

# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

A Summer 2003 NEH Institute.  
Directed by David Cressy  
and Lori Anne Ferrell.



Georg Braun (1540/1-1618) and Franz Hogenberg (d. 1590?).  
"Londinum Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis." in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*.

Church

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Court

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Parliament

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Theatre

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Georg Braun (1540/1-1618) and Franz Hogenberg (d. 1590?).  
"Londinum Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis," in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*.  
[Cologne, 1572-1681].  
ART 229985.1.

This hand-colored map of London, by the German engraver Franz Hogenberg, was first published in Cologne in 1572 (the version here is of the second state, which was produced after 1575). It depicts London from Westminster and Whitehall in the west to Whitechapel in the east and from Shoreditch in the north to Southwark and Lambeth in the south. The research that produced this map was probably undertaken between 1547 and 1559, well before the first commercial theatre, the Rose, was built south of the Thames in 1583.

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## Church

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**The Eucharist**

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**Salvation**

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**Idolatry: Icons and  
Iconoclasm**

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**Reformation Women: The  
Case of Anne Askew**

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**Good and Bad Clergy**

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**The Reformation and the  
Colonies**

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## Church Introduction



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
Chori Ecclesiae Cathedralis S. Pauli, 1658.

What was the relationship of the religious phenomenon known as the Reformation to an institution called the Church of England? For that matter, what is a church: a building site, a set of religious beliefs, or a community?

Most scholars now recognize that the English Reformation was a long, slow, and often contentious process. The English Church—designed (and redesigned) to reflect each manifestation of English religious history from Calvinist consensus to Arminian ceremonialism—was by necessity neither monolithic nor single-dimensional as England made the transition from the medieval Catholic Church to a Protestant one. Nor was the Church of England (despite its claims to represent a middle way) particularly moderate or quiescent. From the Elizabethan era to the reign of Charles I, the Church of England harbored persistent, divisive attachments to Catholic practices, puritan and anti-puritan tendencies, and secret sectarianism. The tensions inherent in this situation played themselves out in volatile polemic over the nature of true and false churches, the relation of the Church of England to both the Protestant and the Roman Churches on the Continent, the authority of the monarch in matters of religion, and the emergence of an astonishing variety of Protestant underground movements. These controversial issues of identity-formation can also be traced in the rhetoric of increasingly contentious episcopal in-fighting as well as disputes between bishops, clergy, and laity over the ownership and physical layout of English Churches and the placement (and removal and re-placement) of furnishings such as altar rails.

The following essays provide an expansive view of the early modern Church, examining it as the subject of theological and cultural debate and as a specific location for worship practices that both ameliorated and exacerbated the societal divisions opened up by rapid confessional change.

[The Eucharist](#)

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**The Eucharist**

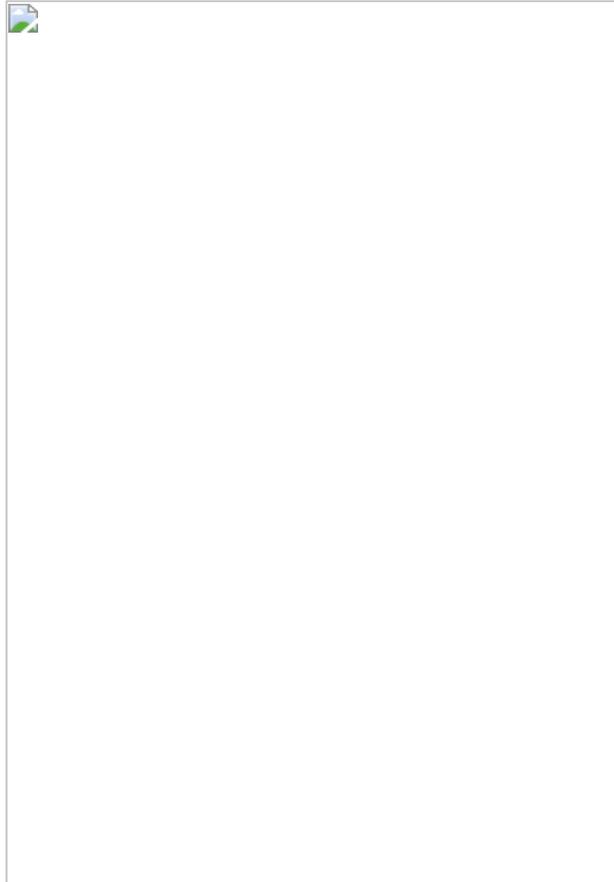
**Salvation**

**Idolatry: Icons and  
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**Reformation Women: The  
Case of Anne Askew**

**Good and Bad Clergy**

**The Reformation and the  
Colonies**



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Chori Ecclesiae Cathedralis S. Pauli, 1658.*  
ART File L847c1 no.8.

The choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, an example of Gothic style, looking towards the altar in the east; the rose window of the retro-choir can be seen in the distance. This was one of many depictions of St. Paul's included in Sir William Dugdale's *History of St. Paul's* (1658), a volume which became indispensable after St. Paul's was consumed by the Great Fire of 1666.

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## The Eucharist

The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." It is commonly used to describe the central act of worship at which bread and wine are consecrated and disseminated among the faithful in remembrance of Christ's Last Supper with his disciples. During the sixteenth century, the understanding of the Eucharist and its meaning were heavily debated. While this was one of the differences that fueled the separation of Protestantism from Catholicism, by the second generation of Reformers it was clear that there remained distinct differences among Protestants themselves. Roman Catholics remained wedded to the doctrine of transubstantiation as a way of explaining what took place (the belief that the bread and wine physically change into the flesh and blood of Christ that was first officially recommended by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and adopted formally in 1551-1552 by the Council of Trent). Protestants, however, differed in their interpretations. A Lutheran position advocated consubstantiation, or, that a real or corporeal presence coexists with the bread and wine; the more radical Zwinglian position, that has oftentimes been called "memorialist," viewed the Eucharistic act as purely symbolic.



The advent of printing not only made available a new forum for carrying on the debate regarding the Eucharist, but provided an opportunity for the wider distribution of liturgical forms for use in worship. The various official English prayer books reflect this Eucharistic battle, with the first edition (1549), published during Edward's reign, still retaining the word "Mass" in its title. In it, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's words of administration allow for a somewhat ambiguous understanding: "the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." By the time of the second edition (1552), the earlier phraseology has been replaced with, "Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving." In addition, a rubric was added which sought to clarify that kneeling at Holy Communion was not meant to imply any kind of adoration to the host, further distancing the liturgy from that of Roman Catholicism.



The official prayer book was revised in Elizabeth's reign, and the 1559 edition restored a combination of the words from the first two books which remains in use today. Now the two phrases spoken at the administration were joined in a way which introduced an even greater level of ambiguity, which furthered Elizabeth's attempts at creating a broader definition of the church but would later fuel the fires of those who insisted on a more precise definition and a narrower vision of the English national ecclesiastical institution.

Some of the hotter sorts of Protestants even undertook moving the altar (or communion table)



from the chancel and installing it in the nave—a place around which the community of faith was expected to gather. At stake in this movement of parish furniture stood the ongoing debate over the nature of the Eucharist: was it a sacrifice, a memorial of a table meal, or something in between? While the Elizabethan compromise held for a couple of generations, by the seventeenth century, Archbishop William Laud sought to restore an emphasis on the sacramental life.

This was viewed with great horror by many of the more Puritan-oriented divines and eventually led to outright division. In the wake of the outbreak of war in the 1640s, soldiers engaged in breaking up the altar rails that Laud had imposed, as a symbol of their disgust with such attitudes. The ability of the liturgy and symbolism of the Eucharist to divide remained intact.

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### Suggestions for further reading:

Booty, John E., editor. *The Book of Common Prayer 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1976.

Brooks, Peter Newman. *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist: An Essay in Historical Development*. Second edition. London: Macmillan, 1965.

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Dugmore, C. W. *The Mass and the English Reformers*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958.

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## Church



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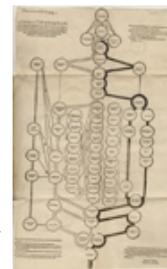
## Salvation

The Protestant Reformation was a religious and cultural movement, beginning in the early sixteenth century, through which several European states threw off the authority and modified certain doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformation came to England at a time when the newly introduced printing press was allowing advances in literacy and in the dissemination of ideas. As Henry VIII (who reigned 1509-1547) removed England from the pope's jurisdiction, and as reformists caused many to rethink their understanding of spiritual things, significant religious tensions arose in England. One special anxiety concerned the issue of salvation: how did Lutherans and Calvinists believe that sinners could be rescued from an eternity of damnation? How did their views differ from those of Roman Catholics? What role did advancing education play in the common person's understanding of these questions?

While calls for reform had periodically surfaced throughout the history of the Roman Catholic Church, in the early-sixteenth century the former German monk Martin Luther (1483-1546) launched the movement we now call the Reformation. Regarding the issue of salvation, Luther stated that since "all have sinned and are justified without merit . . . by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in his blood," then "faith alone justifies us . . . a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law" (Smalcald Articles, Part 2, Article 1). Rooted in the writings of St. Augustine and St. Paul, Luther's view assumed that humankind's fall from grace had left it so depraved that individuals could do nothing to satisfactorily atone for their sins. Because of this, a person could only enter into God's saving grace through his or her belief in Christ's intercessory death on the cross, and not through the Roman Catholic doctrines of confession, penance, and priestly absolution.

While other thinkers, both Catholic and Protestant, would contribute to the theological debate, the perspective of John Calvin (1509-1564), a Frenchman living in Switzerland, had the greatest impact in England. Calvin's systematic theology agreed with Luther's about God's total sovereignty, the individual's inability to affect their salvation through their own actions, and about salvation through faith alone in Christ's sacrificial intervention on behalf of humanity. Noting that some failed to place their faith in the gospel, Calvin decided that everyone was predestined, before the universe began and irrespective of their personal virtues or vices, either to salvation or damnation.

A central difficulty with Calvin's theology involved one's inability to know whether he or she was saved (elect) or damned (reprobate). How could a person find spiritual comfort in such a system? As Lori Anne Ferrell notes, England's conversion to Protestantism owed much to the work of an energetic Calvinist clergy who "came remarkably well prepared, supplied not only with university educations, but also with an unprecedented number of praxis-oriented pastoral textbooks. These were state-of-the-art publications, equipped with such innovative and attractive pedagogical aids as pull-out charts, color-coded tables, and handy indexes" (165). "How-to" books of all kinds were popular in early modern England, and Calvinist writers, assuming that theology could be taught systematically, noted that while one could never be completely sure about one's status, the fact that one desired to develop his or her understanding of spiritual things was a good sign. In the 1600 edition of his very popular "how-to" work, *A Golden Chaine: OR, the Description of Theology*, William Perkins included not only an extensive *written* schematic of the process of salvation, but a diagram, as well. This "ocular catechism" could be removed from the book and tacked up like a poster: "Without the ocular catechism, the reader must advance through page after page of text, making the act of reading uncomfortably akin to the Calvinist experience of prolonged uncertainty. But if the nail-biting conclusion to [Calvin's] *Institutes* was that no one in this world could be certain he was saved, the encouraging conclusion to *A Golden Chaine* was that no one in this world could be certain she was *not*" (Ferrell 174). Thus Calvinist divines provided not only the comforting doctrine of salvation, but also a reassuring template in print to individuals of various literacy levels; the university educated pastor using the diagram as a coaching tool, the newly literate employing it to supplement textual reading, the less literate using it as a mnemonic device.



The social and religious changes experienced in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England forced people to consider new notions of Christian salvation, generating a significant amount of

tension. At stake in the various arguments was the eternal status of one's soul; to be forced or led into error was the ultimate danger. Over the course of two turbulent centuries, anxieties over issues like this one significantly affected events in England, and the civil wars and the collapse of the established church in the 1640s only further contributed to the shaking of ideological foundations for many.

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**Suggestions for further reading:**

Dickens, A.G. *The English Reformation*. Second edition. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964; third printing 1993.

Ferrell, Lori Anne. "Transfiguring Theology: William Perkins and Calvinist Aesthetics." *In John Foxe and his World*, edited by Christopher Highley and John N. King, 160-179. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002.

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## Church



[Wenceslaus Hollar \(1607-1677\),  
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### The Eucharist

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## Idolatry: Icons and Iconoclasm

The Church of England was torn asunder over disputes concerning polity, the meaning of the Eucharist, and liturgy. Another important issue of tension was the role of images in worship. The Protestant Reformation spurred a revival of iconoclasm, or the destruction of images as idolatrous. In eighth-century Byzantium, the use of images in worship had been condemned by Emperor Leo III (who reigned 717-741), who in turn was condemned by Pope Gregory III (who reigned 731-741) as a heretic. The Second Council of Nicea (787) settled the iconoclastic controversy by establishing a distinction between worship (*latría* – due to God alone) and veneration (*dulia* – offered to saints and images). Subsequently, the use of images in both the Eastern and Western churches continued unabated until the Protestant Reformation, when a rejection of tradition in favor of Scriptural literalism resulted in the rejection of the veneration of images as idolatry on the grounds that it was a clear violation of the second Commandment: "Thou shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:4-6).

The conflict over idolatry, which began on the Continent with Luther and Calvin's polemics against Rome, eventually crossed the Channel into England with Henry VIII's break with Rome. Protestant sympathizers translated and published iconoclastic works such as John Ryckes' *Image of Love* (1525) and John Calvin's sermons. Opponents published their own counterarguments; Thomas More, for example, refuted Ryckes' *Image of Love* in his *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale* (1529). The main argument of the defenders was that images were "laymen's books" enabling the illiterate peasantry to acquire knowledge of the Christian faith and grow spiritually. Images of Christ and the saints, the argument went, were not objects of worship, but didactic aids. As Protestant ideas spread and took hold, however, the tensions over the use of images, and whether such use constituted idolatry, became more intense. Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer preached against them. Nicholas Ridley attacked idolatry in *A Treatise on the Worship of Images*.

Following the accession of Edward VI, royal injunctions ordered the removal of all images from English churches in 1548. Iconoclasm reached a fevered pitch during Edward's reign, resulting in the defacement of baptismal fonts, the destruction of stained glass windows, the whitewashing of pictorial depictions on walls, the painting over, or actual removal of, mounted crosses depicting the crucifixion of Jesus known as roods. During the reign of Catholic Mary I, many images were restored and the Edwardian injunctions repealed. However, in subsequent reigns, iconoclastic activity returned, although it was more sporadic, and the re-established and moderated injunctions for the removal of images were not always uniformly enforced, revealing the ambivalence of the populace. Nevertheless, the destruction of images, as a subject of theological debate as well as an activity, remained an on-and-off issue from Edward's reign to the Glorious Revolution as the English sought to construct a Protestant identity.

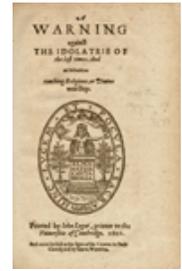
The impact of iconoclastic sentiment (and royal policies) on the religious life of the English people may be illustrated with the case of Holy Trinity Church at Stratford upon Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare. In medieval times, the church's chief glory was its rood loft (a "rood loft" is a central gallery or loft in which the crucifix known as a rood is erected). Carved images, painted in red and gold, were destroyed by iconoclasts along with ceiling paintings of St. George and the Dragon, the Last Judgment, and the history of the Holy Cross.



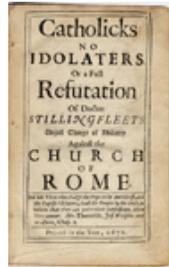
Sometime around 1566, when the chapel was being made to conform to the royal injunctions, the rood loft was removed, and the frescoes (including the one pictured here located on the west wall dividing the chancel and the nave of the church) were whitewashed by order of the acting chamberlain John Shakespeare, William's father. Ironically, Mr. Shakespeare's action preserved the frescoes from defacement by radical iconoclasts. (cf. S. Schoenbaum's *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1975, 30-31)

Conflict over images would be sparked by the changing policies of crown. Under Elizabeth, one of the prescribed homilies of the *The Second Tome of Homilies* (1563), the *Sermon against peril of Idolatrie*, was revised by the Queen herself in a more moderate direction. During the reign of Charles I, the policies of Archbishop Laud became even more permissive on the use of images, to which the Puritans, during the Civil War, reacted with iconoclastic zeal.

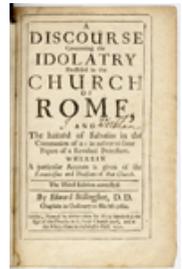
The controversy, over the years, gave rise to a plethora of theological tracts, some supporting and others opposing the use of images in worship. One example of the latter is the Puritan divine William Perkins' *A Warning Against the Idolatry of the Last Times*. In this influential tract, Perkins argues that monuments (as on tombs) are not idols, but that when images are used to represent God or when what is proper to God is ascribed to creatures or things, idolatry is committed. But Perkins goes further in arguing that misconceptions of God, mental images, pose a danger of idolatry and so the mind must be purged of these as well.



The controversies over the use of images in worship erupted again in the late seventeenth century, during a period of increasing anti-Catholic hysteria. The laws established by Parliament in the Restoration, such as the Clarendon Code (1661-1666), which put restrictions on dissenters, and the Test Act (1673), which required civil servants to denounce transubstantiation and swear allegiance to the Church of England, equated Catholics with dissenters. The conversion of James, Duke of York and heir to the throne, to Catholicism only heightened fears of a resurgent Catholicism. The "Popish plot" (1678) revealed by Titus Oates may have been the climax of the anti-Catholicism of this period in English history. It was in this environment that Thomas Godden, Catholic convert from Protestantism, authored *Catholicks no idolaters, or a full refutation*



of Doctor Stillingfleet's unjust charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome (1672). Here Godden defends the use of images from the attacks of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, who had written a treatise titled *A Discourse concerning the idolatry practiced in the Church of Rome and the danger of salvation in the communion of it*. While Stillingfleet is generally considered a Latitudinarian—a seventeenth-century clergyman who adopted more liberal notions in respect to the authority, government, and doctrines of the church than generally prevailed—his toleration of dissent did not extend to Roman Catholicism and the use of images. Stillingfleet's treatise and Godden's response are evidence of the insistent Protestant association of idolatry with Popery, a connection that continued to be made well into the seventeenth century.



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#### Suggestions for further reading:

- Aston, Margaret. *England's Iconoclasts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Eire, Carlos M.N. *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Phillips, John. *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535-1660*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1973.
- Watt, Tessa. *Cheap Print and Popular Piety: 1550-1640*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

#### Study questions:

To what extent was iconoclasm a result of a cultural shift in communicative media, i.e. the invention of movable type, facilitating the production, availability, and affordability of books?

Iconoclasm failed in the eighth century but succeeded (in some measure) in Protestant countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What factors do you think may have contributed to this relative success?

What may have been the political repercussions of iconoclasm? Did the destruction of sacred images have anything to do with the erosion of the image of the monarch, leading perhaps to the execution of King Charles I?



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## Reformation Women: The Case of Ann Askew

Whether they were nuns, housewives, prostitutes, midwives, or martyrs, women of the Reformation found their personal and cultural identities strictly bound to their sex. The role of the martyr offered the most public and sensational role for women during this period of radical change and spiritual angst. One of the most famous Reformation martyrs was Anne Askew, an English Protestant whose life was cut short when in 1546 at the age of twenty-five she was tortured and burned at the stake for her Reformation beliefs. Along with many other figures of the Reformation, Askew rejected the idea of transubstantiation (the notion that in the sacrament the wine is literally the blood of Christ and the bread literally the body of Christ). After being arrested for distributing Protestant literature and preaching Protestant beliefs, she refused to inform on her Protestant friends, even after being tortured for so long that she could no longer walk. Her refusal to hand over the names of other spiritual "rebels" and her death at the stake marked her as a powerful martyr. Further enhancing her fame were the two editions of her story, published first by John Bale in 1547 and by John Foxe in 1559. Both editors purport to tell the true story of Askew's trial by a church court and her subsequent resistance to torture before her execution. In one edition, the title page shows a woodcut of Askew embracing her bible as she stands in an assertive pose. The image, as well as the narrative that follows it, convey the intense rigor and inquisitiveness of her devotion. Yet the history of the publication of these narratives is worth investigating. Where does the voice of Anne Askew come from? How much can we really know about her?



[Image INS0118.jpg: Anne Askewe (1521-1546), *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe*, [Imprinted at Marpurg in the lande of Hessen [i.e. Wesel: Printed by D. van der Straten], in November, 1546. STC 848, title page]

We are dealing with what looks like a first-person account of a rebellious woman edited by two men. Although most readers of Askew's autobiographical tale agree that she is the primary source of her story, historians are still wary about authenticating Askew's voice—we must remember that her story was published only after her death and that Askew herself never had the last editorial say. Furthermore, her story was one of violence, rebellion, torture, and martyrdom, a sensational table of contents that tends to eclipse the details of Askew's politics and faith. Instead of interpreting this publication history as an example of the misogynous impulse to silence women's voices, we might use it instead as a way to understand the complicated ideas about authorship that existed in Reformation England. During Askew's time, authorship was not necessarily an individual, contained role; in some ways even an autobiographical story like this one belongs as much to the editor as it does to the first-person narrator. In Reformation England, that is, sometimes it took a village to raise a book.

The social context for Askew's imprisonment also complicates the authenticity of what survives as her story. Her social prominence drew her to the attention of authorities and her authoritative stance kept their attention. As a highly visible woman of relatively important social status, she was a perfect scapegoat for Protestant politics. In 1546, she denounced the doctrine of transubstantiation. For this, Askew was interrogated and then tortured on the rack. Her persecutors showed little mercy as they tortured Askew until her broken body was no longer capable of walking; in an infamous detail of Reformation history, Askew was escorted to her own execution in a chair. She was burned at the stake (her body covered in gunpowder) after she refused to recant. Rather than disappearing into the anonymity of history, however, Askew's story found a very eager and popular readership.

As reported by Bale, Askew's wit characterizes her language during her examination. In his extraordinary account, Askew evades one attempt after another to force her into a false confession or to recant. Her *sola scriptura* refrain is often peppered with an irreverence not lost on her examiners, and certainly not on us. She remarks, "I had rather to reade five lines in the bible, than to heare five masses in the temple." Such an insistence marks her as a classic rebel in the Reformation struggle against the ceremony and hierarchy that Protestants eschewed.

It is in the ballad attributed to Askew's pen while she was imprisoned that we find her possible vision of strength and power. Though it is not fully insurrectionist by intent, the ballad questions

authority on several levels and informs that questioning through faith:

Like as the armed knight  
Appointed to the field,  
With this world will I fight  
And Faith shall be my shield.

Faith is that weapon strong  
Which will not fail at need.  
My foes, therefore, among  
Therewith will I proceed.

As it is had in strength  
And force of Christes way  
It will prevail at length  
Though all the devils say nay.

Faith in the fathers old  
Obtained rightwisness  
Which make me very bold  
To fear no world's distress.

I now rejoice in heart  
And Hope bid me do so  
For Christ will take my part  
And ease me of my woe.

Thou saist, lord, who so knock  
, To them wilt thou attend.  
Undo, therefore, the lock  
And thy strong power send.

More enmyes now I have  
Than hairs upon my head.  
Let them not me deprave  
But fight thou in my stead.

On thee my care I cast.  
For all their cruel spight  
I set not by their haste  
For thou art my delight.

I am not she that list  
My anchor to let fall  
For every drizzling mist  
My ship substancial.

Not oft use I to wright  
In prose nor yet in rime,  
Yet will I shew one sight  
That I saw in my time.

I saw a rial throne  
Where Justice should have sit  
But in her stead was one  
Of moody cruel wit.

Absorpt was rightwisness  
As of the raging flood  
Sathan in his excess  
Suct up the guiltless blood.

Then thought I, Jesus lord,  
When thou shalt judge us all  
Hard is it to record  
On these men what will fall.

Yet lord, I thee desire

For that they do to me  
Let them not taste the hire  
Of their iniquity.

In the very first line of the ballad, Askew boldly identifies with a warrior as she likens herself to "the armed knight / Appointed to the field." Adopting a language of arms by employing an arsenal of words, Askew intriguingly characterizes her fight through the male combatant. Yet her voice is not eclipsed by this comparison, nor does she adopt the warrior figure as a persona; rather, she returns to a very personal "I" to recount her fight "[w]ith this world." The weapon for the Reformation woman is faith, and this reconceptualization of power dominates the ballad. This same mode of power, that "in the fathers old" provides a source of righteousness, also makes her "very bold." The stanza in which Askew challenges a "rial [royal] throne" characterized by an unjust, "moody cruel wit" offers an audacious insolence and contempt for royal authority. Indeed, throughout the ballad Askew challenges traditional sources of authority even as she locates herself within that tradition. Unabashedly empowered, Askew models an authority that makes possible rebellion in the face of certain torture and death. Though such valiance and courage, then, we see how Askew informs our understanding of the Reformation.

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#### **Suggestions for further reading:**

Beilin, Elaine V., ed. *The Examinations of Anne Askew*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Cressy, David. *Travesties and transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Freeman, Thomas S., and Sarah Elizabeth Wall. "Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs.'" *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 1165-1196.

Sherrin, Marshall. *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

#### **Study questions:**

How might Anne Askew, despite her extraordinary life, be taken as a historical representative of the role of women during the English Reformation?

How does Askew negotiate her own deviance as a source of her authority?

What conditions define the role of the martyr as the victim of a culture that nevertheless proves to be the source of her historical power?

What are the common features of life for women in the Reformation? How might a historian link, for example, the cultural codes informing the life of the martyr and the prostitute? The midwife and the nun?

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

A Summer 2003 NEH Institute.  
Directed by David Cressy  
and Lori Anne Ferrell.

## Church



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
Chori Ecclesiae Cathedralis S.  
Pauli. 1658

### The Eucharist

### Salvation

### Idolatry: Icons and Iconoclasm

### Reformation Women: The Case of Anne Askew

### • Good and Bad Clergy

### The Reformation and the Colonies

## Good and Bad Clergy

From the earliest efforts at Reformation of the Church of England (first under Henry VIII, then under his children-Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I), the English were preoccupied with distinctions between good and wicked clergy.



The first emblem in Thomas Stirry's *A Rot Amongst the Bishops*, published in 1641, nearly a century after those early reforming efforts, shows how persistently that preoccupation remained in English minds. Stirry's emblem attacks the wickedness of four prominent and powerful churchmen: Archbishop William Laud, then head of the Church of England, is first, followed by Sir John Lambe, Bishop Matthew Wren, and Sir Arthur Duck. Stirry's book portrays them as falling from power in yet another effort to reform the Church of England. In the emblem, these wicked men are riding in a ship, named "High Commission," piloted by a devil, and sailing right over "The Church & Commonwealth of England" straight for Hell. Lambe and Duck were civil

lawyers active in that Court of High Commission; it had been created to enforce uniformity in the worship service of every parish in England, and hence the duties of every pastor, according to Archbishop Laud's views of how the worship service should be conducted, views which some Englishmen, Stirry included, considered wicked. In the next emblem, the ship has almost totally sunk.



In what follows, you will be able to read documents, printed at various times over the seventeenth century, which set out the primary duties of pastors-to preach and to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. You will learn what the sacrament of the Eucharist was thought to be and then the importance of fervid preaching. This will lead to two fictional pieces. The first is part of a polemical dialogue between a zealous (or overly zealous) Puritan and a person whose pastor the Puritan condemns for not preaching properly. The second is a poem by George Herbert about preaching with at least two possible readings of the poem, once it is considered in the context of this sample of writing about the clergy.

In addition, some of the images will allow you to see the appearance and type-faces of books printed 400 years ago-books which look very much like the printed plays of Shakespeare.

Thomas Stirry, who was celebrating the fall of Laud and his crew satirically, also provided a verse commentary on this image linking these men to Satan.

The Infernall Tempter, when he first begun  
To trade for soules, no labour did he shun;  
He would not stay (for hast) to take advise,  
But trots on foot as farre as Paradise,  
Where he not ceast to use (be't good or bad)  
Such Retorick the Land of Darknesse had:  
And all to gaine that pure immortall breath,  
Blown from the spring of life, then free from death;  
And having got but one poore soule in store,  
Forthwith to it he addeth many more.

But now who lives, and doth not plainly see  
That under Heavens Star-spangled Canopie,  
Ther's scarce a place, or Countrey to be found,  
Wherein this Hell-born crew doth not abound;  
Deceiving soules and griping in their hands  
The wealth and riches of the fruitfull Lands,  
Witnesse this Iland, which not long agoe,  
Was in subjection to this Hell-born foe:  
For who can say he did not see, or heare,  
What sway the Lordly Prelates [often used as an abusive term for bishops] late did beare?  
None scarce durst preach without these Lords admission,

But streight were hoist aboard their High Commission,  
 Which in full Sayle here fixt before thine eyes,  
 Adumbrate plaine, that wicked Hierarchie;  
 'Tis now in pomp, and makes a glorious sight,  
 Though now 'tis faire, it may be foule ere night.  
 Now Winds obey, and send a Sovereigne gale,  
 Which makes these Sea-Men thus hoyst up their Sayle,  
 And o're blest Albions Church and State to ride,  
 Discharging Canons [a rule, law, or decree of the church, with a pun] in their furious pride;  
 Whence flew the Oath, Et Cetera [an oath pledging never to consent "to alter the government of  
 this Church by archbishops, deans, and archdeacons,  
 &c.;" Many found the "etc." far too broad for comfort.]; after came  
 A good strong Halter to conclude the game;  
 The Duck takes wing, and to the Topsayle flies,  
 And on a Flag a Processe [a writ or summons for a person to be brought into court and tried]  
 neatly tyes;  
 The Sayles have got a Licence, to proclaime,  
 No preaching 'thout a Licence in their name;  
 Their Colours are displaid, that all may see,  
 How in this Ship the Devill and they agree.  
 Hell's mouth wide open, sure it is to show,  
 Both Ship and Sayers with the Devill must goe. . . .

But he that sits in heaven did them deride,  
 He turned the streame in height of all their pride:  
 For turn the leafe, and there in brief I'll show,  
 What wofull shipwrack now they undergoe.

Partly because of Laud's thorough enforcement policies within the church, partly as a result of King Charles I's insistence on the divine right of kings to rule absolutely, and partly for economic and other reasons, a crisis was created in 1640: a rift opened between King and Parliament, and only two years later civil war broke out. Matters moved with such speed that by 1641, the Church of England had almost completely collapsed; many of the bishops (or "prelates," if one hated episcopacy) had fled or would flee or be imprisoned. Archbishop Laud, Bishop of Canterbury, was imprisoned, and as the war continued, he was executed, in 1645. The "Terrible Tempest" in his "See" had begun to engulf him, the pamphlet enthused, with a pun on a term for the authority or jurisdiction of a bishop.

The cartoon echoes back to that long-standing Protestant (and also Roman Catholic) suspicion that some pastors might mislead their flock. Rome created the Inquisition to regulate its clergy's teaching, among other things. In England under Elizabeth I, the "Court of High Commission" (Laud's ship in Stirry's emblem) was created in part to detect, reform, and, if necessary, punish pastors thought to be errant. Almost immediately its powers provoked uneasiness that it might function like the Roman Catholic Inquisition, and that uneasiness became increasingly fearful in the 1630s as William Laud was promoted by King Charles I to head the Church of England as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Although many Roman Catholic apologists felt that the Protestant reformers had innovated in matters of religion, Archbishop Laud was also commonly accused of "innovation" by Puritans, as well. One wants to remember that the clergy of the Church of England had, by and large, been firmly Protestant for almost a century by 1641; however, during the 1630s, Laud had proposed changes in the form of worship which severely emphasized both the separateness of the clergy from the laity and the beauty of the liturgy, much as the Roman Catholic Church was thought by Puritans to do. Furthermore, Laud stressed hierarchy in the Church, and with it, the power to punish lesser clergy who did not worship as his regime felt they should.

To be sure, the hierarchic distinction between clergy and laity as well as between bishops and lesser clergy was important from the very beginnings of the Protestant Church of England. That is evident if we turn way back to 1549, and *The forme and maner of making and consecrating of Archebishops Bishops Priestes and Deacons*.

"It is evident unto all men, diligently reading **holy scripture** and **ancient authors**, that from the **Apostles' time** there hath been these orders of Ministers in Christ's church: **Bishops**, and **Deacons**: which Offices were evermore had in such reverent estimation, that no man **by his own private authority** might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as were requisite for the same; and also, by public prayer, with **imposition of hands**, approved, and admitted thereto. And therefore, to the intent



these orders should be continued, and reverently used, and esteemed, in this Church of England, it is requisite, that no man (not being at this present [time] Bishop, Priest, nor Deacon) shall execute any of them, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted, according to the form hereafter following. . . . And every man which is to be admitted a Priest, shall be full twenty-four years old."

Reformed churches, including the Church of England, regularly traced their worship and doctrine back to "the Apostles' time," or to "ancient authors," as this tract does; they argued that the Roman Church had deviated from or corrupted the pure practices of the original apostles.

Pastors, in this view, were to experience a calling, were to examine themselves, and were to be examined and ordained by ordained bishops. The Protestant Church of England was part of what is called the "magisterial reformation," which emphasized "knowledge"—that is, an understanding of salvation through Christ and the signs of being one of the elect or a reprobate; the candidate was to know his own heart as well as his theology, and was to be examined by knowledgeable clergy as well.

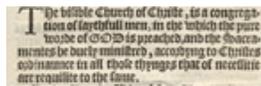
Finally, in the ceremony of ordination, a bishop touched the candidate (called "imposition of hands") as a sort of hands-on transmission, theoretically over generations, of the powers of the clergy.



The most basic duties of the clergy were outlined in Article Nineteen of the *Articles Whereunto it was Agreed by the Archbishops and Bishops in the yere 1562*, an English translation published in 1571 of the international, Latin edition, commonly referred to as *The Thirty-Nine Articles*:

"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. . . ."

The "visible" Church of England theoretically included all the citizens of England. Assuming that all citizens were not saved, contemporary writers also posited an "invisible church" consisting only of the redeemed. Pastors were to administer the two sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist. Those were the signs of a true church, and those were the basic duties of the pastors.



Administering the sacrament of the Eucharist involved changing the nature of the bread and wine. But, the Protestant church held that the bread and wine did not become the actual body and blood of Christ (the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation). Arthur Hildersham's *The Doctrine of communicating worthily in the Lords Supper* explained one change through question and answer:

Q. After the bread and wine have been thus consecrated by the minister of Christ, are they not then by vertue of this consecration changed from that which they were before?

A. Yes: but they are changed onely in their use, not in their nature; because here they are not used to that end, that other bread and wine are used for; namely, to the nourishment of the body, but to a holy and spiritual end; but the wine remaineth the very same after the consecration that it was before.

Bread and wine ordinarily nourish just the body, but consecrated bread and wine, although they remain bread and wine, have been changed from a physical to a spiritual use. Something spiritual has been added by the sacrament that the pastor performs.

Preaching the Word was another of the minister's primary duties. A small but telling example of the very great importance of preaching surfaced when William Perkins, probably the greatest and most influential Puritan theologian, re-worked an old pattern of meditation on "Christ Crucified." The aim of this pattern of meditation initially was for the meditator to picture imaginatively and to identify emotionally with all features of his execution—the pains he suffered, the abuse, the wounds, the nails—and thus to get as emotionally close as possible to God's gift of resurrection in the crucifixion. Perkins outlined a more bookish exercise for both pastors and members of the congregation, stressing the Protestant emphasis on lay-reading of the bible. The meditator is counseled "When thou readest" to apply some feature of the crucifixion to him/herself.

**"When thou readest** that Christ was taken and bound, thinke that thy sinnes brought him into the power of his enemies, and were the very bonds wherewith he was tied: thinke that thou shouldest have beene bound in the very same manner unles he had beene a suretie and pledge for thee: thinke also that thou in the self same manner art bound and tied with the chaines of thine own sinnes, and that by nature thy will, affections, and whole spirit is tied and chained to the will of the devill, so as thou canst doe nothing but that which he willeth: lastly, thinke and beleve that the bonds of Christ serve to purchase thy libertie from hell, death, and damnation, **When thou hearest** that he was brought before Annas and Caiaphas, thinke it was meet, that thy suretie and pledge who was to suffer the condemnation due unto thee, should by the high priest as by the mouth of God, be condemned: and wonder at this, that the very coessentiall and eternall sonne of God, even the very soveraigne judge of the world, stands to be judged, and that by wicked men; perswading thy selfe that this so great confusion comes of thy sinnes. Whereupon beeing further amazed at thy fearefull estate, humble thy self in dust and ashes, and pray God so to soften thy stonie heart, that thou maist turne to him, and by true faith lay hold on Christ, who hath thus exceedingly abased himselfe, that his ignominie may be thy glorie, and his arraignment thy perfect absolution."

"Read" or "Hear" and "Think"; that is the basic pattern of Perkins' meditation, appropriate for both laity and pastor. Reading is important, but the laity needs to be taught through sermons, as well.

In another work, *The arte of prophecying*, Perkins made suggestions for the actual act of preaching. The pastor must manifest "grace" in his life, that is "holinesse of the heart, and an unblamable life": "Which howsoever it makes not a Minister, yet it is very neessarie. 1. Because the doctrine of the word is hard both to understand and to be practised, therefore the Minister ought to expresse that by his example, which hee teacheth, as it were by a type. . . . 2. He that is not godly, howsoever hee may understand the Scriptures, yet doth he not perceive the inward sense and experience of the word in his heart. . . . 3. It is a thing execrable in the sight of God, that godly speech should bee conjoynd with an ungodly life. . . . It is a strange sight to see him, that is the guide of the way to others, to wander out of the way himselfe, and to see a Physitian of others to be ful of botches himselfe in the meane while. . . . 4. It is an ecclesiasticall secret: *that the Minister ought to cover his infirmities, that they be not seene*. For the simple people behold not the ministerie, but the person of the Minister. . . . *It is an easie matter to shew wisdome in words; teach me to live by thy life, this is the best teaching*. For words make not such an impression in the soule as workes doe. 5. A Minister, that is wicked either openly or secretly, is not worthy to stand before the face of the most holy, and the almightie God."

The pastor should live with "a good conscience. . . . If this be wanting, the mouth of the speaker is shut." Further a preacher must experience "an inward feeling of the doctrine to be delivered. Wood that is capable of fire, doth not burne, unlesse fire be put to it: and he must first be godly affected himselfe, who would stirre up godly affections in other men. Therefore what motions a sermon doth require, such the Preacher shall stirre up privately in his owne minde, that he may kindle up the same in his hearers. And the pastor must have "The fear of God, whereby, beeing throughly stricken with a reverent regard of Gods Majestie, he speaketh soberly and moderately."

Overall, one gets the impression that Perkins felt a successful preacher, one who taught and led his congregation fully, must have more than a good voice and pleasing words. He must feel what he teaches within, and live that feeling with his fellow humans.

But clearly, pastors did not perform those duties in a uniform way. Clerical differences emerge from the very beginning of a fictional argument concerning pastors between two characters, Zelotes and Atheos, who encounter each other while travelling. They were created by George Gifford in *A Briefe discourse of certaine points of the religion, which is among the common sort of Christians, which may be termed the Countrie Divinitie. With a manifest confutation of the same, after the order of a Dialogue* (1582), as they met traveling:

Zelotes says: Well overtaken my friende.

Atheos says: I thanke you.

Zelotes says: How farre doe youe travell this way?

Atheos says: Twentie myles.

Zelotes says: Doe you dwell in Essex.

Atheos says: Yea, not farr from Chelmsforde.

Zelotes says: What call yee the Towne where you dwell?

Atheos says: G. B. [anonymous town]

Zelotes says: Have yee a preacher there?

Atheos says: Wee have an honest man our Curat.

Zelotes says: Doth he teach his flock?

Atheos says: Hee doth his good will, and more ye cannot require of a man.

Zelotes says: Yee did commend him even now, to be an honest man.

Atheos says: Commende him: yea I maye commende him: I am perswaded wee have the beste Prieste in this Countrey, wee would bee lothe too forgoe him for the Learnedest of them all.

Zelotes says: I praye ye let mee heare what his virtues bee, for which yee doe commend him so highly.

Atheos says: He is as gentle a person as ever I see: a verve good fellowe, hee will not sticke when good Fellowes and honest men meete together too spende his groate at the Alehouse: I cannot tell, they preache and preache, but hee doeth live as well as the best of them all. I am afrayde when he is gone wee shall never have the like againe.

Zelotes says: Bee these the greate vertues whiche yee doe commend him for, hee maye have all these, and yet be more meete for to keepe swine, then too bee a Sheapherde over the flocke of Christe, is hee able to teache the people, and doeth hee instruct them in Gods word?

Atheos says: I knowe not what teaching yee woulde have, hee doeth reade the service, as well as anye of them all, and I thinke there is as good edifyng in those prayers and Homilies, as in anye that the Preacher canne make: let us learne those first.

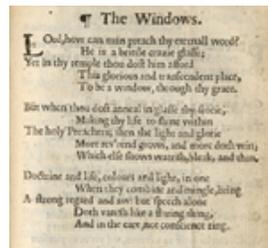
Zelotes says: That is not all which is required of a Minister, for a boye of tenne yeers olde canne doe all this: doeth hee not teache them too knowe the will of GOD and reprove nauughtinesse among the people?

Atheos says: Yes that hee doeth, for if there be anye that doe not agree, hee will seeke for too make them friends: for hee will gette them too playe a game or two at Bowles or Cardes, and too drynke together at the Alehouse: I thynke it a Godlye waye, to make Charitie: hee is none of those busie Controulers: for if hee were, hee could not be so well liked of some (and those not of the meanest) as he is.

The zealous Christian perhaps thinks himself a member of the invisible church or wishes to convert his opponent, styled an atheist, into one of its members. He asks "Doth [Atheos' pastor] teach his flock?" and he repeats "is hee able to teache the people, and doth he instruct them in Gods word?" In his view, a pastor teaches through preaching, and Gifford's Zelotes feels that is essential. Atheos comments that in contrast to his pastor, other pastors "preache and preache"; his reads the official Book of Homilies.

Atheos does not want the "learnedest" pastor; he appreciates one who will "spende his groat at the Alehouse," and who smoothes strife among his parishioners by getting "them to playe a game or two at Bowles or Cards" or having them "drinke together." Games and drink are anathema to the Puritan Zelotes, however. In his view, the man is a bad and misleading pastor.

Atheos' belief that it is "a Godlye waye, to make Charitie," or love, has considerable attraction for most readers, particularly given the Apostle Paul's view that, of the three Christian virtues, Love was greater than faith and hope. Something of that sentiment may color George Herbert's poem "The Windows":



### The Windows

Lord how can man preach thy eternal word?  
He is a brittle crazie glasse:  
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford  
This glorious and transcendent place  
To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou does anneal in glasse thy storie,  
Making thy life to shine within  
The holy Preachers; then the light and glorie  
More rev'rend grows, & more doth win  
Which else shows watrish, bleak, & thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one  
When they combine and mingle, bring  
A strong regard and aw: but speech alone  
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,  
And in the eare, not conscience ring.

"The Windows" occurs in *The Temple*, a collection of Herbert's poems published after his death in 1633. Like this one, some of his poems depart from, or comment on, architectural features of a standard church of the time—poems with titles like "The Altar," "Church-monuments," "Church-lock and key," and "The Church-floore."

Clearly, the poem is focused on preaching, first by raising the question how a finite human can present the eternal deity in human speech, since humans and human language, like glass, can crack, or break, or have no strength.

There *is* hope, however, since in church the pastor can become a "window"—letting in light and enlightening the congregation; it is well to remember that churches did not have electric lighting and that many windows in many churches were stained. At times, the poem suggests, the deity can "anneal" (that is, heat the glass to fix the coloring) his "story" (perhaps the story of the gospels or, as Perkins suggests, the crucifixion) so that it shines within "the holy Preachers." When that happens, perhaps this glowing "more doth win" than at other times, perhaps in other places, perhaps in other moods. Win more what? Win how and whom? The line is a puzzle.

The third stanza seems to oppose the words of a preacher against the glowing of a "window-like" *life*. "Speech alone / Doth vanish like a flaring thing." It affects the ear, not the conscience.

Is this poem attacking pastors like Zelotes, who stressed preaching? It is possible. *The Temple* was published in the same year that that great "innovator," William Laud, became Archbishop of Canterbury. Many contemporaries, both those who stressed preaching and those who stressed (as did Laud) administration of the sacraments, might well have read the poem that way.

Further, Laud stressed the importance of "the beauty of holiness," which led him to refurbish and redecorate many churches—including the stained glass. "The Windows" certainly can be read as evoking "the beauty of holiness." When Laud fell, to Stirry's delight, some Puritans destroyed stained glass windows in reaction to Laud's efforts.

At the same time, Herbert's verse often shows a very common, basic, English, Calvinist approach to Christian life and doctrine, and one could wonder if the gift of light and especially of color in the poem might be to suggest a kind of zeal. Here we need to think about the conventional form of sermons. The preacher began almost always with a biblical verse or text. He then explained what "doctrines" of Christian life the text illustrated or taught. Finally, he would close the sermon with "uses" or "applications," suggesting how one might live out the doctrine. The phrase "Doctrine and life" then might suggest the need for a zealous, glowing living out of Christian faith inspired by zealous preaching.

Finally Perkins' remarks about preaching, published more than three decades before Herbert's *The Temple*, might also be taken as a gloss on "The Windows." Recall that a preacher was to experience "an inward feeling of the doctrine to be delivered." Perkins illuminated that with a striking simile: "Wood that is capable of fire, doth not burne, unlesse fire be put to it: and he must first be godly affected himselfe, who would stirre up godly affections in other men." Another comment might as well gloss the poem: "words make not such an impression in the soule as workes doe."

In short, we can read Herbert's poem as celebrating "the beauty of holiness" as well as illuminating William Laud's program for the Church of England. But we can also read it as manifesting the Puritan values of successful preaching which Perkins put forth, especially in his fiery simile.

And perhaps more importantly, Herbert's poem and its place in this small sampling of language about good and bad clergy may suggest that historical terms which indicate massive oppositions in the Church of England—like Puritan versus Anglican—distort the picture of a church in which much language was *shared*. Clerics and laypersons who made considerable noise about their differences concerning lesser matters also joined their voices together in praise of their God.

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

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and Lori Anne Ferrell.

## Church



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677),  
Chori Ecclesiae Cathedralis S.  
Pauli, 1658

### The Eucharist

### Salvation

### Idolatry: Icons and Iconoclasm

### Reformation Women: The Case of Anne Askew

### Good and Bad Clergy

### • The Reformation and the Colonies

## The Reformation and the Colonies

Perhaps the most famous children of the Reformation are the first settlers of the New England colonies, Puritans whose split with the Church of England was both ideological and geographical. The "Great Migration," a Puritan exodus from Stuart England occurring roughly between 1630 and 1642, ties the colonies to the English Reformation in compelling ways. The Puritans were of course trying to "purify" the church, to rid it of rituals and politics that they believed interfered with their faith. Seen as a religious exodus of the "true" believers, the migration was a source of both anxiety and hope in England.

The fear was that England itself was being corrupted by Catholic influence in the Church of England. The colonies then became a symbol of religious fervor and a cleansing of spiritual power. The fact that some English citizens chose to brave an ocean and an unknown, harsh land in order to seek out a community in which their faith might be practiced outside the corruption in England proved to many that England was in a period of moral decline. For example, John Milton expressed the anxiety in his *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England* (1641):

"[W]hat numbers of faithfull, and freeborn Englishmen, and good Christians have bin constrain'd to forsake their dear dearest home, their friends, and kindred, whom nothing but the wide Ocean, and the savage deserts of *America* could hide and shelter from the fury of the Bishops. O Sir, if we could but see the shape of our deare Mother *England*, as Poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appeare, think ye, but in a mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children expos'd at once, and thrust from things of dearest necessity, because their conscience could not assent to things which the Bishops thought *indifferent*. Let the Astrologer be dismay'd at the portentous blaze of comets, and impressions in the aire as foretelling troubles and changes to states: I shall beleieve there cannot be a more ill-boding signe to a Nation (*God* turne the Omen from us) then when the Inhabitants, to avoid insufferable grievances at home, are inforc'd by heaps to forsake their native Country." (56-57)

Milton contends in this short passage that a personified Mother England would be found in mourning over her concern over her exiled children. This powerful image of the nation from one of its greatest writers reveals that, to Reformation England, the colonies were proof of great cultural stress, as these "orphans" sought a new parent land. Yet, as if this single separation were not enough, these children of the Reformation soon discovered not a "new" land but an old problem, of factions within the faction. Staunchly determined to set up a truly reformed church in America, the British colonists sought, some say in vain, for what they collectively imagined as a "city on a hill." This was to be a model community for all to copy and admire, with a single vision of the church and of the moral behavior expected from its members.

One little-known explorer, Sir William Alexander, noted in his travelogue that this dream of forming the perfect theocracy was being realized in the colonies. Alexander's comments are particularly interesting to look at in contrast to Milton's, for Alexander was no famous bard, and spoke from the position not of a literary giant but of a common explorer. In his work *The Mapp and Description of New-England* (1630), Alexander characterized America in much more inviting terms than Milton's cry for his orphaned brethren. A fairly obscure figure in the history of exploring and settling America, Alexander's is a typical voice of the colonial Reformation that promises a land friendly to the true Christian:



"I have never remembered anything with more admiration then *America*, considering how it hath pleased the Lord to locke it up so long amidst the depths, concealing it from the curiositie of the Ancients, that it might be discovered in a fit time for their prosperitie, they were so farr of old from apprehending it by any reach of reason, that the most learned men (as they thought) by infallible grounds, in regard of the degrees of the Heaven, did hold that these zones could not be inhabited, which now are knowne to include the most pleasant parts in the world.

"But leaving these worldly respects, the greatest encouragement of all for any true Christian is this, that here is a large way for advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to whom Churches may bee builded in places where his Name was never knowne; and if the Saints of Heaven rejoyce at the

conversion of a Sinner, what exceeding joy would it bee to them to see many thousands of Savage people (who doe now live like brute beasts) converted unto God, and I wish (leaving these dreames of Honour and Profit, which doe intoxicate the braines, and impoyson the mind with transitory pleasures) that this might bee our chiefe end to begin a new life, serving God more sincerely then before, to whom we may draw more neere, by retryng our selves further from hence." (44)

For Alexander, selling America's strong points and its ability to fuse prosperity with Christianity justifies his possible desire to explore further land prospects and to expand the colonial boundaries. The idea that America has been a pristine Edenic land preserved throughout the history of the world for the English explorers to claim also justifies their colonization of Indian land. He also manages to read a Christian destiny into the American landscape, a common theological position among the colonists.

Both Milton and Alexander find themselves "in a fit time," a historical moment when church reform became one of the central motivators for cultural change. Both writers remind us, too, that the colonies were essentially an attempt to perfect a theocracy, an understanding often eclipsed by America's later revolution in the name of democratic liberty. Alexander's notion that America was "[locked] up," waiting for the colonists and their efforts to purify the church, refigures the landscape not as a *tabula rasa* awaiting Christian doctrine, but a land of natives in desperate "need" of conversion and a place where material concerns no longer govern the human heart. The colonial side of the Reformation, then, might be understood not simply as an exodus from persecution and corruption, but one toward a landscape in which divinity might truly reside in the faithful. As politically misguided as we might believe this mission to be, the promise that one might please God all the more by advancing the Christian faith in native American cultures is an important element in the history of the Reformation, in part because it reveals how the cultural anxiety over "impurity" led thousands of English Protestants to impose that anxiety on a set of entirely foreign cultures in America. The newness of the landscape thus becomes valued as the last place where reform is possible, and the persecution of American Indians might be productively read through this lens as a Reformation ideology.

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

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## Court

[Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall](#)

[The Masque](#)

[Full-text of Thomas Carew and Inigo Jones's \*Coelum Britannicum\*, 1633.](#)

## Court Introduction



[Wenceslaus Hollar \(1607-1677\).](#)

[Palatium Regis propè Londinium, vulgo White-hall.](#)

"In the court I exist and of the court I speak but what the court is, God knows. I know not." So wrote Walter Map, a twelfth-century courtier, in *De Nugis Curialium* (3). Historians—trying to come to terms with the ambiguous nature of the court—have quoted him ever since. Part of the difficulty in defining the term derives from the fact that contemporaries would interchangeably refer to the court as a location, an institution, a group of people, or even an event.

While it may be hard to define the court precisely, we can identify some of its aspects: The court only existed in the presence of the monarch, and its membership included those with access to the monarch's presence. When the court occurred in one of the monarch's official residences, household ordinances regulated who could gain sight of the monarch. Within Stuart palaces, for instance, there were five main state rooms: the Guard Chamber, the Presence Chamber, the Privy Chamber, the Withdrawing Room, and the Bed Chamber. The access to each room was successively more restrictive. Only peers and the closest of the monarch's servants, for instance, were allowed to enter the Withdrawing Room. These barriers that restricted access, however, were constantly being assaulted by courtiers who sought more intimate access to the monarch; for access to the monarch not only meant the opportunity to importune a favor, it also implied to all onlookers that the gainer of access had political power and social eminence. Literary historian Tom Bishop has stated that "the court often functioned like a series of locked rooms, with those outside always trying keys and those inside constantly changing locks" ("Gingerbread Host," 89)

The court obviously attracted individuals who sought access to the monarch, but it functioned as more than simply a place to catch the monarch's eye. The court was the social and cultural epicenter of the country and a recruitment office for the administration. As the historian G.R. Elton famously put it, the court also served as one of the three main points of contact between the Crown and the local ruling elites (along with the Parliament and the Privy Council). In fact, because Parliament met so rarely and the membership of the Privy Council was so small in early Stuart England, the court was the main point of contact with the monarch. Within the court, the Crown could disseminate its ideas to the local ruling elites and, ideally, hear from them as well.

The following essays examine the architectural and performative aspects of the Stuart court; both contributed to the Crown's strategy of retaining the central position in a society increasingly under pressure from a variety of sources:

[Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall](#)

[The Masque](#)

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## Court

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Inigo Jones' Banqueting  
House at Whitehall

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The Masque

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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).

*Palatium Regis propè Londinium, vulgo White-hall*, [mid seventeenth century].

ART Vol. b16 no.251.

A view of Whitehall Palace showing the buildings of the chief royal palace from the time of Henry VIII to William III. Behind the first row of buildings is the new Banqueting House (1619-1622), designed and built by Inigo Jones.

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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Palatium Regis propè Londinium,*  
*vulgo White-hall,*

### • Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall

#### The Masque

[Full-text of Thomas Carew and Inigo Jones's \*Coelum Britannicum\*, 1633.](#)

## Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall

One of the most important sites of court activity within Whitehall Palace was the Banqueting House, designed by Inigo Jones (1573-1652). Commissioned by James I, Jones's building replaced an older Tudor structure that burnt down in 1619. The Banqueting House was completed in 1622.



The Banqueting House is considered the first Renaissance building in England designed by the first English architect in the Italian sense of the word. Following the model of the architects in Italy, Jones was not a mere craftsman, but also an artist who knew design and theory. He ultimately became a gentleman of the court. Little is known of Jones's early life, but from 1598 to 1603 he was traveling on the Continent, studying painting and the other arts. It was during this trip that he purchased a copy of Andrea Palladio's *I quattro libri d'architettura* (Venice, 1570). With the succession of James I, Jones returned home and began to work as a "picture-maker," or portrait painter. Soon he became a designer of the scenery, costumes, and stage effects of court masques, often working in collaboration with the poet Ben Jonson (1572-1637). From 1613, Jones was once again traveling abroad, this time to Italy in the entourage of Lord Arundel (1585-1646), an important collector of antiquities. During this trip, Jones made an intensive study of Palladio's villas, civic buildings, and churches in the Veneto. After visiting Rome, Naples, and other cities, Jones returned to England in 1615, where he was appointed Surveyor of the Works, putting him in charge of all royal building projects.



With the Banqueting House, Jones introduced a new style of architecture to England based on the Renaissance ideals of Palladio (1508-1580). The facade, modeled after Palladian prototypes, is built of drafted stone and takes the form of superimposed orders, Ionic and Corinthian, resting on a basement story. Engaged columns articulate the three central bays; coupled pilasters, the ends of the facade. The windows, with triangular and segmental pediments on the main floor, and straight lintels on the floor above, as well as the decorative details, including the swags in the frieze, are all in accordance with the style of Palladio. As two early sketches now in the Chatsworth collection indicate, the preliminary designs were even more Palladian, each with a pediment over the center, in the mode of Palladio's villas.

Inside, the building demonstrates even more clearly the classical ideals of the Renaissance. The large hall, corresponding physically to the two main stories of the facade, is located above a basement level that contained an artificial grotto for drinking parties. In accordance with the classical rules of geometry presented by Palladio in his treatise, the hall has the form and proportions of a double cube (110 feet by 55 feet by 55 feet). In accordance with classical rules of decorum, it is modeled on the ancient Roman basilica, as described and reconstructed by Palladio. Jones, however, replaced the typical side aisles with a cantilevered balcony supported by Ionic engaged columns with Corinthian pilasters above. The original domed niche at the southern end of the space was removed in 1626.

The Banqueting House was used for state banquets and receptions of ambassadors, as well as masques. During these performances, large number of spectators gathered in Jones's grand two-story space, as well as above in the balcony along with the musicians. The stage was constructed at one end of the space, and the masquers, dressed in Jones's costumes, performed verses, songs, and dances against the backdrop of Jones's scenery. In 1635, ceiling paintings by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), depicting the apotheosis of James I and an allegory of the birth of Charles I, were installed. These paintings completed what Jones created at the Banqueting House—an appropriate setting, functionally and symbolically, for one of the most important rituals of the early Stuart Court—the masque.

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

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## Court



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
Palatium Regis propè Londinium,  
vulgo White-hall

### Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall

#### • The Masque

Full-text of Thomas Carew and  
Inigo Jones's *Coelum  
Britanicum*, 1633.

## The Masque

Masques were ephemeral combinations of dancing, music, costumes, spoken text, and scenery, at all of which the audience looked not only for entertainment, but also to detect political currents: the main dancers in the masque were not paid professionals, but rather the elite of society. Unfortunately for scholars, very often only the written text of a masque has survived, and, since Ben Jonson penned many of these texts, they have become the primary objects of literary scholarly investigation. But in the eyes of the audience, the words may have ranked a distant sixth behind the scenery, costumes, music, the identity of the participants, and, most importantly, the abilities of those participants as performers. When we read the text of a masque and try to recreate the experience of a seventeenth-century audience, it is like trying to reconstruct a performance of *42nd Street* or *The Lion King* based solely on the script.

In some sense, the masque was an elaborate dance, and it is helpful to think about its components. As Leeds Barroll describes the masque in *Anna of Denmark*, all masques had a central motif, called a device, which determined the costumes, scenery, and even the types of dances. Devices could be provided by distant lands or places of mythology. In the first part of the masque, the device was introduced through a small playlet performed by professionals (the masquers themselves, being aristocrats, would not perform the socially demeaning task of acting). The masquers would then present themselves to the king and audience. In the second part of the masque—known as the measure—the masquers performed conventional dances. Barroll describes one such dance, "the sideways single," as follows: "one dancer holding the hands of the other . . . stepped apart sideways, inside knees bent, outside feet flat on the ground but rising to the toes by the close of the beat. The second beat moved the inside leg away from the partner to join the other foot, both feet now on tip toes but sinking to the heels at the close of the beat, partners continuing to hold hands, now slightly lowered. On the third and fourth beats, the sequence was reversed to move the couple back together, the joined hands lifted slightly as the hip of each dancer was gracefully raised a little to the side when stepping." (85). Following the measure, the original masquers invited certain of the on-lookers of the opposite sex to join them in the dancing. This was not a courtship ritual, but rather a predetermined selection based on political concerns. In the fourth part of the dance, all the participants on stage took new partners and danced in a faster manner than previously. Finally, the fifth part was a final dance for the original masquers in which they danced, unmasked, and joined the king for refreshments.

Dancing clearly lay at the heart of the masque. Dancing for aristocrats was not an exercise in leisure, but rather a demonstration of command and control. Replete as early modern thought was with correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm, control of one's own body signified the ability to command others. Riding, that other great aristocratic pastime, likewise demonstrated one's ability to command and control. Since control was central to the idea of dance, the audiences did not appreciate outrageous gestures but, as the name of the dance indicates, measured paces. Dancers, for instance, never danced on toe, but raised their foot only halfway.

The masque may have been a display of aristocratic talent and protocol. It was also a highly politicized event. The study of the masque as a political device owes much to the work of Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong. Orgel described the masque as pure panegyric, designed simply to glorify (and perhaps even deify) the king. In the text of most masques, the performers are interrupted by anti-masquers, signs of disorder, but often the king, by his very presence, restores order. Not only did the masques portray the king as omnipotent, but also as nearly omniscient. The theatrical setting of the masque was devised so that the king alone experienced the full force of the perspectival illusion. The masque also acted as a way of demonstrating hierarchy in the society, for, as Orgel argued, "the closer one sat to the monarch the 'better' one's place was, an index to one's status, and more directly, to the degree of favor one enjoyed" (11).

Many historians have seen the masque as the quintessential sign of Stuart isolation. Instead of listening to the complaints of the people, they heard only the empty flattery of the masque. Recent scholars, however, have read masques against the grain, seeing in them criticism of the court as well as compliments to it. Martin Butler has stressed that in the reign of James I, for example, the masques could represent the views of the Prince of Wales or the Queen. Kevin Sharpe sees the masque as relaying real complaints to the ears of the king. As he states, "the antimasque is such

a forceful feature of some of the Caroline texts that the debates, the doubts and difficulties of the antimasques are never completely dispelled" (194). Sharpe further claims that of all Stuart masques, *Coelum Britannicum* most clearly demonstrates such criticism.

### Coelum Britannicum



On 18 February 1633, Thomas Carew and Inigo Jones presented their masque, *Coelum Britannicum*. The plot of this masque is quite simple: Mercury descends from Olympus to inform Charles I and Henrietta Maria that their example of conjugal bliss had made such an impression on the gods that the Roman deities had forsaken their adulterous, immoral pursuits and have reformed heaven. Momus, the god of ridicule, then appears to tell the royal couple that not only have the gods changed their behavior, but—in an attempt to encourage morality—they have decided to rid the heavens of any constellation that celebrates impiety. Then, in a series of antimasques, the constellations of Cancer, Capricorn, Hercules, and the Lion dance in a manner that shows their impious nature. Then, "the stars are quenched" (presumably the candles were blown out) and Momus announces that a new election will take place to fill the empty space in the heavens. Such figures as Poverty, Pleasure, and Fortune come, but each is found wanting. Finally, it is resolved that Charles I and Henrietta Maria will themselves become the chief constellation, and the masquers celebrate this with dances and elaborate special effects.

All this is standard fare for Stuart masques, but the character of Momus complicates this one. A god of ridicule in the midst of panegyric seems out of place. While the masque celebrates moral reformation, Momus makes ribald jokes. While the masque praises Henrietta Maria and Charles I, Momus jabs at Catholicism (Henrietta's religion) and arbitrary government (Charles I's predilection). In fact, Momus's blunt and plain prose is juxtaposed with Mercury's overwritten verse, thereby ridiculing the nature of the genre itself. Yet, despite the jabs at the crowned heads and their chief form of self-representation, Momus is, after all, the god of ridicule. Perhaps his criticism is like that of a court jester: funny, but not to be taken all that seriously.

### The Author



*Coelum Britannicum* was Thomas Carew's only masque. The son of Matthew Carew, a Master of Chancery, Thomas entered Merton College at Oxford at the age of thirteen. Thomas began to study at the Inns of Court at the age of 17, but a lack of diligence and a reversal in family fortune meant that he could no longer pursue his studies. His father found him a position as secretary to Sir Dudley Carleton, the English Ambassador to Venice, and the husband of Matthew Carew's niece. Thomas Carew seems to have performed admirably: in 1616, Sir Dudley Carleton brought Thomas along on his ambassadorship to the Netherlands. But Thomas was soon to fall out of favor. He had written a libel that ridiculed both Sir Dudley and his Lady. Upon discovering this document among Thomas's papers, Carleton sent him back to England. We do not know how Thomas supported himself after this dismissal, but he had become notable enough at court to gain the ceremonial court post of Carver, and, by the 1620s, Carew started to compose verse, most notably the erotic poem *A Rapture*. Carew died in 1640, probably of syphilis.

### The Masquers



James Stuart, Duke of Lennox (Scottish Title) (1612-55): Relative of the king and a ward of James I. Although of Scottish decent and having a Scottish title, Stuart was baptized and educated in England. In the English Civil Wars, he would become one of the strongest supporters of the king, lending over £40,000 and volunteering to be executed in lieu of the king.

William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire (1617-84): After the performance of this masque, Cavendish became Lord Lieutenant of Devonshire (1638). During the Civil Wars, he fought with the King at York, but left England for three years. Cavendish was one of the first members of the Royal Society in

the Restoration.



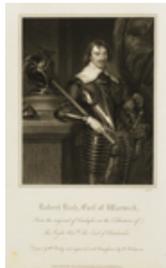
Henry Rich, Earl of Holland (1590-1649): Before the masque, Henry Rich—the second son of the first Earl of Warwick and the grandson of the first Earl of Essex—had served as an MP for Leicester, ambassador to France, a privy councilor, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and Master of the Horse, to name just a few of his positions. In the English Civil Wars, Rich, known for his Presbyterian leanings, waffled between supporting the Parliament and the king. Although he served the Parliament as a Lord Lieutenant and was sent by them to negotiate with the king, he joined the rising for the king in 1648 and was executed for treason in 1649.



Mountjoy Blount, Earl of Newport (1597-1666): Blount was one of the three illegitimate sons of Charles Blount, Earl of Devonshire. Blount served in the military both in the debacle at the Isle of Rhe and as Rear Admiral in the expedition to Cadiz. During the English Civil War Blount fought on the side of the king, serving as Lieutenant General of the North.

Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin (Scottish Title) (1599-1663): Bruce attended the king in Scotland in 1633 and received his MA from Oxford the year after the performance of *Coelum Britannicum*. In 1638, he was knighted at Windsor along with the Prince of Wales.

William Villiers, Viscount Grandeson (Irish Title) (1614-43): Son of Sir Edward Villiers, President of Munster. Like Thomas Bruce, Villiers was knighted at Windsor with the Prince of Wales. Villiers died during the English Civil War, fighting for the king and along Prince Rupert at the siege of Bristol.



Robert Rich, styled Lord Rich (1611-1659): Rich had served as MP for Essex in 1628/9. Unlike his father, the Earl of Warwick, who sided with Parliament during the English Civil War, Robert Rich supported the king, joining his troops at Oxford. Rich later took the Commonwealth's covenant.

Basil Feilding, styled Viscount Feilding (1608-75): Served as ambassador to Venice from 1634-1638. In opposition to his father, Feilding joined the Parliamentary forces, leading a regiment of horse and then later serving as a Major General, and the Speaker of the House of Lords.

George Digby, styled Earl Digby, (1612-1677): George Digby, the eldest son of John Digby the earl of Bristol, is more often known as the Earl of Bristol, a title he received in 1653. He served as an MP for Dorset in 1640-41 and was one of the members who managed the impeachment of Stratford. Digby backed away from this stance, however, voting against the impeachment and then becoming a supporter of the king after 1641. Digby served the king as a Colonel of the Horse, Privy Councilor, and Secretary of State. Digby joined Charles II in exile, fighting in the French Army and, until he became Catholic in 1657, as Secretary of State. Digby (or Bristol as he was then known) was a major political figure during the reign of Charles II.

Richard Boyle, styled Viscount Dungarvin (Irish Title) (1612-1697): Boyle, who would later become Earl of Cork and Earl of Burlington, was the brother both to the famous scientist and to the less famous playwright. Boyle had just returned from a two-year European tour at the time of the masque. Boyle fought for the king in Ireland, but after the king's forces lost he went to the Continent for several years.

Randall MacDonnel, styled Lord Dunluce (Irish Title) (1609-1683): Son and heir of the Earl of Antrim. MacDonnel is famous for leading an unsuccessful attack on Scotland at the beginnings of the Civil Wars. He believed that if he could bring an Irish army to Scotland the entire MacDonnel Clan would join him. The attempt failed.

Philip Wharton, Baron Wharton (1613-95): Wharton also had been abroad before the masque, traveling in Europe 1629-1632. During the Civil War, Wharton, a devout Presbyterian, sided with the Parliament fighting at Edgehill (among other battles).

William Paget, Baron Paget (1609-78): Paget was the son-in-law of Henry Rich, Earl of Holland. Paget, like Holland, waffled between the Parliament and the King, serving the Parliament through 1642, joining the king from 1643-4, and then returning to Parliament's side in 1645.

Alexander Abernathy, Lord Saulton of Abernathy (Scottish Title) (1611-68): Soon after the

masque this Scottish Lord suffered financial difficulties.

One of the first things to note is that the masquers in *Coelum Britannicum* are generally young, as would be expected of dancers. The eldest is Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, at the age of 45, but except for two other dancers in their 30s, the rest are under the age of 27. Secondly, they represent all three kingdoms. Such a strategy of including representatives of Scotland, Ireland, and England in the performance of *Coelum Britannicum* aligns with the king's desire to create cohesiveness throughout his kingdoms. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the selection of masquers is the number who had religious and political views that clashed with Charles's agenda of establishing a church replete with ceremony and ritual. Five of the masquers had Puritan or Parliamentary tendencies. Such selections make us wonder why Charles invited his political adversaries to dance, something we might assume was a sign of the king's favor. Was he attempting to change the minds of these five individuals? Did he want the world to see that even his political opponents supported him? Or did Charles simply separate the court from politics?

Brian Weiser

[Full-text of Thomas Carew and Inigo Jones's Coelum Britannicum. 1633.](#)

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## Court

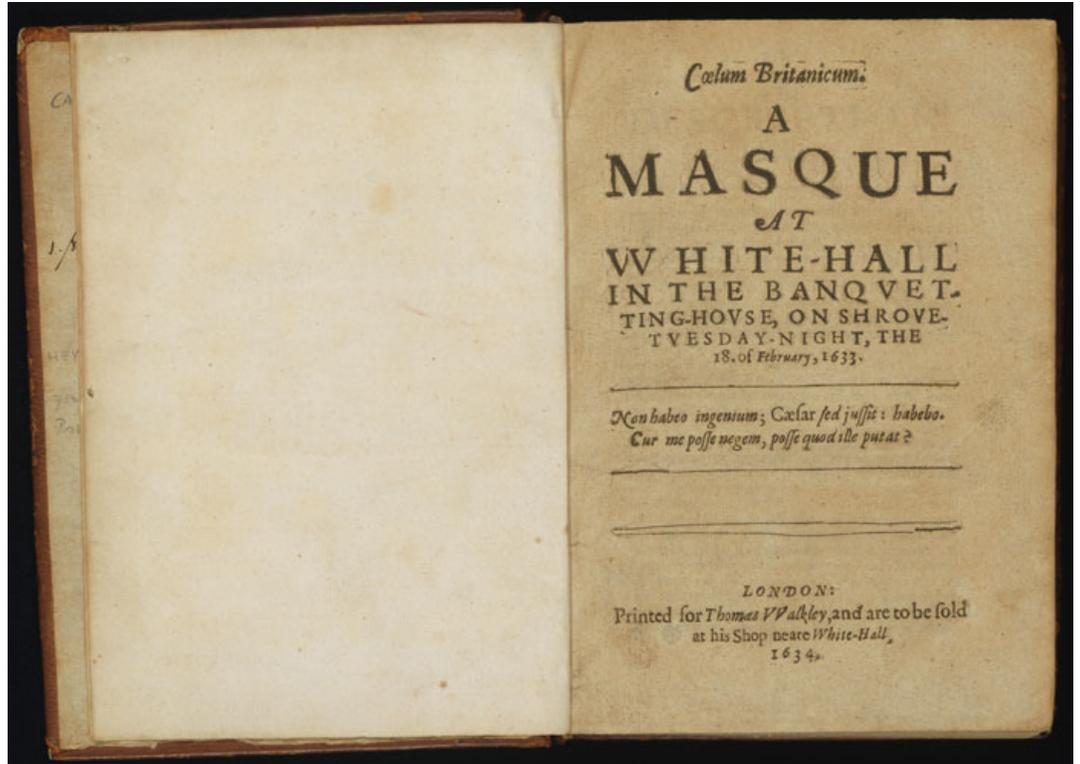
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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Palatium Regis propè Londinium,*  
vulgo *White-hall.*

### Inigo Jones' Banqueting House at Whitehall

#### • The Masque



Carew, Thomas (1595?-1639?).

*Coelum Britannicum. A masque at White-Hall in the Banqueting-House, on Shrove-Tuesday-night, the 18. of February, 1633.*

London: printed for Thomas VValkley, and are to be sold at his shop neare White-Hall, 1634.

STC 4619.

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

A Summer 2003 NEH Institute.  
Directed by David Cressy  
and Lori Anne Ferrell.

## Parliament

**The Duke of Buckingham and Parliament**

**Parliament, the People and Physical Space in the 1641-1642 Petitioning Campaigns**

**Women and Parliament in Seventeenth-Century England: The Examples of Lady Eleanor Davies and the Leveller Petitioners**

**Succession in Elizabethan Parliamentary Culture**

[Full-text of \*The Citizens of London's Humble Petition to the Right Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses of the Commons House in Parliament, 1641.\*](#)

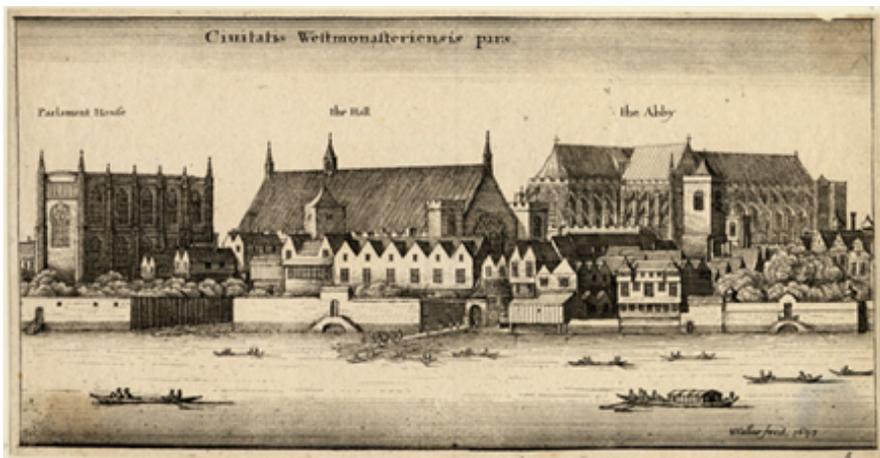
[Full-text of \*A Bloody Masacre Plotted by the Papists, 1641.\*](#)

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[Full-text of \*An Acte whereby certayne offences be made treason, 1571.\* Includes study questions.](#)

## Parliament Introduction



[Wenceslaus Hollar \(1607-1677\).  
\*Civitas Westmonasteriensis Pars, 1647.\*](#)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Parliament played a significant role in English political culture. Both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I sought Parliamentary approval for the major policy changes associated with the Protestant Reformation. In the later sixteenth century, Parliament—often to the Crown's chagrin—presumed to offer unsolicited counsel on matters ranging from religious policy to the royal succession. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Parliament claimed increasing power to advise the Crown, although rarely without controversy. In the 1620s, both James I and Charles I complained of Parliament's frequent intrusions into matters of state secrecy, ecclesiastical policy, and political power; in the 1630s, Charles I attempted to rule without the guidance of Parliaments; and, in the 1640s, these contests flared into civil war.

Superficially, Parliament seems to have steadily grown in power over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, eventually emerging in the civil war era as a powerful political entity in its own right. Parliament was not, however, a monolithic or monovalent institution. Rather, Westminster often witnessed bitter contests. Within the institution of Parliament, debate and discord were facts of life. In the House of Commons, Members sparred with each other over matters of policy, but also engaged in interpersonal disputes. Similarly, relations between the House of Commons and the House of Lords could be contentious and strained.

The two Houses of Parliament were not insulated from the outside world. The physical space in which Parliament conducted its business was part of the living city of Westminster. A constant bustle of clerks, lawyers, and ordinary tradespeople moved through the environs of Parliament's meeting spaces. Their presence added to the cacophony of sounds and confusion under normal circumstances. During moments of political anxiety or uncertainty, the presence of large numbers of men and women moving about Westminster could affect the business of Parliament. During the civil war era, Parliament's close proximity to the City of London made it a magnet for political protest and agitation.

The following essays explore four discrete moments in the Tudor and Stuart periods that help to reveal deeper tensions relating to Parliament's functions, roles, and responsibilities:

[The Duke of Buckingham and Parliament](#)

[Parliament, the People and Physical Space in the 1641-1642 Petitioning Campaigns](#)

[Succession in Elizabethan Parliamentary Culture](#)

[Women and Parliament in Seventeenth-Century England: The Examples of Lady](#)



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## Parliament

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**The Duke of Buckingham  
and Parliament**

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**Parliament, the People and  
Physical Space in the  
1641-1642 Petitioning  
Campaigns**

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**Succession in Elizabethan  
Parliamentary Culture**

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**Women and Parliament in  
Seventeenth-Century  
England: The Examples of  
Lady Eleanor Davies and  
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[Full-text of \*The Citizens of  
London's Humble Petition to the  
Right Honourable the Knights,  
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Commons House in Parliament,  
1641.\*](#)

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[Full-text of \*A Bloody Masacre  
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[Full-text of \*Lady Eleanor  
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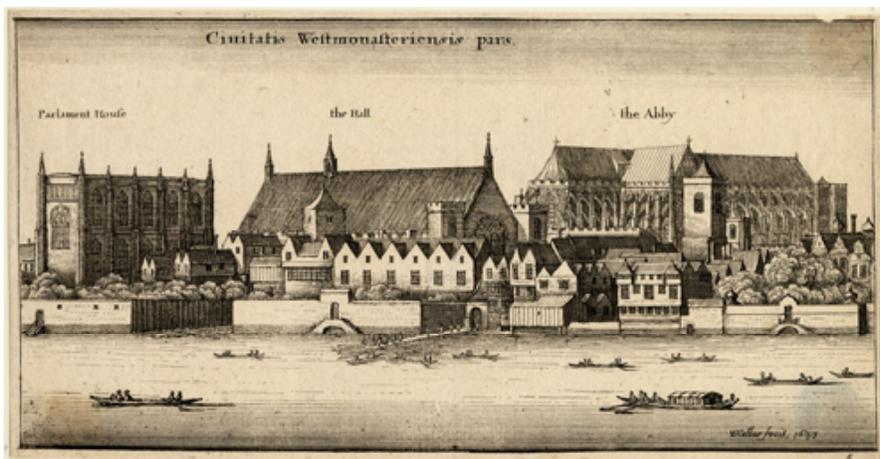
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[Full-text of \*An Acte whereby  
certayne offences be made  
treason, 1571.\* Includes study  
questions.](#)

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## The Parliament

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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Civitas Westmonasteriensis Pars*, 1647.  
Art vol d60 no. 16.

This elevation of Parliament House from the Thames River by Wenceslas Hollar illustrates the close physical proximity of Parliament and other state institutions to the city of Westminster. Move the mouse over an area of the image to learn more about the people and places associated with Westminster.

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## Parliament



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Civitas Westmonasteriensis Pars*,  
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## The Duke of Buckingham and Parliament as a Site of Stress



The 1620s were a time of particular stress for both the Crown and the Parliament. The combination of foreign war, fiscal constraints, and religious tensions necessitated the calling of Parliament five times during the decade; this was especially unusual given that Parliament had met only once, and then only for a few weeks, during the previous ten years. The fact that Parliament met comparatively often in the 1620s reflected significant unease among the political elites about war, money, and religious tensions. The failure of those Parliaments to address England's serious problems only heightened the sense of stress in Westminster and beyond. The focus of the stress came to rest on the person and activities of George Villiers, Duke of

Buckingham.

Who was Buckingham? He had risen very quickly through the ranks of King James I's courtiers, becoming the "royal favourite" by 1618. At the time of James I's death in 1625, he held several influential offices as well as the title of Duke, the highest title in the English peerage structure. He continued to be enormously important as the new king, Charles I, relied heavily on Buckingham's advice and assistance. Buckingham's influence on both monarchs became one of the points of stress, then, during the contentious Parliaments of the 1620s. He was temporarily popular for leading, in the 1624 Parliament, the movement to go to war against Spain. That war's failure made him just as unpopular, since the failure was due to naval problems laid at his feet as Lord Admiral. The 1625 Parliament, the first of Charles I's reign, saw an attempt by some Parliamentarians to bring Buckingham to account for the failed war. Charles dismissed the Parliament rather than suffer an attack on his most prominent government minister, but the next Parliament, in 1626, saw the resumption of the attack from both Houses of Parliament. The House of Commons launched an impeachment proceeding against the Duke, while the Lords allowed one of its members, the Earl of Bristol, to air serious charges about Buckingham's role in diplomacy with Spain, charging in particular that he was sympathetic to Catholicism and to undermining the Church of England. King Charles I, who desperately needed money, tried to cajole both Houses into abandoning the attacks on Buckingham and to concentrate instead on providing the needed funds, but to no avail. Eventually the King gave up and dissolved the Parliament without receiving the money, but in so doing he protected Buckingham.

By this time, there was significant resentment of Buckingham among English people of different social classes. This resentment culminated in the assassination of the Duke in 1628. John Felton, the assassin, was lauded in popular verse and ballads, revealing the depth of animosity Buckingham had inspired among his countrymen. Tellingly, though, the conflict and tensions continued between King Charles and Parliament. Even though Buckingham had attracted so much antipathy, the Parliament continued to be a significant site of stress even after his death.

Dwight Brautigam  
Huntington College

### Suggestions for further reading:

Cogswell, Thomas. "The People's Love: The Duke of Buckingham and Popularity." In *Politics, Religion and Popularity*, edited by Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake, 211-34. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

"Buckingham's Relation, 24 February 1624." In *Journals of the House of Lords*. London: H.M.S.O., 1509-1891.

"Bristol's Charges." In *Proceedings in Parliament 1626*, edited by William B. Bidwell and Maija Jansson for the Yale Center for Parliamentary History, vol. I, 329-331. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991-1996.

Russell, Conrad. *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

### **Study questions**

What things can you learn about Buckingham by carefully examining his portrait in the upper portion of the engraving? You might be able to discern things about his social standing, for example.

How could you interpret the significance of the panel in the lower left of the engraving (the one with ships in it)?

How might you understand the panel in the lower right of the engraving? What seems to be happening in this panel?

What questions come to mind as you carefully observe this engraving? How would you proceed in finding the answers to your questions?

Was the artist who created this engraving a friend or foe of Buckingham? On what basis do you draw your conclusion?

What do you make of the fact that Buckingham's assassination did not result in the lowering of tensions between King Charles and Parliament?

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[Full-text of \*An Acte whereby certayne offences be made treason\*, 1571. Includes study questions.](#)

## Parliament, the People and Physical Space in the 1641 - 1642 Petitioning Campaigns

In 1641, relations between Charles I and his Parliament were deeply strained over matters of religion, royal councilors, and finance. The outbreak of the Irish Rebellion in October 1641 significantly worsened these tensions. Concerns about the intentions of Charles I and the men and women who surrounded him mixed with vivid accounts of barbarous atrocities perpetrated against English Protestants in Ireland, intensifying fear and anxiety throughout England.

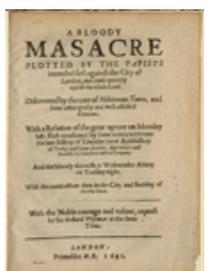
In Westminster at this time, the permeable boundary between Parliament and the outside world became a political problem. Petitioning efforts from the wider populace of London and the counties mobilized large numbers of local inhabitants. Due to the accessibility and location of Parliament, the crowd could exert significant pressure on members, raising significant questions about the autonomy of the institution. At certain key moments, large crowds, numbering in the thousands, assembled at Westminster, disrupted business, and were accused by critics of physically intimidating some Members. To contemporaries as well as modern historians, one of the central questions concerning the months leading up to the outbreak of the civil war is the relationship between Parliamentary activism and this popular political activism.



[\*The Citizens of London's Humble Petition to the Right Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses of the Commons House in Parliament \(1641\)\*](#) is an example of the kind of petition presented to Parliament during the anxious days of late 1641 and early 1642. The Londoners' petition was the first of many submitted to Parliament as part of a sustained campaign. This was a remarkable moment in which the English people—as petitions from all over the kingdom claimed—attempted to encourage and advise Parliament.

*The Citizens of London's Petition* was presented on 11 December, and claimed to speak on behalf of "twenty-thousand" high-status Londoners. The proximity of Parliament's meeting spaces to the City of London and the relative openness of the Commons' meeting chamber was an important part of the formal presentation of the petition. According to the printed version of the petition, four hundred London citizens formed a procession into Westminster and one hundred were admitted into the House of Commons to present the document, where they conducted themselves in an orderly fashion and earned the thanks of the House. The petition itself outlined a number of anxieties about the severity of the Catholic-led rebellion in Ireland, the possibility of a popish rising in England, and the influence wielded by "wicked counselors" at Charles I's court. It also explicitly requested that Parliament respond to these grievances by taking steps to put the kingdom in a defensive military posture, doing more to uncover popish plots, and abolishing the privilege of "Popish Lords and Bishops voting in the house of Peeres" (1).

December 1641 was a month of political tension, due in part to the growing power of the crowd. In previous months, massive crowds of angry Londoners had marched on Westminster to protest delays in the prosecution of the notorious "evil counselor" Thomas Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford, and had succeeded in intimidating some members of the House of Lords. The presentation of the December petition saw similar popular activism, and by the end of the month, crowds assembled almost daily outside of Parliament.



As the tract entitled [\*A Bloody Masacre \[sic\] Plotted by the Papists\*](#) illustrates, this kind of popular participation could turn violent. The tract describes the confrontations of 24 December 1641, when blood was shed in Westminster Hall. In many respects, the crowd expressed the same concerns as the 11 December petitioners, albeit in a dramatically different manner. According to the tract, the crowd gathered out of anxieties derived from vague rumors of a plot that "there would be bloody designes wrought in this kingdome of *England* by the Papists" (2-3). Like the 11 December petitioners, the ringleader pledged to "spend my dearest and best blood in defense of the House of *Commons*," (5) and the apprentices in the crowd physically intimidated the Archbishop of York in order to prevent him from taking

his seat in the House of Lords. Eventually the apprentices came to blows with soldiers under command of Colonel Thomas Lunsford, the recently appointed and roundly-despised lieutenant of the Tower of London. Inside Westminster Hall, only a few yards from the assembled members of the Houses of Parliament, chaos and violence erupted.

*A Bloody Masacre Plotted by the Papists* casts the inhabitants of London and Westminster as heroes for their vigilance against popish plots and their successful attack on Colonel Lunsford. Other responses to the events of 24 December, however, demonstrate that some members of Parliament were anxious about the impact that protesters outside of the House would have on Parliamentary autonomy. The *Commons Journal* for 27 December 1641 reported on a communication from the House of Lords, which asked the Commons "to join with them in a Declaration to be printed and published, of their Dislike of the Assembling of the People in such Companies and Disorders about the Houses of Parliament; and to join with them in a Petition to his Majesty, that the Houses of Parliament may have a Guard" (358-9). Likewise, a Member of Parliament, Philip Smith, complained on 29 December of "the riotous, and tumultuous Assembly of vaine and idle persons, who presume to begirt our House, not only in an irregular manner to preferre their Petitions, but with open clamour would prescribe us what lawes to inact, and what not; and what persons to prosecute, and who not." Smith's proposals to prevent future disorders were published. Smith hoped that the House would warn the people of London and Westminster to desist from assembling outside the Commons, and failing that, post a guard with instructions: "to shoot at them if they obstinately refuse to bee perswaded; it will bee the best and speediest means to repell them."

These responses to the petitions and assemblies raise important questions about who exactly wielded political power on the eve of the English Civil War. On the one hand, some Parliamentary initiatives from late 1641 and 1642—for example the Protestation Oath and appeals for relief collections on behalf of Irish Protestants—encouraged the English people to involve themselves in national politics and to assist in protecting the nation from popish plotting. On the other hand, the riots of late December were clearly disruptive, suggesting that the proximity of Parliament's meeting rooms to London and Westminster were increasingly problematic, and revealing that some members felt intimidated and endangered by the tumults. Charles I, for his part, was more decisive in his views of these developments, citing the dangerous crowds of London protesters as one of his main justifications for retiring from the metropolis in January 1642.

Joseph Cope  
State University of New York, Geneseo College

[Full-text of The Citizens of London's Humble Petition to the Right Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses of the Commons House in Parliament, 1641.](#)

[Full-text of A Bloody Masacre Plotted by the Papists, 1641.](#)

#### **Suggestions for further reading:**

Clifton, Robin. "The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution." *Past and Present* 52 (1971): 23-55.

Cust, Richard. "News and Politics in Early Seventeenth Century England." *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 60-90.

Fletcher, Anthony. *The Outbreak of the English Civil War*. London: E. Arnold, 1981.

Freist, Dagmar. *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London, 1637-1645*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Kyle, Chris R., and Jason Peacey. "'Under cover of so much coming and going': Public Access to Parliament and the Political Process in Early Modern England." In *Parliament at Work*, eds. Chris Kyle and Jason Peacey, pp.1-23. Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2002.

Kyle, Chris R. "Parliament and the Palace of Westminster: An Exploration of Public Space in the Early Seventeenth Century." In *Parliamentary History* 21 (2002): 85-98.

Lindley, Keith. "The Impact of the 1641 Rebellion upon England and Wales, 1641-5." *Irish Historical Studies* 18 (1972-3): 143-76.

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Pearl, Valerie. *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government and National Politics, 1625-43*. [London]: Oxford University Press 1961.

Walter, John. *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

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## Women and Parliament in Seventeenth-Century England

On 28 July 1625, as she tells the story, Lady Eleanor Davies had a mystical experience during which she heard the voice of Daniel recruiting her to prophesy that the Day of Judgment was nineteen and a half years away. In her newfound role as prophetess, she criticized King Charles I and Parliament and predicted the deaths of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Lady Eleanor was imprisoned at least four times. She stood several trials, the first and most important of which was in 1633 when Charles I commanded that she be called before the High Commission. Found guilty of circulating false prophecies and printing unlicensed books, Lady Eleanor was fined £3,000 and sent to prison. Before her sentence was given, she watched Archbishop Laud burn her books in front of her. Lady Eleanor saw this act as the theft and destruction of her "children," and she called Laud a rapist and murderer. When Laud was executed in 1645, nineteen and a half years after Lady Eleanor had heard the voice of Daniel, Lady Eleanor took it as evidence that the Day of Judgment had come.

Lady Eleanor married twice. Like Laud, both of her husbands reacted to her books by burning them. In each case, Lady Eleanor predicted that the men would be judged for their misdeeds, and indeed, Eleanor's first husband, Sir John Davies, died suddenly while her second husband, Sir Archibald Douglas, went mad soon after burning her writings. A vehement anti-papist, in 1636 Lady Eleanor led a raid on the Lichfield Cathedral, ruined its altar hangings, and sat on the bishop's throne, all of which earned her a stay of sixteen months in Bedlam. She was moved to the Tower of London in 1639 and was subsequently released. During her lifetime, Lady Eleanor printed more than fifty tracts in which she warned that the Day of Judgment was at hand. In her prophetic writings, she represented herself as Daniel, the bride of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and, playing upon an abbreviation of her first married name "Da" and her last married name "Do," as the Alpha and Omega. She also saw herself as a representative of the British Isles, citing her family's heritage and her marriage connections with England, Scotland, Ireland, and France.

The Folger Shakespeare Library's holdings include a volume of forty-five bound tracts by Lady Eleanor which was probably owned by her daughter, Lucy, Countess of Huntingdon. The Folger volume includes the tract titled *Samsons Fall* (1642), in which Lady Eleanor warns Parliament that Charles I has become too popish; indeed the King has become like Samson in that he has fallen under the seductive spell of the French Catholic Delilah, Henrietta Maria, at the cost of British unity.

In contrast to Lady Eleanor, whose status as a prophet made it necessary to remain, to a certain extent, separate and superior, other women *grouped together* to present their addresses to Parliament. Of particular interest are the petitions by Leveller women in the 1640s. The Levellers believed in religious toleration, basic human rights, constitutional reform, and democratic election. In 1648, several prominent Leveller men, including John Lilburne, Richard Overton, Thomas Prince, and William Walwyn, were imprisoned for criticizing the Rump Parliament and Oliver Cromwell. The Leveller women responded by drawing up a petition, which reportedly had ten thousand signatures, and taking it to Parliament. Though Parliament refused to admit the women's petition, the incident was widely reported. In the second edition of that petition, *To the Supream Authority of England the Commons Assembled in Parliament. The humble Petition of diverse wel-affected WEOMEN [sic], of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borrough of Southward, Hamblets, and places adjacent. Affecters and Approvers of the Petition of Sept. 11. 1648* (1649), the Leveller women argue for their right to fight for their beliefs, dying for them if necessary: "Nor will we ever rest until we have prevailed, that We, our husbands, Friends, and Servants, may not be liable to be abused, violated, and butchered at mens Wills and pleasures. But if nothing will satisfy but the blood of those just men, those constant unda[u]nted Asserters of the Peoples freedoms will satisfy your thirst, drink also, and be glutted with our blood, and let us all fall together: Take the blood of one more, and take all: slay one, slay all." Throughout the petition, it is possible to identify strains of what we could call early liberal feminist discourse. The Leveller women stress their intelligence and ability to reason, and, even in this short document, the word "equal" appears three times, variations of the word "liberty" can be found five times, and at several points appeals are made to justice and to the importance of overthrowing tyranny and slavery.

Only in the twentieth century did it become possible to discuss women's addresses *in* Parliament rather than just women's addresses to Parliament. The first woman elected to Parliament was Nancy, Viscountess Astor, who sat in the House of Commons from 1919 to 1945. In 1967, Barbara Wootton became the first woman member of the House of Lords. On 11 June 1987, and at the age of thirty-three, Diane Abbott became the first black woman MP. Parliament gained a record one-hundred-twenty women in May 1997; thirty-five of these were selected for their seats as a result of the Labour Party's policy of gender equitable shortlists. In June 2001, the number of women in the House of Commons fell for the first time in twenty years. Currently, only eighteen percent of British MPs are women.

Amy Scott-Douglass  
California State University Fullerton

[Full-text of Lady Eleanor Davies's \*Samsons Fall\* \(1624\).](#)

### **Suggestions for further reading:**

#### **Lady Eleanor Davies**

Cope, Esther S. *Handmaid of the Holy Spirit: Dame Eleanor Davies, Never Soe Mad a Ladie*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

---, ed. *Prophetic Writings of Lady Eleanor Davies*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Feroli, Teresa, ed. *Eleanor Davies. The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*. Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000.

Mack, Phyllis. *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

#### **Leveller Women Petitioners**

Achinstein, Sharon. "Women on Top in the Pamphlet Literature of the English Revolution." *Women's Studies* 24 (1994): 131-63. Reprinted in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, edited by Lorna Hutson, 339-375. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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Higgins, Patricia. "The Reactions of Women with Special Reference to Women Petitioners." In *Politics, Religion, and the English Civil War*, edited by Brian Manning, 179-224. London: Edward Arnold, 1973.

Hughes, Ann. "Gender and Politics in Leveller Literature." In *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in England: Essays Presented to David Underdown*, edited by Susan Amussen and Mark Kishlansky, 162-188. Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: St Martins, 1995.

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## Succession in Elizabethan Parliamentary Culture



Elizabeth sitting in the House of Lords in Parliament was an image of good governance in Tudor England: the Queen in Parliament. The Queen sat in the back of the House of Lords, with the Chancellor, Treasurer, and other officers of state surrounding her. The Ecclesiastical Lords sat perpendicular to the Queen on her right hand side, and the Secular Lords sat perpendicular to the Queen on her left. A center table held books of importance, such as the Bible, Statutes of the Realm, and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, and was surrounded by the scribes of the Parliament. Finally, opposite the Queen, behind a barrier and not formally admitted into the chamber for the House of Lords, were Members of the House of Commons, with the Lord Speaker standing in the center. The image of the Queen in Parliament demonstrated how Parliament was expected to work: a happy integration of the Queen and the Lords with Members of the House of Commons supporting the government.

Despite this idealized portrait, all was not perfect in the initial years of her accession. One of the most pressing questions that faced Elizabeth during the first decade of her reign was something that would not need to be answered until after her death: who would succeed her to the English throne? In 1562, Elizabeth contracted a near fatal case of smallpox, which scared many of her councilors and members of Parliament. In the Parliament convened in 1563, therefore, one of the primary questions was that of succession. The largely Protestant Members of Parliament were nervous that Elizabeth might die without an heir of her blood. The Crown could then pass to a Catholic contender from another branch of the Tudor dynasty.

Protestant fears were based on the rules of primogeniture, or the right of inheritance belonging to the eldest child, with sons preferred before daughters. The Tudor case was fairly straightforward. Elizabeth's grandparents, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, had four children: Arthur, Margaret, Henry, and Mary. Prince Arthur died without offspring, and Prince Henry succeeded Henry VII to the throne as Henry VIII. Henry VIII married six times, producing, in order, Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward. According to the rules of primogeniture and, importantly, to Henry's will, Edward would be crowned first, then Mary, and then Elizabeth. Henry VIII's will then specified that if no "heirs of the body" were produced by his children, the Crown should pass to the heirs of his younger sister Mary, a Protestant, instead of to the heirs of his older sister Margaret, a Catholic. This ran counter to the rules of primogeniture.

A debate ensued in the early 1560s over who was best suited under English law to inherit the throne if Elizabeth did not have legitimate "heirs of the body" or name a successor. Both of Henry VIII's sisters, Margaret and Mary, had produced legitimate claimants. His older sister, Margaret, established two Scots Catholic lines with two different husbands that came into and out of favor throughout the last two-thirds of the sixteenth century. His younger sister, Mary, had married Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and with him founded a viable Protestant claim to the throne. If Elizabeth were to die without an heir, the chief rivals to the English throne were Margaret's granddaughter and grandson, that is, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, or, on the Protestant side, Mary's granddaughter, Catherine Grey.

English Catholics naturally favored the lines descending from Henry VIII's older sister, Margaret. Protestants, for their part, circulated many documents demanding that Mary's granddaughter, Catherine Grey, be nominated as heir, and used as their justification the dictates of Henry VIII's will.



One of these documents was written by John Hales, a Protestant Member of the House of Commons for the Borough of Lancaster. In 1563, Hales produced a pamphlet advocating the rights of the Grey family to the throne should Elizabeth die without issue or a named successor. Hales was a Tudor bureaucrat (a clerk of the hanaper, the department of the Chancery handling payments for the sealing and enrollment of instruments under the Great Seal). In his pamphlet, Hales rejected all claims rivaling that of the Protestant Catherine Grey. He disqualified Mary, Queen of Scots, because her father, James V of Scotland, was out of allegiance to Henry VIII. Hales next rejected the possibility that Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley,

succeed Elizabeth, because Hales considered Darnley's mother a foreigner even though she was born in England and to an English mother, namely, Henry VIII's older sister Margaret. Hales instead argued that the citizenship of Margaret's daughter derived completely from her father, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, and thus she was unable to inherit the English throne.

Predictably, Elizabeth reacted badly to this tract and similar ones concerning the succession. To Elizabeth's mind, any attempt by others to address the succession question was an infringement of her prerogative as monarch. Despite these debates over competing claims, Elizabeth herself believed that the question of succession rested solely upon her shoulders and that Parliament or other advisors of the realm did not even have the right to discuss the questions of a potential marriage or of the succession. Many historians consider this the greatest tension between Parliament and the Crown that existed before the seventeenth century.

The protracted debates of who should succeed the long-lived Elizabeth did not rest for almost four decades, but in the next few years, positions hardened. Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, who married his cousin Mary, Queen of Scots in 1565, recombined and strengthened the two Catholic lines descending from Henry VIII's older sister Margaret. After Henry Stewart's assassination at the hands of Mary's lover, the Queen of Scots was held prisoner in England from 1568 until her execution in 1587, during which time she was repeatedly implicated as the focal point for plots against Elizabeth's life. Further complicating matters, the Pope encouraged Catholic insurgency with his Bull excommunicating Elizabeth in 1570, *Regnans in Excelsis*. Elizabeth and her Parliament responded with an act declaring that any attempt to determine or discuss the succession was an act of treason.

Kristen Post Walton  
Salisbury University

[Full-text transcription of John Hales's A Declaratyon of the Successyon of the Crowne Imperyal of England, 1563. Includes study questions.](#)

[Full-text of An Acte whereby certayne offences be made treason, 1571. Includes study questions.](#)

#### **Suggestions for further reading:**

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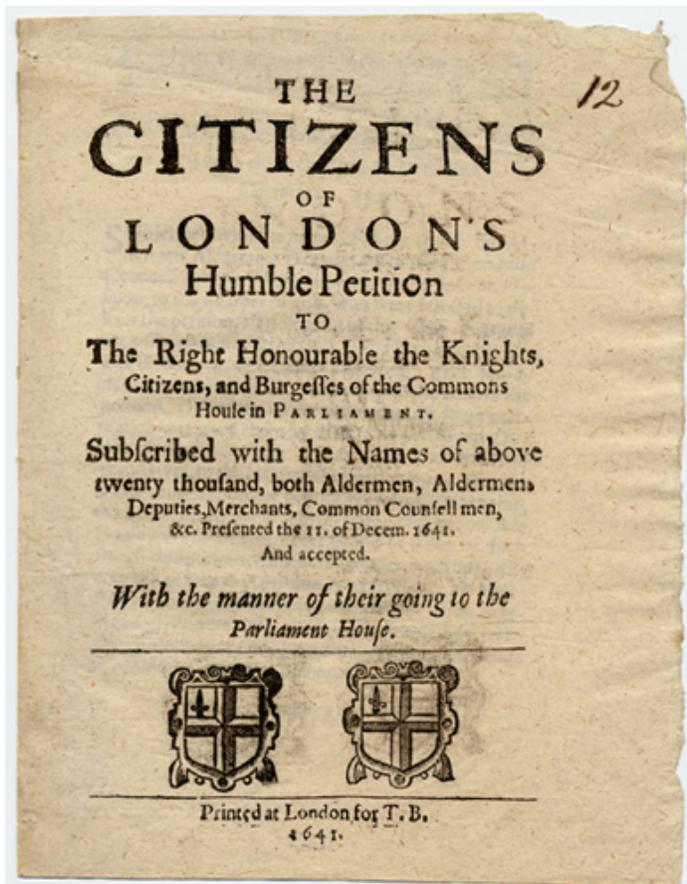
Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
*Civitas Westmonasteriensis Pars*,  
1647.

### The Duke of Buckingham and Parliament

- **Parliament, the People  
and Physical Space in the  
1641-1642 Petitioning  
Campaigns**

### Succession in Elizabethan Parliamentary Culture

### Women and Parliament in Seventeenth-Century England: The Examples of Lady Eleanor Davies and the Leveller Petitioners



*The Citizens of London's Humble Petition.*  
Printed at London: for T.B. 1641.  
Wing C4343, title page.

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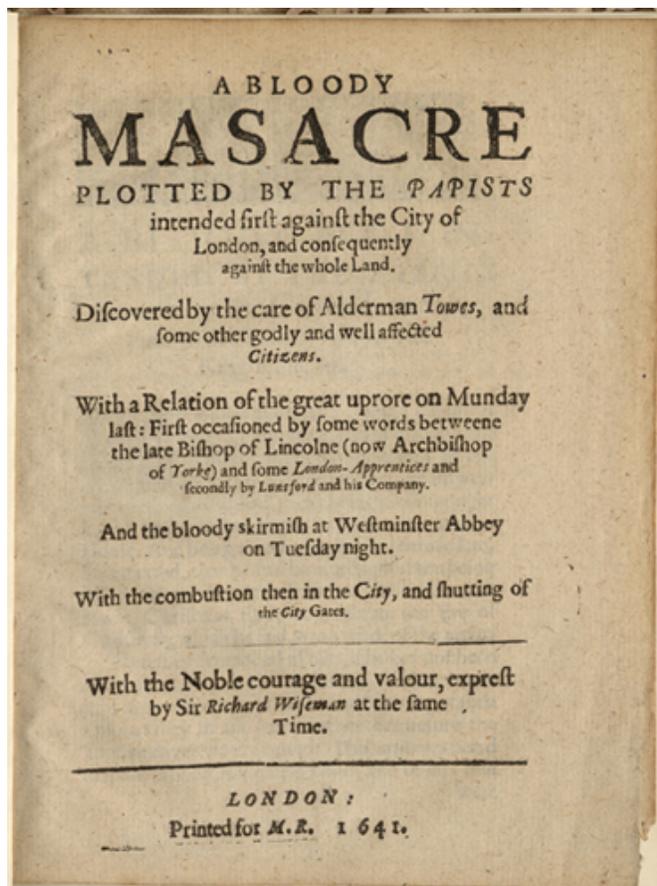
Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
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*A Bloody Massacre Plotted by the Papists.*  
London: printed for M.R., 1641.  
187699.

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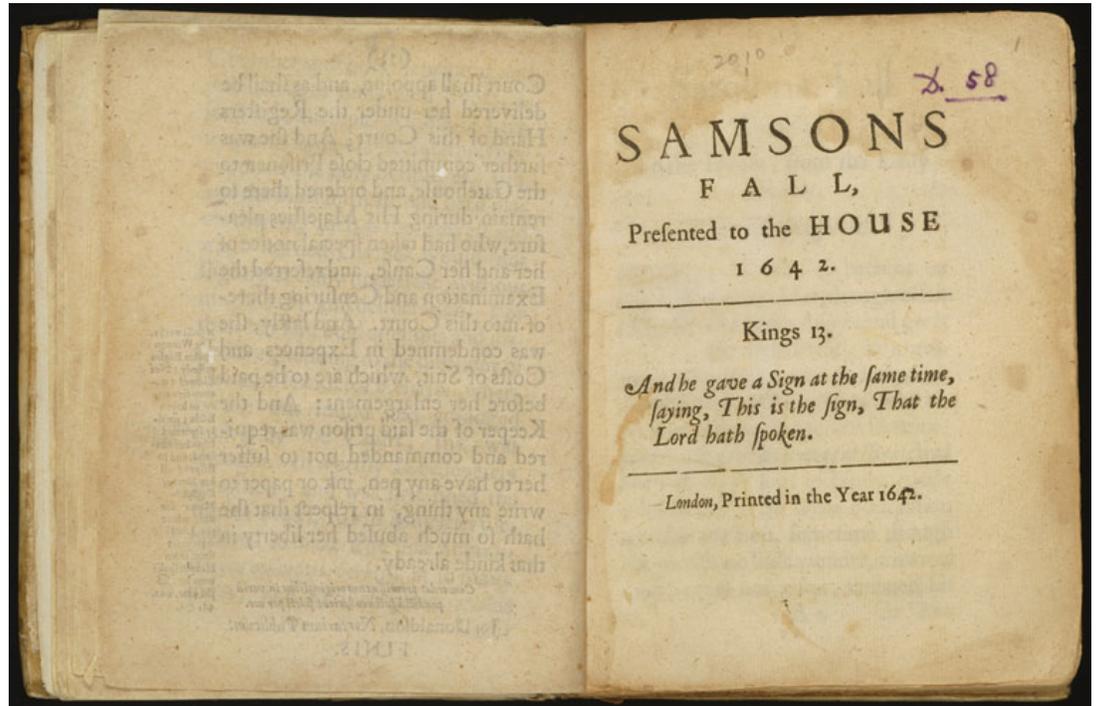
Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
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Lady Eleanor Douglas (d. 1652).  
*Samsons fall, presented to the house* 1642.  
London: [s.n.], printed in the year 1642.  
D2010.

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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
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## *A Declaratyon of the Successyon of the Crowne Imperyall of England made by J. Hales. 1563.*

### Study Questions

What aspect of this document demonstrates to you that Hales is a Protestant? Do you think that his arguments against the succession of the line descending from Margaret of Lennox are convincing?

This document was never published, but many copies survive; in addition to that of the Folger, copies exist at the British Library and Lambeth Palace in London and several other places), and it was passed around as what was called a circular letter. Hales himself was a Member of Parliament when he wrote the document. Why do you think he never published it? Do you think a letter such as this might have turned Elizabeth against those Members of Parliament who read and supported the writings of Hales?

What arguments is Hales making with regard to the succession? Do you think his reasons for the exclusion of the line of Margaret Tudor are sufficient? What are they? Do they demonstrate to you any sign that Members of the House of Parliament may be promoting ideas of citizenship that most people do not recognize within the politics of the age of monarchs?

Brief physical description:

Quire of twelve leaves with seventeen pages of text beginning on fol. 2r. Jug watermark with letters "BB" on fols. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9.

Editorial conventions:

Lineation	Maintained
Underlined	In abbreviated words, the supplied letters are underlined
< >	Broken brackets enclose deleted letters or words
<...>	Broken brackets containing ellipsis points enclose illegible deletions
[ ]	Square brackets enclose editorial interpolations
^	Carets indicate interlineated letters and words, but not superior letters
apostrophe	Indicates any mark of abbreviation when the abbreviated word has not been extended.
"j"	The "j" is used for the long "i"
Superscript letters	Silently lowered
y <sup>e</sup>	Expanded to <u>the</u>

[Transcription here]

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### **Parliament, the People and Physical Space in the 1641-1642 Petitioning Campaigns**

### **• Succession in Elizabethan Parliamentary Culture**

### **Women and Parliament in Seventeenth-Century England: The Examples of Lady Eleanor Davies and the Leveller Petitioners**

### ***An Acte whereby certayne offences be made treason, 1571.***

#### **Study Questions**

This document is an act produced of the thirteenth year of Elizabeth's reign. What is this act stating? How does the document demonstrate Elizabeth's desires during the succession crisis? Do you think this act is an accurate representation of the issues concerning the question of succession by the early 1570s? Do you think that Hales would have approved of this act?

What does this act tell you about the idea of free speech? From reading it, do you think that the English people had a voice in Elizabethan politics? If so, who would have that voice?

How is this document representative of the tensions that had erupted between Crown and Parliament during the first thirteen years of Elizabeth's reign? What is the role of the current problems with regard to Mary Stuart's imprisonment in England? Do you think that those tensions and problems were likely to disappear with the passage of this act?

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[Full-text of \*A Game at Chess\*](#)  
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## Theatre Introduction



[Wenceslaus Hollar \(1607-1677\).](#)  
[Section from "The long bird's eye view of London," 1647.](#)

The building of commercial, public theatres in England dates from 1567, when the Red Lion was built in the Whitechapel district of east of London on the model of the open-air amphitheatres and innyards previously used for bear- and bull-baiting as well as dramatic performances by traveling players. Playhouses were often located in the suburban "liberties" of London like Whitechapel, the southern Bankside of the Thames, and Shoreditch in northern London. Here they were outside London's jurisdiction but close enough to attract an audience of broad theatrical tastes and social composition. Like the animal-baiting pits upon which they were based, playhouses generally featured two or three tiers of galleries arranged around a central yard, and some were reported to hold as many as three thousand playgoers. Seventy-five years later, in 1642, all theatres were closed by Parliamentary edict on political, religious, and moral grounds.

The commercial theatre is a phenomenon of the English Reformation, and broad questions of morality and appropriate social behavior often swirled around it as an institution. Writings of the period resonate with Reformist discourse connecting playacting and Catholicism (both described as idolatrous, lying, deceitful, and sumptuous), and there were offices to censor productions and printed scripts. Representation—at the heart of theatrical practice—was often equated with fraudulence by contemporary anti-theatrical writers and fervent Protestants. In the midst of such invective, the theatre highlighted language and feigned behavior and the ways that representation on the stage echoed, ignored, or opposed Reformist concerns.

Representing the political subterfuge of England's traditional Catholic enemy, Spain, Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* ignited the London populace in 1624. Accompanied by a full-text digitization of an early manuscript of the play, the following essays place *A Game at Chess* in its historical context in terms of competing religions, rising nationalism, and even espionage.

[Censorship and the English Stage: A Brief Overview](#)

[The Spanish Match](#)

[Thomas Scott and the Influence of Pamphlet literature on \*A Game at Chess\*](#)

Provocations of Performance: *A Game at Chess* (includes the full-text manuscript edition)

[The Black Knight](#)

[The White King](#)

[The White Duke](#)

[The White Knight](#)

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Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).  
Section from "*The long bird's eye view of London*," 1647.  
Map L85c no.29 pt.1.

This detail from a much larger view of London depicts the second Globe Theatre (1614-1644), built after the first burned down during a performance the previous year. The names of the two Southwark amphitheatres depicted here, the Globe Theatre and the "beere baiting house," or Hope Theatre, are accidentally reversed probably due to the fact that the view was produced in Antwerp in 1647, three years after Hollar had left England and five years after all the London theatres had been closed by Parliament.

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[Full-text of \*A Game at Chess\*](#)  
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## Censorship and the English Stage: A Brief Overview

What do we know about the role of censorship in seventeenth-century English drama? Official regulating agencies, such as the Office of the Master of Revels, ensured that theater companies and playwrights generally knew what they could and could not get away with. But what sorts of things constituted offensive material, and why? Were these standards consistent over time or did they vary from case to case? What sorts of punishments did a playwright face if he wrote or staged something later deemed offensive? Did such punishments ultimately hurt or help that playwright's career? How effectively did the risk of fine or imprisonment keep an individual from committing similar offenses in future? How effective were public acts of censure, such as shutting down a playhouse? Did such gestures suppress the offensive material in question, or simply make it more intriguing to the public eye?

Such questions have elicited a wide array of interpretations. It is important to note, however, that while censorship represented one of the many social pressures that helped forge the professional stage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, actual punishments were infrequent. A handful of plays did result in the author's arrest or a playhouse closure. These included, for instance, Ben Jonson's now lost play, *The Isle of the Dogs* (1597); the city comedy *Eastward Ho!* written by Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston (1605); and Richard Brome's *The Courtly Beggar* (1640). In these cases, punitive actions responded to specific passages that deliberately and personally mocked the monarch. Ironically, while Jonson repeatedly provoked official censure—he was found guilty of sedition following *The Isle of the Dogs*—he nevertheless maintained a good relationship with the court and even with King James himself.

By contrast with such regulatory action, it is worth noting the Crown's capacity for restraint towards, if not indifference to, potentially offensive material. In 1599, for instance, a group of disaffected gentlemen (associates of Robert Devereaux, Second Earl of Essex) sponsored William Shakespeare's company to stage a revival performance of a play depicting the fall of Richard II. If this performance was of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, as many scholars today suppose, the conspirators' interest probably lay in the scene that represented the king's abdication from the throne, as they themselves tried to force Queen Elizabeth from power the following day. The queen was furious about the Essex uprising, and the members of the faction were arrested. Some were tried and executed. As for the players, though, a different fate awaited: after a brief arrest and interrogation, they were performing again in a matter of days—including a special performance, before the queen, of none other than *Richard II*.

In the early decades of the seventeenth century, playwrights and audiences alike went about their business with little direct interference from government regulators. Plays did not seem to be regarded as significant instruments or threats in contemporary political affairs. In this context, Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) stands out like a powder flash, challenging many of our assumptions about the relation between theater and political crisis. The play was an astonishing success. From 5 through 14 August, performances were staged at the Globe Theater each day, with many would-be patrons turned away at the gate. It was an unprecedented run; the typical new play would last for three days before another took its place. And yet we know that the Privy Council also took an interest in the play: "According to his Maiesties pleasure . . . touching the suppressing of a scandalous *Commedie* Acted by the *Kings Players*. . . . haue called before vs some of the principall Actors. . . . The *Poett* they tell vs is one Midleton, who shifting out of the way, and not attending the Board with the rest as was expected, Wee haue given warrant to a Messenger for the apprehending of him" (*A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill, 1993, 204).

### Suggestions for further reading:

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## The Spanish Match

Throughout his reign, King James pursued an Anglo-Spanish match. Negotiations for a marriage between the Spanish Infanta and Henry, Prince of Wales, officially began in 1604, following a treaty between England and Spain. They accelerated in 1613, when Sarmiento de Acuna, Condé de Gondomar, arrived in England as the Spanish ambassador. They continued after Prince Henry's sudden and tragic death, with his younger brother Charles taking his place. And they reached a critical stage in 1623, when Charles and long-time court favorite, George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, embarked on a secret mission to Madrid. When Charles and Buckingham returned home in October, empty-handed and vowing never to resume negotiations with the Spanish, the mood in England was nothing short of exuberant. Spontaneous celebrations broke out all across the nation. Within the year, Parliament was urging war with Spain with uncustomary enthusiasm.

What were the advantages to the proposed marriage? Why did James pursue it for so many years? What were the conditions of marriage and why were they finally deemed unacceptable? What additional factors complicated the negotiations? Why was the nation so demonstrably excited when they finally did collapse? Such questions resist easy answers. However, a few observations will help explain why the proposed marriage proved to be at once so crucial and so controversial.

As king of England, James took seriously his position and responsibility as *Rex Pacificus*, and he saw himself in the unique position to restore the balance of powers across Europe. While the Reformation had polarized Europeans and turned the once universal church into an array of warring factions, James pursued a policy that would re-unite Protestants with the Church of Rome. Among his many strategies, he used marriage alliances as a way to forge diplomatic alliances across the continent. Thus, while he pursued a marriage between his sons and the Catholic Infanta throughout his reign, in 1613 he celebrated the marriage between his only daughter Elizabeth and Frederick V, the Elector Palatine—a Calvinist prince viewed by many as a potential spearhead for a pan-European Protestant union against the Catholic Hapsburg empire.

In other words, part of James' strategy was to bring about peace through dynastic marriage. Having already married his only daughter to the Calvinist prince, an additional marriage between his only surviving son and the Catholic Infanta would have brought about two advantages. For England, it would have made diplomatic alliances more complicated, thus decreasing the nation's chances of being dragged into war. England's intricate family arrangements might also encourage other European countries to put aside their differences. If this was perhaps wishful thinking on James' part, it was a far more attractive alternative to war. One did not need to be a military expert or a pacifist to recognize that England was horribly outmatched by the Hapsburgs. Moreover, as vehement as the population's support for a war might have seemed on the surface, very few people really wanted to finance it. Since England could neither afford nor survive war with Spain, a marriage match struck James as a perfectly reasonable alternative.

In the end, the marriage proposal between the Prince of Wales and the Spanish Infanta turned out to be wishful thinking. Religious differences between England and Spain proved a bigger obstacle than James anticipated. While he tried to emphasize the similarities between the churches of England and Rome, the Spanish ambassador Conde de Gondomar would settle for nothing less than the prince's conversion to Catholicism. Meanwhile, tensions between the Hapsburgs and the Calvinist opposition had deteriorated to the point of all-out war. In 1618, Protestants in Bohemia forcibly ousted their king from the throne and invited the Elector Palatine to take his place. Within the year, he accepted. When Hapsburg forces moved to drive out the Protestant King, Parliament called upon James for military and political support; in the eyes of many, it was King James' personal obligation to defend his son-in-law from the Hapsburg armies. By the 1620s, a marriage alliance with Spain would have proved awkward. Certainly by 1624, when Parliament began to clamor for war with Spain, such a match would have been impossible.

The fact that both English and Spanish alliances were split by the conflict in the Palatine meant trouble for the marriage negotiations. Unfortunately, King James had as hard a time convincing

the public as he had executing his plan in the first place. In Spain, Gondomar perceived the marriage negotiations as a sign of England's weakness. The longer he could perpetuate the negotiations by haggling over details, the longer he could keep England sidelined from support of the Elector Palatine. Meanwhile, in England, the population saw the King's frosty response to the Elector as a sign of senility, if not an outright betrayal of his only daughter.

There were widespread expressions of joy when Prince Charles and Buckingham returned from Madrid without a bride. The King's policies with regard to Spain, in particular, and the brewing Continental war in general, had been inscrutable at best. At worst they were taken as signs of a Catholic fifth column that threatened to bring down the nation from within. The conflict between the crown and the general population was mostly—though not entirely—one of perception with regard to England's supposed role in European affairs. Would England lead Europe toward re-unification? Or would it instead stand alongside its Calvinist allies, united in open hostility against the Catholic Church?

Perhaps the intense hatred over the Spanish Match can be summed up through the following irony: neither Charles nor the infamous Buckingham ever enjoyed so much popularity and public support as when the two returned empty handed. Rarely in history has a nation collectively heaped so much praise on their ruler for *failing*.

Adam H. Kitzes

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## Thomas Scott and the Influence of Pamphlet Literature on *A Game at Chess*

War fever caught hold over the general London populace following Prince Charles and Buckingham's return from Madrid following the failed Spanish Match. Supported by the Prince and the royal favorite, Parliamentarians urged James to forge a military alliance against Spain, and to reawaken the glory days of Queen Elizabeth, who had defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588. The Council of War recruited soldiers and officers by the thousands. Meanwhile, an unprecedented wave of popular writing boldly urged the king to take up arms against the Spanish and the superstitious religious beliefs they espoused. Pleas for war took the form of Parliamentary exhortations, prayers and sermons, public prophecies, anonymous poems and ballads, and a flood of news pamphlets, both accurate and fictional.



Among the more successful, as well as the more controversial, of these pamphlet writers was clergyman Thomas Scott. In 1624, he published several pamphlets that both generated and capitalized on anti-Spanish sentiment, including one that Thomas Middleton would draw from as source material while writing his play, *A Game at Chess*. Scott's pamphlet, *The Second Part of Vox Populi*, consisted of a fabricated news account of the Spanish Council in session. During the course of the session, Gondomar gloated over his various plots and strategies, all designed to weaken the English on religious, political and economic fronts. A woodcut on the frontispiece depicted the council visually, portraying the various councilmen, Gondomar, and Satan himself lurking in the shadows.

Just how well timed Scott's pamphlets were depends on whose interests we consider. Certainly, Scott knew how to maximize readership. When he published this tract he made sure it coincided with the Spanish ambassador's return to London. The ambassador was furious with the tabloid report passed off as news. But even more interesting is the king's response, as it is recorded in the diary of Parliamentarian Simonds D'Ewes:

"But the King himself, hoping to get the Prince Elector, his son-in-law, to be restored to the Palatinate by an amicable treaty, was much incensed at the sight of it, as being published at an unseasonable time, though otherwise it seemed to proceed from an honest English heart. There was, therefore, so much and so speedy search made for the author of it, as he scarcely escaped the hands of the pursuivants, who had they taken him, he had certainly tasted of a sharp censure: for the Spanish Ambassador himself did at this time suppose and fear the people's eyes to be opened so far with the perusal of this book and their hearts to be so extremely irritated with that discovery of his villainous practices, as he caused his house for a while to be secured in Holborn by a guard of men, it being the Bishop of Ely's house, at the lower end of Holborn."

As angry as the King may have been, though, not only did Scott manage to escape, but he even published sequels. And while he was forced to flee to Utrecht, where he was eventually assassinated, it was fifty years before his pamphlets ceased to pique the interests of a scandal-hungry reading public. In the cases of Middleton and Scott alike, we can catch a glimpse of just how delicate the balance James I was trying to strike: while clearly upset at both writers, to the extent that he saw fit to intervene, he threatened punishments much more severe than what he actually delivered.

Because Middleton drew heavily from Scott's pamphlet, it is interesting to draw comparisons between the two writers. Both Thomas Scott and Thomas Middleton shared common desires, wanting to play to a popular audience, to stir up public anti-Spanish sentiment, and to make use of an emerging literary marketplace in order to obtain a public voice. But whereas Middleton tapped into public fears *on occasion*, Scott seemed bent on making a career of it.

Adam Kitzes

## Study Questions:

To what extent were the writings of Thomas Scott and Thomas Middleton based on sincere convictions about public policy?

To what extent were they driven by other motives, such as economic ones?

In addition, how would you characterize the ways that Middleton and Scott make use of fiction (or at least the manipulation of real events) as part of their writing strategies?

Does one writer strike you as more responsible or irresponsible than the other? Can you give reasons?

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## Provocations of Performance: *A Game at Chess*

In what was arguably the most commercially successful theatrical production in the history of the early modern theatre, *A Game at Chess* demonstrates how a play text and performance work as sites of political and religious stress. Staged some ten months after the Duke of Buckingham and Prince Charles returned from King James's failed attempt to conduct dynastic politics—the Spanish match that would have married Charles and the Infanta of Spain—this play intervened in the political and religious cross-currents. Thomas Middleton managed to produce both a "panegyric and a satire," as Paul Yachnin says (113), and could thus accommodate a range of responses from the audience.

Thomas Middleton's play was a success in print, in manuscript, and on the stage. No fewer than three quarto editions appeared in print within eighteen months. Additionally, Middleton himself participated in the production of at least six manuscript copies of the play, each varying from the others. It was performed for an unprecedented nine days in a row at the Globe theatre in the summer of 1624, and its run was brought to an abrupt end at James's express command. Accounts of the scandal are found in several ambassadors' reports as well as in playgoers' letters. These are not the usual historical sources for information about the theatrical scene in London. Neither does the play text appear especially scandalous, at least not in relation to the contemporary tragedies of corrupt courts that playwrights such as John Webster, George Chapman, John Marston, James Shirley, and Richard Brome were known for writing. What was all the uproar about?



As suggested by the title page of the published play, the stage was arranged to resemble a large-scale chessboard. Various figures appeared on stage, appeared in black and white garb, more or less resembling chess pieces. These included Black and White Kings and Queens, Bishops, Knights, and Pawns, but they also included a White Duke and a character known as the Fat Bishop. The story itself is fairly episodic. On the surface, the Kings of both houses attempt to conduct normal public relations with each other; meanwhile, a sex scandal involving the White Queen's Pawn, a betrayal by the White King's Pawn, and the hint of many more plots serve to disrupt the White House.

Lurking behind these plots is the Black Knight, who boasts of his relentless drive to bring the White House to ruin. The play suggests that were it not for the bravery, skill, and good fortune of the White Duke and the White Knight, it would only be a matter of time before the Black Knight would have them all under his command.

Most of the characters, or pieces, bore no more than a very loose resemblance to living political figures, and the play's major episodes only hint at specific political affairs. Nevertheless, it was the play's tantalizing allusions to the English monarch's negotiations with Spain—and the unmistakable resemblance of the Black Knight to the Spanish ambassador, the Condé de Gondomar—that generated such massive public, and indeed international, interest.

Gondomar's successor as Spanish ambassador to England, Don Carlos Coloma, described the play in an alarmed letter dated 10 August 1624 to the Conde-Duque Olivares in Madrid:

"The actors whom they call here 'the King's men' have recently acted, and are still acting, in London a play that so many people come to see, that there were more than 3000 persons there on the day that the audience was the smallest. There was such merriment, hubbub and applause that even if I had been many leagues away it would not have been possible for me not to have taken notice of it. . . . All these people come out of the theatre so inflamed against Spain that, as a few Catholics have told me who went secretly to see the play, my person would not be safe in the streets." (quoted in *A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill, 1993, 194-97)

The ambassador was surprised by the scurrilous quality of the language toward the Spanish characters, which even included royalty. Based on the account from Don Coloma, it would appear that the cause for concern was not only the play's offensive material, however, but its seemingly unique ability to tap into public fears and prejudices. Unlike many plays that touched upon politically sensitive topics, *A Game at Chess* did actually give rise to anti-Spanish xenophobia. It reached a level that had not been seen for decades, and the city of London was

ready for war. It was this mindset, as much as the play itself, that the ambassador wanted to suppress.

To be sure, it was not Middleton alone who turned the public sentiment in favor of war with Spain. Many other individuals made very public cases against the Spanish monarchy in general, and its Machiavellian former ambassador to England in particular. For all the nationalistic stir *A Game at Chess* caused, though, Middleton's ambitions may have been more economic than political. While anti-Spanish war fever reached new heights, the King's Men presumably reaped the financial benefits. More importantly, the play survived in print long after performances ceased, generating still more profits for the company. But even as we imagine the conflict of interests between the King's Men—who clearly wanted to capitalize on recent court scandals by playing on the passions of the public—and the Crown—which wanted to maintain the façade of a normal relation with Spain—we must remember just how rarely such conflicts ever materialized.

Though it is difficult for us at this distance to be certain of the allegorical significance for all the characters in the play, the historical references for the major pieces are clear in performance. The ambassador's witnesses identified the Black King as the King of Spain, the [Black Knight](#) as Gondomar, the Fat Bishop as the Archbishop of Spalato, the [White Knight](#) as Prince Charles, and the [White Duke](#) as Buckingham.

Character analyses:

[The Black Knight](#)

[The White King](#)

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Thomas Middleton (d. 1627).  
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## The Black Knight

The Black Knight is clearly at the center of *A Game at Chess*. In calling it "the play of Gondomar," contemporaries readily identified the impersonation of the Spanish ambassador to England as the source of the audience's enjoyment in the play. To understand some of this enjoyment, however, we need to remember that Middleton was not trying to impersonate the real person of Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde [Count] de Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador to England from 1613 to 1622, but rather to offer the audience the Gondomar of the anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish imagination. The Gondomar on stage was a well-known Machiavel, a stock figure type of the conniving, self-serving man: the man that Protestant audiences loved to hate. The Black Knight is represented as a worthy opponent, one who is encumbered finally with his bumbling, excessively lascivious crew of co-conspirators. When he is bagged at the end of the play, the White Knight readily recognizes his worth in calling him "the mightiest Machiavel-politician" (5.3.204).

For his characterization of Gondomar, Middleton draws heavily from the anti-Catholic, anti-Spanish propaganda of his day, especially from Thomas Scott's satirical pamphlet *The Second Part of Vox Populi, or Gondomar appearing in the Likeness of a Machiavel in a Spanish Parliament* (1624). Middleton takes his characterization of Gondomar from Scott, depicting Gondomar as one who has "effected more by his wit and policy, then could have been wrought by the strength of many Armies" (58). Middleton also takes his visual cues from the title page of *The Second Part of Vox Populi*. Gondomar stands bravely in the foreground, but this image is undercut by the iconographic images behind him, both the special seat to accommodate his fistula and his livery drawn by asses. Contemporary reports focus heavily on both of these details, and the modern-day editor T.H. Howard-Hill suggests that Middleton revised the play to call more attention to such details. An early manuscript (the Archdall-Folger manuscript) has the word "litter" written above Act Five, suggesting that the scene may have been fleshed out further in performance. Similarly, Gondomar's reference to "my golden stool" in the Archdall-Folger manuscript is later emphasized as "my chair of ease, my chair of cozenage" in the Trinity College Manuscript. According to Howard-Hill, the King's Men may have either acquired the objects themselves, or simply had props made to imitate them. As one contemporary writes, "they counterfeited his person to the life, with all his graces and faces, and had gotten (they say) a cast sute of his apparell for the purpose, with his Lyter, wherein the world sayes lackt nothing but a couple of asses to carry yt" (John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, quoted in Howard-Hill, *A Game*, 205).



When contemporaries, then, called the play a "play of Gondomar," as some did, they were drawn to Middleton's satirical characterization of Gondomar as an arch-Machiavel. As actors have long known, however, villains can sometimes steal the show, and satirical caricatures too can sometimes unintentionally offer a figure worthy of admiration. One contemporary witness, the Florentine Ambassador, made precisely this critique of the play. In seeking to expose Gondomar's evil machinations to view, *A Game at Chess* makes him appear a skilled and worthy enemy. As the Ambassador writes, "In going about to discover his trickes, me thinkes they make him a man of understanding with a great reflection / upon them that he daylie treated with" (Howard-Hill, *A Game*, 202). In particular, the characterization of Gondomar as this wildly influential Machiavel makes King James a dupe. *A Game at Chess* does nothing to overcome this view of the White King; he is overly beguiled by superficial holiness and honor, not only of the Black Knight himself, but also of so obviously a depraved figure as the Black Bishop's Pawn. After the audience observes a sensational scene in which the Black Bishop's Pawn attempts to rape the White Queen's Pawn while she is at her devotions, the White King, nonetheless, is shown as easily convinced by the Black Knight that the Pawn has been maliciously slandered (2.2). In fact, the White King even leaves the Pawn in the hands of the Black House for correction, as the White Knight and White Duke can do nothing but promise eventual aid. Such scenes remind us that King James was seen increasingly as misled, not only by the Spanish, but also by his Councilors. The Florentine Ambassador wrote that "It is believed nevertheless that it [*A Game at Chess*] will be prohibited once the King has notice of it, because they cannot tear Count Gondomar so much by revealing his fashion of dealing, without depicting him against their will as a man of worth, consequently reflecting weakness on those that gave him credence, and that daily dealt with him" (Howard-Hill, *A Game*, 201).

According to Sir Edward Conway, the tumult that ensued once King James was informed of the play by the Spanish Ambassador, Carlos Coloma, was piqued precisely because James felt himself to have been duped by the players, who performed the play while he was abroad, and, more importantly, by his Councilors, who should have informed him about the play (Howard-Hill, *A Game*, 200).

Various details of the satirical world of the play also make the Black Knight appear different in kind from the other Black pieces. If Gondomar's characterization comes from the stock-type of the Spanish Machiavel, then the characterization of the Jesuits comes from the stock anti-clerical and anti-Jesuitical model of the rapacious priests and religious, a type that extends back to Chaucer and beyond. Virtually all the religious pieces, especially the Fat Bishop and Black Bishop's Pawn, are seen as unable to control their immense appetites. In the seventeenth century generally and in *A Game at Chess* particularly, a "man" who gives into his appetites is seen as being feminized. Only two figures seem to be in command of their appetites, the Jesuitess (the Black Queen's Pawn, who plays on the lasciviousness of the Black Bishop's Pawn to "bag" him for herself) and the Black Knight. By all accounts, Gondomar, unlike the Duke of Buckingham, was not an excessively lascivious man, yet Middleton has the Black Knight boast on several occasions of his past sexual conquests. At first glimpse, such boasts might seem to suggest that his satirical characterization is partially influenced by the anti-clerical tradition. In practice, such boasts seem designed to differentiate Gondomar from the other Black pieces of the play, who notably cannot control their appetites. The Black Knight first boasts of his past sexual adventures when he is chastising the Black Bishop's Pawn for his inability to control his. After a discussion of his more politic and moderate past conquests (2.1.167-8), the Black Knight announces, "*Qui cauté, casté*, that's my motto ever" (2.1.171). Loosely translated as "He who is cautious is chaste," the motto clearly underscores Gondomar's Machiavellian character. Only the clerical figures like the Black Bishop or the Black Bishop's Pawn would allow their passions to get the better of them in ways that lead to their downfall.

The Black Knight is also seen as far more masterful than the young Black King, who wants to rush the game so as to grab the White Queen. The Black Knight notably advises his King, "You're too hot, sir" (3.1.244). Throughout the play, the Black Knight is distinguished from the other Black pieces in a way that suggests that he is a far more worthy and considerable opponent. Middleton even has the Black Knight at times complain of his companions that make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to win this game. After he learns of the Black Bishop's Pawn's attempted rape, Gondomar complains, "What I in seven years laboured to accomplish / One minute sets back by some codpiece college still" (2.1.167-68). There is a sense here that the Black Knight is brought down because he participates in what is seen in the satirical world of *A Game at Chess* as a corrupted and corrupting church.

None of the White pieces are morally superior to the Black Knight. Certainly, the White Duke and White Knight can only defeat him by employing the same deceptive techniques he does. We are made to wonder in the course of the scene whether they really establish themselves as superior to the Black Knight. Certainly, the Black Knight never really loses in the same way as other Black pieces do. More important, the White Duke, identified by contemporaries as James's favorite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, can only trap the Black Knight by confessing his own promiscuity. The White Knight, too, must confess himself an "arch-dissembler" (5.3.145), which, indeed, he must be in order to uncover the corruption of the Black Knight himself. The two White pieces may thus succeed, but not in a way that establishes them as morally superior.

In the lines following this confession, we hear the Black King and Queen admit their defeat, and we hear the bickering from the more minor Black pieces who have already been bagged. The Black Knight, however, never speaks again. Why, we might ask, does Middleton refrain from having him speak? Did Middleton find it somehow too demeaning finally to lump his arch-villain in with this crew? Perhaps the Florentine Ambassador was more right than he knew. Perhaps, despite the efforts of the players to make the Black Knight the buffoon, the Black Knight finally is seen to be a far more worthy politician than even Middleton may have wanted him to be. This would certainly not be the first example of the way that satirical intentions can go awry.

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#### **Suggestions for further reading:**

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## The White King

While the White King might represent King James I in one sense, it is unlikely that Middleton was aiming to depict the king. After all, it was dangerous to represent living monarchs on stage. Nevertheless, Middleton's fictional king does have considerable depth and subtlety, and as a literary character he must have invited playgoers to contemplate the dangers and hardships involved in managing complex state affairs.

What is particularly noteworthy about the White King is that he triumphs in spite of his policies, rather than because of them. Even before he makes his first appearance on stage, the audience learns of his dangerous ineptitude with regard to domestic security. The Black Knight makes reference to a plot already a full seven years in the planning—a remark that would have been understood by the audience as an allusion to the Spanish Match. To make matters worse, there is a turncoat in the White court, none other than the King's own pawn. In fact, one of the most exciting scenes occurs midway through the play, when the White King's Pawn discloses himself as a spy for the Black cause. Such dangers do not come across as minor oversights. They suggest a monumental blindness on the part of the White House, even as its enemies have made their way to the very center.

If the audience has suspicions about the White King from the start, they are confirmed when the character does finally appear on stage. In Act Two, he enters to overhear a rape charge from the White Queen's Pawn. To everyone's dismay, he renders an abominable judgment, not only rejecting her charge but putting her in the hands of the Black House. As Act Two ends, we watch the Black pieces dream up all sorts of sexual tortures for their new captive, while the White King exits oblivious to the damage he has just caused. Meanwhile, as we contrast his poor conduct with the pithy aphorisms that pepper his own speeches—he clearly sees himself as a wise figure who dispenses memorable phrases for others to learn—the irony becomes all the more tragic.

Indeed, Middleton does further his plot by exploiting the gaps between the White King's linguistic skills and his public conduct. In Act Three, for instance, he speaks the following lines:

Has my goodness,  
Clemency, love, and favour gracious raised thee  
From a condition next to popular labour,  
Took thee from all the dubitable hazards  
Of fortune, her most unsecure adventures,  
And grafted thee into a branch of honour,  
And dost thou fall from the top-bough by the rottenness  
Of thy alone corruption, like a fruit  
That's over-ripened by the beams of favour?  
Let thy own weight reward thee, I have forgot thee;  
Integrity of life is so dear to me  
Where I find falsehood or a crying trespass,  
Be it in any whom our grace shines most on,  
I'd tear 'em from my heart. (3.1.263-76)

They are among the most poetical lines of the scene, but they are directed at his own pawn—a piece who has only just sacrificed himself to the Black Bishop. In this context, the White Bishop's immediate reply seems ambivalent. When he observes, "Spoke like heaven's substitute," does he sincerely mean to represent the White King as a true agent of God on earth, much as James himself did in his own right? Or is there perhaps an undertone of sarcasm in the line, as though the word "substitute" suggested that the King occupied a space where heaven ought to have been instead?

Given the king's poor handling of corruption within his court, and given his profound inability to recognize the Black Knight's schemes—with over 20,000 plots in the hatching, one would think the king might have stumbled across at least *one*—it is something of an unexpected relief when the king finally does emerge victorious. As the White Knight and White Duke make a sudden grab for the major Black pieces, putting them in an enormous sack, the king makes the final speech of the play:

So, now let the bag close, the fittest womb  
For treachery, pride and malice, whilst we, winner-like,  
Destroying, through heaven's power, what would destroy,  
Welcome our White Knight with loud peals of joy. (5.3.216-20)

And as the White King oversees the Black pieces fall one by one, we cannot help but wonder how he would remain on top.

One might note that victory has nothing to do with the White King after all. While he does appear during certain high moments of the White House's struggle, he has relatively little stage time in comparison to the other pieces. And while he is the one who proclaims the ultimate victory over his adversaries, the other players—particularly the White Knight and White Duke—are the ones who have done the bulk of the work. Even at the ending, after the curtain falls, it is the White Queen's Pawn who delivers the epilogue, giving a speech which makes no mention of the King whatsoever. In a way it is just as we would expect in a chess game, which usually does not involve the King during the major development stages; but as a play about court affairs, it cannot help but incite discussion about the sort of role a king *ought* to play in managing major domestic crises.

Another way to explain the king's success is to suggest that *A Game at Chess* is a hybrid of styles. On the one hand, the plot resembles the types of domestic tragedies that were made popular by the likes of Middleton, as well as John Webster, John Ford, and others. Such plays usually involved complicated plot structures, with multiple twists and surprises, and often they are as ethically complicated as they are intricate. On the other hand, the play also performs as lowbrow propaganda, provoking its audience to war fever. Under such a lens, ethical complexities usually give way to black and white scenarios (as it were), where the forces of good always inevitably triumph over evil.

Perhaps the real challenge would be to explain how playgoers might have related the White House's easy victory to the real war against the Hapsburgs that so many so desperately wanted. Did they believe that a war against Spain would have concluded just as easily as the White House's triumph over its opponents? Did they recognize the severe challenges that a real war would have imposed, and if so, did they use the play's simplistic thematic structure to "cure" themselves of any trepidation? Meanwhile, did the King himself see through Middleton's ruse? After all, he did censor it at the ambassador's request. But did he make the right choice? And even if so, did he bring it about in the right manner? Like the White King on stage, King James's actual role in the affair over *A Game at Chess* is much easier to speculate about than it is to define.

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## The White Duke

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was a highly controversial figure in the courts of King James I and his son, Charles I. He was represented in the sensational production of *A Game at Chess* as the White Duke. Since there is no duke among genuine chess pieces, the piece is a highly visible addition to the game. Unlike the addition of the Fat Bishop, however, who can be seen as an individualization of a standard piece, the addition of the Duke required the removal of a chessman to make room. This sort of usurpation by the White Duke of the place of a rightful chessman might have seemed analogous to Buckingham's upstart reputation. As suggested by numerous documents from the period—including George Eglisam's exposé, *The fore-runner of revenge. . . . Wherein is expressed divers actions of the late Earle of Buckingham; especially concerning the death of King James, and the Marquess Hamelton, supposed by poyson. Also may be observed the inconveniences befalling a state where the noble disposition of the prince is mis-led by a favourite* (originally published in Latin in 1526)—many nobles and commoners felt that Buckingham had wrongfully and shamefully been raised into the peerage and high authority and had been so raised by winning and thereafter manipulating King James's affections and decisions.

There are many documents in addition to Eglisam's from the period giving voice to such views of Buckingham. The following ballad is representative. The bit of *facetia*, "Upon The Dukes Goeing Into Fraunce," treats an event something like that portrayed by *A Game at Chess*.

And wilt thou goe, great duke, and leave us heere  
Lamenting thee, and eke thy pupill deere,  
Great Charles: O who shall then the scepter sway  
And kingdomes rule, when thou art gone away?  
Is there noe whore at court to stay thee? must  
Thy hate to Spaine and France excite thy lust?  
Hast thou no neece to wed, is there no inne?  
Nor bawdy house t' afford thee any kinne  
To cuckold lords withall? hast thou noe foe  
Unpoyson'd left at home? then maist thou goe,  
And thinke poore England plagu'd sufficiently.  
Most graceless duke we thanke thy charitie,  
Wishing the fleet such speed, as thou but lost,  
Though we be conquer'd we have quitted cost.  
(*Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature*, 9-10.)

This libel expresses the key traits of the common view of Buckingham's character, including his usurping tendencies, his lasciviousness, and his underhanded and murderous techniques of management. It also expresses these characteristics from the perspective of a contemptuous person addressing an ignoble parvenu, communicated from the start by the verbal irony of "great duke."

Such a character is dramatically depicted by the White Duke in *A Game at Chess*. Although allocated fewer lines than most characters important to the plot or to the thinly allegorical sensation of the production, the White Duke gives self-conscious voice to his own widely reputed licentiousness, a licentiousness that, the Black Knight suggests, includes delight in same-sex *frottage*, if not necessarily more penetrating same-sex pleasures.

In the last scene of the play, the White Duke declares his incontinence more directly: "Some that are pleased to make a wanton on't / Call it infirmity of blood, flesh-frailty, / But certain there's a worse name in your books for't" (5.3.121-123). But on this seemingly shocking declaration of concupiscent delinquency, the Black Knight responds, quite gleefully,

The trifle of all vices, the mere innocent,  
The very novice of this house of clay: venery!  
If I but hug thee hard I show the worst on't. (5.3.124-126)

Carnality, we hear, is as inoffensive to the Black Knight and the Black House as is hunting, suggested by the Black Knight's witty use of the word, "venery!", which, of course, means both

the pursuit of lecherous pleasure and the act of hunting. In this punning linkage, as in others, the connection is made also to the White King, James I, who was a famously avid hunter.

However the play was received and reviewed by governmental authorities, there was little doubt that the White Duke was understood to be the Duke of Buckingham. Whether impersonated or in person, Buckingham usually drew keen attention, sometimes admiring, sometimes detracting, but always erotic or salacious.

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**Suggestions for further reading:**

Bergeron, David M. *King James & Letters of Homoerotic Desire*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999.

"Poems, Songs, etc., George Duke of Buckingham, and his assassination by Felton." In *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages*, vol. XXIX. London: Percy Society, 1851

Lockyer, Roger. *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628*. London: Longman, 1981.

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# Sites of Cultural Stress from Reformation to Revolution

A Summer 2003 NEH Institute.  
Directed by David Cressy  
and Lori Anne Ferrell.

## Theatre



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677).

Section from "The long bird's eye view  
of London," 1647.

### Censorship and the English Stage: A Brief Overview

### The Spanish Match

### Thomas Scott and the Influence of Pamphlet Literature on *A Game of Chess*

- **Provocations of  
Performance: *A Game at  
Chess***

- **The Black Knight**
- **The White King**
- **The White Duke**
- **The White Knight**

Full-text of *A Game at Chess*

Folger shelf mark: V.a. 231

## The White Knight

*A Game at Chess* capitalizes on the increasing hostility toward Spain, and it casts the White Knight as the true hero of England. But it is equally easy to see the White Knight—the allegorical representation of Prince Charles—as a fool; and the view depends on one's own political position and insight.

In his letter to the Spanish court, the Spanish Ambassador in London described the White Knight's role in the play: "The last act ended with a long, obstinate struggle between all the whites and the blacks, and in it he who acted the Prince of Wales [the White Knight] heartily beat and kicked the 'Count of Gondomar' into Hell, which consisted of a great hole and hideous figures; and the white king [drove] the black king and even his queen [into hell] almost as offensively. All this has been so much applauded and enjoyed by the mob that here, where no play has been acted for more than one day [consecutively], this one has already been acted on four, and each day the crowd is greater." (Howard-Hill, *A Game at Chess*, 195)



Indeed, the White Knight presents the audience with an overly flattering characterization of Charles, Prince of Wales, as the epitome of courage and virtue who saves the White Queen's Pawn by riding into the Black House and uncovering their duplicity, albeit through his own dissembling. He "confesses" to the Black Knight, "I'm an arch-dissembler, sir" (5.3.145) and thus sets up the "checkmate by Discovery" that allows the White King and Queen to preside over the triumph of the White House. As a bag is opened—representing both the maw of hell and the bag into which captured chess pieces are put—the other black players are observed bickering among themselves.

"Contention in the bag! Is hell divided?" (5.3.198), the White Knight asks before the White King and Queen unite to put the remaining black players—the Black King and Queen, the Black Knight, and the Black Duke—in with the others, thus securing the destination of the opposition and the victory for the White House.

The sensational run came to an end when King James censored the performance. But was this a concession to the Spanish ambassador's outrage? Or did it reflect the King's own sense of injured merit? Was the audience responding to the simple jingoistic triumph of England over Spain, or were they compelled by the allegorical complexity of the performance that allowed for ambiguous readings of even the white characters? The duplicity of the Jesuits of the Black House is clear, but how does the audience read the duplicity or cleverness of Prince Charles and Buckingham?

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### Suggestions for further reading:

Yachnin, Paul, "A *Game at Chess*: Thomas Middleton's 'Praise of Folly.'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 48 (1987): 105-23.

Dutton, Richard, ed. *Thomas Middleton: Women Beware Women and Other Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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