsel in order to be virtuous sparked considerable energy from each of these writers to explore how to find good counsel and how to ensure that monarchs and others heed it.

What shape and method of delivery advice should take, however, produced divergences among early modern writers. More, Sidney, Bacon, and Milton developed rhetorical tactics in response to the political and social conditions in which they lived. More wrote *Utopia* primarily to other humanist counselors, playfully engaging with them on questions about how they might counsel a prince, while Sidney involved Elizabeth as part of his audience for entertainments and at least imagined her as an audience for the *Arcadia*, whether the text actually circulated to the queen or not. Bacon's various uses of

aphorism in essays and treatises sought to frame the moral and intellectual thinking of readers, and Milton turned to a Protestant conception of individual responsibility to reshape counsel in a manner that might make possible his political and moral vision for England. In order to write, all of these writers accepted the premise that writing could counsel, but the process by which a writer could accomplish this came under considerable pressure as potential audiences grew to include not only other counselors, but also monarchs and increasingly diverse readers with fewer connections to court.

What these writers shared was less a broad ideology than a set of cultural and political practices and relationships steeped in counsel. Common fears about failure to heed good counsel, flattery, and the like are predictable reactions to the practical workings of counsel. What is more significant in light of the current project are the divergences and shifts among these writers with respect to counsel. Counsel helped define how people interacted and related to one another. As practices of counsel changed, people's social and political relationships changed; as social and political relationships shifted, particularly as successive Tudor and Stuart monarchs negotiated monarchal sovereignty differently, practices of counsel had to adjust. Facing the exigencies of their moments, writers adapted, audiences shifted, and the rhetoric employed to shape these audiences changed, too.

While Milton maintained a commitment to counsel as a writer, the underpinnings of Milton's counsel rest in a conception of the individual as an autonomous moral agent that marks a notable departure from those like More, Sidney, and Bacon who rooted the need for political counsel in the common weal. Milton was highly interested in counsel of state, and by no means would have rejected counsel's role in the common weal. But

by the time Milton wrote, political counsel in England had suffered severe blows, particularly in Charles I's decision to rule without Parliament advising him. More and Sidney could fret over monarchs failing to heed particular counsel, but the rejection of a political body whose purpose was to advise handed Milton a fractured practice of counsel that could not easily be reassembled into a functioning system that could again provide stability to the state. Milton perceived the problem in the king himself, and his demands for personal responsibility were not only rooted in Milton's Protestantism but also reacted to the implications of personal rule. A king who wants to rule alone is responsible alone.

An even more considerable shift, however, is in how writers imagined their audiences. More's audience for *Utopia* was an international one, but it remained limited to those few people with enough education and Latin (and Greek) to engage meaningfully with the text. Given *Utopia*'s reliance on inside jokes and plays on language, More may have imagined an audience not much larger than the humanist circles in which More participated. Just as humanist educators understood their enterprise as shaping young men to provide counsel, More imagined his text's relationship with its readers in this fashion. For Sidney, too, his actual coterie audience was notably small, probably even smaller than More's was given that Sidney did not publish any of his works during his lifetime. This said, Sidney's writings ambitiously imagine readers beyond Sidney's coterie circles. Sidney's *Defence* establishes a project of developing literature of the English tongue. His *Arcadia*, too, carries much more narrative appeal than just the interest that Elizabeth and a few courtiers might have had in the text, especially in the context of Elizabeth's marriage negotiations, which Sidney had begun to realize more fully in his revision of the narrative. Sidney's works achieved a broader readership

following his death thanks to efforts by the Leicester circle and particularly Sidney's family and friends to bolster his reputation and publish his works, an accomplishment that would not have been possible had Sidney not already imagined his texts engaging with readers beyond his circle of associates and at least extending through the ranks of educated people with court ties.

New readers, actual or imagined, gave writers opportunities to counsel a readership and fashion an audience that, by reading, participated in the moral and political values that writers attempted to communicate. Bacon was among the early English authors to publish to a broad English audience. Literacy rates remained low in England, but they were rising, particularly around London. Bacon's scientific writings plainly imagine a highly educated readership that may also possess the political connections to build Bacon's vision. Bacon's *Essays*, however, imagine a different sort of reader. Bacon's imagined reader is educated, and many of the particular essays touch upon matters of court counsel and state that would have appealed to a political class. Following Montaigne, however, many of Bacon's topics appeal to a broad English audience in whose nascent construction Bacon participated in through his publications. By the time Milton began writing, that audience had begun to be realized to a greater degree and not merely imagined. Milton engaged international and English audiences alike, but many of his later poems shift to the individual reader. Milton's poetry effectively imagines a nation full of potential individual readers. All of these potential readers were not literate yet, but the texts had a hand in promoting literacy.

Realizing—not merely imagining—a literate audience was party a consequence of texts imagining audiences, writers and publishers producing and circulating texts, and the

virtue and utility of those texts attracting readers who had not previously needed literate skills. Writers such as those we have considered had strong reasons to want to counsel readers, but why read? Particularly if few good texts were available, potential readers had little motivation to develop skills they would not use. A broad readership grew in England when people perceived value in accessible reading materials and developed the literate skills to realize what writers and texts had imagined. Particularly by the time Milton wrote during the Restoration, a broad English audience had begun to materialize. Milton, far from rejecting this audience, instead chose to engage readers one-by-one, returning counsel to an intimate space, the privy chamber having been supplanted in the literary imagination by the private act of reading.

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