

The Making of Englishmen

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The Making of Englishmen

Debates on National Identity 1550–1650

By

Hilary Larkin



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PREFACE

My interest in the history of English identity long predated my studies at University. Studying for a doctorate at Cambridge gave me the chance at last to transform that interest into the subject of a thesis and now a book. Above all else, the work was shaped fundamentally in discussions with Quentin Skinner. I am deeply grateful for his readiness to share his insights into the theory and practice of history and for his unstinting generosity, all of which made doing the history of ideas in his company not merely a scholarly experience of the very first order but also a most civilised one. In the course of writing, I have become indebted to many scholars, among them John Morrill, David Colclough, Annabel Brett, Markku Peltonen and Alex Shepard. As the scope of the work increased, so did my discussions with Krishan Kumar, John Breuilly and Mike Savage about national identities, with John Kerrigan, Colin Burrow, Victoria Fordham, Jennifer Richards, Emma Smith, and Cathy Shrank about literature and language; with Ulinka Rublack, John Walter and Patricia Allerston about cultural matters and finally with Tom Freeman, Paulina Kewes, Tom McCoog SJ, Arthur Marotti, Vittoria Feola, David Trim and Robert Miola on religion.

There are institutional debts too. St John's College provided a most civilised atmosphere of scholarship during my three years there as a doctoral student. Thanks in particular to the then Dean, Dr Peter Linehan and my tutors, Maire Ní Mhaonaigh and Sylvana Tomaselli. Whilst teaching in St Paul's School, London, I submitted the revised manuscript to Brill: my thanks to colleagues and students for providing such a congenial environment. Latterly, the University of Kansas has provided me with a research position which has enabled me to finish the book with that rarest of academic luxuries: leisure. I am indebted to the support of Jonathan and Katherine Clark and recent conversations with Christopher Forth and Jon Lamb and others of the early-modern seminar group. So much of the time has been spent in one library or other and I am grateful to the staff of many rare books departments including the Bodleian and All Souls College, Oxford as well as the various college libraries at Cambridge, particularly Trinity and St John's. In the last mentioned, Adam, Jonathan and Malcolm proved to be particularly helpful. Malcolm Marjoram in the British library and Nicholas Smith of the University Library in Cambridge deserve a mention too. The editor of the EEBO database, Peter White, has

answered my queries with promptitude and efficiency. Terence Ball, Rosanna Woensdregt, Karen Cullen, and others involved in reading and preparing the manuscript at Brill have been wonderfully supportive and insightful throughout.

Research trips to England as I finished the final version have been excellently facilitated by the hospitality of friends: I thank in particular Deirdre and Richard Serjeantson, Kristina and Giles Parkinson, and Aisling Byrne. It is, indeed, a great pleasure to be able to acknowledge the encouragement provided by family and friends on both sides of the Atlantic. My parents, siblings David, Andrew, Valeria and my aunts have been unfailingly supportive, and Danny, Gabi, Laura, Barnie, Geraldine, Jane and Ed delightful companions from the very outset of my time in Cambridge. It would be idle to name every friend for they know very well who they are; it only remains to assure them of my very real gratitude. This book is dedicated to John who was the best kind of reason for my leaving England.

CONVENTIONS

Abbreviations. The main abbreviations used are the following:

OED: Oxford English Dictionary.

ODNB: Dictionary of National Biography.

ESTC: English Short Title Catalogue.

EEBO: Early English Books Online.

Cal of S.P. (Ven.) Calendar of State Papers (Venetian).

Transcriptions: I have retained original spelling, capitalisation and punctuation when quoting from early-modern sources including the original in the case of *i/j* and the usage of *u/v* and *w*. I have, however, made a few adjustments for clarity's sake. This includes consistently lengthening contractions and ampersands, and normalising the long 's' throughout. I have also modernised and regularised all proper names, to obviate the necessity of engaging with the great diversity in spelling at the time. Thus, for example, John Lilburn appears here as John Lilburne, Barnabee Rych as Barnabe Rich. Moreover, when making use of modern editions of primary texts, I have used their spelling even when it differs from the original.

Dating: Old Style dating is retained. Yet I have taken the start of the year to be 1 January rather than Lady Day, 25 March, as the custom then was in England.

References: I use a version of the author-date system for both footnotes and bibliography. Yet there are certain necessary modifications. Where authorship has never been established, I list texts by title. I have also referred to collections of primary sources by title for ease of reference, except in cases where a collection is particularly well known by the name of its compilers, as for instance William Haller and Godfrey Davies' edition of the Leveller tracts or A.S.P. Woodhouse's edition of the Putney and Whitehall debates. In the case of much of the 1640s pamphlet material, I have indicated the actual date as well as the year of publication when it has been annotated in George Thomason's hand. The sheer number of works involved and the importance of correct sequencing make this the preferred option.

Authorship and Attributions: In most cases, the author's name or initials are presented unambiguously on the title page or in a signed dedicatory. In those texts where the name of the author does not appear in any of these

ways, but which are generally recognised to be by a particular author, I have given the name in square brackets. This also applies in cases when we must deduce authorship from a well-known pseudonym: John Marston, for instance, used W. Kingsayder and Theriomastix; Robert Persons often signed himself N. Doleman. In support of these attributions, I have closely followed established scholarly opinion as contained in the *English Short Title Catalogue Collection*. I have indicated particular occasions where I have diverged from their suggestions. Particular issues arise with the works of the Levellers, a portion of whose pamphlets appeared anonymously and are often thought to be collaborative efforts. In attributing such works to particular authors, I have again followed established scholarly opinion, making use of suggested attributions as given in the *ESTC* and the *ODNB* and also in the work of Frank 1955, Brailsford 1961 and Foxley 2001. I have noted ambiguities, where they arise, in the footnotes.

Places of Publication: In the primary bibliography, all works were published in London unless otherwise stated. Where the place of publication is not made explicit but is presumed to be London, I have put it in square brackets. Some of the Catholic literature was published from a secret press in England. In such cases, I have followed the *ESTC* in citing the place of publication as England in square brackets.

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INTRODUCTION

What did it mean to be an early-modern Englishman? This study addresses that question not through an investigation of state-formation, or social history, but through the detailed analysis of a series of discursive themes. It asks how Englishmen sought to define themselves: what terms they used, what values they adhered to, and what they defined themselves against. It asks about the controversies that such inevitably narrow and exclusionary definitions often involved. Its source base ranges widely, from political treatises and parliamentary debates, to dialogues, dramas, and verse. In the burgeoning print culture of the late Tudor and early Stuart periods, ideas about what it was to be English possessed a rhetorical prominence which has not yet received due attention. That there should be a lively discourse construing and contesting national identity is unsurprising. What it was to be English and what it was *not* to be English had to preoccupy the minds of the three or four generations following the Reformation if only for the simple reason that the Roman Catholic Church had been dislodged from its position as the focus of supranational identity. A certain amount of intellectual introversion was thus inevitable. Also of significance was an ethos, emerging from the Renaissance, which prompted, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, 'an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.'¹ This could be applied to collective identities as well as individual ones: there seems to have been more of an instinct in this period to impose a shape upon a disparate community, to establish its ideological boundaries, than there had been before. Even if this thesis is not acknowledged, it may be granted that discourses about identity came to the surface more than in the past: in short, that they became more public, that they provided a rich quarry for the day's soothsayer and critic. These were ideas that could be bandied around in print – lazy stereotypes, engrained assumptions, and evolving normative judgments, many of which were national in tone. Then, in England's case in particular, there was a sense of cultural striving. Her status as an aspiring power spurred the kind of national self-fashioning that stressed the distinctive virtues and freedoms

¹ Greenblatt 1973, p. 2.

of a Protestant people. Identity construction would be an attempt to control the image of the nation, the impression her people gave off. In some cases, it amounted to damage limitation.

There were geographical impulses at work too. Cartography had become something of a 'craze' in sixteenth-century Europe and in 1579, Christopher Saxon collected the first national compilation of regional maps, thus representing the 'English place in the world' for the first time. An interest in representing one's country, one could argue, complemented the desire to fashion the national self.² At the same time, and in a much more practical sense, being English came to matter more because the country was ever more open to the world through trade and communication, and thus more exposed to different modes of being and behaving. More elaborate connections with other nationalities prompted self-reflection – even self-interrogation. Moreover, if travel did indeed broaden the cultural horizons in one sense, it also, in quite another sense, fostered the development of – and delight in – narrow cultural caricatures of foreigners. The English quickly caught on to the early-modern virus for typologies: for assessing and judging 'national types'. There was an increased propensity to think about the effects of climate, religion, culture and polity on a people's habits and dispositions. For all these reasons therefore, identities needed to be renegotiated, redefined and above all, politicized in the face of change.

Whilst there is no complete history of ideas about Englishness in the period, there are many histories which have focused on the rise of the English nation and what could be called its 'national consciousness'. Predictably, every period has its own defenders and detractors.³ For Patrick Wormald, the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* in the eighth century was crucial in 'defining English national identity', an identity that remained 'embedded' in much of the population even after 1066.⁴ John Gillingham positions a revival of the nation in the twelfth century while Adrian Hastings, for his part, maintains that the fourteenth century was 'the very latest point at which it is plausible to claim that the English nation-state had gelled so decisively that no imaginable circumstance could later have diverted English society into some quite other form'. Liah Greenfeld is no less decided in dating this development to the early Tudor period; Hans Kohn convinced that it is a phenomenon proper to the seventeenth century because of what he calls its Puritan Revolution. He claims to find in

² Hale 1993, pp. 16, 18.

³ Kumar 2003, pp. 39–59 gives a very useful overview of all the views.

⁴ Wormald 1992, p. 26; Wormald 1994, pp. 14–18.

this the very 'first example of modern nationalism [...], infinitely more than the etatism and patriotism of the Renaissance'.⁵ Gerald Newman delves into the period between 1750 and 1830 to decipher the shift from a low grade patriotism to assertive nationalist 'demands and actions', and Krishan Kumar, although acknowledging signs of nationhood as far back as the fourteenth century, locates the real 'moment of Englishness' in the nineteenth.⁶ Many of these scholars also claim that 'the English gave the world the model of a nation state' in their respective centuries, that it was, in short, the prototype.⁷

These are all claims that have been more or less plausibly made in their respective contexts. What this study intends to do is something rather different. It intends to uncover what writers meant when they invoked Englishness in the period roughly from 1550 to 1650. This is not to claim that they thereby invented the English nation or brought nationalism to birth. That would be to claim too much. The origins debate we can appropriately leave to one side. This will be the more modest attempt to analyse how and why they imagined (not without internal contestations) that being English was synonymous with being free, plain and Protestant, and how they began to insist on distinguishing themselves from the rest of Europe, although in practice, of course, such distinctions were less than absolute. That intellectual legacy continued to inform culture more widely, even when the infant state had grown into the British behemoth of a later age, the world's pre-eminent maritime, mercantile and imperial power.⁸ Indeed, residual traces of that legacy, much muted, are still with us. Its roots are in this period.

But why this period more than before or after? The subject is a large one and in focusing on the century between 1550 and 1650, the study offers only a partial view of what is habitually taken to constitute the early-modern period. But the perspective of a century of formative growth allows one to chart the emerging mental geography of Englishness with a

⁵ Gillingham 2000, xviii–xxii, pp. 113–44; Hastings 1997, p. 51; Greenfeld 1992, p. 42. To be precise, Greenfeld dates the 'emergence of national sentiment' to the first third of the sixteenth century. Kohn 1965. He provides a survey of nationalism in general, and so seventeenth-century England gets a rather short treatment, with an inevitable sense of incompleteness. He returns to the point in a later work, from which this quotation is drawn. Kohn 2005, p. 166.

⁶ Newman 1997, p. 60; Kumar 2003, pp. 59, 175.

⁷ Hastings 1997, pp. 45, 4; Wormald 1994, p. 3; Kohn 1965, p. 16; Newman 1997, p. 224. For Greenfeld 1992, p. 14 England was the 'first nation in the world' and the only one for two hundred years, possibly excepting the Dutch Republic.

⁸ Scott 2011.

certain internal coherence. It is also, for various reasons, a privileged moment of the story. These are the first few generations when we see the Reformation leading off in a definitively Protestant and Erastian direction. It is a time when English writers are most adamant in laying down foundations of anti-Romanism and taking stock of the vast changes that have shaken their country since the 1530s. It is a time also when England was sufficiently insecure in its position in the world as to *need* to make big claims about its identity. Discourses of Englishness are not so much a fruit of national self-confidence as of its lack. Sometimes, historians have been misled by the surface bravura and triumphalism into half-believing in a narrative of success. Yet, this was not an especially glorious century for England in terms of its record on the world stage. The Armada was not so great a victory as it was trumpeted.⁹ The posturing as Protestant protector of Europe was largely just that: a posture. Jonathan Scott is right in pointing to the multiple failures of England in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century: the failure, for example, to find a north-western passage to Carthay, the failure to prevent Dutch dominance of the East Indies and Spanish dominance of the Americas, and the failure to establish good Muscovy trade.¹⁰ England, in short, was not secure. She was a relatively puny upstart amongst more established powers with far greater resources. Her later global success was not predetermined. There were few laurels to rest upon. There was thus a perceived need for an energetic and robust statement of who they were, and if it meant talking up the glory days of Agincourt and Crécy, and the superiority of the Magna Carta, so be it. A glorious past was easy to dwell in: it had comforts denied to the present. So also did an imaginary future.

The period 1550 to 1650 is also an apposite one for considering identity construction because it was a time of great acceleration in trade, exchange and travel. Although this will be dwarfed by what occurs after the Restoration in 1660, it is contextually very significant.¹¹ Cities became hubs of this newly dynamic, more globalised environment. London's population of a mere 50,000 in 1550 had increased to 400,000 just over a century later. Early forms of consumerism had emerged, historians would argue, by 1300: by the sixteenth century, consumerist practices were more expansive than ever.¹² There were quite simply more things to be bought, owned,

⁹ See, for example, Fernández-Armesto 1988.

¹⁰ Scott 2011, p. 34.

¹¹ Muldrew 1998. See below p. 26.

¹² Rublack 2010, xx.

sold and traded and that, by a wide variety of people, not just the social elites.¹³ Markets became more complex and as they did so, so also did the market-place of ideas. Interactions opened up new worlds for England. It was not just things that were being traded in ever increasing quantities but values, mores and attitudes also, not all of them especially welcome. Elizabethan and Stuart England was just such a raucous market-place for ideas of national identity. There was, as it were, much haggling to distinguish what was pure, unadulterated and native from the attractively-packaged foreign ware which was often felt to be dubious and counterfeit. The historian needs to be sensitive to the workings of this noisy ideological market-place to find out just what was being packaged, peddled and indeed rejected.

If these reasons serve to explain the chosen chronological frame for the story, the other preliminary question to ask is why choose to focus upon Englishness in this period when so much is being claimed as British history? The cosy terrain of Englishry has long been mined by historians such as J.G.A. Pocock, Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill. We are now much more attune to the 'multiplicity of histories' within the British Isles, much less likely to be led astray by the blithely unconscious (or arrogantly presumptive) Anglocentricity of earlier historiography.¹⁴ Not only does it seem less fashionable but, rather worse, it seems suspiciously regressive to go back to plough the furrow of particularist English identity. Yet it could not be helped. Whilst this is not in the least an attempt to restore an Anglocentric model for British history, it does suggest that Englishness and not Britishness was the more prevalent discourse of identity construction in the period 1550 to 1650. It seems to me undeniable, upon any consideration of the sources, that invocations of Englishness were more constant, emphatic and emotive than invocations of Britishness. As regards the popular construction of identity, Britishness was then very much in its prehistory. It did not resonate with the public. A signal proof is that King James' union of the crowns in 1603 brought no political or cultural union. It was only during later 'successive military struggles, primarily against France,' writes Scott 'that inhabitants of the island began to think of themselves as British'.¹⁵ The process of thinking of themselves as

¹³ Jones and Stallybrass 2000 have done some interesting research into the market for second-hand clothes.

¹⁴ Pocock 2005, p. 75; Bradshaw and Morrill eds. 1996. Also Bradshaw and Roberts ed. 1998.

¹⁵ Scott 2011, 121.

British cannot be backdated meaningfully into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

That said, it makes for a plausible case to say that the foundations of a later construction of British identity were laid in the period: the constitution of a truly British monarchy under the Scottish Stuarts and the establishment of what would in time become very British institutions were important for the future. But the former failed, as we have said, to translate into the full union desired by the monarch: despite the poetry and rhetoric of eager courtiers on the subject of *Britannia*, there was little momentum for conflating Anglo-Scottish destinies. The latter, exemplified for instance in the English East India Company, was, as Scott shrewdly notes, a private mercantile endeavour eventually legitimated by royal patent, not a state-sponsored endorsement of imperial construction. David Armitage who is among the first to recover fully the aetiology of British imperial ideology does trace its evolution from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, but notes that it is a 'long drawn out' process, not fully established until the late seventeenth century.¹⁶ In short, whilst foundations were being laid for a British state in this period, it is not the ideal place to examine a popular construction of what it was to be British.

So Englishness remains the most valid object of study. The question arises as to how this way of thinking can properly be recovered and interpreted by the historian. This represents a particular challenge. After all, the words and collocations which habitually clothe the fashionable studies of identity in our own day – words like identity itself, nationhood, collective selfhood and national consciousness – simply do not exist in the vocabulary of those living in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Even the word Englishness was not coined until 1804.¹⁷ Where then does this leave the historian? Is it impossible to reconstruct the stories that Elizabethan and Stuart Englishmen wished to tell about themselves? Some would say it is. Some would argue that there is no sense in which the early-moderns had a grasp of national identity, and whatever vague notions that they had of belonging to the national community, shorn of philosophical and theological considerations, they were not an important or even particularly interesting element of their thought. This interrogation, therefore, as it is phrased, would be an entirely anachronistic

¹⁶ Scott 2011, p. 34; Armitage 2000, p. 7.

¹⁷ The etymology of Englishness is particularly interesting. William Taylor of Norwich is credited with first employing it in 1804 (*OED* sub Englishness); ironically, he was slighted by certain contemporaries for using too many foreign words and idioms. Langford 2000, p. 1.

exercise, presuming early-modern interest in a subject which only interests the moderns.¹⁸ This is a significant criticism that deserves consideration accordingly. My answer is that it is still possible and even worthwhile to reconstruct their thinking on identity, provided that one is highly sensitive to the languages and idioms particular to them and to the limitations of the discourse. Proposing to interpret their ways of thinking rests upon the conviction that once a society self-consciously possesses a concept, a related vocabulary will invariably emerge around it.¹⁹ Accordingly, if early-modern writers are indeed thinking about national identity or reflecting upon it *en passant*, those thoughts will find expression in particular ways, in a very different language to our own, undoubtedly, but one which, by its internal coherence and its insistent repetition in a variety of contexts, will be unmistakable. Historians of ideas, according to J.G.A Pocock, may be confident that that they are not fabricating theories when they are able to show that 'different authors carried out variant acts in the same language, responding to each other in it and employing it as a medium as well as mode of discourse'.²⁰ The object will be to cast the net as widely as possibly so as to trace the contours of this language across diverse sorts of texts.

One habitual feature to be observed about the particular language in the sources studied is that it is engaged and often polemical. It is neither neutral nor overly theoretical in its presentation or analysis of national identity. There is no evidence for a deep study of national character and its relationship with climate, laws and customs as would be characteristic of later Enlightenment thought. There are rough convictions that a temperate climate has had some impact on national attributes and a definite conviction that the laws of the land have had a bearing on an Englishman's innate sense of freedom, for example, but there is no attempt to create a 'scientific' anthropology of the citizen and subject. So how, it may well be asked, does a discourse about Englishness emerge in this period? How does an early-modern idiom and vocabulary permit statements about identity? And how should we read those statements? Invocations of national identity emerge most often in the form of statements about what

¹⁸ This thesis was raised by Jonathan Clark in discussion and is a chief argument against the proposal of a valid history of ideas about early-modern Englishness.

¹⁹ This is the point that Skinner makes in talking of the relationship between concepts and language. Skinner 2002, I, p. 160. Pocock stresses the symbiosis of this relationship: 'the language determines what can be said in it, but is capable of being modified by what is said in it.' Pocock 1987, p. 20.

²⁰ For this and a list of other signs separating an authentic from a spurious history of a language, see Pocock 1987, pp. 26–27.

it is to be an Englishman: what sort of political and moral persona he ought to have, how he ought to speak, dress and behave and how he ought to conduct himself in the religious sphere. These are the very practical and contested issues which arrest late Tudor and early Stuart contemporaries. The focus on the normative is notable. This is primarily a discourse which seeks to standardise and regulate behaviour and belief, although it often makes a claim to simple descriptiveness. Identity can be aspiration and/or prescription more than description, concerned with what ought to be the case but what is not. It is plausible to contend that this focus on the idealised individual is a newly important one in the print culture of the Elizabethan era and afterwards. It is of a piece with the vogue for self-fashioning as exemplified by the enthusiasm for courtesy and behaviour manuals in which the aspiring classes could learn not just the habits of the Englishman but those of the English gentleman. Drawing inspiration from popular foreign manuals but retaining a measure of distinctiveness, the native courtesy literature shows a society preoccupied with 'becoming', with identifying ways of being that would confer distinction and at the same time, complement the national persona.

It is also a portrait with a strong bias towards the masculinity of national identity. Questions about what it was to be English were most often asked in the form of what it was to be an Englishman, thus bringing into sharp focus the rhetoric of gender, which constitutes a very obvious avenue of approach into the subject. For there is no denying that ideals of masculinity were mapped on to national identity in the period, and while the same could justifiably be said of many societies in many eras, here the equation seems to be particularly insistent and, because of its long-term consequences on English self-consciousness, particularly worth the recovery.²¹ The chief reason why masculine values are so central is because the story that Englishmen were keen to tell about themselves was one of self-sufficiency, self-government and non-subjection.²² That these were some

²¹ The study of masculinities has emerged since the late 1980s from the belated reflection that men, like women, could be seen as gendered beings, and that masculinity itself was a construct, attaining to a variety of forms in different periods and places. The purpose is to make 'men visible as gendered subjects'. Tosh and Roper 1991, p. 1. One of the most outstandingly masculine of societal constructions is the Roman one, and this was often recalled and emulated subsequently, not least in our chosen period. See for example McDonnell 2006; Gleason 1995; Gunderson c2000.

²² As we shall find later, Englishness could be compatible with being a subject but not with subjection. This distinction will emerge from much of the political polemic of the Stuart era. See below pp. 213–225, 257–272.

of the more prominent elements in the normative masculine models in early-modern England has been thoroughly established by Alexandra Shepard.²³ One of the ways, David Kuchta tells us, in which men maintained power was ‘by creating a public image of manliness’ – I would argue, in this case, a national image of manliness.²⁴ By contrast, there was a great deal less attention paid towards what it meant for an English woman to be English. There was some, of course, but it was confined to the moral and behavioural literature for the most part, and proved not to pervade into as many other domains.²⁵ It is also worth reiterating that although there was a prevalent conception of the realm and the Church themselves as feminine and indeed maternal entities, a conception rendered more visible by the presence of a female monarch for 45 years, this in no way detracted from the propensity to tie masculine values to Englishness; in fact, it seemed only to enhance it.

Another avenue of approach in uncovering how contemporaries thought of identity is to re-establish just what was construed as ‘foreignness’, that against which Englishness had to do business in the real world but also battle in the mental world. Concerns about the domination of foreign ways of being or modes of governance were voiced so very frequently – and not just at the danger points of 1588, 1625 and the 1640s – that they became part of the *patois* of the day. Undesirable qualities were consistently foisted onto their rivals, most especially the Spanish and the French, and there was a lively trade in stereotyping and calculated insult. This tendency may seem superficial, but from a political and cultural point of view, it is of great interest. What, for example, were the grounds of the emergence of the French stereotype of effeminacy and excess? How was it historically backdated, so as to lend the story medieval justification? How did it become enmeshed with wider stereotypes about Roman Catholicism? Why did the image of the slavish French become so engrained in this hundred-year period as to be able to lend weight to the political discourse on the Englishness of liberty during the days of civil war? A century later when William Hogarth painted his celebrated *Gate of Calais* in 1748, with its portrayal of the snivelling, cringing French and the

²³ Shepard 2003, pp. 246–247.

²⁴ Kuchta 2002, p. 10.

²⁵ At least it is not systematic treatment. She is pretty much absent from the discourse on freedom, but receives much attention in terms of her sartorial habits, more for reason of modesty than for that of nationality. For discussions of the life and status of early-modern English women see Hull c1982; Roberts 1985; Sommerville 1995; Mendelson and Crawford 1998.

implication of substantial, healthy, prosperous and Protestant Englishness exemplified by the sirloin beef, the cultural assumptions informing such crudely potent stereotypes had long been in place. The automatic associations are, in fact, in place by the 1650s and the process whereby these (and others such) were established and politicised needs to be traced and scrutinised.

From the point of view of understanding the construction of a positive vision of English identity, understanding why there emerged such powerful negative judgments against foreignness is also vital. It is not difficult to read signs of beleaguering in the sources. This 'fortress built by Nature for herself' was, in fact, no genuine fortress. Nor did the 'silver sea' serve England in the office of a wall or as a 'moat defensive to a house', whatever John of Gaunt may have thought.²⁶ The period, as we have seen, saw an unprecedented opening to the outer world, a veritable efflorescence of trade, commerce, travel, exploration and communication. So many developments were happening simultaneously to transform the profile of the country. Successful privateers unloaded booty from the New World and the government was not reticent in sanctioning this forceful entry into the lucrative Atlantic trade. The East India Company was granted the Royal Charter in 1600 and soon began to make considerable profits. The British Empire started to take on coherent form in North America and the Caribbean from early on in James I's reign. Although the Grand Tour as such is usually dated to the period following the Restoration, it emerges from the multiple travellers' manuals from the late Elizabethan period onwards that Englishmen were going to the continent in numbers not experienced before. It was also something of a golden age for translations: quantities of European texts were, as they would have said at the time, 'Englished'. The hub of the court attracted foreigners, bringing with them new habits and fashions that could be emulated. The two early Stuart Queens, Anne of Denmark and Henrietta Maria of France, had cosmopolitan entourages; the former's secret and the latter's overt Catholicism eroded in practice some of the sharp dichotomies that seemed to shut off England from its major continental neighbours. In short, given these contexts which pressed upon the consciousness of Tudor and Stuart subjects, it is unsurprising that foreignness should form such a central part in considerations of identity. The socially- or educationally-elite Englishman (and the non-elite Englishman if he resided in the capital city) could not

²⁶ Shakespeare *Richard II*, II, i.

avoid it, even if he wanted to (and very often, he did not want to): the fabrics of the clothes he wore or aspired to wear, the words he spoke to colour his conversation, and the political culture in which his country was enmeshed, all spoke of international engagement.

Questions were thus inevitable. How could the Englishman distinguish himself? Was the wearing of foreign apparel a slippery slope into acquiring the slavish religious or political values of his continental counterparts? Could one travel without losing one's very self in the process? Could one suffer a loss of traditional rights and still be upright? A classical metaphor underlies these concerns: what person was the Englishman carrying? What role was he playing? Although not a philosophical discourse, properly speaking, there are traces of more elevated reflections on the nature of representation and of being and seeming which echo, in demotic form, some of the main political, legal philosophical concerns of the period.²⁷ Man is *homo symbolicum*, a representational animal, and his role-playing was a natural consideration in an era saturated in Cicero. He it was who had argued that for every *officia*, a particular *persona* was necessary.²⁸ This lent itself, obviously enough to theatre: staged representations are often employed to point up the differences in identity, most notably of all in the three inter-related texts of the late Elizabethan era which tell the moral tale of 'Cloth Breeches' (true Englishness) against 'Velvet Breeches' (Italianate Englishness).²⁹ Nowhere is the divergence between the normative ideal and real-life English people of Elizabethan and Stuart times more clearly to be seen than in the ample literature which pokes fun at or anathematizes these national imposters, these most un-English of Englishmen. There are different adjectives for him – Jesuited, Frenchified, Italianate, Hispaniolated – and different modes of attacking him, but throughout, he is not merely a foolish or confused figure, ripe for scorn, but even a potentially dangerous one. He is a civic liability, even an enemy because he does not know who he is nor who he ought to be. In a sometimes very explicit way, he is said to symbolise degeneration in the fullest sense of a departure from his own kind. It is also a departure from his virtuous masculinity. The most potent and indeed politicised image that will be offered is that of the traitor, a leitmotif throughout the various sections of this work. The political and religious traitor is something we are familiar with but the cultural traitor is a newer angle which needs particular recovery. This is the very image in

²⁷ Skinner 2005, pp. 155–184.

²⁸ Cicero 1913, I 107–115. See also Skinner 2005, p. 162, fn 47.

²⁹ See below, chapters 2 and 3.

Thomas Dekker's *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* when he depicts the Englishman, decked out in fabrics and styles from abroad, as a body hung, drawn and quartered. The wearer of other people's identities is guilty of a new style of treachery: a crime born of the context in which he lives.³⁰

In satires and denunciations of Englishmen who have too much in them of foreignness, there is also an element of self-interrogation and self-satire on the part of some authors, particularly the London hacks in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period. They know they are guilty of the very vices they condemn. Yet, they still ask the question: who are the English? If they wear velvet from Genoa, and throw French words into a conversation, and kiss hands like a Spaniard, and profess loyalty to a Roman Pope, and are prepared to see their rights and liberties abrogated, what is there to bind them as a people? They ask these questions above all because they are searching for an adequate national frame of reference which will be capacious enough for liberty and prosperity but narrow enough for virtuous living.

Structurally, the study is divided into three inter-related sections. The opening section of the work traces the persistent strand in the post-Reformation literature which associates being English with the values of plainness and simplicity. This ethos of plainness emerges, in part, because of the Reformation; certainly, the 'hot Protestants' as they were called were particularly keen to promote it. Nevertheless, there are also other influences, notably a Tacitean revival and a hostile reaction to perceived excesses in the socio-cultural world, notably at court and in the city. By the 1640s, it had become entirely conventional to criticise the un-English nature of fashionable life. An ethos of plainness also emerged out of a nostalgic veneration for agrarian and pastoral life. The account of rural virtue was overlaid with national overtones, so that arguments about the latter are also more widely arguments about what it was to be upstanding and pure.

Language and clothes are the two major concerns here. Both 'proclaimed' the man and thus were easily politicised. Moreover, both were peculiarly exposed to foreignness and both were perceived as potentially feminine domains. The Englishman would have to tread carefully. As the English language evolved, as its vocabulary rapidly expanded and as its respectability increased, pronouncements were regularly made about how the Englishman ought to speak. A plain tongue meant a virtuous life

³⁰ See below p. 101.

and there was that about such speech and gesture that was thought to facilitate civic morality. Plain appearances also came to be trumpeted as personal style became ever more contested. The most emphatic visual fault-line of the period pits cavaliers against roundheads, that is to say the florid courtly types who were slaves to fashion and arbitrary power and those who wore their hair short and straight. This construction, in its essentials if not in all its details, predates the civil war period by at least five decades so that by then it is simply a matter of invoking established stereotypes, however exaggerated they may be. How the value and virtue of plainness came to be imbued with notions of nationality thus needs to be investigated.

Naturally, the plain Englishman is found to sit very ill with Roman Catholicism, and especially with Jesuitism. He may be one of a variety of Protestants; he may not be especially devout at all, but he is quite sure of what he is not. This construction of an incompatibility between Catholicism and Englishness has its roots in the Henrician period; from the time of Elizabethan settlement onwards, it becomes a much more expansive narrative. Elizabethan longevity meant that England stayed, or, some would argue, then *became* Protestant. There was thus leisure to develop cultural and not merely theological anti-Catholicism. There was cause too: the long-term conflict with Catholic Habsburg Spain added fuel to this way of thinking. Two nations and religions facing each other in war constituted a crisis in which identities were forged. Historians have long been interested in the phenomenon of anti-Catholicism in England and the various plots and international situations as well as myths that fed it.³¹

Yet revisionist accounts have exploded the narrative of a simple binary. Anthony Milton describes a 'norm' of cross-confessionalism, how, in practice, politics, devotions, and multiple interactions problematize the traditional view that the reformed and the Catholic religious traditions were in 'polar' position to each other. Although at one with revisionists such as he in refuting the existence of an 'anti-Catholic ideological strait-jacket', nonetheless, the anti-Catholic, anti-Jesuit position remains a prominent part of the hegemonic discourse of Englishness.³² What is there to uncover about this story? The question that still needs to be asked is how such an animus against a community within and outside the nation becomes the lowest common denominator of Englishness. To answer this involves

³¹ The most relevant analyses to date in this regard are Weiner 1968; Weiner 1971; Lake 1989; Marotti 1999.

³² Milton 1999, pp. 85–115.

thoroughly reconstructing the web of ideas connecting Romish ways to political and cultural slavery as well as excess and a vicious sort of flamboyance. It particularly involves reconstructing the real strength of the rhetoric against the Jesuits, who were seen as a sort of 'mobile Rome'. Society members and sympathisers became, point by point, the opposite of the image that the English wanted to have of themselves. If the construction of a virtuous commonweal was desirable, then the prospect of what was strikingly called a 'Jesuited mock weal' was appalling.³³ It would mean a regime turned on its head, a people unpeopled. Although this strand of thinking is so very emphatic throughout the period studied – with predictable high points around the time of the various plots, the Ridolfi in 1570, the Throckmorton in 1584, the Babington in 1586, the Bye in 1603, the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 and the 1630s anti-Laudian movement – it does not go entirely uncontested. It is questioned primarily by some Catholics writing at the start of the seventeenth century. Polemicists such as Anthony Copley weigh in on the debate and try to reassert their Englishness in emphatic terms, all the while placing the blame on the Jesuits whom they dislike. So it is not merely a hegemonic Protestant discourse on the un-Englishness of Catholics that we must consider but also, in part, a Catholic discourse on the un-Englishness of other Catholics. This accounts for the richness and complexity of the story. Copley's insistence that the country boasted 'true English-Catholickes' and 'Catholicke-English' was a fairly futile endeavour, because anti-Catholicism remained a fundamental part of how many if not most English people saw themselves by the 1650s.³⁴ Nonetheless, it is not a straightforward binary construction as once supposed.

Some of the very ferocity of the arguments made against Popery derive their strength from England's sense of itself as a nation of freeman, curbing the arbitrary, international sway of Rome and its allies. Contemporary discourses of liberty are also, at least in part, discourses about what it was to be truly English. Not only does the discourse chronologically advance the story because of its later evolution but liberty also unites the other two themes because the freeman was not merely Protestant, he was also plain, upstanding and un beholden, in short, a civic asset. The subject of liberty has been worked over as few others have been for seventeenth-century history; its connections with the growth in national identity have been apprehended, it is true, but not thoroughly traced. So there clearly is a

³³ Bagshaw 1601, sig. a2^r.

³⁴ C[opley] 1601, pp. 98–99.

story to be told here, and it comes in two strands. The first plots the Englishman as bearer of historic rights: particularities which define and distinguish him. Increasingly, he needs to be defended against encroachments: Charles I's unconventional, non-parliamentary ways of trying to raise money, especially after 1629, brings these interventions to the fore. But, although circumstantial, its spokesmen make the bold claim that the Englishman has borne rights immemorially. The very plasticity of the discourse means that, in radical hands, it acquires proto-democratic accretions in the 1640s, with the logic that the Englishman *qua* Englishman has a right to vote. The second strand, evolving in the same time period, owes more to classical influences. This maintains that the Englishman is free in the Roman sense, that is to say that he is (or ought to be) exempt from the very possibility of arbitrary power not merely its exercise. It is thus a philosophically more radical kind of argument and feeds into republicanism, the fundamental alternative proposed to the country after the execution of Charles.³⁵ In the fraught relationships between ruler and ruled in the 1630s and 1640s, these ways of thinking raised very uncomfortable issues and prodded national considerations into a much more confrontational direction. It was suggested, repeatedly, that the English had become degenerate and had lost that which bound them together as a people. In a Commons debate in the 1620s, it was suggested that their very 'persons' were touched.³⁶ This fierceness played itself out in bitter parliamentary debates and pamphlet wars and contributed in its way to the bloody Civil War.

The guiding principle in the selection of sources has been to cast the net as widely as practicable. This is necessary because it is not to be expected that ideas about Englishness turn up in a predictable type of text. In a sense, one is often reading across the grain of sources, catching them in the act of talking about identity. Their very various, and indeed interdisciplinary nature is, naturally, a methodological challenge but also a clear strength: the historian searching for ideas about national identity *must* consult a variety of types of source, everything from what Andrew Pettegree calls the 'scrappy little books' and pamphlets (cheap, short, and disposable), to the more respectable and canonic (designed to be read and considered by the educated elites).³⁷ That is not to say that the sources are all discrete entities and cannot be considered in their ensemble. Texts

³⁵ Skinner 2002, II, pp. 286–307 and Skinner 2006, pp. 156–170.

³⁶ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 99.

³⁷ Pettegree 2010, xv.

often come in the form of clusters, (the Leveller pamphlets, for example, the neo-Theophrastan literature, and travel books to name but a few) and they speak back and forth to each other in a way that shows close engagement with common themes. Again the idea of a market-place of ideas is of relevance. The book market was highly diverse and some attempt must be made to reflect this, even if a comprehensive study is unfeasible. To remain in a single groove of sources – for example, by studying political treatises only or prose satire or the courtesy manuals – would be to write a different sort of history, a single-angle view on identity. It may have a value of its own, but it would mean missing out on those variant acts in the same language of which Pocock speaks, and which are vital when seeking to reconstruct the history of an idea.

The different themes have, however, suggested different types of sources. The recovery of a cultural ethos lends itself particularly to a study of the welter of courtesy manuals, rhetorical treatises and advice literature, all of which were staple fare for the educated Elizabethan and Stuart man. These sources are alike in that they share a pedagogical motivation, that is to say the construction of the idealised individual. Satiric material, which also features prominently here, may be grouped alongside, its purpose being nothing less than to amend the morals and manners of the day by puncturing the kind of deadening complacency that would convince the respectable that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.³⁸ All is certainly not for the best. These very authors who were seen as ‘popular, polemical, and prolific, superficial rather than serious’ in their day have been frequently left in a limbo since, and although worked over by literary critics and at times, social historians, they have been very often unfairly neglected by historians of ideas.³⁹ This is a short-sighted position. Although they are dealing a very different sort of pedagogy to the courtesy books, their satire is indirect pedagogy nonetheless. Their comedy seeks to have a reformatory effect: their jokes cut for a reason. Why should the habitual butt of the day’s jest *not* be considered relevant when looking at the construction of identity? Why should we not reflect upon the serious points being made through contemporary humour? There is, I would argue, real substance amidst the froth. Satire needs consideration on its own terms.

³⁸ See Fowler 1965, p. 253 for an invaluable table classifying of the motives, province, method and audience of different forms of humour. For more in-depth treatment of satiric literature see Sutherland 1958 and Knight 2004. Upon satire in Tudor verse see Gransden 1970 and in the early Stuart state consult McRae 2004.

³⁹ *ODNB* sub Barnabe Rich.

Polemic was the obvious source-base for investigation of the themes of religion and liberty in their connections with national self-construction. Significantly, the word polemic is first recorded as an adjective in English in 1614, and as a noun in 1626. According to Jesse Lander, it was precisely the religious controversies of the sixteenth century that created a new awareness of polemic as a distinct generic category. This is an alluring hypothesis and tallies well with what emerges from the evidence here. Polemic provides insight into the construction of anti-Catholicism, from the works which came out in steely opposition to a Catholic marriage for Elizabeth and which were eager to repulse the Hispanic military threat to those texts which fostered, in no uncertain terms, the black legend of Jesuitism. Political polemic about liberty occurs both within parliament and outside: thus both the official records of debates, the parliamentary diaries and the sprawling pamphlet literature of the Caroline period will be prime sources of evidence. Such polemic has its own style and force, ensuring that the issue of identity was always very much caught up into the fray of political and theological debates. The narrowness of its boundaries are immensely important: it seeks less to inform than to persuade.⁴⁰ The pedagogical sources are not entirely dissociated from the polemical, needless to say: the former may indirectly be polemical; whilst the polemical is always seeking to persuade and therefore, in its way, to teach and mould the public it addresses.

Who then is the public being addressed? The hidden but crucial factor in this investigation is the audience for texts in which Englishness was an argument and a language. What can we infer about the kinds of audience to whom such works aspired to appeal? And what can we tell about reader or viewer reception? There are no short or easy answers to such questions. Between Thomas Dekker's irreverent *Guls Horne-Book* and John Milton's *Areopagitica*, a wide gulf is fixed. The same person may conceivably have read both, but not with equal relish. What interested me above all was the prevalence of the discourse in such a variety of contexts for such very different types of audience. Reflections on Englishness were found in texts for the elites who had read their classics and received a humanist education and those who most certainly had not but who liked their stereotypes racy and of the moment, and who lapped up a diet of 'us V them' with little difficulty. Considerations of Englishness were found in the marginal, fractious texts of anti-Jesuit Catholic figures and in what could be called the

⁴⁰ See *OED* sub polemic. Lander 2006.

more established 'in-house' texts for the political and legal elite. But those very texts, as Peter Lake and Steven Pincus have made clear, were being made available to a wider audience from the Elizabethan period onwards through newsletters, manuscript separates and accounts. Private spheres were newly public.⁴¹ A very prominent strand of readership would have been urbanite and particularly metropolitan. The funny, malicious and aggressively satirical texts were clearly aimed at them: the kinds of people who saw at first hand the traveller and his outlandish ways, those who liked robust social commentary, who enjoyed feeling that they had caught the pulse of the day. It is impossible to put numbers on the 'consumers' of such texts; still less is it possible to gauge their responses. But we do know that some of the texts under consideration went through many re-printings and that, for example, one tenth of the population of London (that is to say 30,000 people) went to see Middleton's identity-drama *A Game at Chesse* for the nine nights of its performance in 1624, before it was controversially banned.⁴² A potent set of ideas such as those congregating around national identity was not simply limited to elite social groups: it was eminently adaptable. A cheap jibe about an outlandish Italianate Englishman was meant to cause a laugh. A reflection on the free-state of an Englishman was meant to evoke political activism. Both have their place, although they were doing different things. There was undoubtedly an audience and a market for such ideas, clothed in their different ways. Although not possible to recover reader reception in its entirety, enough may be apprehended to resolve upon some kind of popular response to the vibrant rhetoric of Englishness.

The potential objections that have to be dealt with before embarking on an investigation of this kind are fourfold. First, it could be advanced that the constructions are patently not unique to an early-modern context, and that still in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the English are construing themselves as plain, free and unCatholic. That is, in fact, one of the points of this study: to backdate this way of thinking about identity to an earlier period than has been considered fully before.⁴³ It is less its uniqueness as a construct and more the contours of its evolution that interest me. Secondly, it could be said that the study gives too much attention to the repeated and aggressive claims that the English made to

⁴¹ Lake and Pincus 2007, p. 6.

⁴² Corns 1999, p. 12.

⁴³ There will be more discussion of the long-term trajectory of the themes in the conclusion.

distinctiveness, and is less concerned with the limitations. This would be unfair. The limitations are immediately obvious to contemporary readers. Truth-claims about national distinctiveness sometimes sound intuitively consistent but they are nearly always over-generalisations, very often dubious in content, and sometimes, of course, entirely spurious. Yet, it is precisely with their highly-partisan moral geography that we must engage.

Thirdly, it could well be argued that Englishness was not a default form for every discourse in this period. It is an assertive and pervasive language, true, but is not by any means to be found universally. It is entirely missing in some of the obvious canonic texts of the period: there is no reflection upon it in Francis Bacon's *Essays* or Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, for example, nor yet in James Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana*.⁴⁴ In most of the grand and less grand theological works, it does not enter in, except insofar as the effort to construe an English 'via media' between extremes might be said to be part of the whole project. But the Marprelate controversy, launched by plain, homely Martin, for example, says more about competing theologies and religious practices than it does about national consciousness. Did these and other remarkable commentators consider themselves English? Undoubtedly yes, but it was not a battleground upon which they chose to fight. In fact, the reflections on national identity described here are generally not written in a language dressed up to be philosophical or theological, with the notable exception of John Milton. Nor is the language of Englishness especially employed by royal figures except, in times of need, for rallying purposes. This is not surprising. The English state endorsed patriotism and called upon it in especially dangerous moments, but such invocations constituted a more static kind of discourse, exemplified classically by Queen Elizabeth's speech to her troops at Tilbury in 1588. Her boisterous dare to the Spaniards to try to 'invade the border of my realm' was rousing stuff but, at the level of ideas, very simple. Neither she nor her Stuart successors ever argued about what English identity was or was not. Charles I faced many criticisms that he was an un-English monarch, a ruler who brought in creeping foreign customs into his domains. But Charles, insofar as he thought about the matter at all, undoubtedly went to his death considering himself as a true English King and head of its national Church. The shaft did not meet its target. He could and did cultivate all manner of European cultural habits (excesses, his enemies would say) and still consider himself thoroughly English. Nationality was a fact of birth for him: it was not an agenda of becoming.

⁴⁴ Hobbes 1651; Harrington 1656.

There are many other examples which show that national identity was not, for everyone, the key determinant of life. Undoubtedly, for many, social standing was paramount and a Protestant member of the gentry might well have a lot more in common with his Catholic equivalent than either would have had with the lesser sort. And they would both know this, despite the rhetoric which called the Catholic's national credibility into question. Even within a discourse ostensibly about national identity, there was sometimes more consciousness of the 'elite' than of the populace. Englishness was not an all-levelling ideal, except among some radical sectors in the Civil War. More often, it was compatible with just hierarchies. There were thus many alternative ways of seeing oneself and one's society than through a national lens and this study denies none of them their potency. What it can do is to look at some of the inter-connections between various modalities of identity – gender, status, religion, politics and the nation. Above all, investigation of the discourses surrounding identity must take into account that in practice, identities were lived out in much less schematic, much more diverse and complicated ways. The history of Englishness is not the same as a factual account of how English people lived their lives. It is a more restricted endeavour altogether.

The fourth objection would argue that the exercise is fairly redundant on the grounds that since peoples are likely to attribute to themselves all the virtues regardless of whether they possess them or not, the study merely amounts to an elaborate commentary on how medals were pinned to the national chest, in a naïve and blinkered paean to collective superiority, forgivable, perhaps, but not worth recovering. I would answer this in two ways. First, it would be tendentious to suggest that there is a fixed repertoire of qualities which a society may aspire to or congratulate itself on having. The choice of just what is brought into relief and what appears recessive in a given context is revealing in itself, and no less so here. Medal-pinning was certainly occurring but the choice of which medals to pin is of interest. Moreover, the assumption that the construction of identity is just a matter of smug communal self-glorification needs to be constantly scrutinised. This discourse shows up ambivalences relentlessly: there are hotbeds of contestation and conflict throughout. One of the strongest statements against the whole idea of trying to fix national character comes from the pen of the Jesuit Robert Persons. He thinks the whole project bunkum and is completely modern in his perception of the fluidity of individual and communal identities: naturally, this merely gives his enemies one more reason to execrate him. The mere fact that national identity has to be invoked and asserted and is capable of being challenged

shows that it was not as 'natural' as claimed. Englishness certainly could not be taken for granted. There is undoubtedly a sentimentally patriotic note at times, but there is also much angst and doubt, and, at times, it prevails. Love of country does not invariably mean that one loves it as it is. So the point is not whether the English are actually a freer people or entirely un-Jesuitical, or completely plain – a minimal knowledge of some of the realities of the late Tudor and early Stuart era will prove otherwise – but rather that in a time of such ambivalences, these values were still seen, by many of the most articulate in the print media, as being constitutive of who they were.

It all becomes rather clearer if one speculates upon what contemporaries could have done and set that beside what was actually done. It would look something like this. There were ample moral grounds, both classical and Christian, for defending plainness and simplicity and venerating the virtuous man. Yet that apparently was not to make a strong enough case; it was made more robust by wedding it to national considerations. Likewise, there was no particular pressure to nationalise the concept of liberty so very emphatically, nothing, in short, to prevent contemporaries from presenting it merely as a universal value, derived from classical and biblical sources. Nevertheless, it mattered greatly to the case for liberty to convince hearers and readers that this was a rightfully English property and that anyone who went disagreed with this vision was an alien, even in Milton's words, a Saracen. Finally, it would have been sufficient to rail against Catholicism for what the average Protestant Englishman deemed its heretical content. They certainly *did* say that, but that was not all they said. Their language alone alerts the historian to the fact that there is something more at stake, and what that is must accordingly be uncovered and interpreted.

PART ONE

THE PLAIN ENGLISHMAN

A
QUIP FOR AN UP-
START COURTIER :

Or,

A quaint dispute between Veluet breeches
and Cloth-breeches.

*Wherein is plainly set downe the disorders
in all Estates and Trades.*



L O N D O N

Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe, and are to bee sold at his
shop at Poules chayne. 1 5 9 2.

Figure 1. 1592 edition of *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (Robert Greene). STC 12301a.3, With the kind permission of Houghton Library, Harvard University.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RISE OF AN ETHOS OF PLAINNESS

The persistent strand of thinking in the period which associated being English with an ideal of plainness has been overlooked in much of the literature and deserves a much greater degree of attention from historians. Elizabethan contestations about the plain style are inevitably a matter discussed more by literary critics than historians, as in Kenneth Graham's *The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in the Early English Renaissance* and Arne Rudskoger's *Plain: A Study in Co-text and Context*.¹ Insofar as historians already have a grasp of the concept of plainness in early-modern England, it is largely something attributed to the hotter Protestants so-called. The image that most readily springs to mind in this regard is probably the roundhead of the 1640s typified by Oliver Cromwell who would rather have had a 'plain russet-coated Captain that knows what he fights for' than a Gentleman who is nothing else, the same Cromwell who insisted that his portrait should show him 'warts-and-all'.² This is the stuff of more or less hazy mental images, a sort of uninterrogated acceptance of a highly-charged self-attribution and of an elaborately-constructed ethos. We generally take it on faith that these men were plain because they said they were just as we generally take it on faith that their cultural preferences come from their particular religious background. There is something in this, of course, for there is indubitably a large element of religion, a theology of austerity, even a soteriology of simplicity behind many early-modern English evocations of plainness. Yet that is not all there is to it.

This most rhetorical of anti-rhetorical formulations that we must recover from the study of a substantial body of sources from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, brings it about that normative ideas about national identity cluster around the construction of the plain speech and plain clothes of the true Englishman, and correspondingly, associates any excess, frivolity, and floridity in these contexts with the foreign. To understand what it was about both language and fashion that

¹ Graham 1994; Rudskoger 1970.

² Upon the subject of the roundhead and cavalier labels in 1641 see Williams 1990.

made them apt arenas within which nationhood was articulated is to fully integrate the perception, articulated by so many voices in early-modern Europe, that both were essentially proclamatory, externalising identity with an immediacy achieved by few other signifiers. There was an acute sensitivity to the fact that one spoke and dressed not merely as an individual but as a representative of a whole of some kind, whether that be one's gender or estate, one's calling or nation and that, even at a time when vernacular speech forms were only in the early stages of being formally standardised, and dress distinctions, despite the comparative rigidity of governmental and institutional sartorial legislation, very much in flux. Indeed, it is a paradox worth insisting on. One would perhaps think that in a time of heightened linguistic and sartorial unrest, people might be more tolerant of ambiguity; on the contrary, the more instability there was in these matters, the greater the instinct to 'fix' them into established criteria, to make claims for stability and traditional usage. So this is a highly-charged normative rather than a descriptive story, contested constantly in practice and occasionally in theory.

Yet there is another, more pragmatic reason for the frequency with which speech and clothes turn up in the sources as loci of contested national identity and that has to do with the impacts of what we may call the growth of the commercial factor in English life. Economically, England was brushing up against its European neighbours as never before. As Craig Muldrew has established, consumption markedly increased after 1530 and marketing structures became more complex and active. It is his contention that the period after the mid-sixteenth century represented the 'most intensely concentrated period of economic growth before the late eighteenth century'.³ As regards clothes stuffs, England knew unprecedentedly high levels of importation, for, despite a thriving cloth industry, she did not manufacture the finer materials to any significant degree. Consequently the voguish silks, satins, velvets, damask, and taffetas all had to come from abroad.⁴ Moreover, the market was never merely economic because there was great commerce not merely of goods but of ideas, languages and mores. As regards the lexis, there was a sevenfold increase in the Englishing of foreign words in the period from 1500 to 1600.

³ Muldrew 1998, pp. 3, 21.

⁴ For details of fabric imports see Ashelford 1983, pp.12–13; Stone 1961, p. 94. Levy Peck 2005, pp. 85–111 discusses the story of silk in England; Davies 1961, pp. 117–137 provides an economic account of England's relationship with the Mediterranean world from 1570 to 1670.

It is estimated that the fifty foreign loan words that entered the language in the year 1500 had become 350 by 1600.⁵ One historical linguist claims for the period 1570 to 1630, 'the fastest vocabulary growth in the history of English in proportion to the vocabulary size of the time'.⁶ This claim illustrates something of the intensity of socio-cultural encounter.

Dramatic expansion of the sort did not go unnoticed or uncriticised. As Ulinka Rublack has observed in relation to fashion, people's 'interaction with more things and visual media added [...] complexities to their lives'.⁷ Such opportunities for cross-cultural exchange awoke resistance in the bosom of traditionalists and the habit of despising novelties on national grounds became very common. Indeed, Hale backdates the anger at the Italian luxury trade to the early fifteenth century when there was much criticism of the 'wasting of money by bluff Englishmen on ephemeral kickshaws.' By 1400, certain Italian cities had mastered the art of sericulture and were producing that key luxury commodity: silk.⁸ By the second half of the sixteenth century, the criticism had evolved to take in more entrenched constructs of national identity. With all this *reinventio* in an English environment, there were bound to be people who questioned the benefits as well as those who took advantage of the new copiousness and luxuries. And the former looked askance not only at the reputed benefits of new modes but at the people who adopted such practices and who lived in such novel ways. The question as to what constituted national identity in the socio-cultural domain was thus expressed through the more immediate question of *who* embodied it.

On the one hand, some kinds of characters were considered very creditable specifically because their behaviour fell within the bounds of what observers recognised to be English. There was a real effort to reclaim a sense of national authenticity (if indeed such a very fugal 'norm' had ever existed, which is another question entirely). On the other, it was considered deplorable that the clear lines that had reputedly framed the Englishness of the past had been blurred by the borderline figures of the day – be they the upstart courtier or the returned traveller. To expose such figures to ridicule is of course a trope of the greatest normality in

⁵ After that, it fell off somewhat. See Hughes 1988, p. 103; Kinney 2000, p. 23.

⁶ Nevalainen 1999, p. 336. Many of these loan words came directly from Latin, but French loans accounted for second in numeric terms, and Greek, Italian and Spanish loans came after. Nevalainen 1999, pp. 364–378.

⁷ Rublack 2010, p.261.

⁸ Hale 2005, p. 8.

literature; to attribute their faults to foreign influence of some kind is also banal in its very familiarity,⁹ but done with particular emphasis at this juncture of national history as it was, it deserves attention on its own terms. We ought to regard this primarily as a product of the fact that they *were* conscious of having to express and reaffirm normative values about what being English was in a time of rapid change.

Plainness was the most important of these values. In assessing why it was construed as a national value, I would adduce four main contributory factors. These are not unique to England, but are, perhaps, uniquely privileged in an early-modern English context. The first involves consideration of the religious background. We must recall that where the Reformation succeeded, it presented itself as something old; novelty was no selling point for anything fledgling. But the old, as reformers conceived it, was also simpler, purer, and less complex. The motifs as well as the actions of purification and purging thus being so central to the language of the reformers, it was understandable that this would be carried into contexts at one remove from theology, and thus, in England at least, it proved. The will to restore the plain meaning of scripture and the drive for making its language popularly accessible were united before we take up the story, pre-eminently in William Tyndale's translation of the Bible. He wanted to present the scriptures in the language of the people typified by the proverbial 'ploughboy'. Somewhat later, the interests of the influential Cambridge Protestant humanist circle around John Cheke in the 1540s brought together both linguistic and religious reform.¹⁰ Plainness of speech was conceived as religiously meritorious and construed in direct contrast to the Latinate and scholastic idioms of the old faith. Lionel Trilling draws a valuable if somewhat exaggerated distinction between the prevalent rhetorical culture of Italy in 1500 and England in 1600, saying that in the former, 'one could speak plain to sovereign power only if one possessed a trained perfection of grace and charm', and in the latter, that 'the only requirement for speaking plain was a man's conviction that he had the Word to speak.'¹¹ Certainly, a positive espousal of linguistic simplicity and

⁹ Something similar was happening contemporaneously in Valois France. Henri D'Estienne was to the fore in fighting against what he saw as the corrupt influence of the Italian language and manners on the French. The subtitle to his 1578 dialogues on the French language makes his stance perfectly clear: the language was '*italianizé et autrement desquize principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps*'. D'Estienne 1980. Knight 2004, pp. 50–80 has developed a theory of satiric nationalism. Duffy 1986 discusses a similar theme in relation to the development of satiric print from 1600 to 1837.

¹⁰ Tyndale 2000. Shrank 2004, pp. 148, 189.

¹¹ Trilling 1972, p. 22.

a rejection of sophistication, and therefore, it was thought, also the sophisticated, were due in no small measure to the Protestant reform. Yet the purist phenomenon in religion was never merely confined to language. The fact of literally stripping altars actualised the process of purification in the most material of ways, and from the 1550s, the vestiarian controversy forced the question of liturgical dress into unwonted prominence. The very fabrics of the old culture were contested. Clothing as well as language was thus a central concern of the reformers.¹² One important point remains to be made about the religious impulses behind an evolving ethos of plainness. Most often, historians have (unproblematically) seen plainness as the property (real or imagined) of the puritan community of the Elizabethan and Stuart period. Undoubtedly, there is an element of this at work in some of the works we shall consider: those with 'puritan' sympathies are often particularly zealous advocates of the value. Nevertheless, to relegate 'plainness' to a mere faction in English life is to fail to grasp its wider significance for many different sorts of commentators. Plainness is not just the desirable ideal of those with puritan leanings. It may owe its origins in part to the nature of the Protestant reformation, but it is never a narrowly religious construct.

Also creating momentum for the national framing of this value was a defensive reaction to what may be called a culture of ornamentation and show in the period which was perceived, not without some justification, to have been imported from European courts. The inflow of luxuries into the country gave concrete grounds for this sort of reaction. Daniel Javitch's remark that criticism of the ornamental was a kind of front for more insidious hostility to the court thus has a degree of truth in it. Certainly, it may have been more politic in many instances to criticise excess in general terms, rather than engage in the more dangerous practice of directly attacking powerful factions of the establishment, not that this always stopped them.¹³ The court itself was a veritable marketplace of the exotic, and that, not just as regards its gluttonous appetite for material goods but its actual cultivation of foreign talent and its aristocratic habit of bypassing the nation in the interests of dynasty or of culture. That said, neither the Tudor nor the Stuart dynasty needed lessons from outside in how to engage in elaborate court-craft or conduct lavish ceremony, and it is quite certain that, even without the addition of luxurious items and talent from abroad, Elizabeth and her Stuart successors would have lived far from the

¹² Duffy 1992; Guy 2000, pp. 306–307; Primus 1960.

¹³ Javitch 1978, p. 113.

sparse simple lives that some liked to imagine was the case in earlier eras. For historians, it is often, although not always, difficult to distinguish between foreign and native developments in an entity so fluid and cosmopolitan as the early-modern court. Such nice distinctions would not appear to have mattered so much to critics who generally worked on the principle that foreigners were responsible for making excesses of all kinds, and nationals responsible merely for lapping them up. Seeking to blame the other is evidence of pure national defensiveness, and, as such, not so much proof of the realities as proof of a particular mentality. There was also a political sub-current in this way of thinking. Tacitus' *The Annals of Imperial Rome* had been first published in 1515 and provided inspiration for moralists wishing to pin political decay upon the decadent behaviour of courtly elites. A Tacitean revival thus gave the necessary classical legitimacy to contemporary critique of excess and defence of plainness: the future of the nation was held to be at stake.

Plainness also fitted in well with an 'ethical tradition concerned with credit, honesty and reputation', a tradition which became more pronounced as the market became more complicated and simple systems were being replaced by more elaborate ones, in which trust had to be won and maintained.¹⁴ As social interactions became more convoluted and *less* transparent, the need to argue for transparency became greater. And perhaps even more passionate than endorsements were denunciations of the opposing vices. The age was, as one critic has noted, 'preoccupied to an extreme degree with dissimulation, feigning, and pretence', and it is not in the least surprising that this intellectual preoccupation was articulated within a national frame of mind.¹⁵ Furthermore, the appeal of plainness lay in its capacity to act as shorthand for all the qualities that could be included under the aegis of what it was to be one's own person. If there is a sense in which plainness was considered as a kind of stripping down, there is another and a complementary sense in which it denoted self-sufficiency and completeness: an attractive moral ethic to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mind. Plainness was construed as a visible expression of morality and honesty, and therein lay its wider importance. Only through honest behaviour and integrated living, it was felt, was the gap between the inner and the outer man, which so preoccupied the early-moderns, definitively closed. That a disjunction here would not merely be

¹⁴ Muldrew 1998, p. 2.

¹⁵ Trilling 1972, p. 13. My italics.

a personal failing but a phenomenon that deeply implicated national integrity was a spur to the endorsement of such a value. Undoubtedly, this way of thinking drew heavily on neo-Stoic visions of the self popular anew under the influence of Justus Lipsius in late sixteenth-century England.¹⁶ This ethos privileged the notion of self-containment and restraint, of simplicity of utterance and of appearance, all the while condemning that dispersion and dissimulation, characteristic of the man without interior centering. It is a matter of primary interest that a Roman idiom, laid alongside Christian ideals of renunciation and self-discipline, explicitly entered into the very heart of an early-modern construction of Englishness.

Finally, its rise as a value may be linked to Ethan Shagan's thesis about the development of an ethos of moderation in early-modern England. He emphasises the dual nature of the concept, involving, as it did, both 'self-restraint and the restraint of others to produce a golden mean.'¹⁷ In a similar way, plainness was a virtue of the middle-way, being neither boorish nor overly-elaborate and it too demanded both commitment to a process of simplification and indeed intervention so that the falsely artificial may be stripped away. To make things plain again, violence was necessary, and some of the most notable texts that we shall look at bring this out. Although Shagan does not make the link between the rhetoric of plainness and that of moderation, it is a very apposite one. There is another sense, indeed, in which plainness was a virtue of the *via media*. It was something in which all ranks of society could share. It proves to be, as we shall see, a usefully plastic concept. Plainness can go 'up-register' (and be deemed fitting for the gentleman) but also down-register and be fitting for a carter. What we may loosely call the Piers Plowman strand of social criticism on the one hand, and the neo-classical vision of elite man on the other, both involve a robust and constant invocation of the value.

¹⁶ Lipsius 1584, In England, it was published first in Latin in 1592 and in a translation by John Stradling in 1594.

¹⁷ Shagan 2011, p. 3.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PLAIN-SPEAKING ENGLISHMAN

A LANGUAGE IN FLUX

The intense linguistic flux which characterised the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries raised urgent questions as to the direction that the vernacular was taking. These questions were articulated in print in a variety of ways. Humanist rhetoricians were concerned with the formal expression of public man; sceptics took issue with the so-called 'inkhorn' vocabulary of the scholarly world which was thought to be far too arcane for clarity. Antiquarians worried that the language was removing itself too far from its Saxonist roots, and translators could be at once eager and ambivalent about the very works they translated.¹ In a particular way, the spoken word was contested and became, in the process, caught up in wider debates about identity. Speech, as Adam Fox has put it in his recent study of oral culture in England, provides 'a more immediate and sensitive insight into the mental world of a people than perhaps all other forms of expression' and it will thus enable a recovery of perceptions and assumptions about desirable and actual identities.² Methodologically, the challenges of investigating this remain considerable. One is the issue of access, for all the historian can call upon in this domain is what people actually wrote about how English was or was not, should or should not be spoken: it is the problem, in James Obelkevich's memorable phrase, of 'conjur[ing] orality out of literacy', something achievable only through a certain amount of sleight of hand.³ Since any attempt to retrieve the spoken word

¹ Wilson 1553; Peacham 1577; [Puttenham] 1589 are three of the most definitive rhetoric manuals of the day. Upon the vogue for and the reaction against recondite 'inkhorn' terms, which spilled out over the borders of the scholarly world see Barber 1976, pp. 81–90; Görlach 1991, pp. 161–162. The most extreme presentation of the antiquarian case comes from the pen of Richard Verstegan 1605. He had a complete reverence for monosyllabic native word units and a historically-based revulsion at foreign accretions. See Jones 1953, pp. 214–71 for extensive treatment of the antiquaries' views of the English language. George Pettie is an example of a translator who accepts that imports are the 'ready vvay to inrich our tongue, and make it copious' but also is ambivalent about Englishmen borrowing too much of their ways of being from abroad. Guazzo 1581, sigs. iij^r, ij^v.

² Fox 2000, p. 51.

³ Obelkevich 1987, p. 43.

is thus channelled through a written medium of some sort, the analysis offered is of necessity at one remove. Nevertheless, the subject is accessible in four ways: first, in the vigorous endorsement of homespun speech and secondly, in its politicisation. We shall find that plain speech is not just the quality of private man but is construed as a constituent part of his public persona. Thirdly, there emerges a continuous critique of an alien and excessive habit of discourse, which is seen to detract from true Englishness. Lastly, in spreading the net more widely to include other forms of language, we shall find the beginnings of a discourse on national forms of gesture and deportment.

THE CULT OF HOMESPUN SPEECH

The starting point for understanding concepts of plainness of speech is to understand contemporary concerns surrounding rhetoric. In the curriculum of the sixteenth century, the study of rhetoric acquired a new importance, partly owing to the growth of classical humanism and partly for the very practical reason that the vulgar tongue was being used in contexts where before Latin had been pre-eminent, and thus it too had to be developed as a tool of persuasion. But rhetoric, with its intentions to teach, to delight and to persuade could be highly problematic. It was not a transparent art. Subject to manipulation, it could hinder meaning and truthfulness by obfuscation and recourse to the arcane. Subject to fashions, it could indulge in far-fetched experiments, borrowing too much from other cultures. The English language could become ghettoised: polarised between a court and university language and a country language, a sophisticated and a common speech.

One of strongest defences of plainness is to be found in the work of an Elizabethan statesman-scholar, Thomas Wilson, who worried about the implications of all this. *The Arte of Rhetorique* is one of the earliest works on rhetoric written in English: first published in 1553, with a more complete edition in 1560, it ran to eight editions and became very popular with those who sought after eloquence in speech. The work is conventionally interpreted as one of the classic expositions of rhetoric in the Tudor period, and rightly so, for it is with the theory and even more so, the practice of eloquence with which this eminent humanist, well-schooled in the writings of Cicero and Quintilian, is principally concerned.⁴ Yet,

⁴ Cicero presented his fullest treatment of the subject in *De Oratore*; Quintilian in the *Institutio Oratoria*. Skinner 2002, II, pp. 264–285 treats of the Renaissance revival of classical rhetoric in England.

there is a more contemporary battle being fought at the same time, not merely a reformulation of the classical ideals, and that is the battle against too much elitism and too little commonality in language. On one level, this is somewhat surprising because Wilson snobbishly disdained his Lincolnshire origins and much preferred to live in London and be at the centre of things. Nevertheless, in the section devoted to plainness which receives pride of place in his study of elocution (the art of apt expression), he is adamant about its value. The first lesson to be learned before anything else, he says is to speak 'as is commonly received'. That means no strange and inhorn terms. It means unlearning a lot of what one has learned. This is a most emphatic statement and disarming in a work of its kind. He looks around at his contemporaries and sees a worrying disunity of speech-forms. What he notices and objects to is that 'difference of English' that divides 'courte talke' from 'country speache', or, in another modality, the so-called 'learned' from the 'rude'. The choice facing English society is emphatic, he claims: *either* accept the two modes of language and its implied divisiveness *or* (and this is his preference) banish 'al such affected Rhetorique' and 'vse altogether one maner of language.' His solution, therefore, is not to educate the average country dweller in the fashionable rhetoric of the day, but to educate the elite in plain talk, in the 'new' purified rhetoric of the Protestant nation. Wilson, it may be added, was a committed believer in the new religion. There are those who think that rhetoric stands 'wholy vpon darke woordes' and think national standing is enhanced by abandoning the gold standard of plainness. This sort of 'fine Englishman' is the height of folly and he proceeds to ridicule him with some verve. He is convinced that all those cherished shibboleths of social distinction, propounded by the educated and the cultivated, should be abandoned in favour of plainness.⁵

It is a curious moment in a work on rhetoric that he should be so adamant against affected rhetoric. Of course, he does claim that he is being truly Ciceronian in insisting that one's meaning should be plain for all men to perceive.⁶ Nevertheless, one might raise the objection that he is being rather ambiguous, even hypocritical: surely he has spent the entire work fashioning the kind of man whose 'difference' from the commonality will be supremely evident in the way he speaks. He has been teaching an art – a veritable craft of speaking: how well does his endorsement of plainness sit with that? It is undeniably true that the two projects sit uneasily

⁵ Wilson 1553, fos. 86^r–87^r.

⁶ Wilson 1553, 88^r.

together, but then again, plainness is not necessarily 'plain' in a narrowly linguistic sense: there is a rhetorical nature of all appeals to and professions of it. Wilson's espousal of plainness is an ideal: he may not even be aware that his way of talking is not always accessible to the common man. Later, in his preface to the translation of Demosthenes' *Orationes*, he does not mind being accused of using 'over bare' English: he declares it his intention 'to speake simply and plainly to the common people's understanding, than to overflouryshe with superfluous speech.'⁷ Wilson's very plainness is rhetorical but it is no less important for that. The gold standard of plainness and simplicity is established in one of the major humanist texts of the period, and it is at moments like this – rather than in the more formal construction of the *homo rhetoricus* who was not clearly nationally delineated – that the desire to fashion a national community through language is quite clearly to be seen.

Wilson's target audience was elevated – the kind of audience who *would* read a book on rhetoric. They were the men who, after all, were most likely to assimilate affectations in their speech: their plainness was particularly open to question. Something of the same concern is evident in the courtesy literature which sought to fashion the English gentleman. For Henry Peacham, in his classic 1622 work on the subject, *The Compleat Gentleman fashioning him absolut*, speech was the 'character of a man'. He urged his readership to make use of the 'most familiar words' when he spoke and to avoid pomp and what he calls 'emptie furniture of phrase'. He thought it wise to 'lay downe your words one by one.' In outlining these principles, he followed Cicero's *De Oratore* very closely, unsurprising in one who had attended Trinity College, Cambridge and was then a schoolteacher at St Martin-in-the-Fields, so perhaps one should, in his case, downplay its Englishness in favour of its rather more patent classical humanism. Yet he is doing something different too. This text is not a mere regurgitation of classical principles in education. On the contrary, it is an example of what Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine have said about the new curriculum making headway in this period, that it was a highly politicized phenomenon, aimed at the ruling elites and serving their agenda.⁸ This text is politicised in the sense of being national in tone: the contemporary Englishman is not merely a resurrected figure from classical antiquity. Peacham hastens to say that acquiring a plain form of rhetoric in English is just as

⁷ Demosthenes 1570, sig. iijj^v.

⁸ Grafton and Jardine 1986, xiv.

essential as knowing Latin, and he explicitly warns against an 'apish and supserstitious imitation' of Tully.⁹

There is even more to be gleaned from Richard Brathwaite's similar endeavour several years later. The titles alone reveal the shift in emphasis, from the Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman* to the latter's *English Gentleman*. Brathwaite's definition of a gentleman is as a 'man of himselfe' and he is concerned throughout with creating a profile that supports this. According to this respectable JP and deputy lieutenant, the Englishman ought to maintain sobriety in speech on all occasions. He urges the young man to speak 'but not with *affectation*' and speak 'freely, yet with reservation', thus proposing a fine balance between the frank and the restrained which recalls Shagan's thesis on the rule of moderation. He warns of slavish sycophantic speech and bids his reader steer clear of 'this mimicke and apish action' which keeps 'small concurrence with the Postures of a *Gentleman*'.¹⁰

He then goes on to emphasise that the speech of such a one should be 'free, native and generous', that is to say it should be emblematic of a whole national culture and history. We would do well to dwell on the full implications of this. Plain speech, in fact, is part of his defence of the older more authentic country values whose decline he deplores. He reserves special praise for those gentry who are not 'besotted' with fashions and foreign imitations and live in the countryside being hospitable hosts and good landlords. He notes that they are ridiculed as 'men of rusticke condition' and 'mere home-spun fellowes' whose values derogate from the fads which are supposed to constitute gentility. But he wants to emphasise that the contrary is true: these very men are the true English gentlemen worthy of their predecessors. It is a new (rural and nationalist) twist on the humanist dictum that virtue was true nobility. *Vera nobilità* lies in a virtuous identification with one's land, with one's country. 'Return to your *Houses*' he urges his readers: this can be understood on multiple levels. In later centuries, of course, the bluff independent gentleman, residing on his estate for much of the year would become a distinctively (and self-consciously) English phenomenon. In Brathwaite, the outlines of this ideal are already emerging.¹¹

What does plain speech and a plain style of life reveal about the Englishman, according to Brathwaite? Above all, it reveals that he is free, that he is truly his own man. His convictions have been made clear to us

⁹ Peacham 1622, p. 42–43.

¹⁰ Brathwaite 1641 edn., p. 8, Brathwaite 1630, sig. Nnn^r; p. 87. Shagan 2011.

¹¹ Brathwaite 1630, pp. 87. Brathwaite 1641 edn., p. 37.

from the very start: already in the epistle dedicatory, we are given to know that his very title 'exempts him from servile bashfulness, being an *English Gentleman*'. It is a forceful statement of belief in the defining independence of the type.¹² Nor was that conviction at all unusual: it seems to have been a commonplace that, in the words of John Stradling, the translator of Justus Lipsius, '[o]f all other nations our owne is most free, ingenious and open'.¹³ Considering how much the educated early-modern Englishman was in debt to antique ideals, the rejection of any form of behaviour connected with servility was inevitably going to be as much a part of the gentlemanly ideal as it was part of that of the Athenian citizen or the Roman freeman. Yet here we need to underline the fact that it is not just a matter of Brathwaite casually transposing a classical trope but of fully integrating it into a present-day national context where to act with servility meant to imitate foreigners, particularly upper-class foreigners with whom the elites would have the most contact. This is the imitation of which he speaks, this the kind of affectation. It is anathema to plainness.

There is, furthermore, a curious silence in both Peacham's and Brathwaite's works which makes them stand out in one fundamental sense from the general run of courtesy manuals in vogue in Europe at that time and this very silence has a bearing upon our theme. Neither of them develops to any notable degree the theme of grace in the Castiglionian sense of elegance of speech and behaviour, which becomes in the French manuals of the following century, a full-blown *art de plaire*, with emphasis on personal 'souplesse' or flexibility.¹⁴ One could say that the European works reveal a sort of behavioural aesthetics which is simply not to be found in the English equivalents. The lynchpin of this aesthetic is Castiglione's concept of *sprezzatura*, which he presents in *Il Cortegiano*: it is the desirable effortlessness of the courtly persona. It involves a measure of graceful dissimulation: such a one would not reveal his hand too much. An art lay in concealing his very art. Now because this concept reflected and established a whole behavioural ethos in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance

¹² Brathwaite 1630, ¶.

¹³ Lipsius 1592, sig. C3^r.

¹⁴ See Faret 1630, p. 168: 'la souplesse est l'un des souverains precepts de nostre Art'. Castiglione 1561, sigs. niii^r–niiii^r places an equivalent emphasis on being 'pliable' in one's relations with others. Kelso 1929, p. 85 sees the Italian ideal represented by Castiglione as one in which the 'graces and not the business of life are insisted upon', in contrast, she says, with the English model. The distinction is perhaps too crude, for the whole point of the former is the fact that the graces are central to the business of life; nevertheless I find myself in general agreement with the contrast. See also Lee Ustick 1932, pp. 409–441 and Lee Ustick 1932–33, pp. 147–166.

world, the silence in these texts on this subject is notable. It was not as if men in their position did not have access to such works. The evidence shows rather the reverse: England was flooded with editions of courtesy texts in their originals and in translations. Thomas Hoby's vernacular translation of Castiglione in 1561, for example, ran to three further editions in 1577, 1588 and 1603, while Clerke's Latin rendition of the same work proved even more popular, running to eight: the last one in 1619. It is safe to say that most educated men had read the work, that it was one of the most-discussed texts of the period, a cornerstone of the English renaissance.¹⁵ In his introduction, the humanist and diplomat, Hoby commented that Englishmen were 'inferiour to well most all other Nations' in regard of manners and behaviour and described the work he was about to translate as a 'storehouse of most necessary implements for the conuersacion, use and training up of mans life with Courtly demeaners'.¹⁶ There were also translations available of Stefano Guazzo's *The civile conuersation*, Eustache De Refuge's *A Treatise of the Court*, and Nicolas Faret's *The Honest Man or the Art to please in Court*. And we know that some of these books were used in Cambridge where both Peacham and Brathwaite had studied. It is next to impossible that they would not have read at least some of them.¹⁷

When motifs like this are common currency, conventions indeed in a particular genre, the fact of *not* having recourse to them is highly significant. It suggests that they *have* set store by a prior value and cannot accommodate this one without in some way denying the first. The seriousness of their stated views on simplicity in the Englishman may well have caused them to believe that grace, *sprezzatura* and nonchalance, as they were understood, would detract from his plain, upright nature as manifested in honest speech and behaviour. The kind of grace which would carry one through every social situation could be morally quite slippery. The artifice written into Castiglione, no matter how concealed, was still highly contrived: he must 'speak such things after a sort, yt it maye appeare that they are not rehearsed to that ende'.¹⁸ Although neither Castiglione nor any of the continental courtesy writers eschew honesty as such, it is a concept

¹⁵ It was a popular text in the college libraries of Cambridge – indeed the largest known network of readers were from St John's College. Burke 1995, p. 151.

¹⁶ Castiglione 1561, Aiii^r–Aiii^v.

¹⁷ Guazzo 1586, De Refuge 1622 and Faret 1632. For information on the presence of some of these in Cambridge, see MS 48 (L.2.27) Emmanuel College, Library, Cambridge.

¹⁸ Castiglione 1561, sig. Di^v.

that is inevitably tempered by being constantly integrated in courtly and civil contexts. There is a lot more to honesty than simple honesty: it is eminently negotiable. Peacham and Brathwaite's gentlemen are not especially comfortable fits in the court environment. It is not that they present an ungracious model of speech and behaviour; but there is simply nothing approaching the cult of grace or style that informs other writings in a similar genre. It would seem that they were conscious of not emulating European pedagogy in this regard: the plain style prohibited it.

So the value of plainness was held to be genuinely compatible with true civility and far from being confined to the uneducated Englishmen, prominent writers wished to see it reinvigorated among the country's elite. If not, the country would become decadent. Three sources from the late Elizabethan period successfully dramatise the perceived decline in plainness of speech and behaviour. The result is a textual cluster with more than an element of a morality play about it. That the writers followed markedly different careers only adds to the interest. Francis Thynne was a respectable antiquarian; Robert Greene, the rather disreputable university-educated prose-writer and playwright; Barnabe Rich, a soldier stationed in Ireland for much of his career. The three of them were obviously lively witnesses of the contemporary scene. Thynne's choice of allegory must have struck a chord with the others. The discourse started with the antiquarian's seemingly unpublished poem entitled *The Debate betweene Pride and Lowlines* in 1570. The text was found, transformed into a prose-drama, and popularised by Greene in *A Quip for an Vpstart Courtier* some twenty years later.¹⁹ Immensely appealing, Greene's work went through six editions alone in the year of its publication, a fact that his biographer calls 'astonishing'. Subsequently, the last of the trio thought he would capitalise on this lively market when he took up from where the other had left off, calling the finished burlesque *Greenes newes both from heauen and hell*.²⁰ The three texts memorably present the conflict between an upstart Italianate figure called Velvet Breeches, newly arrived

¹⁹ There is some uncertainty about the authorship and the dating of *The Debate*. The *ESTC* has it that it is erroneously attributed to Francis Thynne. It also suggests a dating of 1577. I have adhered instead to the view of John Payne Collier who in the 1841 edition of the work, positions it somewhat earlier, claiming that it was written in 1568, and printed in 1570, although never subsequently published. Thynne 1841, vii–xv. In what Payne Collier has called a 'barefaced piece of plagiarism', Greene 1592 lifted the story from Thynne's work without acknowledgment. Thynne 1841, vi. He makes no reference at all to Thynne, who was still alive.

²⁰ *ODNB* sub Greene. R[ich] 1593. Greene had recently died.

in England to demand rights that he clearly does not possess, and the homely defender of traditional values, Cloth Breeches.

The treatment of fashion will be considered at a later point. Language is another layer, and indeed an intrinsic one in the rich texture of attributes that distinguish Cloth from Velvet Breeches, and thus true from false Englishness.²¹ We must remember that there is much resting on the result of this conflict. The question is who has the right to the land? Language is the means by which they make their cases. Cloth is described as somebody who is 'as breefe as hee was proud' and his subsequent speeches, always to the point, even to the point of brusqueness, confirm it. Unlike his opponent, his claim is based on raw honesty: he boasts that he has no 'glosing phrase to trick out my speeches withal'.²² It is as if he has nothing else to argue for him except that he is an historic man of his nation and speaks as such: 'let me as I was wont liue famous in my native home *England*, where I was borne and bred, yea and bearded *Caesar* thy Countryman'.²³ Thynne presents a reserved Cloth Breeches who deliberates before speaking in response to his opponent, something that fits his role as defendant rather than aggressor.²⁴ His reticence is linked in the depiction to his moral self-restraint: he responds 'mildly' to one of Velvet's long boastful tirades. Rich's subsequent portrayal shows him tellingly biting his lip as the other vents his spleen on him.²⁵ Thus plainness is not conceived as boorish taciturnity but reasonable reserve and necessary speech. To be a plain speaker is to stand up for one's rights, for oneself and for one's nation. It is thus a politically fitting choice for an Englishman. He stands on and for his land.

In the most extensive version of the tale, Greene's *Quip*, plain speech is particularly correlated with moral agency. This occurs gradually as Cloth becomes increasingly outspoken, even taking it upon himself to dismiss people from the proposed jury, thus usurping what ought to be the narrator's role. The latter is taken aback; he 'wondred and laughte to heare Cloth-breeches make this discourse' and he describes such behaviour as 'peremptory', but does not intervene.²⁶ The defendant has become judge. Greene had already challenged his 'gentlemen readers' in the dedication of the work by confronting them with the image of the solemn Cloth,

²¹ Some of the complexities of these texts will be teased out later. See below pp. 81–82, 86, 89–92.

²² Greene 1592a, sig. B2^r.

²³ Greene 1592a, sig. B2^v.

²⁴ Thynne 1841, p. 11. The other at these woordes was not afeard,/ Ne changed collour ne yet countenance/ And at the last [...] answerd.

²⁵ Greene 1592a, sig. B3^v; R[ich] 1593, sig. Bii^r.

²⁶ Greene 1592a, sigs. D2^v, E3^r, F2^r.

'leaning on his pike staffe, till he heere what you conceaue of him for being so peremptorie'. He awaits the definitive judgement of readers because, although his fate in the text is well accounted for, his actual fate is in their hands. Would the English gentlemen be on his side? Or would they support the false pretensions and pretentiousness of the other character?²⁷

Two things will have become apparent by now. First, the identification of plain words with the true Englishman has nothing to do with a defence of rustic boorishness and clumsiness of utterance: that kind of speech and behaviour was often satirised, and it certainly awoke no particular chord of recognition, still less of approval in those writers whose work is under review. A 1628 source, for example, dismisses the country fellow who 'speakes Gee and Ree better than English'. So the agenda to restore plainness was not a regressive desire to become like churls. It was rather a moral crusade, to achieve a middle way between extremes in modes of speech.²⁸ Second, plain-speakers were invariably envisaged as men. The quality was heavily gendered. One might argue that this is a default position but there seems to be something more self-consciously masculine than usual about the trope. It relies invariably on the presupposition that men were innately direct and women were, by contrast, chatterers.²⁹ There was, moreover, a thesis gaining strength in this period that the origins of the vernacular made English a more masculine language than others. The choice of which inheritance to recall is always revealing and in this case, there was a strong strand of thought that, in privileging its Anglo-Saxon roots and playing down the influence of the Romance languages, brought out and developed its masculine connotations.³⁰ For James Howell writing in the 1640s, it came naturally to make a point of saying that English, being one of the Germanic languages was a 'full mouthed masculine speech', because taking 'an *Englishman Capa pea*, from head to

²⁷ Greene 1592a, sigs. A4^r-A4^v.

²⁸ [Earle] 1628, sig. F4^r. Rich 1606, fos. 4^v-5^r has no time for the 'boisterous couersation' of those who 'smell of the Plow and the Cart'. See also Stephens 1615, pp. 251-257 for character sketch of the churl.

²⁹ A particularly incisive expression of this is to be found in Stubbes 1595, p. 57. Hull c1982 treats of this theme with general application to early-modern England.

³⁰ The English defence of Teutonism took life from the work of continental philologists of the sixteenth century. See Jones 1953, pp. 214-218. For the most extreme Saxonist perspective on the language see Verstegan 1605; Carew 1904, pp. 285-294 was more moderate, but nevertheless on the same spectrum. It is difficult to say how much these theoretical accounts filtered through into more quotidian reflections on contemporary speech, but they do constitute an important backdrop to thinking on this subject.

foot every member hee hath is Dutch'. Although he has no ill-feeling against French, saying that it has embellished English over the years, he still considers it to be more fundamental to stress the Teutonic roots of the Englishman's speech because of what it said about their robust manliness.³¹

POLITICISATION OF THE PLAIN ENGLISHMAN

The plain-talking Englishman was not merely the epitome of unity, morality and masculinity; he could also be a powerful agent in political debate. This complements a recent thesis that there was such a thing as a post-Reformation public sphere in which new ways of 'political manoeuvre and public politics' were developed.³² Whether or not this was a public sphere by later standards does not concern me here. All I would argue is that it became easier and therefore more common to articulate one's views in print and that this new facility transformed the *ways* in which polemicists argued, the language in which 'demotic' politics was done. In this sense, it may be argued that plainness became the chief rhetorical trope of the man with a national grievance, determined to put his case before a wider public. As such, it was an exceptionally important part of the print polemic of this period and outstandingly so at both ends of the chronological spectrum, that is to say during one of the high points of Elizabethan controversy involving the prospect of a French marriage, and secondly, in the Leveller literature of the 1640s. Both moments have this in common: that a full development of this line of thinking occurs in relation to the figure of the bluff Englishman. His politicisation may be linked with contemporary discussions of free speech—David Colclough's thesis about *parrhesia* is of relevance here—and indeed moral freedom more generally.³³

The prominent Elizabethan puritan writer, John Stubbes, took issue with the proposed royal marriage to the unpopular Duc d'Anjou in 1579 and made strategic use of the figure of common man to argue his case.

³¹ Howell 1642, pp. 155–158. Howell indeed just returned from France, and published his first book in his own translation while there. Howell 1640, *Dendrologia: Dodona's Grove, or, The Vocall Forest* appeared in Paris the following year as *Dendrologie ou la forest de Dodone*.

³² Lake and Pincus 2007, p. 3.

³³ Colclough has conducted a full investigation into the usages of the classical rhetorical figure of *parrhesia* in secular and religious contexts in early modern England. See in particular his study of early Stuart Parliaments. Colclough 2005, pp. 120–95. He does not treat of the subject in relation to reflections on what it was to be English, however.

This would be interesting even if, as was once generally thought, he had been asked by powerful councillors, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, to engineer a popular case for the issue. It is even more interesting now because, according to Nathalie Mears' close study of the text, this is not a piece of commissioned propaganda but an independent attempt to lobby Elizabeth, and as such, indicative of a new culture of counsel and public debate.³⁴ His claims in *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gvlf wherein England is like to be swallowed* to be 'of the meaner sort' were somewhat disingenuous, given his own education and stature.³⁵ Nevertheless, the pretension of plainness is a potent weapon that he uses to argue that it would be nothing short of disaster if Elizabeth married this French Papist. Anjou was the fifth son of Henry II and Catherine de Medici and although diplomatically this may have been a good match, impediments of nationality, religion and age (she was 46 to his 24) were put forward against it. Stubbes shuffles off the authorial voice, and puts the definitive judgment into the mouth of this plain sooth-sayer: 'well may the simple Englishman say, timeo gallos, namely Valesios [the Valois], nuptias ambientes especiallye such mixt marriages'.³⁶ Of course, such an Englishman would probably not have enough Latin to say as much as this, or any knowledge of the Virgilian origins of the phrase which explains its resonance, but as Colclough notes in this regard, '[f]rank speech can be ornate as the speaker wishes to make it'.³⁷ What is important is that at this sensitive juncture when the fate of the land is in the balance and when more sophisticated people have gone astray, this decidedly homely figure, unrestricted in what he may say by the requirements of diplomacy, and unrestricted in what he *does* say by any particular finesse appears to be the only one to speak out with the voice of sound common-sense, urging withdrawal.

Those who supported and encouraged the match were, by contrast, 'halfe taughte Christians and halfe harted Englishmen' using 'smooth wordes'. Not being 'playne dealing' in themselves, the deal that they were pressing upon the Queen and the people was bound to be a

³⁴ Mears 2001, pp. 629–650.

³⁵ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. E2^r. Stubbes had matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1555, and had then proceeded to Lincoln's Inns, where he was called to the bar in 1572. He was also related, through his sister's marriage in 1578 to Thomas Cartwright, the Cambridge divine, although that was hardly a point likely to work in his favour with the authorities by then.

³⁶ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C3^v. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. Virgil *Aeneid*, II, 49.

³⁷ Colclough 2005, p. 19.

harmful one.³⁸ Thus, to be plainly-spoken was to be loyal and true; to be given to persuasive rhetoric on this matter was to be degenerate because one was trying to bring about a situation in which Englishmen would ultimately be put in the power of the Pope through French intermediaries. He proceeded to urge the Queen to 'make much of playne honest speakers, and to put out of hart al flatterers' but even such conventional humanist wisdom, expressed repeatedly throughout the mirror-for-princes literature, derives more particular meaning from the context; the true Englishman, as he styled himself to be, *would* speak what he thought, regardless of royal reaction and thus indeed it proved. Stubbes was punished by having his right hand amputated, and his declaration that, as a 'true Englishman', his were not the words of a 'busie body, speaking at all aduentures' came to haunt him.³⁹ Not only was he a 'religious parrhesiast', as Colclough calls him, he was also a self-consciously English parrhesiast, one who justified boldness of speech in terms of national authenticity. His case and his way of making the case are one.⁴⁰ His lines were neither fine nor original, but he earned a hearing. And that was the whole point. It was the simple spontaneity of his utterances that gave them value as counsel. Is he as plain a speaker as he claims? Hardly. The very faux-simplicity is sophisticated. There was nothing more sophisticated than the attempt to 'mobilise various publics' to prevent the Queen 'from doing things she wanted to do.'⁴¹

If Stubbes was foremost in Elizabethan times in politicising plainness of utterance in the national cause, at another time of major stress, namely the Civil War period, there is a more extensive and incisive manifestation of the same outlook, in the voluminous pamphlet literature of the amorphous grouping known as the Levellers.⁴² This group were outside the established and even the main revolutionary circles of power: plainness became their justification for an *entrée* into politics. Their polemic was written to make its point quickly and emphatically: there was no time for elaboration. The towering persona that John Lilburne creates for himself in his pamphlets is that of the plainly-spoken Englishman

³⁸ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. B6^v. Presumably the Englishness of those clergy who were studying more for 'smooth delicate wordes then for playn rough truth' was only half-hearted too.

³⁹ [Stubbes] 1579, sigs. B7^r, F3^v. I shall treat of this text as regards its anti-Catholicism at a later point. See below pp. 137–143.

⁴⁰ Colclough 2005, p. 91.

⁴¹ Lake and Pincus 2007, p. 3.

⁴² I shall deal more extensively with the properly political dimensions of Leveller thought. See below pp. 227–252.

constantly repeating the same home truths, however unpalatable to those in authority – and at various stages, they would have been unpalatable to very different sorts of authority as the country went through its many transformations. He was a leveller fighting against social privilege and an Independent colliding with the Presbyterians. Amidst all the corruption he claimed to find in high places, he was the ‘faithfull plaine dealer’, his account the ‘bare, naked, and single’ one of an Englishman, those on whose behalf he spoke the ‘honest plaine-hearted men of *England*’, and that which he opposed the ‘subtill practices’ of his opponents.⁴³ Even the rough style of his pamphlets confirm the nature of his self-proclamation: written with the immediacy of direct speech and with the same unrehearsed quality, he fixes on the most basic of rhetorical units which, repeated *usque ad nauseam*, strike home forcefully despite his otherwise rather convoluted syntax. Needless to say, he has no use for classical allusions, although he would have had a grammar – school knowledge of them. In short, although a writer, he seems to be more of a speaker: there is something of the whine of the thwarted demagogue clinging to all his prose. He had other voices to back him up in his espousal of plainness. William Walwyn, who had first met him in 1645 and became a devotee of similar causes, affirmed in his *Englands Lamentable Slavery* that the ‘honest and plaine men of England’ would be Lilburne’s true judges and would speak on his behalf, just as he was speaking on theirs.⁴⁴ Walwyn wrote from this personal perspective also, as one drawn from the trustworthy ranks of the ‘plain-hearted people in England’.⁴⁵

What were these polemicists were trying to do by such an appeal to and personal espousal of plainness? In the first place, it functioned as a high claim to righteousness: every claim to truth, as Kenneth Graham has observed, is ‘likely to call itself plain at some point’ and this is what we see happening with the dogged insistence that characterises them.⁴⁶ Yet, far from being merely a lofty boast, it was also highly tactical primarily because it placed agitator and audience within the same bracket. The former were

⁴³ Lilburne [26 July] 1647, p. 10; Lilburne, Prince and Overton [11 April] 1649, p. 4; Lilburne [6 October] 1649, sig. A1^v; I. L. 1647, p. 3. The *ESTC* holds that this latter pamphlet entitled *Plaine Truth Without Feare or flattery* is erroneously attributed to Lilburne and attributes it instead to Amon Wilbee. I have simply listed it under the given initials in the bibliography and make no judgement as to its actual attribution.

⁴⁴ Walwyn [October] 1645 in McMichael and Taft, p. 151.

⁴⁵ Walwyn [June-July?] 1649 in McMichael and Taft, p. 421. The other particulars of his vision of Englishness will be considered at later. See below pp. 239–240, 243.

⁴⁶ Graham 1994, p. 2.

pre-empting accusations that they may have been exploiting the campaign of liberty for merely personal ends by stressing instead that their whole aim was to be of use to their fellow countrymen. Thus they alone said how things *really* were, rather than how the authorities said they were. This is the logic behind the appeals to have the laws put into plain English. Only when they were shorn of French could they be accessible to a nation of plain-speakers.⁴⁷ Who was plain-dealing in the 1640s? Their answer is that the common Englishman alone is right-thinking and that they are his representatives. There is perhaps something a little suspect to us about the smugness behind such self-presentation, yet it is not entirely complacent. Plainness had its concomitant disadvantages: to describe the people in such a way was to point to a strength which was also a vulnerability. Simple Englishmen were capable, as Lilburne constantly made clear, of being deluded and even destroyed: one of his reasons for printing his thoughts in 1647 was to thwart Oliver Cromwell's efforts to deceive 'honest simple hearted plain dealing men'.⁴⁸ The new men of government were betraying the great national cause. It would also seem, by insisting on this value, that they were grooming themselves more for exercising moral pressure than political power: to lay claim to guilelessness was, in fact, to imply a principled aloofness from the murky dealings of the decade, whether courtly or parliamentary and as such, was the language of men without power, except that of their word as critics and their experience as victims. Plainness was all that they possessed.

THE SPEECH OF RETURNED TRAVELLERS

The plain-talking Englishman was no less of an ideal, albeit a more implicit one, in the condemnation of the two characters deemed excessive in their speech forms, namely the homecoming traveller and the courtier. These categories were not in the least mutually exclusive: on the contrary, courtiers accounted for much of the travel undertaken by Englishmen in the period. The distinction is not necessarily one of person then, but more one of emphasis: the traveller is associated more with direct loan-words, strange pronunciation and chatter; whereas the courtier attracts criticism

⁴⁷ Upon this point see Lilburne [14 February] 1648, sig. a3^v; Lilburne [10 August] 1649, p. 48. We recall how lawyers' English had been satirised by Wilson 1553, fos. 86^r–86^v.

⁴⁸ Lilburne [26 July] 1647, p. 10. This incidentally was penned just months before Cromwell gave the movement the name by which it has become known to history.

in a wider way for engaging too much with an exotic language of compliment. Yet the lines of thought dovetail at every stage: in short both types of men were accused of taking an *à la carte* approach to English ways of saying and doing things. They were harshly presented as agents in others' degeneration as well as their own, clearly more sinning than sinned against.

The problematisation of the first figure occurs against the backdrop of a vogue for continental travel, which by the late sixteenth century was becoming a more staple feature of the elite Englishman's education. A recent historian has pinpointed the origins of this trend in Edward's short reign.⁴⁹ Classically, the logic of this sort of travel was pedagogical. It was meant to give one a grounding in the world of antiquity and a fine understanding of contemporary affairs. Thus it had a civic purpose: the idea was that one would return in a better position to serve the commonwealth, putting the knowledge and expertise acquired when abroad to advantage at home. In practice, however, it was often thought more likely that the traveller had undergone or would undergo religious, moral, or political corruption when away, forsaking the essence of his being for false manners and habits. It was in the light of these dire eventualities that a literature of imperatives and cautions sprung up around him.⁵⁰

In the burgeoning neo-Theophrastan character literature of the early seventeenth century, it is not surprising to find the frailty of the type concisely drawn in the context of concerns about how he had let his national identity slip. The character sketch, in the manner of Theophrastus' *On Moral Characters*, was a popular genre in an age which delighted in prodding the humours and vanities of men in high places. It is trenchant comedy with a serious vein. John Stephens' 'Ubiquitary' in his *Essayes and Characters* is a good example.⁵¹ Stephens was one of the many satirists

⁴⁹ Brennan 2004. It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that this kind of travel became something of a compulsory rite of passage. It is difficult to get an idea of the exact number of young men who went abroad for purposes other than commercial: diaries, travel itineraries, and guides as well as a large number of incidental references would indicate that it was not negligible, and apparently sizeable enough to warrant concerns about reintegration on return.

⁵⁰ That there was also a significant literature by travellers as well as about them is something not to lose sight of, although it proves to be less revealing for us. Well-known accounts include Coryate [1611] and Moryson 1617. Stoye 1952 and Brennan 2004 provide an analysis of this and other material.

⁵¹ For fuller treatment of the Theophrastan literature in English from 1592 to 1642, the era in which it reached full growth, see Boyce 1976. For details of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions, including the first English edition of 1616 see particularly Boyce 1976, pp. 177–178. See also Greenough 1947.

who congregated around the capital, professionally involved in law but now and then compiling his store of observations into published form. What he objected to was the kaleidoscopic identities that the traveller presented: 'euery houre, almost, giues him a new Being, or at least, the purpose to bee an other thing then hee is'. The particular culprits are singled out: 'in his behaiour he would seeme *French, Italian, Spanish*, or any-thing'.⁵² His worry is ontological: what constitutes his being if it is so will-o-the-wisp?

Another point made is that the traveller can never truly be a free Englishman. Brathwaite's depiction of the Journeyman in his 1631 *Whimzies: or a new cast of characters* is in a somewhat similar vein to Stephens', except that it is more politicised. The travelling Englishman 'can never bee a *freeman*, till hee bee *endenized* in his *owne Countrey*.' True liberty is only to be found at home. He satirises the traveller's itch to go abroad, saying that he is 'troubled with a perpetuall *migrim*'. The resonance of this figure of the freeman, increasingly to the fore since the parliamentary debates of 1628, gives this comment a very particular edge. It was as if the journeyman was disabled from all the privileges consequent on his national status, as if the liberties confirmed by the Petition of Right were set at nought in his regard. Even when such a one was cured of his '*migrim*', his status is questionable because he would have 'mould[ed] himself to all conditions, fashions and religions' while away.⁵³ He does not push this point further; it was for others to draw out this connection between imitation and slavery.

The issues will be further thrown into relief by considering James Howell's *Instructions for forreine travel*, a manual setting out precepts useful to the Englishman before, during and after the three years or so that he would spend abroad.⁵⁴ Hale's comments are of particular interest because he was not a crabbed traditionalist but a well-travelled man himself, who approved of the practice but with cautions. Indeed, he devotes two sections to the traveller's return and is emphatic about first principles: he who 'savoureth of no affectation; or Strangenesse, of no exotique modes at

⁵² Stephens 1615, pp. 233–4.

⁵³ [Brathwaite] 1631b, pp. 147, 150. See below pp. 213–225 for discussion of the self-consciously English tone of the debates of 1628.

⁵⁴ Howell 1642, p. 14. He estimates three years and four months will suffice for crossing France, Spain, Italy, observing 'the multiplicity of Governments therein'; and also for climbing the Alps, traversing the best part of Germany, and the 'Belgique Lion', p. 174. He was in prison when he wrote this, although it is unclear whether for debt or royalist activities.

all, after his returne, either in his Cariage or Discours' is the most discrete traveller, the truest Englishman by another reckoning. He underlines the importance of remaining English at heart.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note *en passant* that Howell's own Welshness does not seem to impinge at all. Whatever the traveller has gleaned of foreign ways, and Howell *does* permit him to acquire some of them for specific ends, he must now 'abhorre' all 'affectations, all forced postures and complements'. He deplores how many of his contemporaries 'wander from themselves' and return 'mere *Mimiques*'.⁵⁶ The necessity of returning home to oneself and not just one's country is a good example of the embryonic language about national being that we noted in Stephens. Perhaps referring to the ontological content of such views does makes their ideas out to be more theoretical than they are in reality; still, there are intimations. This, in any case, is how they talk about identity. Most worryingly of all for Howell was the fact that travellers were not passive floaters in this process; rather did they themselves 'strive to degenerate as much as they can from *Englishmen*', flouting their own natures, as it were, in a wholly reprehensible way.⁵⁷

The main principles and concerns about the traveller having thus been established, the question of speech needs to be examined, because language 'the greatest outward testimony of *Trauell*', as Howell had put it, could also be the most offensively evident when exotic modes infiltrated such a one's everyday conversation.⁵⁸ The penchant for mixing languages received its most thorough condemnation from Wilson, who, as has been seen, kept a weather eye on the contemporary scene even as he traced the more formal aspects of rhetoric in *The Arte*. The outstanding issue for him was the propensity of 'farre iourneid ientlemen' to return speaking 'French English' without blushing and chop up their native tongue with 'Angleso Italiano'. Be it added that the *Inglese Italiano* had long been a figure of hate in popular culture. A case could be made against them for actually

⁵⁵ Howell 1642, Sect XIV and XV, pp. 173–195, 191, 190. 'His heart must still remain *English*'.

⁵⁶ Howell 1642, p. 174.

⁵⁷ Howell 1642, pp. 174–5. A much more pragmatic source is Robert Dallington's *A method for trauell* [1605?]. He states early on that he who wants to travel must move 'out of his country fashion, and indeed out of himselfe' – by this he is referring to the youthful habits of over-drinking, gambling and violent exercise. On return however, he should come out of all foreign 'humors and habits', and instead 'come home to himselfe, fashioned to such a carriage in his apparrell, gesture and conversation, as in his owne country is most plausible'. (sigs. Br^r, Cr^v.) The key word here is plausible: it shows that his thinking is guided by pragmatism. He is not seriously interested in considerations of an English nature or heart.

⁵⁸ Howell 1642, p. 196.

'counterfeiting the kynges English'.⁵⁹ The image invites us to link hollow language and false coinage: neither rings true. Of interest also is the reference to the monarch in legitimating the standard language. As established earlier, Wilson was of the opinion that there ought to be no dividing line between elite and common English. Both ought to be fundamentally alike, the authority of royalty guarding the clarity of the other. It is rather the middle ranks, the lawyers, auditors, fine courtiers, savants and these traveller types that are obscuring truly national modes of utterance.⁶⁰

Wilson uses another striking image in reference to the English traveller's speech that has much in common with the idea of counterfeiting, that of cosmetics. He accuses them of 'pouder[ing] their talke with oversea language'. If powder concealed blemishes and enhanced feature, the question is why should the Englishman need it? Their language was sufficient without it: *they* were sufficient without it. He is evidently discomfited by the effeminacy of this practice, a discomfort made more apparent by the subsequent disparagement of the new penchant for 'forrein apparel', a nudge to the effect that men were becoming too womanish by showing excessive interest in the latest fashion.⁶¹ But there is one other implication to be teased out in regard of his mordant comments on the traveller. It involves an ambiguity in respect of where he locates superficiality. It is an open question as to whether it rests with the imitative Englishman himself or is inherent in the foreign codes. If the first, then he alone is to blame in bringing back the most trivial of baggage, ignoring what may be of real value in other cultures. If the second, then he may want to suggest that 'oversea language' and its speakers had more than their fair share of rhetorical affectation, and that they could only export what they possessed. This ambiguity is in keeping with his general ambiguity with regard to Italy in particular.

Where Wilson pursed his lips, the more demotic Barnabe Rich raged. He was one of the more determined '*Satyrists* and *Critickes* of these times' and certainly one of the most voluble, writing half a million words. In a socially purgative work entitled *Faultes faults, and nothing else but faultes*, he rounded on the hapless traveller, whom he described as returning 'full

⁵⁹ Wilson 1553, fo. 86^r.

⁶⁰ Wilson 1553, fos. 86^r-86^v.

⁶¹ Wilson 1553, fo. 86^r. Cathy Shrank pinpoints both issues when she observes that these 'French-talking Englishmen and 'Angleschi Italiani' – Englishmen grotesquely mutating into Italians – display a tongue as un-English and effeminate ('pouder[ed]' like women's faces) as their exotic garb'. Shrank 2004, p. 191.

fraught with farre fetcht follies'. He ridiculed it as one of the whipsters' 'outlandish vanities' the practice of adding 'some foolish phrases' in French, Spanish and Italian to English speech. Rich is making the most of both literal and metaphorical connotations of the word outlandish: only since the 1580s had it acquired the pejorative meaning of strangeness in the sense of outrage, having originally being a neutral means of designating things foreign. Again, it is an open question at this point whether he was saying that the outlandish was foolish in itself because it was foreign, or just inappropriate when transposed: both interpretations are viable and perhaps, indeed, intended. He pressed home the seriousness of the issue by remarking that these kinds of practices made them untrustworthy at home. They lose their 'credite at home'. In a society obsessed with reading honesty, such a destruction of social trust was a grave issue.⁶²

Beneath the dislike of linguistic *bric-à-brac* may be discerned a preference for integrity, which Thomas Dekker's ironic injunction to courtier-travellers to 'publish your Languages, if you haue them; if not, get some fragments of French or small parcels of Italian to fling about the table' illustrates well.⁶³ In Howell, a much more self-consciously authoritative voice, one seizes upon this more fully: a central feature of the homecomers' attempt to continue the process of degeneration was that 'all their talke is still Forraine'.⁶⁴ Their mind is still residing elsewhere. Abandoning one's mother tongue is symbolic of abandoning the fatherland at least in spirit, even when bodily present as they are. For a practice that was motivated by a combination of playfulness and ostentation on the part of the self-conscious cosmopolite to have attracted this sort of attention is a clear sign of how deeply it could cut into an evolving sense of the national self.

Such a Babel-like mingling of tongues was compounded by the tendency on the part of this ambiguous creature to pronounce English words themselves in the manner of a foreigner. In his *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell*, Thomas Nashe revelled in some sharp satire at the expense of London types, among them, 'a dapper Iacke, that hath been but

⁶² Rich 1606, fos. 2^r, 8^r.

⁶³ Dekker 1609, p. 23.

⁶⁴ Howell 1642, p. 175. The issue of mixing did not die out. The author of *Remarques on the humours and conversations of the town* was even willing to concede adoption of French fashions, as long as the languages are kept from mixing: 'better to let them [the French] command our dresses, than our Language'. It is not that he is hostile to French per se – indeed he sees it as necessary for court life and world affairs, but he is adamant that there should be no 'mix'. S.L. 1673, pp. 98, 101.

ouer at *Deepe*' who had returned talking 'English through the teeth like *Iaque Scabd-hams* or *Monsieur Mingo de Moustrap*'. It seems to have formed part of a general perception that the Frenchman 'mangleth, cuts off and eates many letters'. But here, it is weighted with particular venom because it has found its way into an Englishman's speech. By stifling his natural accent, plain (albeit aspiring) Jack had become a French *Iaque*, a would-be aristocrat, the ridiculousness of his formal designations revealing all the keenness of satiric intent. In the next breadth, unsurprisingly, Nash dismisses him as 'poor slaue'. A propos the change in names, it is of relevance to note that William Camden, in his discussion of Christian names several years later, would depart from dispassionate commentary to snarl against the gallic version of James, 'which some frenchified English, to their disgrace, have too much affected'. Nashe's eye for the telling detail was one of the reasons why *Pierce* was one of his most popular works: according to his biographer, its worldly gossipy tone caught 'the intellectual pulse of the 1590s'.⁶⁵ Sir William Cornwallis, an essayist inspired by Michel de Montaigne, observed that people will 'tell you where they were last, by their behaviour, and table-talke, as well upon the inward-est acquaintance', noting in particular that a year in Italy seemed to make people forget their English and 'speake it broken'.⁶⁶

So far the point has been that speaking English strangely made one a stranger too, but that there is more to the matter is evidenced by the fact that speaking English without articulating properly was seen by some as symptomatic of a whole attitude of dissatisfaction with and disparagement of one's own.⁶⁷ To an extent, this is to be inferred from the above image of a truculent *Iaque* speaking through clenched teeth, but it is made much more explicit in the depiction of the traveller by Thomas Overbury, who, writing like Stephens in the Theophrastan mode, noted that such a one now 'speaks his owne language with shame and lispng,' thus allying the loss of pride in his mother tongue with the loss of competence in speaking it properly.⁶⁸

Lispng had a long and controversial provenance in England. Mentioned by Chaucer, it seems subsequently to have been associated with the French

⁶⁵ Nashe 1592a, sig. B2^r; Howell 1642, p. 73; Camden 1605, p. 59; *ODNB*. *Pierce* went through 5 editions in 3 years.

⁶⁶ Cornwallis 1600–sigs. L8^v - M^r.

⁶⁷ An interesting interpretation of the traveller-malcontent and the nature of his melancholy with particular reference to Jacques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is to be found in Fink 1935, pp. 235–252.

⁶⁸ Overbury 1616, sig. D1^r.

fashion for ‘parler gras’ (soft speaking) in the sixteenth century, so John Stubbes’ claim to recognise a Frenchman by ‘his hissing and lisp[ing]’ is nothing uncommon. In this case, it was the Duc d’Anjou who is the particular target, and it was linked with his Catholicism and his daily attendance at Mass – a typical Protestant accusation against Catholics mumbling their prayers inaudibly in church. Later in the same work, he snipes at ‘euery lisp[ing] vvord and crouching curtesie of a French Ambassador’.⁶⁹ Importantly, Randle Cotgrave writing his bilingual dictionary defined ‘parler gras’ as a ‘lisp[ing], or not pronouncing of R’, so it was not necessarily or even principally used to denote the replacement of sibilants with interdental sounds in the period.⁷⁰ An occasional indiscriminateness as to attribution – for Cornwallis it was a year in Italy that made the man ‘forget his English, and speake it broken, and lisp[ing]’ – may indicate that the practice incorporated any way of speaking particularly disliked and felt to be too soft.⁷¹ The suggestion of effeminacy and childishness indicated by this defect is unmistakable, both connotations that will figure repeatedly in the construction of the foreign. In Richard Carew’s treatise on the *Excellency of the English tongue*, Italian had been criticised for lacking in ‘synewes’, French for being ‘ouer nice’ like a woman ‘scarce daring to open her lipps for feare of marring her countenance’. Speaking English as if it was either would thus be inappropriate.⁷²

There may have been other reasons for this reaction against what was deemed Frenchified utterance. By far the most politically intoned one advanced for the unpleasant ‘whining kind of querulous tone’ among the French, especially the peasantry, was that proposed by Howell in 1642. For him, it has its roots in the condition of ‘pittifull slavery they are brought unto’.⁷³ In other words, they sounded needy and importunate because their masters were arbitrary and tyrannical. The Englishmen listening to them had fallen ‘a lisp[ing] and mincing’ and in their turn ‘distort[ing] and ‘strain[ing] their mouths and voice, so that they render themselves fantastique and ridiculous’. Absurdity was one thing, but an even more serious

⁶⁹ Chaucer’s friar had adopted a lisp purely for affected purposes: ‘Somewhat he lipped for his wantownesse, To make his Engliish sweete upon his tonge’. ‘General Prologue’ to the *Cantebury Tales*, 264–265. [Stubbes] 1579, sigs. A2^v, C6^r. For a treatment of the French lisp see Carrington Lancaster 1934, pp. 243–4.

⁷⁰ Cotgrave 1611, *sub* gras, sig. Ttiiiij^v. He translated ‘grassier’ as to lisp.

⁷¹ Cornwallis 1600–01, sig. M1^r. Cleveland 1647, p. 42 notes that the Scots have learned to lisp abroad.

⁷² Carew 1904, p. 292.

⁷³ Howell 1642, pp. 27–28. Howell was of the belief that every tongue had a ‘tone or tune peculiar to her self’.

implication was left unsaid: by imitation, had they also rendered themselves slavish? In the crises that marked the year of its publication, such an implication would not have been missed. Perhaps Howell had read his Henry Parker.⁷⁴ In any case, he would have been alive to contemporary concerns surrounding the fate of the Englishman's liberty. What comes across is his powerful conviction that the 'true genuine tone' of the Englishman could not accommodate any ring of the slavish. Plain and free speech was not dependent speech.⁷⁵

Questions of nationality arose not merely from what or how one spoke, but also the extent to which one spoke at all. There are signs, as we have seen in the characterisation of Cloth Breeches for instance, that English plainness entailed what one refrained from saying as well as what one said. Roger Ascham, one time fellow of St John's College, Cambridge and former royal tutor, was particularly preoccupied with this new-found volubility, and he blamed Italy for it. Coming after his depiction of religious and moral decline, he portrayed the English Italianated as 'common discourses of all matters', believing themselves qualified to air opinions on everything. Far from revering their experience, his words discredit it; excess of speech had no correlation to worth of substance. In acquiring a 'discouring tong' under the Italian influence, the plain tongue proper to Englishmen was no more.⁷⁶ Ascham presents a particularly interesting instance because he is not altogether averse to courtly models *per se* but whatever about the courtier coming to meet the Englishman in the safe guise of a translation written by someone who had been at Cambridge – he praises Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione – there was something more bothering about the Englishman going out to engage with the totality of Italian society and coming back, a mindless chatterer.⁷⁷ Nor was he the only one to bracket together unrestrained and empty verbiage with alien influence. Not referring to any one influence in particular, Overbury notes that the traveller's 'discourse sonnds big, but meanes nothing', Rich

⁷⁴ Howell 1642, pp. 27–8. We are unable to establish the exact date of Howell's work, as it does not appear in the Stationer's Register. Parker's *Some few observations* and his more famous *Observations* were published anonymously in early and late summer of 1642 respectively. For further comment on Parker see below pp. 273–279. Howell goes on to qualify his position somewhat by saying that the 'French tongue like the Nation, is a bold and hardy speach, therefore the learner must not be bashfull or meale mouth'd in speaking any thing'.

⁷⁵ Howell 1642, pp. 27–8.

⁷⁶ Ascham 1570, fo. 30^r.

⁷⁷ Ascham 1570, fo. 20^v. Thomas Hoby arrived in Cambridge in 1545; Ascham who had matriculated in 1530 had to leave around then owing to ill-health. *ODNB*.

that he will vacuously talk on and on about the magnificence he has seen, hardly pausing for breath, whilst Brathwaite's journeyman 'runnes on in a mere verbal circuit of affected discourse, which the *ignorant* onely admire, and *weaker* than *women* affect'.⁷⁸ The circuitous nature of his talk reveals its complete lack of direction: if not quite thoughtless, what thought there is, is superficial and effeminate, for women, traditionally held to be more roundabout in their social behaviour, were also deemed more diffuse in their speech. The traveller has abandoned the meaning of true communication.

The fundamental reason why the traveller's speech was cause for concern however was not simply linguistic but moral, and if moral, then not merely a private matter but a public one: a national one. The traveller was held to have picked up the vice of hypocrisy as well as languages, a fault particularly associated with the Italian states in the conventional moral geography of the day. In fact, it was seen by many as their innate characteristic. The worst of it was that it could be a vice concealed under a host of courtly virtue. John Stradling who loosely translated Justus Lipsius' *Epistola de Peregrinatione Italica* into *A Direction for Travailleurs*, added in some nationally-specific elements by declaring that 'other nations haue greater facilitie to hide their vices then we English men' and he urged them, in their very frankness, not to be beguiled. English nature is particularly prone to imitating foreign vices and to 'entertain[ing] stranger artificers' being attracted because they are so 'strange', seem so 'delightful' and beguile them with 'glose'. Just as it was part of English nature to be 'free, ingenious and open', Italian hypocrisy, deceit and malice were 'naturall unto them'.⁷⁹ The Earl in Nashe's picaresque novel *The Vnfortunate Traveller*, with all his Italian experience cynically told Jack, the roguish young English page, that lying and prating were the ways to get promotion abroad. Rich says emphatically that the travellers return feeling themselves 'priuileged to lie'.⁸⁰ The guileless English learned the deceitfulness of the Machiavel. Nicholas Breton sighed over the influence of Machiavelli whose 'Rules have metaphormol'de many a *minde*' and who had destroyed a golden age of 'Plaine meaning'.⁸¹ Roger Ascham whose attitude to Italy was ever ambiguous judged that, all the while showing off a veneer of civility, a

⁷⁸ Overbury 1616, sig. D1^v, Rich 1606, fo 8^v, [Brathwaite] 1631b, pp. 150–1. The attribution of prating to foreign travel is also visible in Lodge 1596, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Lipsius (1592). *A direction for trauailers*, sigs. C2^r^v, B3^r.

⁸⁰ Nashe 1594, sig. L3^v; Rich 1606, fo. 8^v.

⁸¹ Breton (1602), sigs. E^v, E2^r.

'smiling countenance and much curtesie openlie to all men,' the English Italians were in reality 'open flatterers' and 'ready bakbiters'. Verbally dexterous, with all their arts honed through imitation, they knew how to manipulate language so as to achieve nefarious ends. 'Faire speakers' they may have been, honest Englishmen they were not: that was the measure of their transformation, or rather, degeneration.⁸² Now, when the early-moderns talk of vice, it is rarely just as it affects private individuals. Vice brought the whole nation into shame: it was a general corruptor. It is not too much to say that the traveller returned, a canker in the body politic.

The traveller is thus a truly borderline figure, one whose engagement with foreign cultures endangered his language and by extension also, the very essence of who he is. Where the 'self' is being construed as an English self, the fact that he does not return to 'himself' convincingly is indeed a damning indictment. One detects great discomfort with this man's connivance in his own loss of identity, for it was that capacity to be an agent in one's own transformation and not merely a victim of overpowering external influence that caused critics to fret so much. More deeply lies the sense that he could also be an agent in changing English ways on his return. An uneasy belief that change was afoot in modes of discourse, regardless of what was said or counselled on the matter, was even more profoundly evident in depictions of the courtier and court culture. The court's invariably cosmopolitan character meant that the Englishman did not have to travel to imbibe foreign ways; they were accessible through more immediate channels.

THE COURTIER'S VELVET TERMS⁸³

That a caricature of the courtier was very popular is evident enough throughout the period, and that, for the same reasons for which courtiers were traditionally mocked – the reputed deceitfulness of their characters, the shallowness of their code of honour, and their indulged habits of decadence. These are motifs with a history that closely binds them – in the English case – to reflections on national identity.⁸⁴ Courtly ways of using

⁸² Ascham 1570, fo. 30^v. Upon the figure of the despised figure of the *Inglese Italianato* in general see Warneke 1995, pp. 105–37 and especially pp. 107–08 upon the point of the origins of such a stereotype.

⁸³ The collocation *velvet terms* comes from [Dekker et al.] 1603, sig. C1^v. See below p. 63.

⁸⁴ Smith 1966 in discussing the anti-aulic trend in sixteenth-century France provides some interesting parallels and contrasts to my analysis. There is unfortunately no comprehensive study on the influence of classical thought on early-modern anti-aulic sentiment.

language came under this cloud of general moral suspicion of this character. The imperatives of what we may call – in a loose sense – the court culture of *ancien régime* Europe prompted the codification and elaboration of a highly ritualised language of compliment, understood here in its older sense as the observance of ceremony in social relations.⁸⁵ Court-talk was felt to be coloured. It was something less than formal oratory but something more than casual speech. Compliment had two faces, by one token ensuring pleasing and amiable rapports between and within elites, yet, and this invariably lurks uncomfortably in the background of the works of even the most committed of proponents, it did tend to give the upper hand to those who could manipulate language more artfully to bid for favour or promote oneself or one's protégés. It was inherently morally suspect.

There was some justification in questioning the court as a reservoir of English values. It was the location, above all others, where the national and the foreign intermingled. Smuts has studied the Europeanisation of court-culture under the Stuarts; it was also a property of the Tudor court.⁸⁶ Moreover, the fact that some of the most popular manuals of courtly behaviour in the sixteenth century were Italian, and in the seventeenth French, something that alone would have made the courtier a suspect figure in the eyes of many. There was, as Anna Bryson points out, no 'full-scale' English treatise of the court.⁸⁷ The hegemony of the Italian model, classically presented by Baldassare Castiglione in *Il libro del cortegiano* of 1528 gave way to French empire over the verbal *art de plaire* in the later period (understandable given the huge growth of the French court), but this was more of a general drift than a rigid rule. As late as 1642, we find Howell still referring to Italy as the 'prime climat of complement'.⁸⁸ By then, the shadow was very long indeed. The powerful Castiglionian model had presented social behaviour and social interaction as a kind of parlour

⁸⁵ It tends to be spelled as 'complement'. *OED* sub complement, 87b. Whether we are talking of an emergence of something new or an intensification of medieval trends, it is not possible for me, as an early modern historian, to say. But see Burke 1993, p. 19, who discusses the 'inflation of polite forms' emanating from the Italian courts of the Quincento.

⁸⁶ Smuts 1987.

⁸⁷ Bryson 1998, p. 37. Compared to Italy and France, Spain was cited to a lesser extent, perhaps because the Castilian court rituals were so rarefied and inaccessible.

⁸⁸ On the growth of the French court see Burke 1988, p. 101. Howell 1642, p. 104. Crane 1920 investigates the development of Italian social customs in the sixteenth century; for treatment of the influence of such customs on England see Javitch 1978, pp. 4–5 and Bryson 1998, pp. 75–80.

game and the civilised man as an adept at shifting from 'role to role'.⁸⁹ His speech was of a piece with the sophistication of his persona. Speech ought to be 'faire, witty, subtil, fine and grave according to the matter'; the voice should be 'clere, sweete and wel framed' with 'fitte maners and gestures'. He should be able to discourse on not just serious but 'pleasant maters', 'mery conceits', 'honest divises' and jests. One of the chief Castiglionian imports was a new-style language of courtesy where grace of utterance and manner were privileged over, its critics declared, true meaning and simplicity. It was a language of luxury, of excess, of masking, a language which could say something but mean another. The courtier is, in fact, encouraged to take 'certain woordes in an other significacion then that is proper to them, & wrasting them to his purpose (as it were) graffe them lyke a graffe of a tree in a more luckye stocke, to make them more sightly and faire.'⁹⁰ His language is embellished, full of artifice. Indeed in the Italian renaissance, as Wayne Rebhorn points out, the concept of 'artificioso' was not one of opprobrium but one of praise.⁹¹ In England it tended, on the whole, not to bear this positive connotation except in poetic and courtly circles.

By the 1590s, there was direct confrontation with the Castiglionian model, probably resulting from the disorder and cleavages evident in the late Elizabethan court. John Marston satirised the 'perfum'd Castilio' (a direct swipe at Castiglione's imitators) who 'Nere in his life did other language vse / But, Sweete lady, faire mistres, kind hart, deare couse'.⁹² Even more damningly, in *Pygmalions Image*, he called the type the '[b]roker of anothers wit' who, for all his 'fine sette speeches' 'doth but champe that which another chew'd'. In his scathing opinion, the much-feted courtier was an empty shell. 'Take ceremonious complement from thee / Alas, I see Castilio's beggary.'⁹³ Edward Guilpin writes in the same vein about London apes, one of them 'all court like' in Spanish clothes, who is a veritable 'Dictionary of complements,/ The Barbers mouth of new-scrapt eloquence [...] And Madame conceits gorgeous gallerie', the 'exact pattern' of a man which 'Castilio / Tooke for accomplish Courtier'.⁹⁴ He is in no doubt of his influence on the nerve-centre of English life: 'Come to the Court, and

⁸⁹ Rebhorn 1978, p. 14.

⁹⁰ Castiglione 1561, sig. fiii^v.

⁹¹ Rebhorn 1978, p. 40.

⁹² Marston 1598a, sigs. B^rv.

⁹³ Marston 1598b, p. 30.

⁹⁴ Guilpin 1598, sig. D7^r.

Balthazar affords/ Fountains of holy and rose-water words.⁹⁵ When Nashe in 1594 spoke out scathingly against 'Filthie Italionat complement-mungers' who exerted themselves only to be counted 'the Courts *Gloriosos*, and the refined iudges of wit', he was in his own way resisting the Englishing of an ideal of speech and behaviour which Thomas Hoby had undertaken for the first time in his translation of Castiglione in 1561, and which had received new leases of life in the editions of 1577 and 1588. One may argue that what he was really resisting was the travesty of such an ideal but in any case, the result was the same: the *cortegiano* had apparently proved 'welwilling to dwell in the Court of Englande', but whether he really was an Englishman was more in doubt. Typically, the upstart in Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* had used a non-native mode of speech as a means of social ascent. His talk 'Al *Italianato*' came at a price however; almost axiomatically he was said to despise 'the barbarisme of his own Countrey'.⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, Gabriel Harvey, the would-be courtier and erstwhile follower of the Earl of Leicester's circle, was not far from Nashe's mind at any stage. He was one of the particular individuals who would earn the dubious reputation as an antitype of English nationality. He was the ultimate soft target. Significantly, Harvey was a well-known admirer of Castiglione. In Cambridge, he had advised his students to read *The Courtier* and there is evidence that he was fascinated by the concept of *sprezzatura*, noting it assiduously in the margins of his own copy of the book.⁹⁷ Nobody could have been less of a model of the desirable nonchalance. He earnestly tried to acquire all the trimmings of foreign civility.

On one occasion, when the memorable controversy between Nashe and Harvey was waxing high, the former recalled an incident showing the foreign measure of Harvey through and through. In Audley End in 1578, dressed in velvet, and vying inelegantly for favour, Harvey had delivered a flowery complimentary oration, kissed the Queen's hand, and was told that he had quite the air of an Italian. According to Nashe, he took it as an encouragement to renounce 'his naturall English accents and gestures' and wrest himself 'wholly to the Italian puntlios, speaking our homely lland tongue strangely as if he were but a raw practitioner in it, and but ten daies before had entertained a schoole master to teach him to pronounce it'. It was his condemnation. To be 'alwaies abroad and neuer *within*' in

⁹⁵ Guilpin 1598, sig. C4^r.

⁹⁶ Nashe 1594a, sig. Diiij^v; Castiglione 1561, sig. Aiii^r; Nashe 1592a, sig. B1^v.

⁹⁷ Stern 1979, pp. 158–161. Paradoxically, Harvey could also criticise the over-emphasis on courtesy books among Cambridge students. Harvey 1884, 78–79.

terms of one's speech, habit and behaviour, was to be, in a word, 'like a begger'.⁹⁸ It was to be, in other words, subservient and dependent – quite simply not to be oneself. In showing up the advantages of recollection and collectedness by criticising their opposites, there is more than a tinge of Stoicism to such remarks. This ought not to surprise us. The vocabulary of neo-Stoicism was, as we have established, a pervasive one in late sixteenth-century England; that it should enter into presentations of an ethos of national self was inevitable.

The ultimate parody of Italianate forms came from the contemporaneous pen of Greene. It is quite possible that he intended the character of Velvet Breeches to be a riposte to Hoby's all too complacent acceptance of the courtier into English life, or at least a reaction against the multitude of cheap imitations that had sprung up in its wake. The character's boastful declaration that he is 'cald into *England* from my natiue home [...] to honour your countrie and yong gentlemen here in *England* with my countenance' is eerily reminiscent of the preface to Hoby's translation which only four years previously had run into a third edition. There the words of the now dead translator had rung out again, words triumphantly declaring that the courtier 'is beecome an Englishman (whiche many a longe tyme haue wysshed, but fewe attempted and none atchieued) and welwilling to dwell in the Court of Englande, and in plight to tel his own cause'. Greene appears to be deliberately mocking this, by letting such a one tell his 'cause' in the most distinctly unflattering light possible, and exposing it for what it is, an unwarranted and unpalatable intrusion: not a natural cause at all but a trumped-up foreign one.⁹⁹

The character's speech is characterised by two principal features which show him up to be the caricature of the Italianate courtier posing as an Englishman. Firstly, it is a language of unwarranted hyperbole: he compares the brilliance of his heritage to sunshine and the baseness of his opponent's to mere candlelight, for example. Moreover, the terms in which he states his claim to England are typically overstated. 'The rights and title in this country [...] fauours me, I am admitted viceroy'. As the narrator says to him: 'you claime al, he [Cloth] would haue but his owne'.¹⁰⁰ His opponent is quick to mock him for his inflated language,

⁹⁸ Nashe 1596, sigs. L4^v, M2^v, M1^v. The *ODNB* situates this incidence in Hadham Hall, Hertfordshire rather than Audley End. Nashe 1592b, sigs. D2^v, F4^r also gives an account of the incident, and calls Harvey a 'Braggadochio Glorioso'.

⁹⁹ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^v; Castiglione 1561, sig. Aiii^r.

¹⁰⁰ Greene 1592a, sig. B2^v.

addressing him as ‘Signior *Glorioso*’ and ‘Mounsier Malapart’, whereas he, the true Englishman is not addressed at any stage in an especially formal way. This detail is highly realistic: Peter Burke has noted the increased use of honorific terms of address in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Italy, and the practice apparently went against the familiar grain of English behaviour, at least according to Peacham, who, although no general opponent of continental customs, took exception to the Neopolitan custom where ‘every base grooome [...] must be termed *Signore*’, to the Venetians for calling every ‘mechanique’ a ‘*Magnifico*’, and to the French where every peasant is ‘saluted by name of *Mounsieur*, or *Sire*’.¹⁰¹ Inflation rather than honesty was the baseline of fashionable courtesy. True English nationality was compatible with a recognition of proper social distinctions – at the same time, writers felt England to be a less inegalitarian country than abroad.¹⁰²

The other problematic feature of Velvet’s speech is his flexibility, his ‘souplesse’ with the truth. He has referred to England as ‘my land’ even though he is obliged to confess a little later that he is still a ‘stranger in this land’ and has, in fact, only just arrived. It is thus ironic that the legal terms of the case state that Cloth Breeches has done Velvet ‘*disseison* of franke tenement’: frank is precisely what the latter is not and frank tenement (freehold) was a historically and politically weighted idea in a legal context. His lack of free tenure in the country is subsequently borne out by the decision of the jury.¹⁰³ His mendacity is at its most blatant however when he makes a reappearance in Barnabe Rich’s pamphlet the following year outside the gates of heaven. For the particular Petrine examination that ensues, it is apparently important to prove one’s authenticity, in which national credentials play a vital part. So after ascertaining his name, St Peter’s next question is to find out his provenance, and in this supreme moment when his eternal fate hangs in the balance, he claims to be an Englishman – apparently unable to change the habits of a lifetime by telling the truth. Peter is not deceived; he cannot think him to be a ‘natural *Englishman*’ for he has never heard of any of that name in the country.¹⁰⁴ Having lived a lie, Velvet’s final lie damns him. Although this is the theme of imposture carried to a ludicrous level, it nonetheless illustrates the unease which was felt about the potential of Italianate forms of speech in an English context. Both authors want to stress in their serio-comic way

¹⁰¹ Greene 1592a, sig. B2^r; Burke 1993, p. 19; Peacham 1622, p. 15.

¹⁰² See below, pp. 132–133.

¹⁰³ Greene 1592a, sigs. B2^v-B3^r, F3^v-F4^f.

¹⁰⁴ R[ich] 1593, sig. C1^v.

that this courtier with his inflated language, so trumpeted by the great and the good, does not match up to older traditions of plain speaking and living.

The overarching sartorial metaphor of these works will be examined later but it is important to note that clothes and speech were constantly overlapping into each other's territory, especially in the depiction of foreign courtliness. As language is the expression of the mind, clothes are the expression of the body. Verbal self-presentation and self-fashioning went together. Excessive language is like excessive clothing. The best collocation fusing the two is the collocation 'velvet terms'. The new language was soft and luxuriously insidious. This image is invoked in *The pleasant comodie of patient Grissill*, a play jointly written by Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle and William Haughton, based on the Boccacian and later Chaucerian tale but with highly-charged contemporary allusions. Although ostensibly set in Italy, this is a convention, as Michele Marrapodi affirms, in which many dramatists chose to present truly domestic concerns. Another example from the same source is of a similar ilk: he speaks of 'silke gallants' who 'speake no language but sweet Lady, and sweet Signior and chew between their teeth terrible words, [...] as complement and Proiects, and Fastidious'.¹⁰⁵ Such 'terrible' words have long since become commonplace, but for a traditionalist at the time, they were anathema. They were convoluted, degenerate, unplain: the very luxuries rather than the core of a lexis. John Marston, who was only starting his career with the first sortie into satire for which he would become most famous, presented a mock-conversation between the long-sighted Linceus (i.e. the lynx) and an Athenian cynic in *The Scourge of Villaine*, in the course of which he took the measure of the sumptuously-attired gallant complete with French herring-bone pattern, and 'new-stampt complement': the Gallic provenance of his clothes being matched perfectly at the level of discourse. The 'stamp' of both is artificial and inorganic.¹⁰⁶

It was, in fact, impossible for contemporaries to see matters of speech and dress as discrete domains. The strong-minded woman in one of Roger Sharpe's epigrams, belonging to his only collection entitled *More fooles yet* refuses to marry her fine-tongued suitor, because his fabricated compliments reveal him to be insufficiently her compatriot.

¹⁰⁵ [Dekker et al.] 1603, sig. C1^v. Marrapodi et al. 1993, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ [Marston] 1598, sig. F2^r.

Ile marry none except an Englishman:
 If you are, as you seeme not by your speaches,
 Reserue your Fustian for to patch your breeches.¹⁰⁷

The sting of the rider depends on knowing, of course, that much of the grey-brown fustian came from Genoa and Milan.¹⁰⁸ A similar way of thinking is to be gleaned from an allusion made by the Calvinist minister, Thomas Adams, in a sermon on flattery, the second in a series entitled *The Deuills Banket*. He weighed in against the 'Italianate Apes and French Parrats' as ones who could 'spinne themselues silken sutes on the voluble wheeles of their pleasing tongues'. The circuitry of the spinning motion happily conjured up all the redundant emptiness of such conversation and although Adams was not making a direct point about being English – his treatment of flattery is one part of a much longer treatment of the vials of sin – the usage of such an image in such a context is especially revealing, in that it shows how engrained a motif it was for him to be able to confidently expect it to resonate with his hearers and discomfit them.¹⁰⁹

One of the worries about dressing up words was that, being effeminate, it would have a negative impact on the military standing of the country. John Stephens' in his essay on cowardliness, dismisses '[t]hose which haue onely complement': he says that when challenged, they 'quake' with fear. All their swaggering bravura is worth nothing.¹¹⁰ This is brought out again some years later by Ralph Knevet in his *Stratiōtikon, or, A Discourse of Militarie Discipline*, part verse georgic, part instruction treatise on the cultivation of 'this Art of order' for men of the nation. Standing in the way of such good order were 'Monstrous abuses' such that 'Mounsieur' and the English gentleman were fast becoming indistinguishable. He writes:

we our selues, our gestures, and our swords,
 In French are drest vp; yea our very words,
 Haue put on French dissimulation.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ S[harpe] 1610, sig. D4^r. There is a related judgement on the language of wooing in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* as Berowne in the final scene repents of wooing in rhyme and 'Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise, / Three-piled hyberboles, spruce affectation' and instead vows to henceforth express himself in 'russet yeas and honest kersey noes'. Worthiness versus affectation is probably more on Shakespeare's mind than Englishness, but it is interesting that he chooses to phrase it in just such a way. Shakespeare 2002, V.ii, p. 242.

¹⁰⁸ Dietz 1972, p. 143.

¹⁰⁹ Adams 1614, pp. 69, 45–46.

¹¹⁰ Stephens 1615, pp. 9–10.

¹¹¹ Knevet 1628, sigs. F1^v, F2^r.

Dire consequences are subsequently outlined in a passage riddled with classical allusions, the main one warning of the fate of King Darius whose adoption of a Greek-style sheath for his sword was prelude to the Achaemenid Empire's defeat at their hands. To an extent, it was a traditional worry that a preoccupation with the finer sides of life might make the adult male do his duty badly in times of war or neglect it altogether.¹¹² But this was a very particular, not just a general dread: the image evoked memories of the humiliating defeat suffered by the Duke of Buckingham's expeditionary force on the Île de Ré off La Rochelle in October 1627. How could one secure victory, such logic went, if one had already ceded the moral victory by digesting, or more appropriately 'donning' the enemy's ways and serving as a mouthpiece for their very words?

Another domain of imagery for redescribing courtesy as unwanted foreign encroachment was that of infectious disease. Thomas Jordan, with all the vivid imagination of an actor-playwright, summed up the phenomenon in this way in his very popular verse miscellany *Pictures of Passions, fancies, & affections poetically deciphered, in variety of characters*.

We draw so much our Neighbouring
Air of France
That Complement (like an Inheritance:
Is Native) like Diseases of succession,
And sticks, as close as primitive Transgression.

Compliment has been inherited by the 1641 generation and adheres as closely as original sin: it transforms the senses of those who are exposed to it into a 'healthlesse waste'.¹¹³ Every generation is now 'born' into this pestilent air from France. It was almost as if French compliment had gone native in England, almost but not quite. The whole point of original sin was that it was not, in a sense, original: there was a state which preceded it, and this is what he is obliquely recalling. Jordan's lament is particularly interesting for us because he has none of the radically Calvinist sympathies or grudging anti-monarchical attitudes which might make antipathy to France more pronounced. He writes, knowing full well that the court has been Frenchified, but remaining devotedly royalist at the same time.

The last two examples, coming from the latter part of the period, with their focus on French, are particularly apt because by then, it had become

¹¹² Rebhorn 1993, p. 245 makes the point that Castiglione himself is acutely aware of this danger in his presentation of the courtier, something that makes him insist much on the masculinity of the figure.

¹¹³ J[ordan] 1641, sig. C3^r, C2^v. This miscellany was issued twice in the same year.

the main source for complimentary discourse. Rich objected to the way in which obsequious declarations like ‘at your seruice [à vo(s)tre service], at your commaund, at your pleasure’ had eclipsed the ‘olde protestation, *Yours in the way of honestie*’, which, he claimed, had a directness and a singular absence of ceremony about it. Brathwaite had the same sort of contrast in mind when he criticised the returned traveller for being ‘all for your *Seruants Seruant*’ and ‘titles of lowest observance’. There was a shifting away from simplicity to more superficially civil modes: Jordan diagnoses it as false humility.¹¹⁴ The new phrases, besides being far too elaborate for their purpose, smacked of subservience, and were (potentially at least) hypocritical. That may have suited the French but not the English. Nashe expressed it so:

The Frenchman (not altered from his owne nature) [...] though he be the most *Grand Seigneur* of them all, he will say, *A vostre seruice & commande-mente Mounseur*, to the meanest vassaile.¹¹⁵

Equalising the unequal by false language was simply another way of abusing meaning. Plainness recognised true social distinctions.

The most politicised of the accusations against these clumsy transpositions had been meted out by John Stubbes in the course of *The discouerie of a gaping gulf*. Imagining the antic speech of the Duc d’Anjou, he reports him as saying: ‘Syr I yeeld my selfe to you to dye at your feete, in your seruice, assuring you that neuer vvill I be estranged from you’. The tone is one of self-abasement, entirely disingenuous however.¹¹⁶ Later Stubbes pushes the point home, by envisaging a situation in which Anjou will appoint some of his own men ‘to serue hyr [Elizabeth] and be at her commaundement after the french phrase’ while he goes away to attend to other business. But this courtly-sounding phrase ‘at her commaundement’, translates ‘in playn English’ as the very opposite of what it seems, foreign domination over her and her state. To translate properly was to deconstruct: to separate ‘surface’ talk from substance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Rich 1606, fo. 6^v. He would return to these expressions in Rich 1616, p. 50, dismissing them as ‘*Fustian phrases*’. [Brathwaite] 1631b, p. 153. Another example of the hostility aroused by usage of the phrase ‘at your service’ and of the general propensity to swallow the ‘new Congye, or protestation’ is to be found in Cornwallis 1600–01, sigs. L8^v, N3^r. J[ordan] 1641, sig. C2^r.

¹¹⁵ Rich 1606, fo. 6^v; Nashe 1592a, sig. C1^r; King 1941, xx; Nevalainen 1999, p. 370; Prins 1952, p. 41. Cleland, an Anglophile Scot, also objected to: ‘*I kiss your hand Sir, and I am your most humble servant*’. Cleland 1607, p. 177.

¹¹⁶ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. B4^r.

¹¹⁷ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C7^v.

Notable by its absence in all these elegant speech patterns was plainness. To ask to what extent these satirists and critics were deliberately going about advocating an ideal of plainness is perhaps the wrong question to ask, for in most cases, they were much readier to point the finger at what they did not approve of, and less ready to eulogise on what they did. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to infer that their negative tirades implied some sort of intuition – whether definite and stated or hazy and ill-defined – about what it was that ought to constitute the English speaker of whatever social category. Certainly, in one of Samuel Rowlands' forceful epigrams, there was nothing remotely hazy about what he thought the gallants of the day were missing.

Most admirable be the wordes they speake,
T'expresse their mindes plaine English is to weake
To these strange words, which the braue gallants cogge
A courtly conge is the Epilogue.¹¹⁸

The mention of a *congé* indicates that an important dimension of communication was gesture, an accompaniment to speech and so much else besides.

DISCOURSING GESTURES

If how one spoke was important, how one 'spoke' oneself was nowhere more clearly seen than in how one disposed of one's own body and the expressions of one's countenance: the doing so invariably amplified one's capacities for expression. Gesture, involving in its widest sense, posture, gait, physiognomy and movement, is still an emerging field of study and its meanings in context are only starting to be uncovered by historical ethnographers. The project is to recover how 'times, spaces, identities and roles are enacted within a given culture' as Michael Braddick announces in a seminal collection of essays on the subject.¹¹⁹ A comprehensive history of gesture in early-modern Europe is still waiting to be written but Peter Burke has raised an intriguing hypothesis to the effect that two distinct gestural cultures emerged during the sixteenth century, geographically divided between that of the restrained forms of self-expression belonging to the peoples of Northern Europe, and the more flamboyant

¹¹⁸ [Rowlands] 1605, sig. A3^r.

¹¹⁹ Walters 2009, p. 122.

ones associated with the Catholic South.¹²⁰ It is certainly a thesis worth bearing in mind as we consider ideas about national gesture. John Walters has done some work on gestural codes in early-modern England in their relationship with hierarchy and social status, but as yet, little consideration has been afforded to the consideration of prescriptive national codes. On the ground, of course, the lived experience of people was much more likely to present gestural ‘dissonance and dissent’ than unity and harmony and we can decipher this too from the works that we shall consider.¹²¹

It will be helpful to frame the discussion in a theoretical work, even though it comes towards the end of our period, as this is evidence for a certain maturity in thinking about the meaning of gesture. John Bulwer’s *Chirologia: or, The natvral language of the hand composed of the speaking motions, and discoursing gestures thereof* of 1644 reflects a wider European movement which sees gesture as a universal language, capable of bringing men together. He and those of his ilk believe that the hand should learn to speak all languages, as is so natural to it. Nevertheless, even within his harmonious universalist vision, there is a place for distinctive national idioms, or, what he calls, *Chirethnicalogia*.¹²² He makes claims to a certain balanced objectivity: declaring blandly in the introduction that he will take into account the ‘fashions of divers Nations in their national expressions by gesture.’ Yet his ethnography of gestures is judgemental rather than merely descriptive, and as such, it betrays his own assumptions and convictions, however tolerant he is compared to other commentators.

He asserts that there is such thing as a standard of ‘Nationall decorum’ which is imposed upon men by their ‘time and place’. This decorum comes from the particular ‘Genius of that climate’ and determines what may or may not be done with appropriateness there. He is quite able to countenance wide discrepancy in standards of a ‘golden Mediocrity’; yet his judgement is sharp when it comes. Italians were prone to ‘overmuch gesturing with the *Hand*’: that is considered proper there. In France, he slyly noted, one is ‘not a *la mode*, and a compleat *Mounsieur*, who is not nimble in the discoursing garbe of his *Hand*’. We note the fluidity of the metaphor: gesture was seen as a way of clothing the body, and therefore also

¹²⁰ See Burke 1991, pp. 71–81 on Renaissance Italian gestural cultures; Knox 1990, pp. 101–36 on gesture and universal languages in the seventeenth century.

¹²¹ Walters 2009, p. 122.

¹²² B[ulwer] 1644, sig. A2^v. Unlike his extensive treatment of both the *Chirologia* and the *Chironomia* (rule of hand), he does not devote a whole section to the *Chirethnicalogia*, but rather a cautionary. This is announced in B[ulwer] 1644, sigs. A7^v–A8^r.

of concealing it. Typically, the preferred movements of the French were proportionate to their language, he adds, being brisk and 'lightsome'. The Spanish standard of moderation in gesture was different again, being proud and lofty: hands are 'accessories to their proud expressions'. Thus although in theory he grants these nations their measure of decorum, in practice he undercuts it, by re-describing them as excessive. Predictably it was only the English and the German who valued true '*moderation* and gravity' because of their 'Nationall complexion'. Clearly, their mode of gesture fits in best of all with his earlier conviction that it should be a 'liberall and free Index of the Minde', and that there should not be a 'too daring garbe of action' on the one hand nor a rustic timidity on the other.¹²³

There is one glaring sense in which Bulwer differs from much more partisan contemporaries. Unlike them, he proceeds to endorse a convergence of national idioms. He notes that because the English have borrowed so many words and thus enriched their language, they may also, as long as moderation is observed, 'with decorum and gravitie enough [...] Meet the *Hand* of any of these warmer Nations halfe way, with the *Manuall* adjuncts of our expressions'.¹²⁴ Three points must be made a propos. First, we note that the Englishman does not forsake his innate values of moderation. He meets the hand of other nations frankly: it is not a servile connection of bowing and scraping. Secondly, we note the hint of the climatological motif: warmer nations are deemed to be more flamboyantly gestural because passionate; cooler nations more aloof, corresponding to their greater fidelity to reason. It is yet another dimension being taken into a national ethos of plainness. Lastly, for all its caveats, this is a cautious acceptance of the 'indenization' of foreign gesture and as such, a rare statement. As the last words of the whole treatise, apart from a final verse, these have something of the effect of a challenge. No doubt some such amiable compromise best describes what was actually happening among elites, but in the writings of the day, it was far more common to find denunciations of the practice of combining gestural idioms, whether by the manner in which one registered emotion in one's face, carried oneself, greeted one another, and moved.

The true Englishman ought to bear himself in public, Brathwaite said, with a '*Sober* carriage or deportment of the Body' and know that in so

¹²³ B[ulwer] 1644, sigs. A7^v–A8^r, pp. 144, 145. An interesting corrective to this view of the French is provided in D'Estienne 1980, p. 323: 'les Françés ne sont pas gesticulateurs de nature'.

¹²⁴ B[ulwer] 1644, pp. 144–146.

doing so he was adding 'no little lustre to *Discourse*' itself. The accompaniment of speech with needless nods and gestures was considered a form of 'phantasticke imitation or servile affectation' that betokens a 'degenerate qualitie or disposition'.¹²⁵ Stradling, embroidering upon Lipsius, urged that Englishmen be not 'plaiers on the stage' mimicking a 'dosen kindes of gestures'; Peacham that they use 'comely moderation' in countenance and gesture.¹²⁶ In an era starting to be fascinated by physiognomy (although it was not until the work of Johann Kaspar Lavater in the eighteenth century that the subject became really popular), we note that certain facial expressions were read as indications of a man's loss of Englishness. Contortion of feature was emphasised: Nashe's 'dapper Iacke' whom we have seen in action before, had taken to 'wring[ing] his face round about, as a man would stir vp a mustard pot', in a misguided attempt at sophistication.¹²⁷ Brathwaite's mockery of the 'scrude face' was surely referring to the same phenomenon.¹²⁸ The set of one's lips even before one framed words could also pose problems because some thought that the *mouë* typical of the French was unsuitable for English speakers. Cotgrave, in his bilingual dictionary of 1611, could not refrain from judgement, calling it '*an (ill-fauoured) extension or thrusting out, of the lips*'.¹²⁹ Rich saw it too as an inappropriate acquisition on the part of the traveller and in a later description of a fantastique 'marke[d] but his countenance how hee *mops*, how he *mowes*, and how he streines his lookes'.¹³⁰ Not only were these expressions disliked in themselves, but they were further confirmation, if confirmation was needed, of this ambiguous creature's dissatisfaction with everything at home. The 'affectate Traueller' censured 'all things by countenances, and shrugs', Overbury noted, while Howell, referring to the same breed of people, observed that even if they could not talk in a foreign way, they made up for it 'by head and shoulder, *magnifying* other Nations, and *derogating* from their own'.¹³¹

The mention of shrugging directly raises the question of Italian influence. It was almost universally despised, and the traveller was urged not to bring it home, notably by Robert Dallington, who, although he would

¹²⁵ Brathwaite 1630, p. 87.

¹²⁶ Lipsius 1592, sig. C2^r; Peacham 1622, p. 42.

¹²⁷ Nashe 1592a, sig. B2^r.

¹²⁸ Brathwaite 1631a, p. 97.

¹²⁹ Cotgrave 1611, *Mot-Mov*, sigs. Hhh^r-iiiij^v. *Monnoye de Singe* (literally the monkey's money) was a colloquial expression in French which was translated into English as moes, mumps, or mouths. *Mon-Mon*, sigs. Hhh^r-jj^r.

¹³⁰ He dismissively calls it the mump. Rich 1606, fo. 8^r. Rich 1616, p. 51.

¹³¹ Overbury 1616, sig. D1^r, Howell 1642, p. 175.

rather see the Englishman Italianate than Frenchified in other ways, weighed in emphatically against the transposition of their 'huffe of the shoulder'.¹³² For Harvey, the 'Italish' look and the 'cringeinge side necke' were among the gestures that had changed the Englishman into a minion.¹³³ That he should be so vehement when he was accused of the very same defects is one of the many piquant twists in the Harvey tale. Nashe, with characteristic vehemence, is referring to the same gesture, when satirising the Englishman for learning to 'cringe his neck like a starueling', literally like someone reduced to a condition of begging, forced to be suppliant.¹³⁴ This touches on some interesting resonances: in ancient Greece, the word for beggar was closely related to the word for hare, deemed to be a cowering animal; and Nashe in his own way is part of that tradition in representing the slavish as physically as well as morally different to the upright citizen.¹³⁵

On a larger scale, there was a degree of controversy about whole body movements which had, under foreign influence, become customary when greeting or taking leave of one another. Mirroring the language of compliment, what one witnesses in Renaissance and post-Renaissance courts is a huge elaboration of gestural codes. The elaboration achieved two things. First, it was an enactment of the relationships of power and subservience that characterised the hierarchical structure of the court. Secondly, it created a complex, even opaque system of 'usages' which none except the initiated could confidently use. One had to *learn* to perform what was required in particular settings. There was no place for naturalness or spontaneity. As people sought to emulate their social superiors, these ways of deporting oneself trickled downwards in society: they were not just found within the locus of the court. Rich's waggish 'you shall know them by their salutations' became something of a truism for the whole period.¹³⁶ It is difficult to reconstruct the physical accompaniment of traditional English greetings because they talk so very little about them. The two possible reasons for this silence lead us in two different directions. Perhaps it was because they were taken so much for granted that they did not have to. As Braddick observes, it is the 'inexplicit or unstated meaning of action or utterance' that 'discloses the cultural frame to the observer'.¹³⁷ If things

¹³² Dallington [1605?] sig. B4^r. See also Rich 1606, fo. 8^r; Rich 1616, p. 51.

¹³³ Harvey 1884, p. 98.

¹³⁴ Nashe 1594b, sig. L4^v.

¹³⁵ Bremmer 1991, pp. 25–26.

¹³⁶ Rich 1606, fos. 6^r–6^v.

¹³⁷ Braddick 2009, p. 9.

are unsaid, it also answers our purpose. Alternatively, one could put forward that perhaps customs were not sufficiently established or standardised to make any appeal to them resounding. In any case, the 'Europeanisation' of social preliminaries was, it would seem, being contrasted with some more naturalised English code. This was probably a half-fanciful construction; nevertheless one catches glimpses of what might once have been the case. Rowlands' *Signeur Fantastique*, we learn, scorns the traditional 'good morrow and good deane', whilst Brathwaite does mention that the returned traveller scornfully resalutes the 'common congie' and 'jeeres at our complement'; frustratingly, neither quite specifies what gestures are included in these formulae, if any at all indeed.¹³⁸ It was apparently clear to many, like Cornwallis, that 'we of these latter times, full of a nice curiositie, mislike all the performances of our forefathers, we say they were honest plaine men'.¹³⁹

When it came to the adoption of lavish reverences, there was thus an acute reaction on the basis that they were not truly native. Rich described the new formula as tripartite, consisting of a kiss on the hand, a full reverence of the whole body, and an extension of the arms.¹⁴⁰ The two first elements provoked the most abuse. It is not altogether apparent whether it entailed joining the fingertips of the right hand and bringing them to the lips as one historian suggests, or the kissing of one's forefinger according to Harvey, or the kiss of the back of the other's hand, according to Bulwer and Jordan.¹⁴¹ In truth, all the variants probably overlapped. Fashions were as mobile here as elsewhere. It was the Arabs who were said to have originally given the Spaniards their 'usuall formes of salutation and valediction whose complement usually is *Baso les vostres mans*, I kisse your *Hand*' in the middle ages; by the sixteenth century, it had become customary in Italy too, and then elsewhere, so much so that there was 'no expression [...] more frequent in the formalities of civil conversation'.¹⁴² The transposition of this custom made the Englishman 'like an ape',

¹³⁸ [Rowlands] 1600, sig. B2^r; [Brathwaite] 1631b, pp. 152, 151.

¹³⁹ Cornwallis 1600–01, sig. P6^r.

¹⁴⁰ Rich 1606, fo. 6^v.

¹⁴¹ Flachskampf 1938, p. 221 mentions this gesture but does not provide historical contextualisation. Baüml and Baüml 1975, p. 181. Harvey 1884, p. 98; B[ulwer] 1644, p. 122; Jordan 1641, sig. C2^r.

¹⁴² B[ulwer] 1644, pp. 122, 87. Eliot 1593, p. 3 also notes it. There is evidence to suggest that kissing on the cheek was customary among the English in the medieval era. Erasmus noted it in 1499. See Hill 1893, p. 302. Perhaps this had gone out of fashion by the seventeenth century; or perhaps it was the foreign manner of kissing that was problematic.

according to Nashe.¹⁴³ Rich was particularly set against its frequency: his '*Flowres of courtesie*' were 'so frequent with the kisse on the hand, that a word shall not passe their mouths, till they haue clapt their fingers ouer their lippes'.¹⁴⁴ Previously in *Greenes Newes*, Velvet Breeches had speculated upon giving the 'Baselos manes' to monarchs and princes when he gets to heaven, a capacity that he never gets a chance to prove.¹⁴⁵ Often cited in Spanish, it is plausible to argue that this may have been because the mannerism was considered so very un-English that it was not possible to fully integrate it into the language, let alone the culture.

There is a tendency, as old as anti-aulic satire itself, to couch the courtier's carriage and deportment in the language of physical deformity, and this is fully the case here. To represent him 'full of creeping and crouching' was not only to make a point about his moral nature but also about the extent to which he had departed from national norms.¹⁴⁶ Prostration, as Walters observes was 'not something to which free born Englishmen willingly subjected themselves to.' Or at least, they *ought* not subject themselves to it. The convergence between the style of the court and foreign ways was nowhere more keenly felt: in both the Englishman 'must licke, he must crouch, he must cogge' if he wished to come to preferment.¹⁴⁷ For the disenchanting English earl in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* who had made this observation, the first particular effect that travel in Italy had on the young Englishman was to change his salutes into an esoteric game: he now 'play[s] at heypass, repass come aloft', making what ought to have been a simple transaction into something approaching a conjuring trick. It is not insignificant that this rather gloomy observer goes on immediately to list the more serious vicious influences; while gestures have no moral content in and of themselves, it is as if they act as the highroad to other kinds of immorality – atheism, epicureanism, prostitution, poisoning, and sodomy. Once one has entered into an Italian way of being even on a superficial level, there are no limitations as to how low one can descend.¹⁴⁸ On other occasions, what drew Nashe's satirical eye was the fact that the

¹⁴³ Nashe 1594b, sig. L4^v.

¹⁴⁴ Rich 1606, fo. 6^v.

¹⁴⁵ R[ich] 1593, sig. B1^v. See also Lodge 1596, p. 20; Cornwallis 1600–01, sigs. N3^r, P6^v; [Rowlands] 1605, sig. A3^r; Rich 1616, p. 51 for further satiric references to this practice. For Haughton 1616, sig. B2^v it is the Frenchman who never washes his fingers, but licks them clean with kisses.

¹⁴⁶ Rich 1606, fo. 6^v.

¹⁴⁷ Walters 2009, p. 107; Nashe 1594b, sig. L3^v.

¹⁴⁸ Nashe 1594b, sig. L4^v.

bow had practically become a genuflection, so that it literally meant scraping one's knees on the ground. This is the sense of the name *Iaques Scabdhams* that he gives to the Frenchified Englishman, and also of the gallic practice of swearing '*Ah parla mort Dieu*' when their 'hammes are scabd,' something that must have happened all the time, and which of course was completely unnecessary. There was something decidedly obsequious about all these gallic bowings and scrapings.¹⁴⁹ It was more generally noticed. In 1642, a Spanish doctor, Carlos Garcia writing a study of the differences in dispositions between the French and the Spaniard, the two 'great lights of the world', noted that when the Frenchman met a friend, he would 'salute him with his whole body, bending downe his head, kissing his hands, and making legs'.¹⁵⁰ The Spanish style had then become more rigid, and involved merely the doffing of the hat. Everybody had their bias.

Of particular interest are the staple references to the low bow as 'cringe'. Such a word created the impression of irrational not to say convulsive movement, leaving no trace of the residual elegance that might have rendered an expression of the sort attractive. It shows that many were not seriously prepared to engage with any so-called foreign practice. The gallant himself in Henry Hutton's collection of satires, whose 'nature doth vnfold / Him, to be framed in *Phantastes* mold' is aware that he will be satirised for, among other things, saluting 'a Mad-dame with a French cringe grace'.¹⁵¹ He was right in that. Fitzgeffrey, who associated the French cringe with the dancing schools that coxcombs attended, remained distinctly unimpressed, while for Rich, to say that a fantasticke had 'the *French Congé*' sounded as if he had a disease.¹⁵² In a moment where faint praise was certainly damning, Brathwaite described his returned traveller as one with no 'uncomposed cringe to accoutre him'. Unknotting the negatives, the image suggests that rehearsed cringes were far worse than improvised ones, which would, after all, retain some spontaneity. For one's actions to have the dual demerits of being both effortful *and* ridiculous was surely the worst of all indictments. It was the polar opposite of

¹⁴⁹ Nashe 1592a, sig. B2^r; Nashe 1594b, sig. L4^r. See also Jordan 1641, sig. C2^r whose gallant pays 'An homage [not only] to your Hand, but to your Toe'. Ironically, they may not have been long established gallic customs at all. Certainly, a few decades earlier, a French observer had blamed the introduction of the low reverence on the Italians, who conveniently figured for them as the source of all excess. D'Estienne 1980, p. 192.

¹⁵⁰ Garcia 1642, sig. K^v.

¹⁵¹ Hutton 1619, sigs. A6^r-A6^v.

¹⁵² [Fitzgeffrey] 1618, sig. F5^v; for accurate but hardly adequate discussion of dancing as a gentlemanly recreation see Vale 1977, pp. 88–93. Rich 1616, p. 51.

sprezzatura. In much the same light are we to see Jordan's sly mockery of the Frenchified man's 'practick Cringe'. The whole performance made a meeting with friends an occasion for ludicrously dancing 'about his feet, And he 'bout yours'.¹⁵³

What was so wrong with the entrée of 'outlandish congie or salute' into England?¹⁵⁴ Fundamentally, it was thought to be a barrier to making those instantaneous judgements about the national identity of another. Salutations of their nature were ephemeral experiences, shared between strangers as well as acquaintances, so if one did not read common nationality in the performance of them, one might never know at all. A friend of George Whetstone, citing the 'plainesse' of his muse, warned him in verse of letting his gestures 'inforce thy friends to say / Behold a Frenchman, wher he flaunts, if face be turned away.' It was left to Knevet to express the dilemma most forcefully:

Our Postures are French conges, and few can:
Know Mounsiour, from an English Gentleman.¹⁵⁵

The dilemma was thus greatly exaggerated, but the underlying argument is realistic. For him, there is no point in being an English gentleman if one cannot be recognised as such from one's bearing. Nationality has to be easily distinguished, not something to be thrown over at the first opportunity.

The second problem with these alien salutatory and valedictory gestures is that they are not appropriate to the English freeman. Although hierarchy is compatible with most visions of freedom then being articulated, there is also a clear sense in which hierarchy is seen in a restricted fashion: there is a feeling that it should be held back from overblown and irrational cultural expressions. Excessive gesture gave off the impression of obsequiousness and servility and put people in a position of subservience. Within this, there was the double suggestion that these gestures were slavish in themselves and also that it was slavish in the Englishman to copy them. The exiled English Earl whose jaundiced views are indicative of a popular point of view recognises the lamentable fact that

wee had rather liue as slaues in another land, crouch and cap, and bee seruile [...] than liue as frée-men and Lords in our owne country.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ [Brathwaite] 1631b, p. 152; Jordan 1641, sig. C2^v.

¹⁵⁴ Brathwaite 1630, p. 66.

¹⁵⁵ Whetstone 1576, p. 69; Knevet 1628, sig. F2^r.

¹⁵⁶ Nashe 1594b, sig. L3^r.

The magnificoes' 'brave embrace to y^e footwarde' was among the gestures that transformed the Englishman into a 'minion' according to Harvey, while similarly, in John Mennes' verse miscellany, one of the brisk epigrams depicts a *Monsieur Congee* who is so capable of discoursing with 'legs and quarter congees' for half hours at a stretch that he is not really to be considered a man at all.¹⁵⁷ For the English 'Land-Lopers' who figure in Howell's treatise on travel, there was the barely-veiled connotation that to be overeager in the '*bending in the hammes*' betrayed too great a readiness to yield. They returned loaded down with a virtual cargo of '*Complements and Cringes*,' the superficial grace of the one offset by the patent servility of the latter.¹⁵⁸ An element of anti-Popery is often added to the mix. Jordan's 'Complemental Man', for instance, who pays homage not just to hand but also to toe, is 'much suspected / To be a man that's popishly affected'.¹⁵⁹ Gesture was Roman Catholic.

The practice of such low obeisance also carried with it the ever-present possibility of hypocrisy. Thomas Churchyard deliberately refers to making a leg and kissing the hand as a 'French deuce, nay sure a Spanish tricke'. Devices and tricks: the artifice was self-evident. Such 'lowting lowe' had no genuine meaning.¹⁶⁰ The fullest treatment of this theme occurs in Samuel Rowlands' collection of epigrams and satires of 1600 entitled *The letting of humours blood in the head-vaine* whose vulgarity won him notoriety.¹⁶¹ Much of the work is devoted to mocking the humours of the 'late Crown'd King of Caualeers' and among manifestations of the type, *Politique* Peter is prodigal in lavishing 'French embracements by the score' and saluting 'about the Knees and Thighes'. In a previous satire, Rowlands spoke more clearly about the insincerity of such mannerisms. In the old times, a 'God saue you sir' would still bring down a grace on an enemy as on a friend, but the problem with these 'French *congés*' was that even if one did them perfectly, they revealed nothing at all of one's interior disposition. One might, in his words, combine 'inward hate' with 'outward salutation'. There is a sort of Geertzian apprehension of gestural ambiguity here: is the contraction of the eyelid a twitch or a wink, or indeed the parody of a wink?¹⁶² How is one able to tell? One isn't. That is precisely the problem.

¹⁵⁷ Harvey 1884, p. 98; [Mennes and Smith] 1650, sig. K7^v.

¹⁵⁸ Howell 1642, p. 181.

¹⁵⁹ Jordan 1641, sig. C2^r.

¹⁶⁰ Churchyard 1593, pp. 165–166.

¹⁶¹ *ODNB*. It was publicly burned, and 29 booksellers were fined for buying it.

¹⁶² [Rowlands] 1600, sigs. A2^r, B1^r, D2^r; Geertz 1973, pp. 5–6.

In the carriage of the body when walking, it was not the cringe which observers noted so much as the propensity to bend over backwards and stride along, bursting with self-importance. Joseph Hall's young master 'stiffly strits [...] trapped in the new-found brauerie'. Overbury's traveller revealed his patent exhibitionism when his very '*gate cryes, Behold me*'; more memorably, Brathwaite pictured such a one walking as if made in 'Wainescot'.¹⁶³ In none of these instances was the strut attributable to any foreign influence in particular, so it is conceivable that they were making a point more of his excessive vainglory than of anything else. Still, it all forms part of the battery of attack upon these national anomalies. Others were more explicit: the jaundiced earl detected Spanish courtly manners lurking behind the Englishman who '*jetteth strouting*'; that such a one then proceeds to make 'a dish-cloath of his owne Countrey in comparison of *Spaine*' was perhaps only to be expected. He took no pride in his own: his very body 'spoke' of the pride of Habsburg Spain. Meanwhile, something of Dekker's habitual prejudices rubbed off on a comment made by the character of Fortunatus, a disillusioned traveller, to the effect that Italy was behind the whole phenomenon of public bombast.

Fantasticke complement stalkes up and downe,
Trickt in out-landish Fethers, all his words
His lookes, his oathes, are all ridiculous
All apish, childish, and Italianate.¹⁶⁴

Too much display, too much posturing, too much 'staged' behaviour went against the grain of every value that these public moralists sought to endorse. They despised excess very heartily.

In the opinion of these satirists, societal pedagogues, and polemicists, it will have become clear by now that nowhere are we nearer to caricature than in the portrayal of such self-imposed distortions and deformities of face and body, and that neither the traveller's nor the courtier's body could be said to speak English in any meaningful sense. Their gestures came not from within, but were shamelessly borrowed from a multiplicity of contexts and cobbled together in a vulgarly theatrical performance which was designed to 'move others to imitate his postures', something that made him more of a public menace than a harmless private oddity for those

¹⁶³ [Hall] 1598, p. 61; Overbury 1616, sig. D1^r; [Brathwaite] 1631b, p. 152. See also [Rowlands] 1600, sig. C7^r for reference to the 'swaggering' gait of the returned traveller. For a possible explanation of this manner of walking see below pp. 110–111.

¹⁶⁴ Nashe 1594b, sig. L4^v; [Dekker] 1600, sig. E2^r.

with strongly contrasting perspectives. 'But what is it which makes him *Complete*?' Brathwaite mused. 'It is not a scrude face, an artfull Cringe, or an *Italionate* ducke that deserues so exquisite a title' but only virtue itself. Nothing but that would make a man complete, let alone completely English.¹⁶⁵

Upon considering the convergence of evidence, it is plausible to argue that certain ways of speaking English and presenting oneself amounted, for many, to a way of being English, or, for that matter, falling short of being English. The positive construction regarded plainness not simply in a narrow linguistic frame of reference, but as a moral tool with which to face down contrary opinions and worrying contemporary trends. The negative construction focused on figures who blurred the normative contours in their various ways; these could not be entirely disassociated from England because of their birth, but critics found ways of questioning their legitimacy, undermining their status and depicting them as transgressors. Speech was not, however, the only site where a gambit was made for a native plainness. Fashion was another such area and just as speech was said to clothe reality, it is no surprise to learn that clothing too was thought to speak.

¹⁶⁵ [Brathwaite] 1631b, p. 151; [Brathwaite] 1631a, p. 97.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMAGE OF THE ENGLISHMAN

THE POLITICS OF APPEARANCE

The study of appearances, a favoured subject of gender and cultural historians, has often got short-shrift in the history of ideas, and yet, unfairly so, if we consider that the dominant or desirable aesthetic of an era or a people reveals values, distinctions and attitudes with great immediacy and vividness. It is much more apposite to see how material and intellectual culture feed off each other than regard them as discrete entities. Thanks to work being done by cultural and gender historians, we are now closer to understanding how identities of various kinds were materialised through clothes.¹ Why are the image-makers and image-breakers so crucial to our story about identity formation? Appearances, one could say, came to matter in new ways in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance world. This was, in part, because of the discovery of ‘things’,² of the increasing scale of consumption and the trickle-down effect of courts on the socio-cultural habits of wider publics. This was, in the words of William Cornwallis, an ‘Age [...] of Taylors’.³ Clothes were the ‘body of the body’ as Erasmus had put it and as such became a focus for much energetic comment and contestation, as contemporaries assessed their relationship with virtue, social hierarchies, classical and religious values, gender and national identity. The subject of fashion in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England was no exception to this wider phenomenon, and to judge from both governmental and non-governmental sources, it was the foreignness of both textiles and clothing styles that helped to make it so. The sumptuary legislation charts the social and economic problems associated with the influx of such luxuries: it was felt, for example, that they would destroy the delicate balance of trade and disrupt God-given hierarchies. All these subjects have been well-covered in the literature.⁴ The concern here is rather with the thought of those who saw it as impinging upon a sense of national self.

¹ See, for example, Jones and Stallybrass 2000, Kuchta 2002, Vincent 2003, Rublack 2010.

² Rublack 2010, xx.

³ Cornwallis (1600–1), sig. L8^r.

⁴ For a general account of sumptuary laws see Baldwin 1926; on the Tudor period in particular see Hooper 1915, pp. 433–449; see also Coleman and John 1976, pp. 137–139.

To understand just why appearances became a matter of such moment, it is necessary to engage with the great paradox surrounding early-modern attitudes to fashions more generally. At one level, there is a common propensity to play up the superficiality of the sartorial in all its frivolous exteriority and caprice, suggesting thereby that it was a matter of little weight: quite fittingly, it was at this time that the word 'fashion' acquired the connotation of constant change.⁵ Yet, if the matter were as superficial as this implied, it is surely logical to ask why there was such overt anxiety about it and why it was deemed so important to repeat *ad nauseam* that it was unimportant. One could argue, of course, that it simply made for good satire (and austere didacticism), which is true as far as it goes. The overdressed are types that everybody loves to hate. Nevertheless, there is a more profound reason. In many of the texts there is evidence not merely of disgust or a desire to poke fun, or even the poor man's habitual envy of what is not his, but of fear: a palpable fear that seems due to a belief that these fashions could actually work deep personal and societal transformations. There is a sense, in short, in which clothes are thought to 'make' the man or indeed unmake him. Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass have a point then in saying that fashion was, for the early moderns, an apparent 'superfluity' that had the 'power to constitute an essence', which had, in short, a disproportionate capacity to establish identity in a highly visible and public way. Ulinka Rublack is along the same lines in thinking that clothing was regarded not just as an external but as something which moulded a person and materialised his/her identity.⁶ This constitutive power of fashion is reflected in the very etymology of the word: *factio* in Latin means the action or process of making. But the converse was also true, because it was felt that fashion had the capacity not only to establish identities, but also to destabilise them. This fundamentally explains why contemporaries fretted so much about the threat continental fashions posed to what was native and natural.

A GOLDEN AGE OF NATIVE DRESS

As with speech, the construction of Englishness present is very much reliant on a particular version of Englishness past. One of the points constantly made in favour of plain dressing is that it is truly historic. The

⁵ *OED* sub fashion 10, 11.

⁶ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 3; Rublack 2010, p. 138.

version of the past offered is organic, mythicized, sentimental and nostalgic. It is all too easy to dismiss nostalgia merely as a reflective mood rather than a tool, to see it as nothing more than the emotional resort of the crank, betraying a perverse inclination to put the clock back after having failed to prevent it going forward. All this is to do it genuine disservice. There need be nothing more self-conscious and, dare I say it, politicised about the careful selection of past events it entails, nothing more deliberate than their presentation in an emotive way. This, I would argue, is the nature of nostalgia in the Tudor and early Stuart period, as regards its reflections on dress.

William Harrison, the historian and obsessive chronologist, provides an obvious starting point in his section on English 'apparel and attire' in *The description and historie of England*.⁷ This is a crisp, passionate polemic against the 'phantasticall follie of our nation' in this matter and a firmly-drawn contrast with former times. It is the latter that draws our attention in the statement: 'Neither was it euer merrier with England, than when an Englishman was knowne abroad by his own cloth, and contented himselfe at home with his fine carsie hosen, and a meane slop'. Paradoxically, in this unspecified period, the Englishman was at once indistinguishable at home and distinctive abroad: precisely the kind of clothes that made him disappear among his compatriots made him stand out everywhere else. This is just as it should be, according to Harrison. The traditionalism in such a view is not only to be seen in purely temporal terms, but in national ones: he is harkening not just to a past age, but to a former state of the nation. In Merry England, men were proud of their native cloth. The current state of the nation is, as he vehemently claims, corrupt as they have disowned what is their own.⁸

The slightly woolly allusion to blessed customs of old receives rather more precise treatment in the hands of Robert Greene and Barnabe Rich, who set their defence of plain ideals of dress in the context of particular reigns. What one selects as a golden age, whether justifiable or not, is revealing for what it says about one's aspirations in the present, and it is no less so here. The character of Cloth Breeches claims that it was a good and 'blessed' time for England when King Stephen wore cloth, and later recalls rather more vaguely the time when 'the king himself was content

⁷ This appears in the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. It is one of the extra chapters in the description of England that had not appeared in 1577. Cf Holinshed 1577; Holinshed 1587.

⁸ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

to keep S. *Georges* day in a plaine paire of kersie hose: when the duke, erle, lord, knight, gentleman and esquire, [...] wore such breeches as was spun in his house'.⁹ Rich's appeal to the past is still more dramatic. Taking advantage of the supernatural setting, he brings before us former English kings – the ones that are in heaven that is – whom St Peter calls upon to discern the true from the false Englishman. In particular, they are asked if any of them actually know Velvet or 'any of his name remaining in *Englande*, in the tyme of theyr raignes and gouernments?' Not one of them does because he simply is not grounded in the country. The character of Cloth, however, is recognised by no less a personage than Henry III. It is the ultimate legitimation: by all accounts, his reign was known for its sober manner of attire, in contrast with his father King John. Despite the passing of many generations, this king is truly able to say that he knows this type of man 'very wel by his lookes', and stresses that he completely 'resemble[s] his auncesters, and hath the very liuely picture of his Predecessours, the which were very honest plaine dealing men'. What is Rich trying to do here? He is not, I would argue, being explicitly subversive, but there surely is a political slur in the subtext. In going out of his way to idealise the old, native ways, once sanctioned by monarchy, the contrast with the Tudor court of the 1590s is an obvious one, however unstated.¹⁰ For this reason, Kuchta's interpretation that defenders of the old sartorial regime such as he are merely condemning the 'conspicuous consumption of the *nouveaux riches*' not the 'long-standing ostentation of the aristocracy' is an unconvincing one.¹¹ There clearly is a message here for the established, if they are willing to listen. The monarchs and aristocrats could be dressed appropriately to their station and still be plain men: that is the didactic point he seeks to make.

It is thus very plausible to argue that the importance of the monarchy in setting the standards of truly English wear in the past was invoked precisely because there was now no such homely example from on high. Neither Tudors nor Stuarts were models of simplicity of attire but rather examples of magnificence and grandeur (read excess and luxury in the eyes of sartorial conservatives). James I's wardrobe budget was particularly notorious, and it was during his time that the French influence became more dominant. Delicately in 1616, Robert Anton expressed his

⁹ Greene 1592a, sigs. B4^v, D1^r.

¹⁰ Upon the simplicity in the reign of Henry III see Fairholt 1846, pp. 103–105. Ironically, velvet was first imported from Italy in that period, Yarwood 1961, p. 57. R[ich] 1593, sigs. C1^v–C2^r.

¹¹ Kuchta 2002, p. 24.

hope that Prince Charles would 'all things rightly set' when he came to rule, that:

Exempt from outward *fashions* so appli'd,
 As it is *truly noble*, without *pride*,
 Or *forraine imitation*, but intire
 To his owne *fashion*.¹²

Charles I, unlike the mistier kings of past ages who had apparently clothed themselves so simply, never did anything of the sort. In this he showed himself no different from his father or his father's godmother, Queen Elizabeth. The theme of pointed nostalgia continued in his reign. In one of the glut of pamphlets characteristic of his last years, Peacham noted that 'the plainnesse of our English Kings in former times hath beene very remarkable,' and that it was not until Henry VIII that a monarch had so much as worn a band about his neck, and even that was very plain, without lace.¹³ As a historical statement, this is of dubious accuracy because English kings, notably Edward II, were often given to luxurious clothing, but the assertion of a direct lineage of plainness is part of the polemic he is making about identity. It is not a simple statement of fact. Here again, plainness is held to be consistent with true traditions of English monarchy. If there was a recognition at the time that the 'wardrobe of power was itself a form of power', then Peacham's point is that plainness is its best expression: excess merely fritters power away.¹⁴ It detracts from 'gravity'. Just as, in the humanist dictum, true nobility does not reside in birth but in virtue, true magnificence does not lie in quantities of lace, jags and slashings. Plainness is compatible with fitting grandeur. He makes the observation, in general terms, that the situation is altered since former times but delicately leaves the contrast with particular monarchs unwritten. Yet the criticism is implied, even when there is no intention of making an argument against monarchy or its obligation to appear glorious. These were perhaps dangerous waters in 1638, and Peacham himself was no radical, but one of royalist and Anglican sympathies. He does end the section on a severe note, however, declaring that God will punish those who are clothed with strange apparel.¹⁵

¹² Anton 1616, pp. 27–28.

¹³ Peacham 1638, p. 61.

¹⁴ Kuchta 2002, p. 7.

¹⁵ Peacham 1638, p. 76. The following year indeed he wrote *The Duty of All True Subjects* 1639.

The monarchical associations of the tradition of plain dressing were also visible in Philip Stubbes' morally stringent work *The Anatomie of Abuses in England*, as he recalled how kings made do with simplicity in 'times past', but it is not his principal focus. Instead, he concentrates on the plain tradition in the lives of ordinary men. The dialogue is initially framed as an outsider's view; Philoponus is a returned traveller from Aligna – a cipher for England – who tells Spudeus, an ignorant countryman, of the 'natures [...] properties and conditions' of that people.¹⁶ It cannot however remain objective for long, and Philoponus recalls plain Englishmen of former days as if he were talking of his own ancestors. He claims that his father lived in a period when men wore frieze coats and straight-cut hose of carsie, 'of the same colour that the sheepe bare them' with the result that they both lived longer and were 'ten tymes harder than we'.¹⁷ In other words, rude health, longevity, manliness and morality were all bound up in native costume.¹⁸

The theme of common man is also present in the popular civic pageant of 1614 entitled *Himatia-Poleos* and performed in honour of Thomas Hayes, the new Lord Mayor of London. It is an intriguing text for several reasons. First, it is self-consciously civic and more particularly metropolitan in tone. Secondly, it gives us an insight into the 'cult' of the native from the perspective of very interested parties indeed: Anthony Munday was a member of the Company of Drapers and took pride in signing himself as citizen and draper. The arguments made for sartorial conservatism are forceful. Native clothing, it is declared, resembles the walls of a city. Hence the title in translation *Garments of the City*. They 'ingirt' the city and preserve it from 'dangerous annoyances [sic]'. It is almost as if siege has been declared. The cities of England, especially London, are the first line of defence against threat: they know that their best advantage lies in the maintenance of England's drapery, that this makes for the 'flourishing condition of Himatiaes Common-wealth'.¹⁹ Such street dramas were a mixture of history, allegory and myth, so it is not surprising to find some veneration of 'olde Antiquitie', of happier, better times when men wore the cloth they had made rather than silks they had imported. The defence is put in the mouth of a shepherd, understandably enough as he is seen as the origins of the cycle from lamb, to wool, and from thence to cloth.

¹⁶ Stubbes 1595, 4th edn, pp. 30, 1–3. The first edition dates from 1583.

¹⁷ Stubbes 1595, p. 28.

¹⁸ Stubbes 1595, pp. 14–15.

¹⁹ Munday 1614, pp. 5, 7.

Ycleped Englands Draperie,
 More worth then gaudie brauerie,
 Of Silken twine, Siluer and Golde,
 Nere knowen in those blest daies of olde:
 Then liu'd that graue and worthie man.

The shepherd is staged to remind people in 'silken sattin Townes' of authentic and transcendent English values. Munday is deliberately vague about this past, just as he is deliberately vague when conjuring up a vision of the peace, plenty and bounty of former times that was so envied by other nations.²⁰ There were naturally some imaginative advantages to imprecision: his folkloric lyricism was unrestricted by the regurgitation of mere fact, thus revealing more about his desires for the present than his insight into the past. What he was trying to get across was the picture of a population of honest, plain and virtuous men that had once peopled the country but were now in danger of extinction. They were being even now displaced by embryonic merchant capitalism.

Something of the same construction of an historic idealised English masculinity, albeit aimed at an audience of the exclusively literate, is visible in the first of Joseph Hall's moral satires, when he yearns for the days when men were 'Clad with their owne' and when the life they led was of a piece with their attire.

Then men were men but now the greater part
 Beasts are in life, and women are in heart.²¹

The manly men that he depicts were clothed in 'home-spun *Russet*' and void of 'forraine pride'. There was an egalitarianism in this 'fairest age', the 'time of Gold', which he claims not to find in evidence in these decayed days. Even the great ones of yester year were clad more simply than the under-groom of a hostelry is now, he laments.²² Hall's position as university lecturer of rhetoric in Cambridge make us read his remarks in a more formal light; besides, the *Virgidemiarum* in which this image figures was the 'first collection of formal verse satires on the Latin model', and in the ecclesiastical clamp-down on satire in 1599, received the dubious distinction of being burned in Stationers' Hall, although it was thereafter

²⁰ Munday 1614, p. 13, 10, 16. *Ycleped* is either a misprint for 'Ycleped' (called/ named); or it remains as *yeleped* in which case, coming from *yelp*, it would mean to acclaim or praise. The latter seems to fit better in context. *OED* sub *yelp* II ¶2.

²¹ [Hall] 1598, pp. 46, 48. For another eulogy of old national traditions of plainness of dress in the mouth of a rustic who claims to base his opinions on knowledge from the *Chronicles* see Nashe 1633, p. 9.

²² [Hall] 1598, pp. 48–49, 45.

reprieved. The ban itself is indicative of the discomfort with the satiric genre, particularly the biting Juvenalian kind, in the late sixteenth century. There was something felt to be ideologically destabilising about it, a fact which should give us pause in teasing out the full discomfiting implications of the works discussed here.

As none of these writers were intending to provide readers, or in Munday's case, street audience, with even the crudest outlines of a history of costume, the question must be asked what they were actually doing in setting their ideas so firmly in historical context, albeit a history with large fictionalised content. The first and most obvious reason is the need to stress continuity in the image of the Englishman and induce readers to take pride in an inherited tradition. Although historians have not made the link explicit, there was a construction of the immemorial in terms of dress as well as in law, and the character of a Cloth Breeches, or a shepherd, or the example of a plain king or a gentleman symbolised just such a claim. Transcendence was held desirable in the matter of appearances. Disjunctions on the contrary were problematic: in Greene's comedy, Velvet Breeches was a recent Italian arrival; in Rich's eschatological account, whilst still implicitly Italianate, he was also, oddly enough, a descendant of the Normans. There was a Norman yoke of fashion also, it would seem. It was not that Rich was making a complete anti-French tirade – after all, Henry III whom he admires was one of the Plantagenet descendants of the House of Anjou – but in giving Velvet a sufficiently complicated background, he effectively cut him off from the simple line of authenticity which the other is guaranteed.²³

Making a pseudo-historical case was also an invaluable means of relegating hierarchical distinctions and divisions to secondary importance. This is a delicate point which has sometimes been overlooked. Kuchta regards authors like Stubbes and Green as defenders of the social order in the sense that they believe dress should make hierarchies visible. This is a straightforward reading and it is partially correct but it does not fully capture the entirety of their thought, which is no more approving of hierarchies than it is critical of their problems.²⁴ It is arguable, in fact, that the historical vision as outlined was also a strangely un-hierarchical one, not that it denied hierarchy, but rather that it effectively transcended it. Some sort of parity was achieved between social groups. Princes and people were drawn together in a unity of dress, so that the vision that emerged

²³ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^v; R[ich] 1593, sig. C1^v.

²⁴ Kuchta 2002, p. 24.

was that of a uniform community of homespun men. Munday put across this sense of prelapsarian solidarity quite clearly in extolling a past where ‘*Draperie* the rich Clothing of *England* [...] clothed both Prince & people all a like’. This was ‘long before the knowledge of fantasticke habites’: it sounds like the account of the Fall, and the knowledge of good and evil.²⁵ Cloth Breeches’ declaration that he ‘belong[ed] to the old auncient yeomanry, yea and gentility’ is also emphatic. He is properly speaking not merely as a farmer but as a gentleman too. This statement was meant to sound triumphant even definitive: it is a position from which he will not budge, even though he is all too aware of his present decline among the gentility of the day.²⁶

Naturally, the type of clothing advocated did have peculiar resonance in the case of the yeoman, the rock solid ‘base and foundation’ of the Common-wealth, as Thomas Scott would call him, and guarantor of its ‘strength and libertie’.²⁷ This type was particularly idealised. It is very plausible to argue that this was because he represented the social *via media*, being neither too grand nor too poor. His idealisation therefore would correspond nicely to the value laid on moderation, as Shagan has pointed out.²⁸ He was the living personification of the call to ‘moderate ourselves’.²⁹ Furthermore, interest in him was part of a wider interest in the pastoral that only an age increasingly metropolitan feels the need to cultivate. His was the *vita activa* of a homely and productive nature, rather than the frenetic activism of the city and court. He was an honest man, in Rowlands’ verse, ‘plaine in Russet clad’ with ‘mutton-taffety’ doublet, dirty hat, kersey stockings and pinned-up sleeves but of far greater worth (both economic and moral) than the gallant type, ‘[a]ll Silke and Veluet’ clad.³⁰

It was also felt that, of all ‘types’ in society, he was the most likely to have retained older ways of dressing. One of the clearest illustrations of this occurs in the robust portrayal of the type in Thomas Fuller’s *The Holy State* of 1642. Fuller himself was a clergyman of royalist sympathies, but not Laudian ones, a balance of affinity also reflected in this supremely temperate exposition of the estates and offices of the realm. Within that, reflections on national distinctiveness could not but occur, but that they occur primarily in his description of the English yeomanry is a point of no small

²⁵ M[unday] 1614, p. 5.

²⁶ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^v.

²⁷ [Scott] 1622, p. 28.

²⁸ Shagan 2011, p. 241.

²⁹ Scott 1622, p. 84.

³⁰ Rowlands 1609, sig. A2^v.

moment. It is the homely attire of this man, the first maxim that he elaborates upon, that makes him 'the surest *landmark*, whence forreiners may take aim of the ancient English customes'. In short, Fuller does not envisage him as a closely guarded secret of the nation, something to be kept out of sight as an embarrassment, but rather as its chief symbol, witnessing to what Englishness genuinely and historically is. He is the mark of the land, the archetypal national character. He blushes if, for reasons of duty, he must wear more elaborate clothes on occasion. The slight is reserved for gentry who have repudiated old styles, 'floting' instead after foreign fashions. Fuller is emphatic that the yeomanry is an estate of people 'almost peculiar to England'. The only approaching comparison are the German boors and even then, the comparison fails because they are incapable of rising.³¹ It is a piquant aside that this treatise found its way into the less formal studies of those gentlemen who came to Cambridge with no intention of making 'Scholarship their profession', but to acquire beneficial learning merely for 'delight and ornament'.³² Knowledge of this readership is interesting for two reasons. It shows the full reach of Fuller's moral exposition: the elite are encouraged to respect a 'social' inferior and to regard him as the fulcrum of the nation. The yeoman, they are told, is a 'Gentleman in Ore'.³³ Secondly, the slur against sartorial novelty presumably found its target among the aspiring gentlemen of the university.

It was not only the yeoman who was praised for being immune to sartorial novelties. English merchants too came in for praise in some sources. Here again, there was respect for a useful group in society who made a point of dressing simply, in keeping with their station but also remembering the canon of historic plainness. Harrison extolled these wealth-creators, who, although they dressed in fine materials, recalled 'a great *péece* of the ancient grauitie apperteining to citizens and burgesses' by the 'forme and colour' of their garments. Of 'all estates', they were most to be commended.³⁴ Apparently, fine fabric could be offset against subdued colour. Plainness could but did not have to mean cheap, native cloth: one could dress expensively and still remain authentically English. In this context, the example of the Dutch was invoked. The case for emulating them in matters of simple apparel was made most forcefully by Thomas Scott in the curious pamphlet entitled *The Belgicke pismire stinging the*

³¹ Fuller 1642, pp. 116–117. My italics.

³² MS 48 (I.2.27), Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge. Overbury's *Characters* (1615) found a similar niche.

³³ Fuller 1642, p. 116.

³⁴ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

slothfull sleeper. A thriving mercantile culture, the presence of rigorous Calvinism and the dominance of a non-aristocratic burgess class in the United Provinces had brought about a plain and sober aesthetic, in which the preference for rich black textiles was pronounced over many decades. Scott who, in a recent analysis, is depicted as an adept blender of both classical humanist and Puritan discourse, is also skilful in giving much contemporary national colour to both.³⁵ To him, it seemed obvious that the English should learn from the Dutch. Imitation in general was frowned upon, as we know, but he argued that this was an exceptional case because coming from the 'same race originally', to learn from the Dutch was like learning from one's own ancestors. The very nature which the English and Dutch held in common predisposed them to plainness: 'they are such whose natures and maners we better agree with, then with any other Nation: having euer found them plaine, but sure friends'.³⁶ These days when the English had fallen from ancient ways, and when 'the principall clothing vsed amongst vs, is both forraine and beyond the ability of the wearer', it was the Dutch who admirably remained 'constant to their country fashion'. Peacham, in a text of the same year, agreed with him: Dutch dress argued for 'a constancie of minde and humour'. Their value as exemplars of rectitude was obvious. Scott, however, does reluctantly admit that there too people are becoming corrupted by the lightness of the French.³⁷ From these remarks, it would appear that for Scott what it was to be English and what it was to be Dutch were cognate notions. Both peoples shared the same spiritual descent from classical Stoicism, and had given special place to the values of self-sufficiency, self-control and constancy in their cultures. Indeed, Scott was also drawing on the more recent and Christianised tradition of stoicism, exemplified in Justus Lipsius' *De Constantia* of 1584. The value and virtue of constancy could be effortlessly nationalised.

The two problems Scott has with current modes are their foreignness and their capacity to flout the good ordering of society. It is illuminating that he should place these two alongside, and it is therefore appropriate to examine more precisely the extent to which visions of Englishness were

³⁵ For this interpretation see Colclough 2005, pp. 102–119. For emphasis on Scott's classical humanism see Peltonen 1995, pp. 229–270. For concentration on the puritan angle see Lake 1982, pp. 805–25.

³⁶ [Scott] 1622, p. 49. Andrew Fleck is researching the Dutch influence on English identity and his book with the provisional title *The Dutch Device: English National Identity and the Image of the Dutch, 1588–1688* is currently under consideration with Oxford University Press.

³⁷ [Scott] 1622, pp. 83, 81, Peacham 1622, p. 204.

embedded in moral and societal discourses. We must ask whether this qualifies or enhances the proposed interpretation about the importance of the national. This embeddedness is most thoroughly illustrated and therefore most fruitfully to be studied in the three serio-comic works which present Cloth Breeches to a Tudor and Stuart audience. The most important of them, Greene's *Quip*, went through six editions in the first year alone, and again appeared in 1606, 1620, 1622 and 1635, so that his agenda got much airing over a period of forty years. As the name of the first work, *Debate between Pride and Lowlines* and the last in the trio, *Greenes newes both from heauen and hell* suggests, the moral dimension is always to the fore; indeed one of the key purposes of the mock trial is to decide who is the worthier person of the two. Yet such questions never came alone. Greene is being a little disingenuous in claiming that he 'twits not the weede but the vice'. Both weed and vice are represented as typically Italianate, and Velvet Breeches is ultimately condemned to hell not just for his vice but for claiming to be something he is not. Narratives of virtue and nationality are all bound up together: none of the texts are proposing anything like a nationally neutral account of what constitutes the good and bad life.³⁸ Already then in the 1590s, something is visible of the phenomenon that Jones and Stallybrass have deemed to be characteristic of conservative republican thinking in the 1650s, that tendency to naturalise 'English virtue, as if it was embedded in pastoral wool and cloth production and contaminated by the workings of culture in the form of fashion'.³⁹ It did not have clearly republican political overtones in the late Elizabethan period, but it was a construction ripe for politicisation when social and political tensions came to the fore in the 1640s.

The other major concern of these three writers which does, at times, appear to override considerations of Englishness is the importance accorded to social estate in determining what was acceptable and unacceptable in matters of dress. This is, however, only an apparent incompatibility. It is true that they do express their most serious reservations for the figure of the upstart, something that seems to suggest that the only real problem that they have with the dispersal of new fashions is the fact that one cannot, in the proverbial phrase of the day, tell a courtier from a carter because of them.⁴⁰ It is also true that Greene, whose work is the most

³⁸ Greene 1592a, sig. A2^v.

³⁹ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 76.

⁴⁰ Holinshed 1587, p. 172. For some interesting remarks on the upstart in Elizabethan times consult Clark 1983, pp. 183–186.

thorough treatment of the subject, has Cloth Breeches utter a long speech, in which he defends himself from accusations of being socially subversive in his dislike of finery. Noblemen and gentlemen, he admits, ought to go as their birth and office requires; he claims to find fault only with upstarts raised from the plough or those 'aduanced for their Italian deuices'.⁴¹ There are two things to bear in mind in helping us to understand the complex balancing act that Greene was negotiating between questions of nationality and social hierarchy. Firstly, as we have already outlined, his historical vision was one in which national distinctiveness inscribed in dress most definitely transcended class. Yet this nostalgic vision was combined with a rather more pragmatic present-day perspective: Greene knew that dress distinctions were there to stay and he could even (grudgingly) see it as fitting although never ideal. He was adamant that the rot would not spread to all social estates.

The criticism of upstarts is not merely an example of snobbery; it is motivated by the genuine sense that a homespun life is of more worth. Upstarts, in Greene's eyes, were not making an ascent but a descent. Baseness could have two possible senses: if Velvet's is the worst sort, Cloth Breeches' kind roots him to the earth, literally to England. But the usage of the soft target of the upstart may also have been a means for issuing wider criticism and getting away with it. Ridiculing him was a kind of under-cover attack on anyone Italianate, and that surely cut across the issue of social status. After all, there is surely an intimation that those promoted for 'Italian deuices' will not just be *paruenus*. Greene would not have been so naïve as to think that they alone aped foreign ways, and that established nobles and gentlemen were not susceptible in the least. Indeed, Velvet Breeches claims to have already transformed English gentlemen, working his way into the heart of the establishment. The rot has gone far.⁴²

Essentially, of course, even the partial exemption of the established nobles and gentry from their critique, is inadequate because they fail to provide us with a positive vision of the use of fine clothes. Indeed there is something rather thin about Cloth Breeches' claim to respect genuine status distinctions expressed in dress when none of the worthy characters that appear throughout Greene's prose drama uphold them, even when they are entitled to. When, for instance, the knight, esquire and the honest English gentleman are proposed as jury members to try the case, Velvet Breeches fumes against them because, among other reasons, they are

⁴¹ Greene 1592a, sig. B3^v.

⁴² Greene 1592a, sig. B3^v.

content with 'homely robes' and 'home spun clothes' when technically they could have aspired to 'better'. By not aspiring to 'better', they were rooting themselves in an authentic national tradition of dress, and their life-style, being honest, humble and hospitable was in harmony with this. The narrator, far from being a neutral judge, affirms their way of life immediately by employing them as jury members.⁴³

If not aiming to reinstate a plain manner of dress across all estates, these authors did at least want to restate its value in the clearest possible terms, so that it was not pushed into the margins in a society increasingly caught up in luxury trade at all levels. The extended tale is like a plea for recognition that cloth at least be honoured if not worn by Englishmen of worth, regardless of rank. This for them was the classic way of being English which transcended both time and class. The personage of Cloth is thus not an anti-establishment figure, precisely because he is at the roots of the establishment. In Greene's *Quip* the favourable opinion of the jury gives his position in the country all the security of the law. On the basis that he has been 'in *Diebus illis* a companion to kings, an equal with the nobilitie a friende to gentlemen and yeomen', they decide for him, and in language which allows of no qualification, 'appoint him for euer to bee resident'.⁴⁴ He is subversive and conservative at one and the same time.

THE MATERIALS OF IDENTITY

It is time to consider more closely the question of material – its provenance, texture, manufacture and colour – and how that came to be invested with meanings. The regard in which simple cloth is held is primarily due to the fact that the industry was unimpeachably native and definitively established.⁴⁵ England had been a major producer of cloth throughout the middle ages: it represented home industry in the dual sense of being domestic and national, and so could never be accused of being a newfangled fabric.⁴⁶ There is a deep economic conservatism behind the defence of traditional dress. The kersie that has been mentioned was a thick, warm, comfortable cloth, an innovation of the Middle Ages and named after a village in Suffolk.⁴⁷ Having these resources to

⁴³ Greene 1592a, sig. E1^r.

⁴⁴ Greene 1592a, sig. F4^r.

⁴⁵ Upon on the various meanings that may be attached to fabrics see Kuchta 1993, p. 242.

⁴⁶ Lockyer 2005, p. 148.

⁴⁷ Greene 1592a, sigs. B1^r, D1^r valorises kersie. Kerridge 1985, p. 5 gives details of this fabric.

hand was not considered an accident. For Philoponus, the principal interlocutor of *The Anatomie*, it is in the way of being a decree of the Lord that 'every country should be content with their owne kinde of attire'.⁴⁸ There was a divine mandate for the usage of native materials.

Traditionalists also made a great point of boasting about the texture and durability of native cloths, what one might call the pragmatics of apparel. As has been seen from many of the examples, simple homespun attire was associated with a variety of functions: it was not beneath a King on festal day, and at the same time was a 'carters weed [...] fit for husbandry' and more besides.⁴⁹ Such attire fitted one out for ritual ceremony and also for the active life of the producer. Moreover, cloth was adapted to English seasonal changes, being '[l]ight for the were, meete for al sort of weather'.⁵⁰ Stubbes was firmly of the opinion that the English wools, frieze, rugs (stout woollen cloths), and kerseys were handsomer, and warmer than anything from abroad: the foreigners, he claims, themselves are aware of this, so these stuffs are in demand elsewhere. He turned the table on the vogue for exotic 'trifles', saying in characteristically grudging fashion that the continentals 'are not to be blamed' for wearing silks and velvets because they do not have 'any other kinde of clothing to couer themselues withal'.⁵¹ Ironically, in certain cases, it seemed that necessity abroad was the mother of luxury: foreigners were to be pitied because they *had* to wear soft materials. Stubbes was sure that the English had no need to lower themselves to the bonds of such degradation, no compunction to deck themselves out in the dubious trappings of material finery.

Native cloths also conserved the balance between practicality and a perfectly satisfactory comeliness. It represented a kind of sartorial golden mean. This is patent in Harrison's nostalgic description of the 'fine carsie [kersey] hosen' and 'the meane slop' of the historic Englishman: the good quality trouser and the rather poorer quality tunic balance each other out, as it were, guarding against the height of excess by adhering to the principle of moderation. Not only the clothes themselves, but the Englishman himself ideally occupied the ground between the 'fine' and the 'meane'.⁵² The cause of moderation could unite people on both ends of the spectrum in the Civil War period. Scott, a radical, was convinced that if a critical

⁴⁸ Stubbes 1595, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Greene 1592a, sigs. D1^r, B3^r.

⁵⁰ Thynne 1841, p. 10.

⁵¹ Stubbes 1595, p. 10. [Terilo] 1604, sig. C^v comments that sheeps' russet does not stain, and is therefore more practical.

⁵² Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

mass cultivated moderation in habit, 'our Broad-clothes would in short time fret out their Silkes and Velvets' and all would be restored, thus envisaging a cultural revolution in the original sense of coming back to the point from where it all started.⁵³ Nor were all royalists defenders of flamboyantly-dressed cavalier types. The crude stereotypes in no way reflect the reality. Brathwaite's gentleman would shape 'his coat to his cloth', and scorn 'as much to be beholden' in sartorial matters 'as to be a Gally-slave'.⁵⁴ Peacham in the circumstances of 1641 which would have lent particular weight to his words, espoused 'a middle, plain and decent garbe, which is best, and most to be commended'.⁵⁵ Plainness was a value which could transcend civil war dichotomies.

The other advantage of cloth was that it could be worn as it was without any extra processes beyond the necessary cutting and fitting. There was a historic association here too. Simplicity of design was a reality of the medieval era when the country's technical textile expertise was relatively rudimentary. Although England was the 'European outpost for the raw material of cloth production', it lacked knowledge of elaborate procedures of dyeing and finishing.⁵⁶ In prizing lack of design, one was in fact setting oneself in the context of a national tradition, or rather the *lack* of a tradition. The description of the 'plaine paire of Cloth bréeches', for example, includes no mention of the trimmings or embroidery that were so characteristic of his antagonist. Instead, a particular point is made of the fact that they were 'without either welt or garde', and that they were 'straight to the thigh'. What such writers are doing is sizing up this character by absence, by what he does not have as much as by what he does; but they read it so that the fact of being 'without' is a boast, that to be 'but of cloth' is a source of pride.⁵⁷ The frontispiece to Greene's *Quip* illustrates something of what he had in mind. There the character, appearing mysteriously reunited to a body, is dressed as one would expect: loose jerkin roughly-belted, and breeches open to the knee.⁵⁸ The illustration was often subsequently used in related contexts and Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas have

⁵³ [Scott] 1622, p. 84.

⁵⁴ Brathwaite 1630, sig. Nnn^r.

⁵⁵ Peacham 1641, pp. 26–27.

⁵⁶ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 76.

⁵⁷ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^r; Thynne 1841, p. 10.

⁵⁸ See Figure 1. The frontispiece to the 1592 editions and again to the 1606 and 1635 editions is more satisfactory than the 1620 and 1622 ones. In the latter case, the difference between the two characters is less pronounced.

affirmed in relation to one of these that Cloth's garments would have been worn at the time only by 'very humble folk.'⁵⁹

Colour as well as style came to be imbued with national meaning. This is a subject whose history has been notoriously under-written although recent studies by Michel Pastoureau have begun to historicise it successfully.⁶⁰ The Renaissance and post-Renaissance world does not give rise to the easy national colour associations made possible by the rise of the flag as popular national symbol in the late eighteenth century; nevertheless, we can point to a preference among English writers of this period for sober shades of dress in keeping with the 'natural' colours of the country. Harrison, for example, gave the Englishman a choice of brown, blue, or puke for his coat, gown and cloak. The brown referred to the undyed wool from black sheep, otherwise known as 'sheep's russet'. For many, this colour was the very touchstone of national worthiness: not surprisingly, the nameless worthy Englishmen of the past described by Stubbes and Joseph Hall wore it, as did Fuller's yeoman: '*He wears russet clothes, but makes golden payment*'.⁶¹ In Gervase Markham's treatise on the English husbandman, he specified that it was not the 'silken scorne' but the 'plaine russet Husbandman' that he wrote about, suggesting that this man did more for the 'kingdomes generall profit' than the other.⁶² Dyeing with woad or, after 1580, with woad and indigo would have produced the kinds of blue that are advocated both by Harrison and Greene. At the time, Suffolk was particularly well-known for its dyed-in-the-wool true blues such as 'sad blue, blue, azure, watchet, plunket, and huling' in descending order of intensity.⁶³ But blue was socially freighted also: choosing it pulled against the contemporary logic that it was not a gentleman's colour, having come to be associated more with serving men.⁶⁴ Made from galls and coppers, puke would have made for bluish-black woollen cloth which again was sober rather than flamboyant.

Having dyed the Englishman's outer garments in very homely colours, Harrison could permit somewhat more chromatic interest in the doublet.

⁵⁹ Cunnington and Lucas 1967, p. 29. For other occurrences of this illustration see, for example, Crimsal, Richard (1640) *A pleasant new dialogue: or, The discourse between the serving-man and the husband-man*, and frontispiece of Anon (1642) *A True Relation of the Late Hurliburly at Kingston upon Thames, A Pleasant New Dialogue between the Serving Man and the Husbandman*.

⁶⁰ Pastoureau c.2001, 2008.

⁶¹ Holinshed 1587, p. 172; Stubbes 1595, p. 28; [Hall] 1598, p. 48; Fuller 1642, p. 116.

⁶² Markham 1613, sig. A^r.

⁶³ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^r. Kerridge 1985, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Cunnington and Lucas 1967, p. 167.

That said, he was careful to balance its tawniness with the qualification that it must be 'sad', meaning in this context gravity and constancy rather than melancholy. He drew on another connotation: tawny was associated in the Middle Ages with the life of the humble.⁶⁵ If he donned velvet, it must be black; and we get the same impression that any 'comelie silke' he approves of will be subdued in shade. Black was very much in vogue amongst European elites, had been so indeed since merchants in the Italian states took to wearing it in the fourteenth century, and later, it came to be associated with the Spanish Habsburgs in their golden age, but Harrison is not endorsing it because it happens to be in the fashion, but because it is a fitting shade for his Englishman independently of any fashion at all.⁶⁶ This comment is of a piece with his respect for the English merchant class that we have remarked upon earlier. They could be said to have cultivated conspicuously inconspicuous clothing: wearing black was a fashion but also an anti-fashion. Yet, there were powerful foreign examples which were obviously influencing thought on the subject, although English commentators would like to believe themselves to be spontaneous. The Venetians and the Dutch could be said to have developed the phenomenon of 'merchant black.' The Dutch we have already mentioned.⁶⁷ Long before that, the Venetian mercantile class, forbidden to wear aristocratic scarlet, had chosen this restrained way of expressing their status. Peacham had praise for Venetian laws which ensured that upper garments should be of 'plaine black'.⁶⁸ Dutch example was the easiest to invoke because of a shared Protestantism, but the quarrelsome relationship of Venice to Rome (the city was under papal interdict in 1606–7) made it easier for the English to praise. Naturally, the Spanish influence, although existent, is rarely remarked upon and never acknowledged in this regard: that would be anathema (Peacham is indeed singular in praising their constancy of attire).⁶⁹ In general, they have to find other ways of endorsing the usage of black.

How much this desire for sobriety of hue was part of what Pastoureau calls a phenomenon of Protestant 'chromoclasm' is difficult to say. In his recent work on the history of the colour black, he maintains that the

⁶⁵ Upon the point of melancholy see McCracken 1985, p. 523. Upon its association with the lowly see Allen 1936, p. 89.

⁶⁶ Holinshed 1587, p. 172; Pastoureau c2001, p. 96.

⁶⁷ See above pp. 88–89.

⁶⁸ Peacham 1641, p. 28. This refers to a more general custom, rather than specific legislation.

⁶⁹ Peacham 1622, p. 204. Studying court portraits, Smuts claims that in the 1610s, many courtiers took to wearing black and abandoned brocade in imitation of Spanish sartorial *gravitas*. See Smuts 1987, pp. 101–04.

Protestant code was ‘almost entirely constructed around a black-gray-white axis.’⁷⁰ With its more elaborate liturgies, clerical vestments, its polychrome sculptures and cultivation of art, it could be argued that Catholicism espoused and celebrated colour in a way that Protestants, as a general rule, did not. Undoubtedly, this religious dimension weighed more strongly with some commentators than with others. Harrison had espoused Protestantism fully, and certainly the call for courtiers to declare their true colours was made most forcefully by Thomas Scott, whose Protestant sympathies invariably tended in a radical direction. That said, the colour he actually recommended was military scarlet, not homely russet, so although the ideal was certainly monochrome, we cannot accuse him of renouncing vividness altogether. Unlike some other critics, he did not confine himself to abuse, but actually pushed for reformation. Playing on the dual significance of the word bravery, he affirmed that

‘it were bravery [...] worthy of a courtier [...] to adorne himself with domestique ornaments, banishing those [...] Butterflies [silk-bows] from his eares and elbowes, who durst buzze about him contrarie perswasion: and whilst hee seeth the *Italian*, *French* and *Spaniard* come in Silkes, to incounter these with scarlet cloth; those *English* braueries, as our Ancestours had wont [...] to do.’⁷¹

By some linguistic slippage, ‘bravery’ had come to signify its exact opposite in one of its usages since the 1560s, and Scott obviously wants to expose to ridicule that sense of superficial pomp and finery and bring courtiers back to its original.⁷² He also opens up a new way for us to think of identity when he talks in terms of a persuasion. Of what persuasion are these so-called Englishmen if everything about them speaks other than what they are? His point is that to be distinct, they must renounce such fancy wear like the men of the past had done.

What writers have been doing in arguing for plainness of attire has been to restate what they saw as permanent national values in a time of rapid and even alarming change. They are seeking to forge an image of true English masculinity, revealed not concealed by his person. Whether they really expected to make a significant impact on the *mœurs* of the day is rather harder to say. The story that was told was never exactly a

⁷⁰ Pastoreau 2001, p. 100; Pastoreau 2008, p. 124.

⁷¹ Scott 1622, p. 84.

⁷² The roots of this duality are in the Italian where *bravo* meant brave, gallant and fine at once. English received this sense through the French in the later sixteenth century. *OED*.

comfortable one: the strong sense of the passing of an old order and the confident insolence of the new made a degree of pessimism inevitable. Just how much so was revealed in a most disturbing way at the conclusion of Thynne's *Debate*. When the jury had withdrawn to weigh up the relative merits of the two breeches, the matter was almost at once taken out of legal hands by the appearance of six military men who advanced on Cloth Breeches and, calling him a 'weede of lowlines', proceeded to tear him apart 'peece by peece'. The destruction was complete, for '[n]ot so much as the codpeece was exempt'. Given the symbolic identity of this character, in destroying him, they were tearing apart the visible representation of English identity, and although the violence is imaginary – being merely a 'dream' of the author's – and the tone supposedly comic, it is a graphic reminder to us that there were very real anxieties over the future of traditional modes of dress and, by extension, traditional modes of being English.⁷³

A WORLD OF FASHIONS

The mirror dimension to the construction of national identity through clothes was the attack on outlandish fashions. Critics could and did voice opposition to the new fashions upon many grounds – moral, social, sexual, and indeed – as occurred pre-eminently in the symbolic dress divisions of the Civil War period – political and religious. Questions of Englishness were not aloof from these considerations; rather they seeped through them, constituting a base to which the debate often returned and from which it drew particular strength. The sources portray a veritable riot of new garments and new styles in the Englishman's closet. Many make a point of reeling off long dismissive lists of items so as to emphasise the bewildering eclecticism of it all. The *Chronicles* breathlessly run through the 'Spanish guise', 'French toies', 'high Alman fashion' 'Turkish maner' that Englishmen took to with eagerness, as well as the 'Morisco gowns, the Barbarian sléeues, the mandilion worne to Collie weston ward [crookedly] and the short French breeches'. That the borrowings are not even confined to the conventional culprits – the three Romance countries – indicated just how far astray he has gone in his craving for style.⁷⁴ There is a very familiar ring to Portia's complaint about her English

⁷³ Thynne 1841, pp. 61–64.

⁷⁴ Holinshed 1587, p. 172. The mandilion was a sleeveless jacket, worn by common folk, used as livery in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Harrison was the first to write

suitor in *The Merchant of Venice*: that he has his doublet from Italy, his hose from France, his bonnet from Germany, and his behaviour from everywhere does not surprise us in the least.⁷⁵ If that was material for a laugh and no more, there was more acidity in Henry Fitzgeffrey's satiric depiction of the gallant as constituting a bewildering 'world of fashions' in his very person, his boots speaking Spanish to his Scottish spurs, his suit cut in the French way, and all in all, scorning '*plaine dealing* at his heeles', heels precisely which were high according to the dictates of the day. The ultimate irony is reserved for the final couplet however.

No! In his *Habite* better vnderstand,
Hee is of *England* by his *Yellow Band*.⁷⁶

Far from his band 'discovering' him to be truly English, by 1618, the colour yellow had been utterly stigmatised as the most un-English of hues, denoting Catholicism, treachery, and a host of other unnatural vices besides.⁷⁷

Apart from the intention to ridicule, what lies behind the recitation of these lists? Firstly, they vividly capture the type's inability to stand alone. This 'world of fashion' does not possess himself. He is dispersed rather than collected, a mosaic of jarring incompatibilities. To understand the full resonance of this depiction, it needs to be interpreted alongside contemporary ideas about gender, in light of the fact that 'an idealised masculinity [was] equated with positive values of self-sufficiency'.⁷⁸ Imitation ran counter to this, suggesting that the Englishman was a dependent creature, that his way of being was essentially a servile one. 'O *England*,' writes Brathwaite, addressing young gentlemen in particular 'how much art thou growne unlike thy selfe? When disvaluing thy own forme, thou deformest thy selfe by borrowing a plume of every Country, to display thy pie-coloured flag of vanity?' We are touching on some interesting points here. England is personified as having 'innate' form, a shape which it is deforming and devaluing. This form, he has said, is divinely given. Breaking it is

Colleyweston into the language. Sharp 1968, pp. 279–300. *OED* sub Colleyweston, 2. Collie Weston is a small village in Northamptonshire.

⁷⁵ Shakespeare 2002, I.2, p. 296. Lodge 1596, p. 35 is another example: 'Who is this with the Spanish hat, the Italian ruffe, the French doublet, the Muffes cloak, the Toledo rapier, the Germane hose, the English stocking, & the Flemish shoe?' It is the returned traveller.

⁷⁶ [Fitzgeffrey] 1618, sigs. F1^v, F2^r. The French set the style in heels in the seventeenth century, although he apparently is referring to a Polish style here. Fairholt 1846, p. 294, n. 1. Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 167.

⁷⁷ See below pp. 115–117.

⁷⁸ Rublack 2002, pp. 2–3.

like breaking one's first faith, one's first love. His contemporaries are all too keen to acquire an 'adulterate shape'.⁷⁹

The effect of frequent enumerations of foreign garments is also to provoke the reader into turning the question back on itself: why should the Englishman need to copy others? It is surely more proper for him to be his own person and dress in his own way. Appositely, Peacham in *The truth of our times* mused seriously on why 'our *English*' had not 'wit' enough to invent fashions, but instead were constantly seeking inspiration from France. From there had come the slashed doublets, half shirts, pickadillies, long tapered breeches, spangled garters, periwigs, and all types of foolery 'unknowne to our manly forefathers'.⁸⁰ Although he is factually wrong about some of the attributions, he is summing up wholesale cultural hybridity. Their fellow countrymen should not need to look abroad. If the lists flag up the nets of dependence in which the Englishman is enmeshed, they also serve to expose the extent of his interior fragmentation. Joseph Hall satirically re-imagined the Englishman's body to 'fit' the varied provenances of his clothing. It is not just a matter of a French hat, an Italian ruff, German hose and Spanish doublet, rather is it:

A French head ioyn'd to necke Italian:
Thy thighs from *Germanie*, and brest fro *Spains*:
An Englishman in none, a foole in all.⁸¹

The body itself is transformed and with it, the mind. There is a suggestion in some sources indeed that such a one is simply not useful to the country. His citizenship is null and void. 'I never knew any wholly affected to follow fashions, to have beene any way usefull or profitable to the common wealth', Peacham says, whilst Rich says that they do positive harm, that they are 'preuidiciall to the whole Common wealth'.⁸² Why so? For one thing, there is a generally-held conviction that a life devoted to following fashions was a wasted life of *otium*, that it was essentially unproductive of any real societal good. For another, there is no conception that the private vice of luxury might prove publically beneficial to the economy: they are very far indeed from the thought of Bernard Mandeville. Personal vices are public vices too: over-indulgence destroys the fabric of the commonwealth. That is why their critique is so politicised in national terms: crucially, it is never just about the transgressive individual but is invariably

⁷⁹ Brathwaite 1641, pp. 10–13.

⁸⁰ Peacham 1638, pp. 73–74.

⁸¹ [Hall] 1598, p. 48.

⁸² Peacham 1638, p. 62–63, Rich 1614, p. 23.

a larger story. And it is a story with many past examples: Brathwaite, for example, points to the sorry example of Roman decay attributable in part to sumptuary excess; he also mentions Old Testament precedents.⁸³

The most strikingly politicised image of practices of sartorial imitation comes from the ever trenchant pen of Dekker. In his description of the deadly sins of London, he goes furthest of all. The slave to fashion that he depicts is both a dishonourable subject and a dismembered carcass.

For an English-mans suite is like a traitors bodie that hath beene hanged, drawne, and quartered, and is set vp in seuerall places: his Codpeece is in *Denmarke*, the collar of his Dublet and the belly in *France*: the wing and narrow sleeue in *Italy*.⁸⁴

The image is grotesque and supremely effective. As the supreme political crime punishable by hanging, drawing, and quartering, he sought to make the point that treason had a peculiar likeness to the cultural 'crime' of dressing in exotic ways. A traitor was the archetype of fragmented identity, his heart having betrayed the allegiances of his birth. The fashionable Englishman had done something of a similarly despicable nature in worldly terms. Yet, there is a difference too. Cultural treason was its own punishment. The law may not intervene but the criminal's fractured body, scattered to the four winds, is displayed for public condemnation. He is the ultimate victim of satire. There is also the potential inference in Dekker's passage that someone who would betray his country culturally could surely betray his country in other more serious ways too. In any case, such a one was felt to be a national liability.

Underpinning these passages is a vision of what it was to be a complete Englishman, although it is expressed primarily by what it is not. Another writer who is clearly moving towards the same end is William Goddard in *A neaste of vvaspes*, his second published collection of satirical epigrams. Writing from Dordrecht in the United Provinces where he was then serving, the external perspective perhaps only sharpens his caustic instincts; the subtitle nods ironically to 'some of our English bees'. Appealing to the readers' judgement in one of the brisk untitled epigrammatic verses, he urges them to

speake I praie, who ist would gess or skann
Fantasmus to be borne a Englishe man?
Hees hatted spanyard-like and bearded to

⁸³ Brathwaite 1641, p. 10–13.

⁸⁴ Dekker 1606, p. 32.

Ruft Itallyon-like; pae'd like them also
 His hose and doublets' Frenche;
 [...] *Oh hees compleate! what shall I descant an?*
*A compleate Foole: noe compleate Englishe man.*⁸⁵

As elsewhere, the enumeration of influences is used to very particular effect to deny the gallant the completeness that he ought to possess. This fixation on 'completeness' is a common one in the idiom of the period: it reflected the vogue for fashioning fully accomplished individuals in particular contexts.⁸⁶ In Goddard's denigration of *Fantasmus*, the emphasis falls on the final, damning rhyming couplet. The one thing that he really ought to be – a full-statured Englishman – he is not.

Another way of casting imitative figures into discredit was to use, as Dekker did the analogy of illegitimacy. His personification of the character of *Apishnesse* had a murky – indeed an improper background, having been 'begotten, betweene a French Tayler, and an English Court-Seamster'.⁸⁷ The implied irregularity of this liaison and the illegitimate issue to which it has given rise impugns the national and the social credit of this individual more pointedly perhaps than any other. Court values and French mores were 'matched' to produce this illegal offspring. His characterisation of *Apishness* draws on quite a tradition. The *ape* was a staple way of describing somebody who mimicked the behaviour of others. The *ape* was also said to kill off his own species with 'culling'.⁸⁸ To *ape* was therefore used frequently to signify to imitate exaggeratedly, to deck out, and to stifle one's own nature: it was a term of great opprobrium.

It is Harrison, Robert Anton, Ralph Knevet, and William Rankins who explore most fully what exactly it meant for foreign styles to 'make Apes of Englishmen'. Harrison was quite clear that it concealed the true nature of his compatriots so much so that no one is 'so disguised, as are my countrie men of England'.⁸⁹ Anton, in one of his philosophical satires directed against the corruptions of the day, described the phenomenon as a kind of

⁸⁵ Goddard 1615, Title page, sig. F1^v.

⁸⁶ On the matter of completeness, one thinks immediately of Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman* of 1622 and Walton's *Compleat Angler* of 1653. But there is a veritable efflorescence of this notion in the works of the period: Thomas De Grey (1639) *The compleat horseman*; Sir John Doddridge (1630) *A compleat parson*; Richard Elton (1650) *The compleat body of the art military*; Gervase Markham (1639) *The complete farriar* and Gervase Markham (1649) *The English house-wife containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleat woman*.

⁸⁷ Dekker 1606, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Rankins 1588, p. 2. This idea that apes killed their own offspring with spoiling them too much as also present in Charron 1608, III, p. 465.

⁸⁹ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

'transmigration' whereby Englishmen's bodies had become those of 'Zainie-Apes'.⁹⁰ The word transmigration is an interesting one, a clear sign that Anton is searching for a deeper way of describing the process of imitation. That is, one may say, his word for a radical change of identity. For Knevet, the implications for Englishmen of being 'what thou see'st', of 'all gath'rings piec'd' were of the very worst kind. Transformed into wolves and apes by Gallic fashions, they forfeited 'those old Herculian shapes / Of Vertue'. The fact that Knevet, as an educated man, tended to set his ideas in a classical frame of reference, adds authority and force to ideas which otherwise would appear quite commonplace. This is the neo-classical moralism at work once again: the prevalent vision of national man is in constant dialogue with classical modes of being.⁹¹

The most extended usage of this image is to be found in Rankins' *The English Ape, the Italian imitation, the footsteppes of Fraunce* of 1588. The title itself uncovers what Rankins regards as the nefarious circles of influence in which the naïve Englishman was enmeshed in this period. He was acutely aware of the broader contexts. The influence of the Medici dynasty had waxed high in France for decades with the presence of the powerful Queen Mother Catherine and her very Florentine entourage. This had influenced, indeed transformed fashion, cuisine, and ballet, in short all those rituals and entertainments that characterised court life. Her lavish 'magnificences' (courtly entertainment) dazzled those prepared to be dazzled and disgusted everybody else. Much of the lavishness subsequently associated with the French court thus had Florentine origins. Her arrival seemed to be the root of all this. Rankins' point is that if by the 1580s, England has decided to follow France's lead in cultural matters, then they are actually following a country which is itself no more than a lackey. They were copying a copy. The ultimate subjection was therefore to Italianate ways and habits.⁹² Far from being a simple matter, the whole country is caught in complex nets of dependence.

For Rankins, apish imitation was as much a matter of 'inward disposition' as it was of 'external habite' and this leads him to reflect deeply on what it said about the Englishman. He is adamant that it divorced him from his natural ways, and he has no hesitation in using the language of

⁹⁰ Anton 1616, p. 28.

⁹¹ Knevet 1628, sig. F2^r.

⁹² The lackey, or foot soldier, originally innocent of pejorative overtone was now coming to possess negative connotations in England as one who was servilely obsequious. Hughes 1988, p. 45. The *OED* counts the first incidence of pejoration from 1588.

physical deformity to describe his misshapen countrymen: 'blinded (with an *Italian* disguise) and disfiguring themselves (with euery French fashion), [they] corrupt their naturall manners'.⁹³ The notion of disfigurement is suggestive: if to figure is, in the understanding of the day, to 'shape oneself into a particular form', then to disfigure is to mar, to misrepresent one's natural form, to destroy the beauty of it. This is attended by a host of images of estrangement, disguise, alienation, misshapeness, bedecking and betrayal, all to show that to be apish was to be untrue to oneself at a very profound level. Such fretful words should give us pause. They are indicative of the broader contemporary fascination with the idea of 'fashioning' and 'representing' oneself in public: through them Rankins seeks to tease out the meanings given off by symbolic expressions. The practice of imitation was deemed to misrepresent the Englishman not just in his superficial appearance but in his very being. The ape of all nations could not truly be said to belong to his own.⁹⁴

There is, one could argue, a positive vision generating all Rankins' harshest strictures, a vision which draws on two general principles. First of all, his Englishness is historic and secondly, it is something to be professed. That these slavish followers would have sufficient disregard for the national past so as to want to be 'newe founde people' is therefore condemnation in itself. We have seen, earlier, the discomfort with 'rootless' characters, with those who were not grounded in the realities of their own land. This is another illustrative example of that particular mentality. Second, there is a damning indictment of him who does not seek to retain the 'perfection of his own profession'. This is not the first time we have come across the notion of Englishness as a profession, and it suggests that the action and behaviour of the mature man need to be aligned in a certain way before one can be said to be fully English. Birth, in other words, is not enough in itself. The model advocated consists in preserving historically-warranted distinctions, and above all in not being beholden to the customs of others. They need to live up to who they are.⁹⁵

As well as a profound critique of the practice of imitation, such commentators also treated of the theme of inconstancy and explored why it too went against the grain of the values an Englishman ought to enshrine. Inconstancy was another national anti-value. We need to situate this way of thinking contextually. It is a point seldom made but worth stating

⁹³ R[ankins] 1588, pp. 2, 3.

⁹⁴ R[ankins] 1588, pp. 2, 4, 13, 15.

⁹⁵ Rankins 1588, pp. 2, 5.

explicitly that the four generations from 1560 to 1650 witnessed multiple more 'generations' of fashion. It would be unwise to put a number on such 'generations', as old styles persisted and co-existed with newer styles, but suffice it to say that the male coming of age in 1560 would, if he lived to a reasonable old age, have seen great variety in mode of dress. Broadly speaking, the Tudor ('Holbein') silhouette, and the Caroline ('Van Dyck') version are utterly different in form. In between, the constant changes bewildered and alarmed. There are two preliminary questions to ask. Was 'fashion' actually happening more rapidly than heretofore or was it just a case of inflamed perceptions? It is quite possible, given increased trade, that the pace of change was indeed more rapid, in which case the critics are justified in thinking this a recent development. But it was also true that societal perceptions about the value of constancy as opposed to inconstancy were at a high, and that anything in that realm touched on a very raw nerve.

The second question to ask is how far the charge of 'inconstancy' is levelled at just the elites. Harrison does not confine his criticism to one social category, in professing disgust at 'the change and the varietie: and finallie the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees'. The unrest of the fashion scene led him to complain that 'nothing is more constant in England than inconstancie of attire'.⁹⁶ It is hard to assess how justified his judgement is, but we have, in any case, to get away from a simple dichotomy between elite and common fashions: given the reuse of materials, and the way the lower orders inherited and bought fine clothes at second or third hand, the clear-cut distinction does not stand. Clothes had multiple biographies.⁹⁷ So there is some justification to setting this phenomenon in national terms, to claim that changes affected all ranks to a greater or lesser extent. Stubbes was at one with Harrison's view, saying that no people were 'so curious in new fangles' as the English.⁹⁸ Peacham pointed out that while the rot began at court, it then moved onto the city and lastly to the countryside. In a later work, he again insisted on the extremity of the case in England, remarked upon the self-imposed nature of the phenomenon. 'But we, the Apes of *Europe*, like *Proteus*, must change our shapes every yeare, nay quarter, moneth and week, as well in our dublets, hose,

⁹⁶ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

⁹⁷ Jones and Stallybrass 2000.

⁹⁸ Stubbes 1595, p. 10; The 'new fangle' is not itself a new way of denoting a negative attitude to novelty, for it harkens back to Chaucerian usage, but it is certainly being used here in a way that gives particular emphasis to native resistance. *OED* sub newfangle, A11.

cloaks, hats, bands, boots, and what not'.⁹⁹ The language of shape-changing is reminiscent of the language of transmigration: Proteus is the god of inconstancy. Nor should we forget that there was something innately theatrical about all these changes of costume: one thereby assumed a role for the purposes of showing off, before abandoning it in favour of something 'newer' and more proclamatory.

Four main problems with inconstant behaviour can be singled out. First, it defied the Christian stoic ideal of stability which had real currency among the educated. The new man was a person of giddy impulses and habits. There was no fitting austerity in his make-up at all. Second, much like the practice of imitation, it exposed him as creature-like and dependent. Thomas Gainsford, in his commonplace book *The rich cabinet*, held the fantastic courtier to be a slave to change, 'so subiect to newfanglednes'.¹⁰⁰ Lastly, it betokened effeminacy. Wilson summed up a common way of thinking about the difference between men's and women's natures when he said that '[t]o bee borne a manchilde, declares a courage, grauitie, and constancie. To be borne a woman, declares weakenes of spirite, neshenes [sic] of body, and fikilnesse of mynde'.¹⁰¹ Women might thus be expected to be more changeable in their dress, and while still not endorsing that, it was at least in their case, a 'natural' propensity. When there are references to male fickleness however, there are implicit questions being raised about his masculinity. The other reason why the inconstancy of Englishmen in matters of dress showed up badly was because it appeared to contrast with the Spaniard and the Dutchman whose fashions remained markedly constant in form and style, as we have earlier seen. Peculiarly, the Catholic Habsburgs and the Calvinist merchants had this in common: sobriety and stability.¹⁰²

The imitative and inconstant Englishman was further problematised by the perceived sumptuousness of the trends he took to following. The habitual language used in the sources already skews the subject because the tendency is to talk about 'excess' in apparel. That is already to judge it. We may with greater objectivity refer to the phenomenon of greater elaborateness in dressing, born, according to Daniel Roche in his seminal study on the history of costume, of court civilisation in the Renaissance. It may be said that the particular political and cultural complex of the *ancien regime* privileged an aesthetic of ostentation: power needed more

⁹⁹ Peacham 1636, pp. 63–64; Peacham 1641, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ G[ainsford] 1616, p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Wilson 1553, fo. 7^v.

¹⁰² Peacham 1622, p. 204.

than ever the supplement of outward show. It was staged in the careful choice of clothes. In particular, we are interested in the male dimension of this practice for although women too participated in this aesthetic, what it meant for national man was more of a preoccupation. The tendency for elite men to dress as or more elaborately than women would last till the French Revolutionary period in many places in Europe; already, there is much resistance to it. In England, given the nature of their desirable self-image, the criticism of those who dressed 'both extravagantly and elaborately', prioritising ornamentation and display over function, was especially acute, especially as the tendencies filtered down through society.¹⁰³

It is well to give an overview of what particular fashions were read as 'excess' when transplanted into England. Franco-Burgundian hegemony had had a definitive influence early on in establishing Renaissance fashions along flamboyant lines, with its preference for brightly-coloured fabrics and its admittedly eccentric penchant for jags and slashings.¹⁰⁴ The Spanish Empire had taken up the flame in sartorial terms by the latter half of the sixteenth century and whatever the sobriety of its colours – especially after Philip II and his court took to wearing black (princely black, as Pastoureau calls it)¹⁰⁵ – the forms of the peascod doublet and the farthingale which they gave Europe were nothing less than grandly conceived. Clothes became monuments in textile. They were staged creations, a vital part of the exercise of power. From the reign of Louis XIII onward (1610–1643), it was France who set the tone, and what the falling lace collar and high riding boots lacked in monumental splendour, was more than compensated for by the negligent grace with which they were worn, and the perceptible femininity of even masculine dress. It was the age of sartorial *sprezzatura* and we have already seen how ambiguously this was regarded. From the point of view of a history of ideas, the study of a dominant and subordinate aesthetic is revealing. It may be said at once that England's power in dictating fashion was, at this time, minimal. It did not initiate any of the grand fashion statements. It is thus no surprise that English critics, watching the unfolding of these influences and their trickle-down effect, tended to equate foreignness of whatever kind with

¹⁰³ Roche 1994, p. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Bruhn 1955, p. 28. Kipling 1977 provides a general discussion of the Burgundian origins of the English Renaissance. The fashion for jags spread from Burgundy at the start of the fifteenth century. Slashings meanwhile were first used by Swiss soldiers in 1477, after a victory rout which consisted in patching up their own ragged clothes with the banners and materials left by the defeated Burgundian army. Peacham 1638, pp. 70–72 gives an account of this incident. Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 324.

¹⁰⁵ Pastoureau 2008, pp. 101–103.

sartorial exuberance. The attire of the affectate ‘speakes *French or Italian*’, Overbury pointed out : it was as a foreign tongue.¹⁰⁶

As well as being construed as foreign, the habitual collocation ‘excess in apparel’ possessed complementary layers of meaning. Firstly, such a concept came packaged with overtones of the irrational, the uncontrollably expressive, and even the feminine: it was something of a commonplace of the day that women being ‘less rational and more emotional than men tended to dangerous extremes’.¹⁰⁷ Here then we are in the realm of what critics saw as fantastic: wildly exuberant display disconnected from function and utility. The collocation also sums up a sense of moral repugnance; for Ascham, another way of talking about it was ‘outrage in apparel’.¹⁰⁸ In the early-modern usage of the word ‘outrage’, there is not yet the mild sense of decent people being offended by a transgressive action. What Ascham means is, in fact, much stronger than that. An outrage means acting out of normal reasonable bounds; it can also mean an act of gross violence against society. The very fierceness of the image is of interest: the implication is, as it was in Dekker’s image of the traitor, that of cultural criminality. But there is yet a further and, I would argue, more fundamental connotation without which allusions to excess do not make sense. To talk about something as excessive is already to have made a value judgement about what one conceives the just measure to be. So the notion of excess of apparel presupposes the prior existence of a concept of the mean and of the moderate Englishman who existed at least in the imagination, as one who conserved a balance in his appearance between the shabby and the luxurious by dressing simply but appropriately according to his station.

Nowhere is the notion of riotous and ridiculous extravagance more vividly captured than in Gascoigne’s description of what happens when one tried to ‘English’ exotic fashions: ‘we make an English footeball of Spanish Codpeece, an English Petycoate of an Itallian waste, an English Chytterling [linen frills] of a *French ruffe*’.¹⁰⁹ His point was twofold. Foreign fashions *could* never be fully nationalised: no matter how much they try to ‘translate’ the garments for domestic use, the attempt was laughable and even more excessive, causing them to lose all sense of proportion. The other implication is, of course, that foreign fashions *should* never be nationalised. The days were when the English had mocked at such garments, he

¹⁰⁶ Overbury 1615, sig. C5^v.

¹⁰⁷ Scodel 2002, p. 145.

¹⁰⁸ Ascham 1570, sig. hi^v.

¹⁰⁹ Gascoigne 1576a, sig. Ciii^v.

claimed, accounting them 'vyle and vyllanous', now they had surpassed the excesses elsewhere. Gascoigne's main point in this short piece, entitled *A delicate Diet, for daintiemouthde Droonkardes*, is to rail against habits of excessive drinking which were also inculcated by the example of foreigners – i.e. the German and the Dutch – but his image of fashionable decadence is a testimony to his belief that no bad habit went alone. Sartorial excess was part of a wider culture of self-indulgence and moral falling-off.¹¹⁰

Naturally, there were some garments, materials and designs which stood out as more excessive than others, and consequently came in for a larger share of criticism and ridicule. Particularly worthy of note was the attention paid to styles of breeches. The centrality of this garment to the construction of masculinity was inevitably vital. In this period, as the trunk hose receded into a short skirt-like garment, the breeches became a more prominent item of apparel, although confusingly, these were still sometimes referred to as hose. Stubbes weighs in against three variants which were in vogue in the 1580s: firstly the French hose which came in two kinds – very round, and very short and narrow, all with extra panes and ornamentation.¹¹¹ These first incidentally were what Peacham would recall with some sarcasm when looking back at the vogues of Elizabethan dress, describing them as 'round breeches not much unlike Saint *Omers* onions' which, combined with long stockings, were convenient for people like the Earl of Leicester and those who wanted to show off the handsomeness of their leg.¹¹² Next to be singled out for criticism by Stubbes were the Gally hose – otherwise known as the Gally-Gascoignes, which were very large and wide with slashing, their name indicating their provenance in Gascony. Lastly, it was the turn of the Venetian breeches to come under attack. They were a popular classic of their kind, being much like knickerbockers. Pear-shaped, their general bagginess was gathered in at the waist and tapered beneath the knee into ties of silk.¹¹³

It is plausible to presume that the kind of breeches which serve as a synecdoche for the Italianate Englishman in the trio of Elizabethan sources already examined were meant to be Venetians. They match the Italian origins of the character and they had moreover come into vogue around the year 1570, the time in which we have established that Thynne composed his satire. His comment to the effect that 'its furniture dyd so

¹¹⁰ Gascoigne 1576a, sigs. Ciii^v-Ciiii^r.

¹¹¹ Stubbes 1595, p. 30.

¹¹² Peacham 1638, p. 66.

¹¹³ Stubbes 1595, p. 30.

exceede' conjures up the lavishness of such a garment.¹¹⁴ Indeed it was customary for them to be 'laied on also with rewes of lace, or gardes'.¹¹⁵ That very same year indeed Ascham had complained of the 'huge hose' fashionable at court and elsewhere.¹¹⁶ The Venetians continued to be in vogue until the mid-1590s, knowing the height of their popularity in the 1580s. Interestingly, the two frontispieces associated with different editions of Greene's *Quip* present two different kind of breeches.¹¹⁷ Although the images are rather crudely executed, they are in their way quite revealing. Many of the other items of apparel belonging to the florid courtier – his high plumed hat, cartwheel ruff, the star-shaped spurs, and puffed doublet – a peascod one in the first illustration, known as the Spanish body – are common to both, allowing for distinction of drawing. There the resemblance ends because in the editions of 1592, the embodied character is clearly wearing Venetian breeches tapered to below the knee. This picture was re-used again in the 1635 edition because by then, the French-inspired cloak-bag or full oval breeches had become common in England and their resemblance to the earlier Venetians was marked.¹¹⁸ However, the editions of 1620 and 1622, by contrast, portray a man in shorter paned and slashed trunk hose with canions: this style knew its zenith in the period from 1570 to 1620 and was then just going out of fashion.¹¹⁹ Although the latter image is not exactly faithful to the letter of the text, it keeps the spirit: hose of this kind is over-sumptuous. It is not without some irony that we notice that the costumes of the story have become actual 'people' in the illustrations. It was of the highest significance to the works that the breeches were disembodied: the clothes spoke for themselves, the ultimate sign of what Jones and Stallybrass call the 'animatedness of clothes'. The drawings only made the message more obvious still.¹²⁰

The depiction of star-shaped spurs on Velvet Breeches in the 1592 frontispiece, although seemingly a small detail, draws attention to the matter of footwear, and will be a fundamental reason why the cavalier-type is so called. A trend took hold in the early 1600s of wearing spurs over one's boots when walking rather than just confining them to riding. This led to a swaggering stride, with an accompanying jangling sound. With the

¹¹⁴ Thynne 1841, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Stubbes 1595, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Ascham 1570, fos. 21^v–22^r.

¹¹⁷ See figure 1.

¹¹⁸ On the so-called cloak bag breeches see Willett and Cunnington 1963, pp. 47–8.

¹¹⁹ Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 2. In Rich's narrative, however, the breeches must have bodies in some sense because there is mention of their hair and ears. R[ich] 1593, sig. Br^r.

exaggerated weight on the leg, this kind of gait was inevitable.¹²¹ In the clashes between London citizens and gentlemen officers in December 1641 when the labels 'roundhead' and 'cavalier' were first flung around in the sense that would become most memorable to history, it is important to realise just how weighted the latter already was with meanings.¹²² Originally the word for horseman had been adopted into English as *cavalero* from the Spanish, but in the late sixteenth century, it took on the form of the French word *cavalier*, acquiring in the process a more extended meaning of a gentleman trained to arms. From about 1600, it began to be used to denote the 'roistering, swaggering gallant', so targeted by the satirists.¹²³ It was not just that he was a horseman, it was that he acted as if he was always on a horse, above the multitudes. Samuel Rowlands was a key voice in expressing this shift: he it was who announced in the very opening words of his first collection of satires that '*Hymours*, is late crown'd king of Caualeeres'. Among his features was an inability to divorce himself from a horseman's wear in everyday life.

Sir gall-Iade, is a Horse man e'ry day,
His Bootes and Spurres and Legges do neuer part.

Further on, in a later epigram on the gallant, he contrasts the jangling sound such a one makes in striding along with the homely bell-wearing traditional dancers of England, and laments '[h]ow rare his spurres do ring the morris-daunce'. He was far removed indeed from the traditions of his own country.¹²⁴

Ironically, it has been suggested that the wearing of boots indoors was made fashionable by Prince Charles who needed to walk with callipers concealed inside his boots to help minimise the effect of childhood rickets. In that sense, it was a more English style than critics were prepared to admit. It is true that the French influence was key in the evolution of boot-style and by the 1620s, one finds Louis XIII's court setting the trend for the wide slouchy 'cavalier' boot and the lighter *ladrines*. The slouchy turn-downs on the tops of these boots became known as French falls.¹²⁵ About them, the poet Matthew Stevenson would say:

¹²¹ On the cavalier swagger see Turner-Wilcox 1948, pp. 104–105. Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 59 and Yarwood 1961, p. 141 date the practice of wearing boots for purposes other than riding to the 1610s onwards, but based on the evidence I consider below, I set this rather before, to the early 1600s.

¹²² Upon the subject of these labels in 1641 see Williams 1990, p. 88.

¹²³ *OED* sub *cavalier*, 2a.

¹²⁴ [Rowlands] 1600, sigs. A2^r, A7^v, C3^v.

¹²⁵ Goddard 1615, sig. F^v.

I Never drew on a compleater Boot;
The blushing top makes me top gallant.¹²⁶

The stockings underneath were so fine that they were protected by frothy lace-edged boothose which itself became something of a statement. In the picture of the *English Antick*, these are very visible, while the commentary would have it that they are ‘as long as a paire of shirt sleeves, double at the ends like a ruffe band.’¹²⁷ The sentiment was not at all far removed from the opinion that had been expressed in Stubbes’ *Anatomie* many years previously. The wholly superlative nature of their design led Spudeus to say that they ‘plainely argue the vertiginy, and instabilitie of their more then phantasticall braines’.¹²⁸

The type of fabric was also an immediate indication of provenance, for just as cloth proclaimed itself to be English, velvets, silks and taffetas were self-evidently not. Whenever these fabrics are mentioned therefore, their status as imports is understood: it becomes another mark against them. Demand for silk was the largest of all: the imports of silk fabrics increased from 3.3% to 5% of all imports in the period from 1559 to 1622, while imports of raw silk went from 1% to 7.5 % in the same time-span.¹²⁹ Particularly desired items were the extremely expensive silk stockings which remained in demand throughout the period. We are unsurprised to learn that Velvet Breeches is accompanied by stockings of ‘pure Granado silke’, appropriately enough because the city of Granada experienced a boom in silk production in the 1500s. Thynne immediately distanced himself from such excess by commenting that ‘Such [stockings] as came neuer upon legges of myne; their cooler cleane contrary vnto mylke’.¹³⁰ In Rich’s version, Silk Stockings is a character referred to by the cheated mercer, as a ‘byrde of the same feather’ as Velvet, given over to misdeeds in earthly life.¹³¹ Velvet’s main association in the sixteenth century was with outposts in Italy, particularly Milan and Genoa; its manufacture was also spreading to Lyon, Germany and Holland. Velvet Breeches thus proclaims his provenance before uttering a word.¹³²

¹²⁶ Stevenson 1645, p. 73.

¹²⁷ [Anon.] 1646, *The Picture of an English Antick*.

¹²⁸ Stubbes 1595, p. 35.

¹²⁹ Levy Peck 2005, p. 85. Admittedly, James I did try to introduce the silk industry but not very successfully; weaving imported silk was the only success story of the period. Levy Peck 2005, pp. 1–2, 85–111.

¹³⁰ Thynne 1841, p. 9. See also Greene 1592a, sig. B1^r.

¹³¹ R[ich] 1593, sigs. C2^r–C3^r.

¹³² Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 387.

It is Philip Stubbes, however, who probes most deeply into the impact that such luxurious materials are having on the robustness of English masculinity. There are few exotic fabrics that he fails to mention in his comprehensive tirade but it is specifically after he has deplored the shirts made of camerick, lawn and holland that he talks of Englishmen being transnated by 'this their curiosity, and nicenes in apparell'. This process of mutation is, for him, at once physical and psychological. As regards the former, the note in the margin reads 'Nicenesse of apparel maketh the bodie tender', and we are to understand that the textural softness of clothes detracts from the physical hardiness of the person.¹³³ The latter is suggested by the reflection that 'wee haue brought our selues into such a pusillanimity and effeminate condition, as we may rather seeme nice dames, and waggish girles, than puissant, valorous and hardy men'.¹³⁴ The Englishman had lost his mettle, he had gone 'soft'. If, as Laura Levine affirms, femaleness was the 'default position, the thing one [was] always in danger of slipping into, then how one dressed was one of the most slippery slopes', especially when it was a matter of wearing silks and satins.¹³⁵

The association of intricacy of design with foreignness fitted into an established groove. England had not developed sophisticated techniques of finishing cloth in the middle ages, but tended rather to send raw cloth to the Low Countries and Italy, and then re-import the finished product. This began to change in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but principally because waves of Protestant immigrants from the Low Countries and France brought with them advanced textile manufacturing skills.¹³⁶ So even still, there were ample grounds for those who were keen to prove that these sophisticated processes were neither native nor natural, and not even the Protestantism of these immigrants could attenuate hostility. The design of Velvet Breeches, for instance, is elaborately detailed. It has panes of 'Neapolitane stuffe' drawn out with the best 'Spanish satine' and is elaborately embroidered – 'maruellous curiously ouer wipt'.¹³⁷ With the mention of the silk lace, cloth of gold, and silver which is used to welt (reinforce border), to gard, (add an ornamental trimming), to edge and to

¹³³ Stubbes 1595, p. 28.

¹³⁴ Stubbes 1595, p. 29. The older edition contains the phrase 'puissant agents, or manlie men'. See Stubbes 1583, sigs. G^v–Gij^r.

¹³⁵ Breitenberg 1996; Levine 1994, p. 8.

¹³⁶ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 76; Kerridge 1985, p. 67 notes that the 1560s was a peak time for immigration from the Netherlands and that they defused textile arts on an 'unprecedented scale'. In the 1580s it was the time of the Huguenot immigration. For remarks on the new draperies see Coleman 1977, p. 80.

¹³⁷ Greene 1592a, sig. B1^r. See Thynne 1841, p. 10 for similar description.

face this garment, we are clearly in the realm of the superfluous.¹³⁸ The costume – and we must constantly bear in mind that here the costume *is* the character – manifests in every stitch the overly involved processes that went into making it and therefore the *artificioso*, the artfulness of the construction. We are also being fed the insinuation that there is something innately crafty about design. When Thynne observes that the gold lace was ‘ful craftely engined’, it is not simply in the sense of it being finely wrought. Crafty had been often used in a pejorative way since Chaucer.¹³⁹

The capacity to go to excess lay also in the selection of colour. This area is criss-crossed by a multiplicity of vectors – some age- and character-related as Grant McCracken has shown, others pertaining to status, office and heraldry, and all of them dependent on what was available in terms of the dyeing of textiles at any one stage.¹⁴⁰ As regards the national vector, this is primarily an anti-French construction. The French were an obvious target: the brilliance of the last Valois King and the Bourbons alone gives every justification for Daniel Roche to describe colour as ‘one of the principal elements of court civilisation’ during the Renaissance. In their respect, it is especially apposite.¹⁴¹ As we have already seen, the Italian merchants, the Spaniards and the Dutch tended to be more restrained. Let us focus on the 1580s, a decade in which the controversy about French colour came particularly to the fore. We know that the favourite colours of the French court then were green, violet, brown, orange, yellow, and rosy pink (*l’incarnat*), although it is often frustratingly difficult to know exactly what shade is meant. Some of these choices, especially the pink, can be seen in the anonymous picture of a ‘Ball at the Court of Henry III’ (c1580) or the ‘Wedding Ball of the Duc de Joyeuse’ (c1581).¹⁴² By all accounts, Henri III’s court was riotously polychromatic and no doubt this was, in large part, the doing of the flamboyant favourites, the *mignons* who possessed disproportionate cultural influence. Their example quickly spread. Harrison held them responsible for bringing all manner of ‘gawrish colours’ into England. Admittedly, the Tudors probably did not need much coaching, but they did need to learn the dyeing techniques or import. There are a range of objectionable ‘new’ hues, such as ‘gooseturd gréene,

¹³⁸ Greene 1592a, sig. C2^r.

¹³⁹ Thynne 1841, p. 10. *OED* sub crafty, 3.

¹⁴⁰ McCracken 1985, pp. 515–533 considers the question of clothes colour in the Tudor period in relation to the age of the wearers and also in connection with moral standing.

¹⁴¹ Roche 1994, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴² LeRoux 2000, p. 304; Boucher 1981, I, p. 342. The first picture is housed in the Museum of Rennes, the second in the Louvre.

[yellowy green] pease porridge tawnie, [yellowish-brown green], poppingaie blue [parrot blue-green], lustie gallant [light red]', all recently devised to 'please phantasticall heads' but contributing to the degeneration of the commonwealth. For him, a penchant for colour was inseparable from the sin of vanity: the French thought themselves 'the gaiest men, when they haue most diuersities of iaggess and change of colours about them', as if style could compensate for substance. Their light-headed frivolity was in contrast with the genuine merriness of Englishmen in the past.¹⁴³

After the *Chronicles*, it is more common to find a roughly-drawn distinction between the garish and the sober without too many particulars added in. Ascham does not blame an outside influence specifically, but at the same time is adamant against the wearing of 'gaurishe coolers' by even the great ones at court. With his awareness of Italy, he may well have been cognisant of the recent works on varieties of colour coming from that country.¹⁴⁴ The jolly 'light timberd Jacke a Napes' in Greene's *Quip* had his cloak daubed with 'colourd lace'; the Englishmen of the present, according to Hall, so far from being in home-spun russet as of yore are now masked in 'garish gauderie' from abroad.¹⁴⁵ The sense of lamentation is visible most of all in William Terilo's hymn to time past. We know nothing at all about Terilo except the evidence of his chronic wistfulness from this sole published work; it may be that it is a pseudonym for Nicolas Breton.¹⁴⁶ In days of yore,

Sheepes Russet would not staine
There were no greenes nor reddes:
Carnation, Crimson, yealow, blew,
Plaine people no such colours knew.¹⁴⁷

This was the prelapsarian Englishry from which they were all exiled. Whether or not it was really purer is not the point. They imagined it to be so and that is what mattered to them.

The mention of the colour yellow in the above verse leads us into the dramatic (and truly bizarre) story of its stigmatisation in seventeenth-century England. If there is one single colour that gets an anti-national

¹⁴³ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

¹⁴⁴ Ascham 1570, fo. 21^v. On the Italian treatises on colour see Allen 1936, pp. 82–83.

¹⁴⁵ Greene 1592a, sig. F3^r; [Hall] 1598, p. 48.

¹⁴⁶ See *ESTC*.

¹⁴⁷ [Terilo] 1604, sig. Cr^v. See also Taylor 1612, sig. F2^r for contrast between gaudy courtier who 'scornes with his heeles to know his russet Sire'. This last says more about the generation gap than it does about Englishness per se. Similarly Rich does not make the foreign motif at all obvious, but he thinks gaudy attire is effeminate, and endorses the example of the ancient Romans who prohibited light coloured silks in all, except players and prostitutes. Rich 1614, pp. 22, 32.

reputation in the space of 40 years, this is it. Even to say this suggests the way in which a fairly innocuous external like colour can acquire depths of meaning and symbolism in particular cultural contexts. These meanings generally prove inaccessible and inexplicable to a later age; in this case, no residual traces are left of what was once a prevalent idea. All the more so then does the subject require a very precise historical treatment. As with gesture, the meanings given off by colour are extremely contingent. Now as Jones and Stallybrass have recounted the story, it is pre-eminently a construction of the 1650s. In the new political dispensation, the colour yellow comes to represent all that was wrong in the past. A retrospective interpretation, it holds up the earlier vogue for starched saffron collars as a symbol of all that was most degenerate, foreign, effeminate, and unProtestant about the Stuart regime.¹⁴⁸

Our interest lies with the earlier texts upon which this later construction was built. The unlikely origins of the myth are to be located in a charged convergence of circumstances in 1615. The facts are simply stated. Anne Turner, a Catholic, was found guilty of contributing to the poisoning of Thomas Overbury in the Tower of London, and legendarily, she went to her execution wearing a fashionable yellow band. Not even the question mark over whether he was actually poisoned or not or her recantation of Catholicism counteracted the dramatic effect this item had in the minds of observers. The Overbury murder was an event of some note because it would appear to have implicated the Earl and Countess of Somerset, he the King's favourite and she daughter of the Catholic Howard family. What some deplored, others found novel and exciting, and the fashion for starched yellow ruffs took greater hold (although it may have done so without this incident). For critics, the distinctive collar worn by the female criminal thus became associated with a range of phenomena they wanted to distance themselves from. As the fashion developed, it was no longer uniquely associated with Anne. Both Rich and Brathwaite underlined that it was not native to England but had been brought by 'some man of little vertue' according to the former, by a returned traveller, according to the latter.¹⁴⁹ To its perceived effeminacy, was added the more traditional connotation of the colour yellow: treachery. According to Rich, 'these yellow starcht bandes shoulde bee euer best suited, with a yellowe *Coate*'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Jones and Stallybrass 2000, pp. 59–85.

¹⁴⁹ Rich 1617, p. 40; [Brathwaite] 1658, p. 156. This poem entitled 'The Ape of Fashion' (pp. 156–61) was written at an earlier point and only belatedly published according to Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 73.

¹⁵⁰ Rich 1614, p. 35.

Starch itself incidentally had acquired a Catholic connection because from 1608 to 1610, the Earl of Northampton had had a highly unpopular monopoly in the starch industry. Of course it did not even need that connection to become despised among those with Puritan leanings.¹⁵¹ The mixture of elements was particularly noxious, and Rich, ever one for his 'plain speeches', spoke for many mourners at the offensively fashionable grave of English masculinity when he reflected that 'wee haue conuerted the collar of steele to a yellow-starched-band.'¹⁵² Military excellence was no longer prized in these effete times. Thus did the colour yellow come to transcend itself and become a symbol of otherness.

Throughout it has been apparent how ideas about sartorial degeneration draw together the themes of morality, nationality and masculinity. Also being established is a clear link with freedom and independence of habit. Subjection, as revealed in the way one dressed, was construed as a repugnant way of living. If an important dimension of liberty was to be free of unwarranted influence, then the incoming modes, dictated by people who were unanswerable to any tradition within the native country were going to strike at the very heart. Unsurprisingly, this kind of language came easily to Gabriel Harvey who depicted Englishmen as 'vassals' to Lady Pleasure, Lady Courtisy, and most of all Lady Nicity.¹⁵³ The warning was even more momentous when uttered in 1622 by a very different voice, that of Thomas Scott, when he asserted primly that 'the customary subjection to any of these vices effeminates the heart of man, and prepares a State fit and supple for any other subjection, how base, dejected, or dishonorable soever it bee'.¹⁵⁴ In this way of thinking, foreign fashions were but another expression of arbitrary power and could pave the way to worse political abuses.

DRESSING THE HEAD

Changing hair-styles were also part of the domain of fashion. Moreover, because of the extraordinary metaphorical usage of the concept of headship in the period, the matter could be especially sensitive. The head was the seat of reason; a man was head of the household. How he dressed his head was considered important, even revelatory of his inner character

¹⁵¹ See, for instance, Stubbes' strong condemnation of starch, Stubbes 1583, sigs. D7^v-D8^r.

¹⁵² Rich 1617, pp. 6, 8-9.

¹⁵³ Harvey 1884, p. 97.

¹⁵⁴ [Scott] 1622, pp. 81-2.

and his ability to rule rationally. It is an excellent illustration of the politicisation of hair-styles that the civil war conflict should be divided on its basis: the closely-cropped roundheads set against the curly long-haired King's men. In truth, this distinction was not absolute: far from it, indeed. Braddick holds that there is 'no truth to the claim that you could tell a parliamentarian from a royalist on the basis of their haircut'.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, its potency as a stereotype was real. What we need to do is contextualise this story in the generations before the conflict and investigate to what extent there was a reflection on 'native' English as opposed to foreign modes of coiffure.¹⁵⁶ To what extent was national identity being invoked?¹⁵⁷

One entry into this subject is through consideration of the figure of the barber. Just like the tailor, he too was a crucial manufacturer of identity: an image-maker upon whom much depended. Of particular interest then is the appearance of this character in Greene's *Quip*. The proposal that he act as jurymen in the case between Cloth and Velvet is the occasion for the former's highly-charged denunciation of his role in transforming the Englishman. Cloth mimics the typical barber's behaviour to his fashionable clients, beginning by describing his pretentious address, full of 'fustian eloquence', 'low conge' and 'cringe with [the] knee'. It is a prelude to worse. As one might expect, the barber does not even offer to perform the 'English cut', considering it too 'base' and unsophisticated; instead his client is faced with the dazzling choice of the Italian, Spanish or French styles. The effeminate quality of all three is brought out in various ways. The Italian cut, although short and round, is 'frounst with the curling yrons'. If preferred, the Englishman can become 'like a Spanyard long at the eares, and curled like to the two ends of an old cast periwig.' Worst of all, the Englishman could be 'Frencheified with a loue-locke downe to your shoulders'.¹⁵⁸ In each of these, there is one common antipathy: curls. Why would curly hair prove so repugnant to social conservatives? Firstly, curls were, in most cases, achievable only through artifice. Secondly, curls were considered effeminate.

¹⁵⁵ Braddick 2009, p. 24.

¹⁵⁶ See for example Anon. (1641) *The Answer to the rattle-heads concerning their fictionate resolution of the round-heads*; Anon. (1641) *A Dialogve betwixt rattle-head and round-head*; Anon. (1642) *'The Round-heads race' added to The Distractions of our times wherein is discovered the generall discontent of all estates throughout the whole land*. Anon. (1642) *A Short, compendious, and true description of the round-heads and the long-heads shag-polls briefly declared*.

¹⁵⁷ On the subject of hairstyles and gender in early-modern England see Fisher 2006, pp. 129–158.

¹⁵⁸ Greene 1592, sigs. D3v–D4; Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

In particular, the lovelock or *cadanette* in French was the *ne plus ultra* of decadence in the day, consisting of a long curl trained from the nape of the neck to fall over the shoulder.¹⁵⁹ Needless to say, Cloth Breeches has no time at all for any of these trends: his only use for a hairdresser is 'pla[i]n to be polde', and to have his beard cut. We are not informed how his beard is cut but presumably it is not in *pique de vant* fashion or any of the ways deplored by Harrison.¹⁶⁰ Greene is playing with notions of baseness; while others denigrate it, he sees it as fundamental, and therefore something to be valued. There is a rather coy postlude to this episode. In Rich's pamphlet of the following year, in which both breeches were strangely united to their bodies, their struggle, finally breaking into physical expression, hinges on a point of hairstyle. Just as the narrator comes upon these two enemies locked in conflict, Cloth has managed to get the upper hand by catching hold of a 'goodly locke hanging downe his left cheeke', it 'being in the French fashion.' The symbolism of the action is not lost on us. In more ways than one, long locks dragged one down.¹⁶¹

Said to have become fashionable among the mignons of the court of Henri III, the lovelock achieved cultic status among late Elizabethan courtiers and continued throughout the Jacobean and Caroline period, only gaining in elaboration.¹⁶² A French aristocrat, Honoré d'Albert, seigneur of Cadenet, brought in the fashion of decorating it with a bow and jewel, thus making the lock even more repugnant to its critics; while another of the same ilk, Henri de Lorraine, the Count of Harcourt took to wearing an earring in the ear which was not covered by the tress, earning the soubriquet *Cadet la Perle*. The offending lock is caricatured by Hall who compares it, in a rather macabre way, to a hanging chord.

His haire *French like*; stares on his frighted hed,
 One locke *Amazon-like* disheueled.
 As if he ment to weare a natiue cord,
 If chaunce his *Fates* should him that bane afford.¹⁶³

Again, as with Dekker, the echo of treachery is not far away. Somewhat later, after the extra finishing touches had caught on among Jacobean courtiers, Rich fumed about 'from whence commeth this wearing, & this

¹⁵⁹ Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 71; Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 199.

¹⁶⁰ Holinshed 1587, p. 172.

¹⁶¹ R[ich] 1593, sig. B1^r.

¹⁶² Yarwood 1961, pp. 130, 138–41; Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 71.

¹⁶³ Greene 1592a, sigs. C3^v-C4^r; R[ich] 1593, sig. B1^r; [Hall] 1598, p. 61.

imbrodering of long lockes, this curiositie that is vsed amongst men, in freziling and curling of their hayre'.¹⁶⁴

A very thorough condemnation of this style and all that it entailed was articulated by William Prynne in *The vnlouelinesse, of loue-lockes*. The lovelock was only one of a range of degenerate hair-styles which he deplored, but it is easily the most raged-against. Prynne's thought about a range of matters was very much in evolution when he published this in 1628. He would become foremost in battling against Laudianism and indeed his Protestantism is patent throughout. Already his religious instincts against excess ceremony are combined here with a pronounced and narrow vision of national authenticity. It is a particularly sour polemic full of repetition, vituperative language, and the most intemperate expression. His angst rests on the dichotomy he observes between profession and practice, for '[w]e all profess ourselues to be Heroicall, Generous, and true-bred *Englishmen*, yea Zealous, downe-right, and true-hearted *Christians*,' yet by bowing to these customs '*disclaime our very Nation, Countrey, and Religion too*'.¹⁶⁵ He constantly reiterates his conviction of his compatriots' multiple degenerations from the state of being English and Christian and, in a highly correlated sense, their loss of masculinity. 'Are not many now of late degenerated into *Virginians, Frenchmen, Ruffians, nay Women* in their Crisped-Lockes, and Haire?'¹⁶⁶ The Frenchified come in for a particular beating because they have 'nothing else to make him famous, (I should say infamous,) but an Effeminate, Ruffianly, Vgly, and deformed Locke.'¹⁶⁷ After such vivid criticism, there is quite simply less to say about the positive case but he does emphasise that '[o]ur English Guise and Tonsure' is just a 'naturall *plaine and common cut*' and has the dual advantage of being both civil and ancient. It is not untypical of a certain kind of mind-set that the truly English way of being could be summed up in one sentence while exotic ways needed a wordy treatment of many pages to demolish.¹⁶⁸

These chapters have provided a consideration of the ways in which Englishness and foreignness may be said to have inhered in certain models of speech and dress. The attention given to these issues convinces us of the importance attached to public ways of being English; it is not for nothing that the metaphor of proclamation has been present throughout.

¹⁶⁴ Hall 1598, p. 61; Rich 1614, p. 35.

¹⁶⁵ Prynne 1628, sig. A3^v.

¹⁶⁶ Prynne 1628, sig. A4^r.

¹⁶⁷ Prynne 1628, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ Prynne 1628, p. 26, sig. A3^v, p. 27.

Positive and negative constructs drew life from each other, although the latter strikes home perhaps more forcefully because of the exceptional abusiveness and colloquial vigour that characterised it. Idealism and bleakness were, as is often the case, bedfellows. Harvey again undoubtedly spoke for and to many in early-modern England, by echoing Cicero's ringing denunciation of Catiline.

O tymes, O manners, O French, O Itlish
 Inglande
 Where be ye mindes and men that woont
 Terrify strangers?
 Where that constant zeale to thy country glory, to vertue? [...]
 Where owld Inglande?¹⁶⁹

The fact that Harvey himself was not known for representing old English ways gives the observation its undertone of piquancy, and proves that no matter how objective he or anyone else thought they were, they always wrote from 'within' the experience, and reveal their own susceptibility to foreign models by the language they used and perhaps also by the clothes they themselves wore.¹⁷⁰

It is all too easy as a result to dismiss such commentators as either cranks or dreamers, just as it is tempting to treat what they said as the early-modern equivalent to tabloid journalism or sentimental memoirs – more given to illusion for affect than to accuracy. Yet grouping them together as hide-bound traditionalists or eccentric panegyrist of a lost world, given over to the very worst form of embattlement there was, that of being powerless to stop trends and categorical in the rejection of them, would absolve us from the necessity of taking what they said seriously. We are entitled to be sceptical about their vision of a homogenous national mode of dress in past ages; entitled also to be sceptical about their reinstatement of the value of a home-spun language in their own day, but what we cannot be sceptical about is their sincerity in valuing these things and the energy which went into putting them across.

Moreover, the fact that those whose views we have studied resist being bracketed as a coherent group goes to show the extent of the appeal and how unwise it would be to pin them down unduly to one way of seeing the world. Diverse people who could at one stage of their career have been

¹⁶⁹ Harvey 1884, p. 97.

¹⁷⁰ Greene 1592b, sig. C1^v records that he had had his lapses in younger years. In his *Repentance*, he describes how on return from the continent with a group of friends from Cambridge, he came back 'ruffled out in my silks, in the habit of *Malcontent*'.

described as university wits, humanist rhetoricians, courtiers, urban hacks, professional writers, antiquaries, clergymen of various sympathies, royalists or hard-line radicals might be expected to have had very different perspectives on many different things: that they found common cause in this way of thinking is a point no less piquant than it is significant. We will, in sum, understand nothing of them or of the period if we do not realise that they were expressing normative values about Englishness, criss-crossed, it is true, by a host of vectors from class to gender, and religion to politics, but none of them overriding, still less contradicting fundamental considerations about what it was to be an authentic exponent of national virtue. Yet the great irony of it all is that any ideal, even the deliberately plain, is, by virtue of being construed and put before a public, rhetorical. We cannot be so naïve as to take a plain Jane at face value. Richard Lanham slyly observes that in ‘a fallen, cosmetic world, she is asking *not* to be considered, wants to be overlooked – or perhaps to claim attention by contrast. She is as rhetorical as her made up sister, proclaims as loudly an attitude.’¹⁷¹ The plainly-spoken, plainly-dressed Englishman was himself a grand statement of the age.

¹⁷¹ Lanham 1976, p. 30.

PART TWO

THE LOYAL ENGLISHMAN

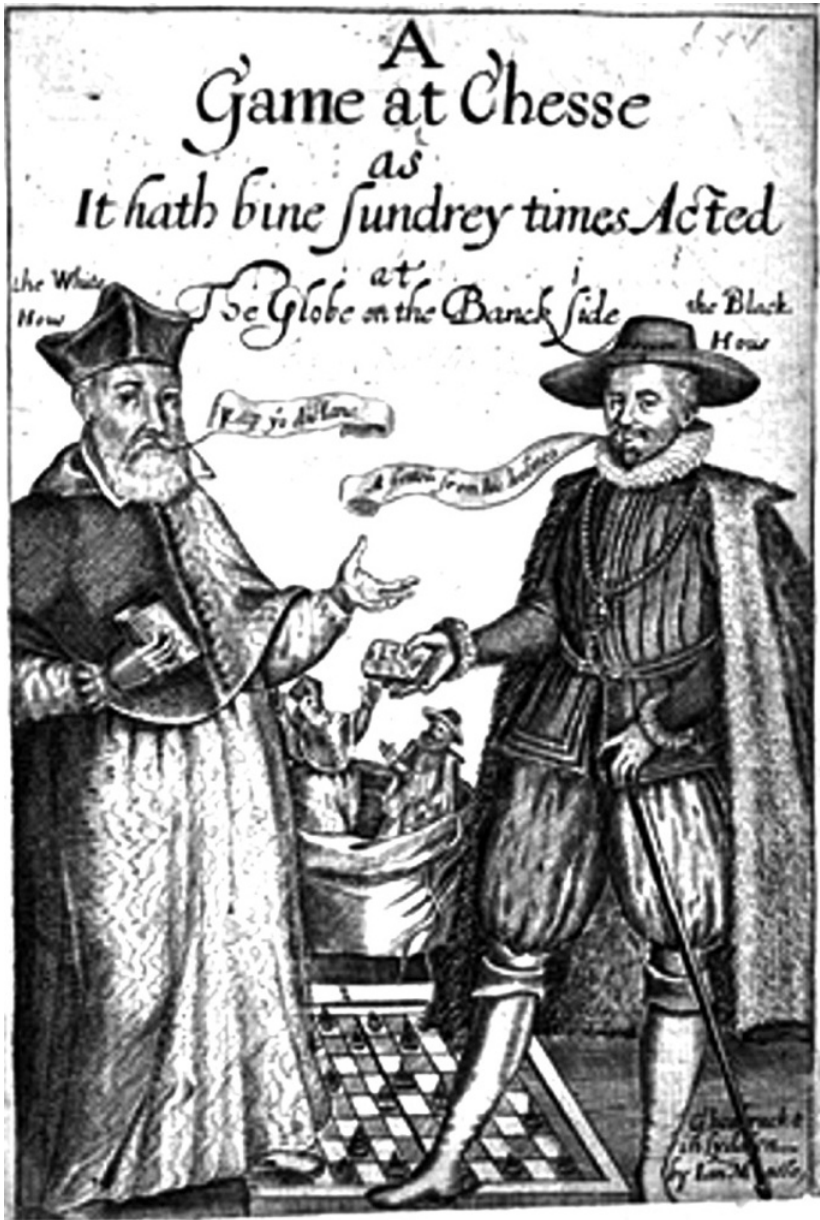


Figure 2. Frontispiece to Thomas Middleton (1624) *A Game at Chesse*, London. Reproduced with the kind permission of the British Library.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTI-CATHOLIC NARRATIVE

It is the contention of one recent historian on the subject that nations, nationalism and religion are so ‘intimately linked’ that it is impossible to write the history of the one without considering the others.¹ Certainly, religious culture has informed the development of a sense of English national consciousness, particularly since the Reformation. The story of the main legislative acts of reformation from the Act of Supremacy in 1534 to the Elizabethan settlement of 1559 is easily told; of greater complexity is the question of shifting *mentalités* from then onwards. The abrupt termination of the relationship with Rome presented England with the opportunity, at times an alarming one, of re-imagining its identity in terms of both past and present. It makes intuitive sense to say that when people no longer identified themselves with a visible supranational entity, new primacy would be accorded to national bonds. The immediate authority replaced one laying claim to geographical and spiritual transcendence. Whereas before, England was, to a greater or lesser extent, bound up in the webs of connection traversing Catholic Christendom, now a virtue would be made out of the fact of *not* appealing to external authority but rather of looking within for answers. Constructing a new identity was, however, a very precarious endeavour in the early decades of rupture partly because of the relatively conservative nature of much of the change and partly also because a change higher up could mean reconverting again, as Mary’s short-lived experiment had intimated. But from 1559 onwards, the mould was more securely Protestant and Erastian, and so the task began in earnest of an intellectual ‘stripping of the altars’, to correspond to the actual one as described by Eamon Duffy.²

What form did this take? Protestantism was too divided to generate any but a negative unity of sentiment that lay in the alienation of the Catholic other. The idea evolved that there was an out-and-out incompatibility between being English and being Catholic, not merely in theological ways but in political, social, and cultural ways too. Essentially, the threefold loyalty proper to an Englishman was problematic – or missing – in their

¹ Hastings 1997, p. 1.

² Duffy 1992.

regard. This threefold loyalty involved their relationship to the monarch, to the country and to their own national nature, to themselves. This last point has been least considered and yet it is just as important as the sources will reveal. In many ways, it is the most basic of all. One monarch would succeed another: integrity to self was a constant. In this triple bond of loyalty, the Roman Catholic population, about 1–2% of the total, were seriously compromised. As regards the person of the monarch, the allegiance proper to a subject was complicated in their case by allegiance to the See of Rome, an allegiance not merely ultramontane, but also beyond the sea. The ambiguity of their position was not aided by the flurry of theory about the nature and extent of the Pope's temporal power, especially his power to depose princes, which the Reformation had made so sensitive a matter and which the 1570 Bull of Excommunication brought home with alarming immediacy.

As regards the country itself, there were doubts about Catholics' commitment to the integrity of the land, given their concourse with powerful co-religionists on the continent, doubts which leapt into conviction with every mention of plot or invasion. In a society where having a stake in the land mattered beyond anything, their 'stake' was abroad, and thus deeply problematic. Lastly, they were going to be depicted as untrue to their nature, to their heart. The affective and what we may call an 'organic' reflection on identity will be particularly prominent here. They were thought not to value freedom, to be leaky vessels of national integrity, to be 'players' of villainous roles, to lack plain-dealing, to have, in short, defective identities. There is a fabulously tortured idiom that is constructed around this, involving (and often inventing) such 'deformed' and twisted words as Jesuited, Hispaniolated, Spaniolised, ubiquitary, Romaniste, and popeling: in short, a vocabulary which made English Catholics out to be very ambiguous creatures indeed, even when texts sought to address them and win them back.

As this discourse was particularly extreme and very often, pointedly venomous, it is altogether unsurprising that there was a measure of protestation and contestation. That said, it took Catholics a while to muster their polemical forces and fight back on similar grounds but in the early 1600s, there are some strong statements from both lay Catholics and clerics which insist on the compatibility between their religion and their nationality. Their attempt to reclaim lost ground may well have been doomed to failure, which is why they are not often seriously considered in this light by historians, but it is nonetheless important, I would argue, in fracturing the straight-line of the dominant narrative. It is, in effect,

a deliberate counterpoint to the prevalent rhetoric. Apart from prevalent Protestant attitudes, the other main problem for Catholics eager to reassert their national credentials was that not all of them thought it necessary to do so. This means that the narrative does not just take in Protestant anti-Catholic discourse, but Catholic anti-Jesuit discourse too. Amongst Jesuit polemicists, the issues at stake remained primarily theological: not only did they not become involved in arguing a 'national' case, but in the case of Robert Persons, there is a deliberate refutation of its logic, a refusal to see how it can have anything to do with genuine post-Reformation intellectual engagements. A clash was inevitable.

Historians have been generally sensitive to the construction of English identity around an anti-Catholic, anti-Jesuit axis. Usually foregrounded in this story are the events – the plots, the penal legislation, the directives from Rome, the various missions and marriages, the grand routs and notable executions.³ Scholars have, in particular, explored the apocalyptic nature of the discourse as exemplified classically in John Foxe's celebrated *Acts and Monuments* although, as Anthony Milton has recently pointed out, an 'apocalyptic schema' like Foxe's 'tended to be focused on church rather than nation'.⁴ Remarkable though they are, these are all in the background of this story – not because I consider them of less importance but partly because the subject has been well-traversed and even more appositely, the focus for an intellectual history of anti-Catholicism and Englishness must lie rather in investigating the process by which this was internalised and the rhetoric in which it was expressed. Some scholars indeed including Carol Weiner, Peter Lake and Arthur Marotti, have probed the underlying structure of the prejudice more thoroughly although we still need to do more to uncover the nature of this in full.⁵

It is important, however, to mark a caveat at the outset. This is only one of the stories it is possible to tell about Catholicism in the period. Recently, Milton among others, have nuanced the Manichean view and detailed

³ Established accounts of this community in early-modern England include Bossy 1975 on the transformation from majority faith to religious minority; Holmes 1982 on the play between resistance to and compromise with the state; Pritchard 1979 on Catholic loyalism in the Elizabethan era; Havran 1962 on Catholics in the Caroline period and Shagan 2005 on their identity within the Protestant nation.

⁴ The story of sixteenth-century elect nationhood as propounded in Haller 1963 has become faded of late, as Milton 1995, p. 409 points out.

⁵ The three essays which do most to uncover the gradual identification of Roman Catholicism with foreignness are Weiner 1971, pp. 27–62 (based on Weiner 1968, unpublished PhD); Lake 1989, pp. 72–106 who probes beneath the surface hysteria to look at the structure of anti-Papist prejudice; and Marotti 1999, pp. 1–34 who gives an account of how Catholic women and Jesuits were alienated.

a story of practical and theoretical compromise: especially in the Stuart period, opposition was 'only one of the ways in which Catholicism was perceived'.⁶ It would be unjust to see the matter as black and white. In more reasonable moments, there was a distinction drawn between the English lay Catholics who were 'quiet and well-minded men, peaceable subjects' and the 'factious stirrers of sedition and perturbers of the commonwealth': thus James I in the opening speech of his first parliament.⁷ Moreover, any story of prejudice must recognise the fact that, so far from shrivelling into nothing, the Catholic community in England actually increased in this period. So the increasing prevalence of a hostile discourse does not correlate with the growth of anti-Catholic persecutions.⁸ And yet, even with these caveats in mind, the construction of Englishness around anti-Catholicism and anti-Jesuitism remains an extremely powerful narrative for the period, and that for three reasons. First, it must of necessity be a national story rather than a parochial one because of its inevitably international dimensions. This makes it from the start a transcendent kind of discourse. It is never merely about the heartily-disliked or readily-tolerated Catholic neighbour, about the gentry family who are known to hide a priest in their home or the wife who defies her husband by going to mass. These may irk, but the matter inevitably involves vaster European-wide interests and conflicts. It is hardly an overstatement to assert that it is heady religious geopolitics, namely the confrontations with the Catholic Spaniards and the French, which determine the force and pervasiveness of this way of thinking.

The second reason for its primacy is that it proves to be a very plastic discourse which absorbs multiple resonances with extreme facility. The discourse quickly draws to itself potent ideas about freedom, manliness, and plainness so that to be Catholic is to be considered lacking in all of these things. Three things follow from this. First, there is once again an obvious effort to 'construe' the image of the true Englishman by reflecting upon what he is not. It is a discourse which exploits set typologies for its own deeply polemical and partisan ends. Second, it is never a purely 'religious' discourse if what one means by religion is something fairly narrowly restrictive. No moral, cultural and political questions are aloof from

⁶ Milton 1999, p. 86. See also Milton 1995 for his nuanced account of Roman and Protestant churches in English Protestant thought from 1600 to 40. Anti-popery, which was once a focus of unity, eventually became 'a channel through which the churches' own internal conflicts found expression' (p. 92).

⁷ *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I*, p. 29.

⁸ Bossy 1975, pp. 182–194.

its reach. Third, it proves so good at absorbing resonances that by the 1640s, the discourse itself loses some of its particularity: it becomes shorthand for any hated quality or group in society, an eminently available *lingua franca*.

The final reason for the potency of this strand of thinking is that it depends as much, or more on the power of the imaginary as it does on hard facts. Although it does undoubtedly feed off events that have actually happened, a substantial portion of it feeds off speculation about what might happen. In the minds of polemicists eager to show that the more Papist one was, the less true an Englishman, Spanish invasions were invariably imminent, Catholic dynasticism a constant fear, Jesuitical assassins always waiting to strike. The very possibility of degeneration, as they would have put it, exercised a powerful hold over many of the interpretations to be considered. So even if in practice there was compromise, and a greater or lesser acceptance of one's Catholic neighbours, nothing could overcome a deep-seated fear of what was felt to be imminent threat. Babylon was ever at the gates.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ESTRANGEMENT OF ENGLISH CATHOLICS

CONSTRUCTING A PLAIN, PROTESTANT AND UN-FRENCH UTOPIA

The year that we take up the threads of the story, 1559, saw the publication of one of the defining political works of the Elizabethan reign, John Aylmer's *An harborovve for faithfull and trevve subiectes against the late blowne blaste*. Aylmer, a Marian exile newly returned from Zürich where he had helped John Foxe prepare the Latin version of the *Acts and Monuments*, threw himself into defending Elizabeth's God-given right to rule against the celebrated objections to feminine rule as raised by John Knox.¹ This is the way *An harborovve* has been conventionally studied, but it also worth investigating what it has to say about post-Reformation identity. Commentators have often noted the importance of his statement to the effect that God Himself was English: it was the first explicit appropriation of the divinity to national ends and as such, the beginning of a more widespread complacency. Yet, that comment apart, it has not been realised just how deeply infused this treatise is with considerations of a national nature, and how important these are to the case he wants to make.²

Aylmer does helpfully give a definition of nature as 'a general disposition ingraft of God in all creatures, for the preservation of the whole'.³ It is a conscious recall of Seneca. His musings on 'howe farre you stretche this vvorde nature' have been seen correctly in the light of what he has to say about feminine rule. Yet there is no reason why it cannot also apply to his endorsement of a natural English disposition which was manly, anti-Catholic, and anti-French.⁴ Aylmer's vision of Englishness is that of a promised (but endangered) land of plain, Protestant men immune to the attacks of 'our aduerseries' and 'sworn enemies' the Papists and, in particular, the blandishments of the papist French.⁵ Catholics are foreign by

¹ Knox 1558 had actually targeted his work at Mary I, Mary of Guise and Mary of Hungary. Yet this was not how it came to be read. Elizabeth, who succeeded shortly after, took it as a personal affront.

² [Aylmer] 1559, sig. P4^v. This statement is actually to be found on the margins.

³ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. B4^r.

⁴ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. D1^v.

⁵ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. K2^v, A3^v.

his own definition: a ‘man in his own country at home, if he be not of the household of faith is a straunger’ – an alien.⁶ The emphasis on France is understandable given the context of 1559. Mary Queen of Scots’ marriage to the Dauphin in 1558 constituted the culmination of the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France. Her husband’s sudden access to the French throne in 1559 as François II gave the English cause to fear for the future of the Reformation in Scotland, and by extension in England. Aylmer published *An harborovve* months before this accession. His anti-Popery is thus inseparable from a robust anti-Gallicism. Moreover, as we shall see, the possibility of a Papist royal marriage for the new Queen is something that makes him profoundly anxious. Accordingly, one of the main things that he is seeking to do is establish in his readers a national sense of themselves: a sense of distinctiveness and indeed superiority. He wants them to consider themselves in a position apart: in the consciousness of aloofness will rest their security from danger. He does this, first of all, by emphasising the providential blessedness of a state and people so constituted as they are. In a highly lyrical passage, he starts off by lamenting popular ignorance: ‘Oh England, England, thou knowest not thine own welth’ and he ends with the exhortation to bless God for having being ‘born an English man, and not a french pezant, nor an Italyan, nor Almanac’.⁷

The blessedness consists in the enjoyment of a *via media*, which is composed of practical goods like the protection of a wise government, plentiful plainness, wholesome food and adequate clothing. Although it sounds a little anachronistic to say it, it does seem as if he is suggesting that being English means to live in a country which guarantees even the least of its members a decent standard of living. In contrast to the body of sources which set Italy up as a model of civilisation, he maintains emphatically that ‘England is the paradise and not Italy, as they commonly call it.’ Once again, he sighs over popular ignorance: ‘Oh if thou knewest thou Englishe man in what welth thou liuest, and in how plentifull a Countrye’. He proceeds to highlight the national blessedness by contrast and mentions food (meat rather than vegetables), drink (beer and ale rather than water), and taxation (occasional rather than constant). His conclusion is that ‘the Englishman’ lives ‘like a Lorde’ whilst ‘other countrymen’, live pretty much ‘like dogges’, creatures rather than masters.⁸ Once again, questions of

⁶ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. L4^v.

⁷ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. P3^r, P4^r.

⁸ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. P3^v.

status were side-lined, as they often were, when the point was to create a sense of horizontal national bonding.

But when one wanted to demonise another nation, issues of status loomed large. It is the French extremes in society that are depicted: the 'fine-mouthed' courtier is sophisticated and false whilst the miserable peasants are unpleasantly 'scraped to the bones'.⁹ The falseness of their social divisions are entirely of a piece with the falseness of their religion: he sees them as being the mainstay of the Pope and the Turk. They are Saracens in the very heart of Christendom. But, he insists, they cannot be monarchs of the world. Why not? It is because they are not manly and English: a naively simple point but that is the nature of such national propaganda. 'No good Englishe man they be effeminate French men: Stoute in bragge, but nothing in dede'.¹⁰ Then he proceeds to launch into a sketch of historic victories over France and laments that, through negligence rather than lack of manliness, they have not been able to maintain their Gallic hold. He has been careful to dismiss the Norman English past, saying categorically '[w]e be the Saxons posteritie' and is quick to relegate long-term Gallic influence to a residual few legal and hunting terms. Present-day 'language and customes' emanate entirely from the Saxons.¹¹ This deliberate falsification of the past shows just how polemical his intents are. His point is that if one is to be thoroughly English, Saxonism is the only inheritance with which one can identify.¹² He leaves his readers no option.

His denunciation of the French thus feeds into a construction of Englishness which becomes, in these rousing passages towards the end of the text, a full-blown 'exhortacion to manlines' through which he seeks to rally his compatriots into unity in the event of war. His vision of Englishness is not that of passively accepting the blessed state of being in which the munificent English God has placed them. Aylmer has particular expectations of how Englishmen should behave. His rallying cry is that his readers 'shew your selues true Englishe men' in the qualities of readiness, courage and boldness. They are also enjoined to fear neither the Frenchman nor the Scot (the Scots, in his view, are honorary Frenchmen because of their compulsive lying). He quotes approvingly a nobleman who proposed the halter for a tardy soldier, saying that 'whyte liuered mylke soppes be no

⁹ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. Q3^r, P3^r.

¹⁰ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. Q1^v.

¹¹ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. Q2^v.

¹² [Aylmer] 1559, sig. Q2^v.

true Englysh, for thei lacke [...] Englishe hartes'.¹³ He who could be relied upon to repel the Papist French was, for Aylmer, a key point of stability in this year of crisis, almost, it would seem, its guarantor. Indeed, his emphasis on the strength of native manhood seems to be his way of compensating for the necessary focus on the female monarch whose claims he is also anxious to support.

Already he is haunted by the shadowy figures of Elizabeth's future suitors, who may well be Catholic foreigners. This fear surfaces when he has to weigh up a common objection to feminine rule on the grounds that by her marriage, the realm is more likely to be 'transferred to straungers'. The succession of a single monarch would be followed in the normal course of events by a dynastically appropriate match, and thus the question of having a stranger as male consort was one that seemed likely to impinge soon again after the Marian marital fiasco of the 1550s. Given his strong convictions about the native 'ornamentes of a home-borne man', his preference would always be for a domestic alliance: 'better ioignyng at home, then chusing abrode'. Nevertheless, his one concession for a German prince 'or some such other' is revelatory. He conceives of them as active and religious men, without ambitious hearts, and not to be faulted for rigorous government. Moreover, there was a greater likelihood that they would be of the reformed faith.

Most importantly, such a one would not bring in 'hys own countrye men to oppresse the Subiectes (as vndoubtedly the Spanyardes and Frenche woulde)'. The belief that Catholic monarchs were oppressive (an inevitable corollary of an oppressive belief system) is something that will be explored more deeply by later writers, but the assumption is already being made here by Aylmer. The Spaniards and French are *more* foreign, as it were, than the Protestant Germans. To live as free, stout and thriving Englishmen under a Popish monarch was unfeasible.¹⁴ Another significant aspect of his indirect advice to the Queen is how little it concerns itself with dynastic considerations and how much more it is concerned with the fate of ordinary Englishmen. This again is a theme that we shall see taken up in later polemic. There is a discomfort with the fact that the monarchy pursues its own agenda which just may be repugnant to the emergingly self-conscious populace. Thus, the work intended to proclaim loyalty to the new Elizabethan regime is not confident about the direction in which that regime might go. There is unease clearly evident throughout. In the

¹³ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. P4^v, Q3^r.

¹⁴ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. L3^r, L4^r.

work's peroration, he enjoins his fellow countrymen to '[b]e no slaues wher you haue bene Lordes', nor 'subiectes, where you haue bene rulers'.¹⁵ It is a robust imperative to resist foreign encroachments, however high-up they might enter. Most revealingly of all for the emergent language of communal selfhood is the phrase: 'Let no straunger make you straungers to your selues'.¹⁶ In fact, Aylmer's whole thinking on matters of identity could be summed up in a commentary on this passage. He could be said to have elaborated on the process of estrangement. Catholicism, after all, was so very recently English: rooted and grounded for centuries in national life. In the generations succeeding the Reformation, it was the task of polemicists to make it seem strange, alien and un-English, to show it as standing for a range of qualities and attributes which were incompatible with national character. It would be all the easier to do because their significant political enemies happened to be Catholic. Both antipathies came together and fed off each other. Aylmer is thus one of the first of the Elizabethans who seek to make readers see and interpret distinctions between cultures through the prism of religious difference.

It was not royal marriage but the recent rising of the Northern earls that played on Thomas Norton's mind in 1569, causing him to publish *A warning agaynst the dangerous practises of papistes, and specially the parteners of the late rebellion*. Lake and Pincus see Norton as somebody who helps frame the 'post-Reformation public sphere'.¹⁷ He was one of a rash of parliamentarians breaking out into pamphleteering and seeking to mobilise opinion beyond the privacy of the chamber. Although this work is conventional to the extent that it cries treason and proclaims divine deliverance after one of the more serious incidences of rebellion in the reign, it escapes its own generic conventions by its explicit statements on the un-Englishness of all Papists. The text functions on several levels: as a warning against Papists, as an indictment of their contradictory position and also as an appeal to them to convert. There is an equivalence between 'all true Christians' and 'all true Englishe subiectes', and papists can be 'neither true Christian men nor true English men'. He goes as far as urging them to 'come home'.¹⁸

¹⁵ [Aylmer] 1559, sigs. R2^r–R2^v.

¹⁶ [Aylmer] 1559, sig. R2^v.

¹⁷ Lake and Pincus 2007, p. 4.

¹⁸ Norton 1569, sig. Oiii^v. The rising itself was instigated by Norfolk, who had been prevented from marrying Mary Queen of Scots. He had pulled out of the plans, but the Catholic Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland marched south to rescue Mary. It was a drab unsuccessful affair with serious repercussions. Hundreds were punished by hanging in its wake. It was in the immediate aftermath that Pope Pius V published the Bull of excommunication against Elizabeth.

Probing the text further to see why it is that Papists cannot be true Englishmen in Norton's eyes, it is possible to advance three main reasons. Firstly, it is because Papists are not content to 'liue in bond of cuntry with English men alone': they have eyes perpetually fixed abroad and are always too willing to 'join' with strangers, 'submit' to a foreign potentate. This is straightforward enough and need not detain us. Secondly, and more profoundly, it is not just the fact but the nature of their subjection that is problematic. It is possible to say that Norton has two models of subjection in mind. One is proper and fitting for an Englishman: it consists in lawful allegiance to a native monarch; emotionally, it gives one a focus for one's 'naturall affections'.¹⁹ The kind of subjection extracted by Rome is of a different order because it draws men into 'slauishe subiection', but since one cannot be a slave and English, one cannot therefore be of the Roman Catholic faith. Instead of directing one's natural affections, it was a channel for one's unnatural and outlandish ones, resulting in subversive plots and rebellion.

Norton goes deep into the motivations behind the recent rising and what it says about the rebels. Crucially, he does not regard them as free agents, but as tools in the hands of a foreign potentate.²⁰ Fortuitously, according to Norton, the rising failed. The motif of providential deliverance is an habitual trope of the period, and as such, not one that generally stands out in its individual occurrences, but it takes on extra meaning in Norton's *A warning* once we grasp just what he thought they were being delivered from: an unfree system that would crush the Englishman *qua* Englishman. This is the sense behind the opening passage in which he extols Elizabeth for saving them from 'foreine thraldome of soules, the escape of the heauie yoke of strange dominion'.²¹ The Roman yoke as well as the Norman yoke was to become a meta-trope of the polemic of the period. Religion forms part of the rich layer of resistance to foreign slavery that we shall see in political form in a later chapter.

The third reason why Papists are no true Englishmen is because they are innately duplicitous. They deck out disloyalty with rhetoric, with pretensions of legality. They cloak their actions, or, in his words 'colour foren subiections of our cuntry with false titles of wrested law'.²² The idea of 'colouring' one's actions is an especially striking one and it takes us back to the anti-rhetorical postures of other Elizabethan writers. It shows the

¹⁹ Norton 1569, sig. Jii^r.

²⁰ Norton 1569, sig. Dij^v.

²¹ Norton 1569, sig. Aii^r.

²² Norton 1569, sigs. Oiii^v, J ii^v.

way in which Catholics are coming to be portrayed as essentially rhetorical (coloured, cosmetic, distorted) creatures whose very sophistication (linguistic, liturgical, or theological) is a falsity. The notion of the foreignness of their make-believe and of performance is further brought out by the analogy of the playhouse: 'to play the good plaine Papist [...] is to play or rather in good earnest to be a hye traitor'.²³ If you are playing a part that is not your own, then you are falsifying: you are not representing yourself. If one is a plain man, one does not 'play parts', cannot indeed. The idea of Papists playing a false part on an English stage, and putting on an alien 'persona' or mask will be a recurrent one throughout this way of thinking and it reflects the ambivalence towards the theatre particularly in these decades when it was growing in popularity. Theatre was taken by many to be a 'socially as well as a morally and religiously disruptive force' and its metaphoric usefulness as a way of stigmatising Popery was obvious.²⁴

The Elizabethan controversies surrounding religion and identity could themselves be said to have become a theatre in which two different and potentially conflicting logics frequently pulled against each other: the dynastic and the national. This is a germane issue. One of the great discomfiting facts facing Protestant writers of the day was that royalty itself was transnational. Its dynastic and diplomatic needs might be expected to transcend, and at times, violate national bonds: a case of nice customs curtsying to great kings.²⁵ After the Marian period, this was seen as increasingly problematic. In particular, the prospect of a royal marriage to a European Catholic spelt disaster. Accordingly, the sources are shrill in their assertion that the national should trump the dynastic every time and in making this case, they also seek to build a fulsome case of incompatibility. This is especially notable in John Stubbes' *The Discouerie of a Gaping Gvlf wherein England is like to be swallowed*, a text which show-cases anti-Catholic and anti-French polemic as it stood in 1579. Two decades had elapsed since Aylmer had written, and a Catholic royal marriage, which then had been only a possibility, appeared now as an imminent reality of calamitous proportions in the advancing and seemingly favoured suit of François, who had recently acceded to the dukedom of Anjou.

The courtships of Elizabeth by himself and his elder brother Henri had dominated the decade. Diplomatically, some such arrangement seemed to make sense: England needed to consider a French alliance as a bulwark

²³ Norton 1569, sigs. Bj^r, Oiii^r, Fiii^r.

²⁴ Lake and Questier 2002, p. 455.

²⁵ Shakespeare Henry V 5.ii.

against Spanish might. Although the proposed marriage to the brother of the French King had its supporters because of this, notably among the principals themselves and Lord Burghley, it nevertheless awoke such fierce opposition that it never came off. That in itself is a point of interest. What power did public opinion have? Clearly, more than is sometimes imagined. *The Discovery* was a crucial intervention in this controversy. The notoriety of some of its language as well as the vicious official reaction make it one of the best-known of the publishing controversies of the age.²⁶ Present, in fact, are the same fundamental considerations that characterised *An harborovve*, namely the establishment of the Englishman as somebody who cannot and will not stomach the dynastic manoeuvres which might bring him under the sway of the Papist French, thereby submerging his values, and alienating all that he is and ever has been.

In fact, even more so than with previous texts, he brings out the connection between models of dependency and the Catholic French. This fed into his positive vision of the sturdy Englishman whose plainness of speech I have already had occasion to note.²⁷ Stubbes presents the sensationalist possibility of a mass migration of miserably poor as well as Papist Frenchmen into England.

[M]ore danger vvil they be, least these needie spent Frenchmen of Monsieurs traine, being of contrary religion and who are the scome of the Kings Court, which is the scome of all France, which is the scomme of Europe, vwhen they seeke, like horseleaches, by sucking vpon vs to fill theyr beggarly purses to the satisfieng of theyr bottomlesse expense: the poore playne and rude Englishman first giue him the elbovve in the streete, then the fist and so proceeding to farther bicquerings.²⁸

What emerges is the familiar polarised portrait of two national types: the typical Frenchman is seen as the very scum of life, at the bottom of every rung, while the ordinary Englishman is a healthy, sturdy specimen, as different from subservient *suivants* as it was possible to be. So far, so commonplace.

Yet there is more to be to probe in his remarks. Insofar as this English type is poor, his poverty is nonetheless of a different order to that of the parasitic misery of his French counterpart. He almost seems to be endowed with an honest Christian poverty; something of an ideal for one of such religious sympathies for he had known Puritan leanings. The allusion to

²⁶ Vanhoutte 1996, pp. 49–77 has written on the gendered aspect of the pamphlet.

²⁷ See above pp. 43–45.

²⁸ [Stubbes] 1579, sigs. C6^r–C6^v.

his rudeness of manner is also of interest, as this is not a sentimental kind of patriotism. Instead, he makes a virtue out of something we are at first inclined to think not a virtue. The Englishman is sturdy, if unrefined, and curiously self-contained: he does not know the finer things of life, but neither does he strive after them. This is a sort of John Bull *avant la lettre*. If the archetype was not wealthy or cultured, neither was he a model of tact, something that Stubbes continues to construe in a wholly positive way. That this man will *not* take the change passively is a tribute in fact to his sincerity of heart; he is not naturally belligerent, but in no circumstances could he stomach being 'a minion of Monsieurs'. One senses in this the authorial curl of the lip. The very word minion was French in origins, and its louche connotations would not have been missed. As well as being an unimportant henchman, it also carried connotations of homosexuality from the fifteenth century onwards and indeed that was an accusation commonly made against French courtiers, another proof given of their lack of manliness.²⁹ Once provoked, the Englishman's reaction is likely to be quite direct and the allusion to bickering suggest that there may be conflict on the streets. Stubbes is adamant that the response to migration will be a raw, even bloody one.

Even the lightest allusions in such a passage open up avenues of thought, and although Stubbes is undoubtedly building on old prejudices about the French, hoarded in the common mind for centuries, here they are given particular direction and focus. While the Englishman was simply poor, the Frenchman is needy and worn – already the emphasis is on the insufficient and insatiable quality of his poverty, and this despite the fact that he would technically be of the 'victorious' party. Moreover, while the Englishman was pictured as an individual who stands alone, the Frenchmen were members of a 'train', followers in other words, not men in their own right. In fact, although they may be called a train, they seem more like an unruly mob. He also develops at this point the idiom of dependency by picturing the French as, at various points, sucking, clinging, and gathering: all actions associated with the infantile or the effeminate, and clearly at odds with the Englishman's gestures. Even their manners of wooing a lady is different. The Duke's methods of courting Elizabeth 'makes vs in England to find very strange, this vnmanlike, vnprincelike, secrete, fearful, suspitious, disdainful, needy french kind of woeng in Monsieur'. Stubbes raids history and finds the model he wishes in the bluff courtship of Henry V. His manner was plain and open, when he went about securing a French wife,

²⁹ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. D5^r. *OED* sub minion, 1.

Catherine de Valois, a common belief echoed by Shakespeare's play twenty years after this text. According to Stubbes, he gave 'shew of vvisdome, manhod, behaiour, and personage' not to speak of the fact that his conversation was 'open' and the variety of his 'knightly excercises' highly various and impressive.³⁰ Both high up and low down in society, distinctive characteristics separate nation from nation.

Animating all these socio-cultural antipathies are religious factors. This is evident in many ways. Although Anglo-Gallic 'inbred hatred' had a long history, and although some of it is transgenerational, having been instilled, he says, by grandfathers, who in teaching their grandsons to shoot 'wold haue them imagen a Frenchman for theyr butt', there is something fiercer about the prejudice in 1579 as he formulates it.³¹ This is a generation living out the Protestant reformation. To old hatreds are added new ones; to antique reasons for animosity are added fresh and even more compelling ones. Notably, although he resists the incoming of the French in general, he makes an exception for Huguenot *émigrés* who have been coming into England since the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. These he welcomes, saying that 'our old grudging nature against the French in this respect, is expelled'.³² They are the right sort of migrants apparently: their religion is compatible with Englishness.

The key to his thinking on this matter is a passage in which he expands upon what he understands by 'the soule of Fraunce'.³³ He finds that the spiritual quality which defines it is servitude. Unlike the Englishman who is simply subject to one earthly power, and retains freedom within that, a complex chain of subjection binds all Frenchmen. This is replicated at more elevated echelons: high-ranking nobles are all beholden to the infamous Catherine de Medici, the Machiavellian female personified. In a strikingly sinister image of her hegemony, he described her as the 'very soule whereby the bodies of the King, of Monsieur, of theyr sister Marguerit, and of al the great ones in Fraunce do moue as a hundred hands to effect hyr purposes'. His Catherine appears as a puppet master and again the notion of play and manipulation are brought into sharp focus. Yet the skeins of subjection do not end even with her, because she in turn is to be considered but as a 'bodye or tronk wherein the Pope moueth, as hyz soule'.³⁴ In short, Stubbes felt that, if one excavated deeply

³⁰ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. F4^v.

³¹ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C2^r.

³² [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C6^v.

³³ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. B4^v.

³⁴ [Stubbes] 1579, sigs. B4^r–B4^v.

enough into the dispositions of the French, one would find that subjection to Rome was their essence. The 'Italian Quintessence of mischief' was capable of imposing his will on 'hys catholike [...] sonnes', they being merely the executors, 'obedient fooles [who] doe hys will'.³⁵ Ultimately this is what Stubbes wants to point out as the most deeply problematic element about unifying the countries through a Catholic match. The question was whether the English were to be caught up in this complex chain of subjection, having no will to call their own? Was their very soul to be put at risk? Were they ultimately to be dependent on the arbitrary will of the Court of Rome? This theme of arbitrary power and subjection will become in several decades a heavily political discourse: the idiom is already taking shape in anti-Catholic polemic as it had done in cultural domains.

There is a further worry in the particular context of 1579, and indeed throughout the Elizabethan period. This is because there is a deeply gendered dimension to the notion of subjection which in turn will problematize the default identification between masculinity and nationhood. Stubbes' point seems to be that subjection and therefore servility will be all the more acute because it involves the marriage of an English woman to a Frenchman. In other words, England was being married – given away, as it were, – to France rather than the other way round. In the past, the English remained English, because change came recognisably in the form of a male conquest, *not* a feminine submission. He conveniently ignores the Normans in his narrative. The kings went to France to be 'maisters of cuntry and people' – naturally, so he thinks, because they *were* English. Being male, there was no loss of identity: 'vvhheresoeuer theyr king vvent he was styll an Englishman'. What he is saying is that the King is an Englishman first and a king second and that it is in the former capacity that he *can* claim mastery, and in the latter that he *does*. It is still, we note *en passant*, a curiously class-transcendent vision. If the present Queen marries abroad, she was putting Englishmen – the rough plain types that we have seen earlier – in the untenable position of women, something that is wholly repugnant to who they are. He shudders at the thought that 'both she and we poore soules, are to be mastered and, vvhich is vvorse, mistrised to'.³⁶

It was for all these reasons that the prospective marriage to the Duke was repulsive to 'euery English hart'.³⁷ Throughout the text, Stubbes harps

³⁵ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. B6^r.

³⁶ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. D3^v.

³⁷ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. A2^v.

upon the importance of this; if there is a foreign royal, the law will see to it that as an alien, he is disabled from exercising full government because the legal presumption is that he will be a 'senceles and careless forreiner' lacking in an 'English hart'.³⁸ Whether, for Stubbes, English Papists are at all 'true' is a moot point. His grudging conviction that any papist 'that hath an Englysh hart left to knock vpon in his breast, wyllbe afrayde to call Monsieur his mayster' is not to be construed as a conviction that there actually *are* any such to be found.³⁹ It is a challenge for them to put their national ahead of their supranational identity and transnational territorial affiliations.

Is Stubbes pessimistic or optimistic about the direction England is taking? In one sense, the text is riddled with anxieties. Speaking of those advocating the match, he has this to say.

And if these men vvere eyther regenerate with theyr lyuing brethren by the Gospel, or yf they were not degenerate from theyr deceased noble fathers, and remained but in theyr pure naturalles, they would neuer so speak for a faultor [offending] prince of Rome, and one that may be warranted to vs and our heyres for an enemy auncestrell.⁴⁰

All that is needed to be a loyal son of the nation is to maintain one's 'pure natural' state of being in the way that he has construed it in the text, but these men are clearly degenerate. Already also, there were signs that elite Englishmen were losing their proper dispositions in cultural ways, and throwing their lot in with France. This nicely parallels the socio-cultural preoccupations of contemporary satires. In the past, he nostalgically recalls, they 'delighted rather to be seene in Fraunce in bright armour then in gay clothes and masking attire', and that 'they did chuse rather to vvin and hold by manly force, then by such effeminate meanes'.⁴¹ It was no longer so. The question is whether the fight is being lost off the battlefield, in the more insidiously dangerous world of the court. Still, he has some confidence in the toughness and resilience of English nature.

But against these irreligious, haughtye and faithlesse frenchmen, that bring in a religion contrarye to ours, and haue no conscience nor loue to vse vs kindly, our English nature vvil return a main [sic.] to his own course.⁴²

The statement that 'English nature' has sufficient power to redirect man to his proper ends is intriguing evidence of Stubbes' belief in an

³⁸ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. B8^v.

³⁹ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C3^r.

⁴⁰ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. D4^r.

⁴¹ [Stubbes] 1579, sig. D3^r.

⁴² [Stubbes] 1579, sig. C6^v.

autonomous communal self which is capable of being an agent of reform and purification in dangerous times. Ideas about identity are maturing.

Stubbes, seeking to make a popular pitch, had a thousand copies of this text printed and distributed in August 1579 but soon found them banned by a royal proclamation. Arrested and found guilty of felony, he had his right hand amputated. What are we to make of such an episode in the light of the text? Stubbes' intervention creates a composite case against a Popish match by deploying a full range of arguments based on identity and counter-identity. Elizabeth saw it primarily as a work of protest and felt herself threatened. Indeed, there was a certain (unintended?) subversiveness to the populist pitch he was making. It could be said that, in his hands, the construct of the plain non-papist Englishman came to the fore not merely as a point of reference but as a moral judge in his own right, engaging in 'affairs of state' traditionally seen as being beyond him. In the real world, he may be considered a cog in the diplomatic machine but in the racier and less exclusionary world of the print media, his is the voice that emerges uncorrupted, the one who cannot stomach the idea of French Catholic infiltration at any level and is not afraid to say as much. Stubbes is an important player in transferring private political discussions that would have taken place within parliament into the public domain, calling into being 'an adjudicating public or publics able to determine the truth of the matter at hand.'⁴³ Stubbes' Englishman had declared himself.

THE ALIENATION OF THE JESUITS

A new emphasis emerged in the last two decades of the sixteenth century which insisted that popery represented cosmopolitanism and rootlessness as against the stability required for the true Englishman. In the discourse surrounding plainness, we have had occasion to analyse the discomfort with the re-integration of the traveller; here the animus was particularly directed against the mobile figure of the Jesuit. The new emphasis is, contextually, unsurprising. The arrival of a Jesuit mission into England in 1580 brought the country into contact with a new phenomenon of religious peripatetic, 'English' by birth, continental by training. It was unsettling on every reckoning. The Society of Jesus, approved by the pope a mere 40 years previously, represented the *avant-garde* of the Counter Reformation, consisting of committed, often brilliant clerics,

⁴³ Lake and Pincus 2007, p. 6.

educated homogenously, and under vows of obedience to their Superior General in a way that made them, according to Ignatius, their founder, disciplined 'like a corpse'. Above all, they were mobile as no other order had quite been before: organised as a military company, they were sent all over the world on missions. That factor alone would have made them intimidating to many people who had not travelled beyond their native land.

Their coming gave a new focus for ideas about the foreignness of Roman Catholicism, and it provoked a range of official and unofficial reactions of note.⁴⁴ Of the first, the royal proclamations of 1580 and the legislation of 1581 stand out, as does the execution of the leader of the mission, Edmund Campion and two companions in 1581, a deterrent against further attempts in the same line.⁴⁵ Of the second, the hostile printed responses were most characteristic, raising accusations of disloyalty, sedition, and treason, and this, despite the fact that Campion and his fellows had brought a breve from the then Pope, Gregory XIII suspending the effects of *Regnans in Excelsis* indefinitely. But no Jesuit mission stood a chance of being regarded as merely spiritual, whatever their protestations. Nor, as Lake and Questier have pointed out, would the threat be regarded as 'merely political in the narrow invasion-, plot- and sedition-centred sense of the term.' Fundamentally, it was an ideological matter and that is where the discourse of identity plays a central role.⁴⁶

It is in Meredith Hanmer's interjections that we find a typical response of the insecure Protestant nation, when confronted with a fresh Catholic presence, heavily engaged in illegal printing and preaching. Hanmer was a beneficed clergyman, making his first sortie into print, which accounts perhaps for the rough quality but also the vividness of both *The Iesuites Banner* and *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion a Iesuite*. The second came in response to the Jesuit's list of points, addressed to the Privy Council, in which he challenged councillors, scholars and lawyers to a disputation on religion.⁴⁷ It is principally from Hanmer's treatment of Campion, whom he claims to have known at Oxford, that the first real

⁴⁴ For details of the Society's membership and activities in England see Edwards 1981; McCoog 1994–5; McCoog 1996.

⁴⁵ On the matter of this legislation see Neale 1953, vol. 2, pp. 386–92.

⁴⁶ Lake and Questier 2002, p. 261.

⁴⁷ As Campion's *Challenge* was merely written and distributed in multiple copies by Thomas Pound, the only 'copy' that was printed was in Hanmer 1581b. He interspersed it with his own refutation. Since then, it has been printed entire in Reynolds 1982, pp. 78–81. This is the text I have used.

articulation emerges of the 'oxymoronic' concept of an English Jesuit.⁴⁸ Campion was the most worrying phenomenon of all. He was undeniably an Englishman with impeccable educational credentials: his influence at Oxford had been so significant that his students took to copying his way of speaking. He was, furthermore, chosen to give the oration during the Queen's visit and had enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Leicester. Yet, he had done the unthinkable and turned 'traitor' to all this, leaving the country in the 1570s to train to become a Jesuit priest. Hanmer makes an urgent appeal to this *enfant terrible* on the grounds of nationality: 'You are an Englishman borne,' he tells Campion 'God hath endued you with sundry good giftes, let not your nature be estraunged'.⁴⁹ By 'estraunged', he was, in effect, saying that Campion was rendered alien, was severed from the community. This idiom is a very common one: a few later, William Lightfoot will complain that the Jesuits and priests 'estrange your selues'.⁵⁰ Romanism is not merely an aberration, but an utter alienation. The man who was once a fine representative of all that was best in elite English life has become a national menace: all the 'brethren and countrey men' are to be warned against such a one.⁵¹

Hanmer's text is a good example of what one has to do to 'deconstruct' somebody's reputation among the educated classes. To ask how deeply Hanmer's thinking goes as regards the alienness of the Jesuits is to uncover the meaning of his remarks about both travel and slavery. It must be emphasized again, in explanation of the first, that the Jesuits were the supreme cosmopolites of the Counter-Reformation, setting up in various locations with a speed and efficiency which set them apart from the older Catholic mendicant orders. Their use of a clandestine press at Stonor Park, Henley within months of the start of their mission was some indication of what might follow. They were immensely mobile and efficiently adept at exploiting networks of communication and transport. For Hanmer, this peripateticism smacked of rootlessness, discontent and mischief-making on an international scale, qualities suggested by his image of them as 'Wandering Romanistes' ranging abroad and his plea to them to renounce all 'Popish pylgrimages, and wearisome iournies'.⁵² Hanmer did not want

⁴⁸ It is possible that he did. Campion was in Oxford for 12 years from 1558 to 1570; Hanmer went up in the late 1560s to be a chaplain and was still only graduating with a B.A. in 1568, when Campion attained the prestigious position of a junior proctor. *ODNB*.

⁴⁹ Hanmer 1581a, sig. C^v.

⁵⁰ Lightfoot 1587, sig. C2^r.

⁵¹ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 3^r.

⁵² Hanmer 1581a, gathering 3^r, sig. C^v. See also Hanmer 1581b, fo. 15^r.

people to seek anything outside national borders, or bring home any strange disguising: he shows just the same discomfort with the practice as social satirists did. It is further brought into relief by his citation of the phrase in the very first few lines of the text: '*Stultus populus querit Romam,*' a foolish people looks to Rome.⁵³ Looking to Rome did not lend itself to building stable domestic identities.

The other troubling aspect of the Jesuits which affronted English nature, Hanmer would have the reader believe, was their subservience to a foreign power. Although this is familiar ground at some level, the Jesuits are even more implicated than the ordinary Catholic because of their extra layer of subservience to the head of their order. He attacks them for

your obedience and tyeing your selfe to that order and trade of life (beyng an Englishman) to a forrain and a straugner (whom yee call your Prouost) enemy to god, [...] a sworne aduersarye to our soueraygne Lady, the Queens maiestye the Crowne & Dignity.⁵⁴

He also refers to the Provost as a 'Controller' who dictated their movements. The very word reeked of negative preconceptions about the kind of allegiance that a Jesuit superior exacted from the individual. St Paul's injunction not to make '*your selues slaues vnto men*' was quoted to support his case.⁵⁵ He even redescribed the phenomenon of joining the Society as a means of 'addict[ing]' oneself to a maimed soldier, a reference to Ignatius' first career before the foundation of the society.⁵⁶ In the early-modern sense of the term, to addict oneself meant to be attached by compulsion or obligation to a person. Both meanings are present here. There is compulsion: the suggestion that these men have been forced into joining the society through devious means. The obligation is constituted by the vows of obedience that members are required to take. Addiction also carried with it the connotation of immoderation and irrationality and thus is directly repugnant to the 'standard moral language' of moderation which characterised the prevalent discourse of the era.⁵⁷

Seeing the Order through this lens, it is not surprising that Hanmer read the English mission itself as an insidious attempt to enslave. So even Campion's invocations of plainness in his *Challenge* were quickly

⁵³ Hanmer 1581b, sig. A3^v.

⁵⁴ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 8^v.

⁵⁵ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 9^v. He references this as Corinthians 7. A more likely source is Galatians 5.1. See also Colossians 2.8.

⁵⁶ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 9^v.

⁵⁷ Shagan 2011, p. 3.

deconstructed. In vain did the priest declare a 'plain confession' of the Roman Catholic cause, and advocate academic disputation on the religious question that would show how 'fair light [...] and plain dealing may be cast on these controversies'.⁵⁸ It is interesting, as an aside, that Campion should make much of the motif of plainness: it is a truth-claim, of course, but it also represents his desire to insist on a quality in which Jesuits are deemed to be particularly deficient. For Hanmer, there could be nothing plain about adherence to Rome and nothing would dislodge him from the belief that Campion and companions held something in reserve. In the very opening gambit, he declares that he 'would heare not a *Romanist*, but an *Englishman* speak'. He quickly attacks Campion's protestations of plain-dealing. Being a Romanist, he 'subtly creepe[s] into the fauour of your Readers, by protesting an open show of plaine, sincere, and unfained dealing'. The Jesuits, in particular, are known to be subtle and therefore they cannot be trusted.⁵⁹

He carries on deconstructing his opponent's case on stylistic grounds that are also, we know from other discourses, heavily imbued with national content. He refers to Campion's 'slye conueyaunce of Rhetorical insinuations' and warns his readers not to be carried away with his 'fayre shew and gloriouse flourish'.⁶⁰ He even criticises the manner of the dissemination of Campion's text which, instead of being published properly, was written and distributed in multiple copies by an associate. This was 'hucker mucker' practice according to his opponent, with the message received in 'scrowles and torne papers'.⁶¹ Hanmer exploits the fact that it is he himself who has first 'printed' Campion's brags and put them in the open for the literate English to see. He has published the 'plain text' and then shown it to be an unplain text. 'Substance [...] I find not', but much 'bragging, and bosting'.⁶² This is, he would have us understand, in keeping with the whole bearing of the Society whose extravagantly humble gestures ('lowlye, dowking') are contradicted by interior pride and deceit. Nothing is as it seems with them. The hostility towards courtly gesture as already outlined is here imagined as Catholic gesture. After all, the centre of Catholicism was the curia, the court of Rome. Catholic gesture is thus perceived as courtly and it is disliked for similar reasons. All the bowing

⁵⁸ Reynolds 1982, pp. 78, 79.

⁵⁹ Hanmer 1581b, sig. A3^v, fo. 2^r.

⁶⁰ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 2^r.

⁶¹ Hanmer 1581b, fo. 1^v.

⁶² Hanmer 1581b, fos. 2^r, 20^v.

and bending and kneeling are neither plain nor simple. Not merely are they overly-ritualised forms of expression but they are innately foreign.

Hanmer's theatricalisation of the Jesuits (and therefore their further alienation from national 'normative' ideals) is further brought out in his mystification that anybody, like Campion, who is '*willing to cast his head under every man's foote, and to kisse the ground they trade vpon*, can play such pageants'. They are constantly playing roles and can, of course, drop the mask whenever they wish to reveal their false identity. He has urged Jesuits rather to strip off what is false and return to their native persona: 'cast of the Popes pelte', he tells them in the introduction, in short, shed the 'skin' of an inauthentic identity.⁶³ Hanmer's pamphlets are extremely interesting examples of how, on many levels, a dichotomy is being hollowed out between the Englishman and the Jesuit-affected or indeed the Jesuit-addicted. The dichotomy is presented in multiple ways and depends in part upon other articulations of national identity taking place in more specifically cultural discourses. The fact that Hanmer constructs his texts as the plain-man's response to the crafty Jesuit is meant to be a reflection of what is happening on the ground in the battle for hearts and minds. His methods and his matter are at one. We should therefore be wary of dismissing his arguments as mere crude knockabout stuff. In a sense, there is much that is crudely simple about them – this is propaganda told with unholy relish – but there is also great strategic force and some subtlety. He strikingly uses resources from a wide variety of discourses (religious, political, and socio-cultural) to create the powerful image of the un-English Jesuit, exemplified in 1581 by the already-fated Edmund Campion.

THE IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE AGAINST SPANISHNESS

It will have become clear by now that in the literature we are considering, anti-popery never came in pure form. It was commonly mediated by opposition to an intermediate Catholic power or religious order, just as it was commonly combined with whatever other issue – political, historical or cultural – to produce an even more potent case for its outlandishness. England's armed conflict with Spain from 1585 to 1604 meant that for much of the last twenty years of the sixteenth century and beyond, the true-hearted Englishman was construed not only in opposition to the

⁶³ Hanmer 1581b, fos. 20^v sigs. A4^v, A3^r.

Catholic Spanish themselves but to the Hispanicised at home. This appears with particular clarity in the year of the first Armada in 1588 and in the immediate aftermath of the third, a decade later. In contemporaneous texts, a rousing rhetoric of Englishness is freely used to work readers up about the fate of their nation and bring them, by means of a barrage of strategies, to the conclusion that one cannot be Popish and English at one and the same time.

In a pamphlet entitled *A briefe discoverie of Doctor Allens seditious drifts*, written by one G.D., we get a good idea of how the events of the 1580s helped to cement a rhetoric of Englishness among the wider public. G.D.'s particular target was William Allen, the spiritual leader of exiled English Catholics and cardinal from 1587. He had exerted much pressure in the 1570s and 1580s for the re-Catholicisation of England, and this enterprise had involved strategising for a French or Spanish invasion, and the replacement of Elizabeth with a Catholic monarch. By the 1580s, the matter was in the hands of Philip II, and Allen acted as something of an intermediary figure between Pope Sixtus V and Spain. These activities made him *persona non grata* in many circles and in this pamphlet, G.D. tried to undo the harm he had done in a published letter of 1587 which had spoken out against English support of the Calvinist Dutch rebels.⁶⁴

Like Campion some time before, Allen had to be constructed as the anti-type of the true Englishman, actively seeking to subvert his patrimony. It was easily done. He was at once compared to Sinon, the subtle Greek, the character behind the false gift of the Trojan horse.⁶⁵ His actions and arguments are depicted as the very reverse of 'plaine dealing': with his 'subtill persuasions', he is innately double. All he utters is 'under a glosse'.⁶⁶ Also in evidence is the language of enchantment as if Allen and his ilk use nefarious magical arts to woo people away from what is, for the author, the 'naturall loue of his country'.⁶⁷ In response to this, G.D. makes the most of every opportunity to use the rhetoric of 'we Englishmen', and is much concerned that the whole country keeps 'true within it selfe', impregnable in the face of Romanist and Hispanic threats of any kind.⁶⁸

Unsurprisingly, in an increasingly fraught international context, he constantly brings the motifs of manliness and nationality together.

⁶⁴ Allen 1587.

⁶⁵ G.D. 1588, pp. 1–4.

⁶⁶ G.D. 1588, pp. 3–4, A2^v.

⁶⁷ G.D. 1588, p. 4, A4^v.

⁶⁸ G.D. 1588, pp. 123, 126.

Referring to the threat, he asks ‘shall wee be dismayed at it? that were not manlike. Shall *Romish* and *Spanish* forces appal vs? That were dishonourable for *English* men.’⁶⁹ He also drums up the prospect of slavery, and this tactic of his is to be taken very seriously. Invasion would not just change a few structures in church and in political life: it would demean the nature of all. The question he poses is a loaded one: ‘shall we be slaues in our own Countrie?’ And he continues in the same vein: ‘What an alteration (or rather degeneration) would this bee in vs? how dishonourable to the *English* name and Nation?’ He goes on to state that freedom is bound up with the national story. Foreigners would fight merely for the sake of spoil but the English fight for ‘lives and liberties’. He also harkens back to their glorious ancestors and hopes that this generation of Englishmen do not ‘degenerate from the courage of our forefathers’. G.D. knew his audience: the argument *ad antiquem* was always a safe choice and was easy to assimilate. Still, his delusions of grandeur are rather transparent. He claims that if this generation fails to preserve themselves, they will be reproached by ‘all other Nations’ and ‘succeeding Ages’, in short, that they will become ‘infamous Inhabitanes of so famous a Country’.⁷⁰ Now this is purely his own construction: England was not an especially grand member amongst the European or indeed Eurasian powers in 1588 and its ‘fall’ would not have had the impact it is here said to have had. Yet, that very narrative with its largely ‘mythical’ invocation of historic greatness and international repute is an utterly crucial one to draw out. It adds something of transcendence to what otherwise might be quite a parochial story and it helped as they moved away from the lure of Rome to have an alternative macro-structure in its place.

Another feature to draw out of G.D.’s text is his emphasis on the heart, which is replicated again and again in other writings. There are two principal connotations attached to the idea, not only that of the heart as the source of the affections, but also as the seat of the will. By the one is suggested the affective aspect of being an Englishman, and by the other, the volitional – how the genuine Englishman willed certain actions and could be expected to do certain things and not others. As regards the orientation of their heart, the English Papists themselves held an extremely ambiguous position. Would they support an invasion? Where did the affections of their hearts truly lie? In that time of crisis, it was more necessary to examine their interior dispositions than to argue about their

⁶⁹ G.D. 1588, pp. 123–124.

⁷⁰ G.D. 1588, p. 124.

religious practice and doctrine, although were it not for their religion, questions about their affective identities would not need to be asked. G.D. claims that he is not drawing them away from their beliefs *per se*.⁷¹ He tries to hope that they will prove true but his phrasing expresses some doubt. 'Yet they are *English* men, and if they beare *English* hearts in their bodies, they will never endure a stranger [...] to tyrannise ouer their country': this looks very like an attempt to convince himself. It ought to follow, but the question is, does it?

He does try, unconvincingly, to reason out the case based on the English Catholics' enlightened self-interest. Even if they did bear malice towards the Queen, and abandon all calls of duty, piety, 'humanity, good nature, and manhood' in regard of their country, they must surely retain a measure of 'naturall loue' for 'their own liues, and liberties' which would prevent them taking on so dreadful a course as throwing in their lot with Spain.⁷² Underneath it all, there must be some core of Englishry. But he is merely fretfully rationalising. One could postulate that G.D. and others of his ilk in the second half of the Elizabethan period are obsessed with the question of security and of the future. What would Englishmen be within a generation? Would they be forced into playing other roles? In 1588, it was impossible to say and that makes the construction of national identity around hostile perceptions of Popery and its secular manifestations all the more urgent. *A Brieve Discoverie* is, in effect, a rallying cry in print, and its manner of making its case, just as much as the case itself, is of interest in the consolidation of this discourse. In the triad which constitutes the rhetorical culmination of the work, he urges that they 'link together in one mind, in one faith, in one force, let vs sticke together, fight together, die together, like men, like *Englishmen*, like true-harted *Englishmen*'.⁷³ The battle for the 'English heart' had begun.

DEBATING NATIONAL AUTHENTICITY

It did not end there. The stories told around the time of the Armada have a privileged place in the construction of a national myth and the next place we take up the thread is with Sir Francis Hastings' *A vvatch-word to all religious, and true hearted English-men*, published twice in 1598, months after the third Armada was thwarted by autumnal storms. Profoundly

⁷¹ G.D. 1588, p. 5.

⁷² G.D. 1588, p. 84.

⁷³ G.D. 1588, p. 126.

interesting in itself in the way that it states its case, it is also important for launching a print controversy that lasted until 1604, attracting the attention of the Dean of Exeter, Matthew Sutcliffe and involving no less a person than Robert Persons, S.J. in opposition. Hastings and Sutcliffe were not particularly natural allies in many ways. Between them, there was not only an ungainly disparity in intellectual ability, but a great difference in theological standpoints, Hastings being on the more forward-pushing side of the Church of England, Sutcliffe the more firmly conservative.⁷⁴ Yet, (and this indicates the centrality of the ideological binary between Catholics and Protestants), both these men felt that they could and should unite against the common enemy. One of the ways in which they found common cause was to base some of their arguments on the importance of having an authentic English identity, Hastings to a greater extent than Sutcliffe.⁷⁵

Persons, drawn into the fray, was thus forced into a defensive position from the start, which he accepted with his usual instinct for controversy. He would show an extraordinary energy in pummelling and ridiculing the narrow nationally-focused arguments and lazy stereotypes; yet, as I shall argue, it was perhaps unfortunate, as far as his cause was concerned, that he made no significant attempt to appropriate their polemical idiom, adopting instead a uniformly critical stance to any 'measure' that involved appeals to or generalisations about national character. In dismissing his opponents in no uncertain terms, it was almost as if he had missed the opportunity to present a positive and populist case of his own which made Englishness and Catholicism compatible again. That the years immediately preceding the Gunpowder Plot and the Oath of Allegiance controversy would have been especially fitting for such a case only made his failure more consequential.

Hastings' voice was a parliamentary one, and by the time of his first sortie into print in 1598, that of his maturity.⁷⁶ *A watch-word* and its sequel, the *Apologie or Defence of the Watch-Word*, are best described as exhortations to vigilance and general national alert; the tone of both characterised by the insistence that all that was truly English was being jeopardised by Papists and popery. Hastings' basic societal division is between the

⁷⁴ [Persons] 1599, p. 78 accuses Hastings of being a Puritan.

⁷⁵ Hastings 1598; Hastings 1600; Sutcliffe 1600a; Sutcliffe 1600b.

⁷⁶ Born in 1546, he had played no small role in the parliaments of the 1570s and was 52 when he came to write *A Watch-Word*. That he was a knight is made much of by Persons who speaks scathingly of his lack of moderation and civil virtues. See, for example, [Persons] 1602, p. 6.

'true' and 'false' hearted Englishmen. He proceeds to give quite fulsome descriptions of each, covering their affections, will and nature of their actions. Before anything, however, this division is a convenient rhetorical device, used to suborn a readership. His claim to true Englishness is his way of justifying all his opinions. Towards the end of the *Apologie*, he put it to his readers as to a jury whether they would trust the views of his opponent, 'a Iesuitticall scholler and sworne Spanish' or himself, 'a Christian and true hearted Englishman'.⁷⁷ By presenting himself as the very epitome of nationhood, he meant to win their trust entirely. There was no more disingenuous ingenuousness than this. With this ploy, he also sought to create unanimity both in the way his text was read, and also in the way every issue was to be judged, just as a later generation would do in the 1640s.⁷⁸ When talking about William Allen, for instance, he appealed over the heads of divisive members to 'all true hearted Englishmen' to tell him whether or not he was an 'impudent [...] lyer'.⁷⁹ By virtue of their being English, the unwritten sub-text ran, they could only decide one way.

What Hastings is especially successful at doing is building up emotional identification with the national cause. True English hearts will have felt the emotions of 'griefe and feare' at the danger to Elizabeth.⁸⁰ Their affection was meant to converge on three realities, namely God, Queen and country. They were, in his neat turn of phrase, to fear the first, obey the second and love the third, as they were 'faithfull Christians, loyall suiects, and true-hearted English-men'.⁸¹ In itself, there was nothing particularly new about the formulation, except the emphasis on the last. The language of self-preservation was understandable because if England was Romanised or Hispanicised, this is precisely what they stood to lose. Hastings is also very keen to build up the civic consequences of having a true heart, to inculcate an active sense of duty in 'every true Englishman'. If *A watch-word does* fall short of a call to arms, it still resonates as a call to greater civic participation. Because of this, it is not merely those who abuse England whom he singles out for blame, it is also those who do not do their utmost in her defence against 'Rome and Spayne', those, in other words, who remain passive in the face of the contemporary situation.⁸²

⁷⁷ Hastings 1600, p. 203.

⁷⁸ See below pp. 232–3.

⁷⁹ Hastings 1598, p. 47.

⁸⁰ Hastings 1600, p. 68.

⁸¹ Hastings 1598, p. 84. See also pp. 69, 72.

⁸² Hastings 1598, pp. 3, 103.

A 'readie hand' is inseparable in his eyes from a 'couragious heart'. Or again, what he calls 'Neutralitie' is not fit for those who call themselves English.⁸³ It is important to take sides, declare one's colours. His version of national identity is a politically and militarily-engaged one. In evidence also is the idea that the Englishman stands not merely for his country and ruler but for himself: as he says 'euen for the life, and liberties of our selves'.⁸⁴

His depiction of the false-hearted or as he dramatically calls them the 'hollow hearted' English is also worth drawing out.⁸⁵ Does he include all Catholics in this bracket? It is true that he does make allowance, in his 1600 work, for any ignorant Catholics who are free from subscribing to Rome's 'disloyal doctrine', and claims that he is 'farre from imputing the crime of sedition to all Recusantes'. For the rest, he spoke of the Papists, not just the plotters among them, in ways that broadly problematized – even crippled – their national credibility. '[V]erie manie' have been 'ouer-taken with this humour, by the perswasions of Iesuites'.⁸⁶ He is not somebody who habitually bears in mind the niceties of distinction. Papists are problematic because they might well be passive in the face of invasion, or might indeed act against the instincts of their compatriots. The active, civically conscientious Englishman who stands for his liberties has given away to the agent for foreign powers who acts but *not* in his own right; that is to say his activities are regulated and constrained. Hastings' hollow-hearted Englishmen are represented as having no will of their own: they are puppets. His comment on their thralldom signals this and there is a telling instance in which he labels Jesuits as 'agents for the King of Spaine'.⁸⁷ There is a distinction, he is implying, between free action and mere agency. The one is independent; the other controlled and pre-determined. This angle is of interest in the evolving rhetoric of freedom, articulated first in these politico-religious contexts.

Paralleling his emphasis on the affective affiliations of the Englishman, he also draws out what is perverted about the affections of Papists. Affectively, these 'home traitors' were defective, setting their hearts on Rome and Spain rather than on their native country.⁸⁸ How one was 'affected' meant the way one was leaning. On that point, Mary Queen of Scots was, he claims, so

⁸³ Hastings 1600, Preface (unpaginated); Hastings 1598, p. 103.

⁸⁴ Hastings 1598, pp. 69–70.

⁸⁵ Hastings 1598, p. 109.

⁸⁶ Hastings 1600, sig. A2^v, p. 171.

⁸⁷ Hastings 1598, p. 20; Hastings 1600, p. 196.

⁸⁸ Hastings 1598, pp. 49, 103.

'affected' by Spain and 'our English Espagniolized traitours' that her inclinations once put England itself in danger. She might have been a Scottish Queen, but it was still an English problem. 'I am sure all *England* had like to haue tasted by so lamentable an experience'.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, one of his most trenchant criticisms of Persons is precisely that he is lacking in the love proper to his national being, or as he puts it more strongly, he is 'degenerate from the honest affection of a true Englishman'.⁹⁰ Hispanicisation was an accusation that easily stuck: it was in just such a way that William Barlow would denounce the same man somewhat later, calling him 'an Hispanized Camelion, [...] *filius terrae*, no true Englishman either in heart or by birth'.⁹¹ This is the language of complete alienation: Jesuitism has deprived Persons of national dispositions and even his very birthright.

For those who wanted to construct Englishness to exclude Roman Catholicism, there was always going to be a problem: however much they might have wanted to distance it, there were still English Papists – numerically insignificant perhaps, but in terms of their presence in court and their allies on the continent, it was felt, disproportionately influential. It was one of Hastings' great successes that he worked through this particular problem by insisting on the distinction between English birth and having an English heart. His point was that the latter did not necessarily follow on from the former, and that Papists provided the most disturbing example of such a disjunction. The identity of the body was a given, and therefore there was no particular credit or moral value attached to it. His conclusion appears to be that English birth was not enough to be considered truly English. Englishness involves particular allegiances. The orientation of the heart was decisive in fixing identity, and that could only be the result of a mature choice. In the *Apologie*, he wished that the two would coalesce, '*as they are home-borne, so they may be home-hearted*', soundly English, as he went on to say, not just so in a superficial sense.⁹² Targeting his adversary, he imputed to him an ambiguous duality, of carrying a 'Spanish heart in an English bodie'.⁹³ He went even further in his judgements on would-be assassins of Elizabeth, casting in doubt the very circumstances of their birth, calling them 'our bastarde countreyemen', and again '*bastard born, English*'.⁹⁴ The motif of the natural and unnatural

⁸⁹ Hastings 1600, p. 86.

⁹⁰ Hastings 1600, sig. B1r.

⁹¹ Barlow 1609, p. 3.

⁹² Hastings 1600, Preface. Unpaginated.

⁹³ Hastings 1600, p. 196.

⁹⁴ Hastings 1598, p. 49; Hastings 1600, Preface. Unpaginated.

is also present in Sutcliffe who calls Persons a 'bastardly English renegade'. Accusations of bastardy were not taken lightly (in Persons' case there was a *double-entendre* because of the malicious gossip surrounding his origins) and it would be fitting to interpret these insults as moments of intense de-legitimation of politically-active Papists in a national context.⁹⁵

The attempt to create some homogenous criteria for recognising English identity and its opposite, although not as pugnacious as in Hastings' writings, deeply pervades Sutcliffe's three works in this exchange. Supporting his ally in exhorting the 'true English', he decides to weigh into the debate on behalf of the 'well affected'.⁹⁶ He often phrases his clearest statements about true Englishmen in terms of what they find, or, ought to find – as readers, we are alive to the element of auto-suggestion – intolerable. Speculating on the possibility of the Queen's submission to the Pope, for example, he stated that it could not be endured 'nor yielded unto by any true English man'.⁹⁷ It would be an offence to her, but also – and we recall the subtext of selfhood in Hastings – an offence to themselves. He reinforces this subsequently, professing his repulsion to the very idea of submitting 'our selues unto him'.⁹⁸ A true Englishman will stand up for England.

For they may not thinke that all English men are so base, that ever they will endure [...] the tyrannie of the pope, or the command of strangers. Neither can any true English endure to receiue conditions either from pope or Spaniard, much lesse that they shall have power to dispose of this crowne and gournment.⁹⁹

This is a strong statement of incompatibility. His term of preference for the false hearted is the 'rinegued', or, when his orthography finally settles in 1604, the 'renegade', a term which brought into full relief the unwelcome reality of religious and political apostasy.¹⁰⁰ He does include a more generous caveat about the breadth of the term's application, saying that it is confined to the factious elements among the Papists only and those who aid and receive them.¹⁰¹ How do we make sense of this reasonably

⁹⁵ Hastings 1598, p. 49 sets them against Elizabeth's 'naturally borne subiects'. He calls them a 'vipers brood' and also a 'dangerous breed'. Hastings 1598, pp. 66, 42, 79, Sutcliffe 1604, p. 201.

⁹⁶ Hastings 1600a, sigs. a1^r, a3^r.

⁹⁷ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 230.

⁹⁸ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 231.

⁹⁹ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 233.

¹⁰⁰ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, sigs. A5^r, a1^r, a3^v, p. 149. Also Sutcliffe 1604, sig. A3^r. The renegade is often tied to the idea of the hispaniolized. 1600a, p. 30, sig. a3vi^r.

¹⁰¹ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, sigs. a3^v–a4^r.

generous exception and yet still maintain that the construction of identity is deeply and pervasively anti-popish? First, the allowance he makes for loyalists serves a purpose in that it is an encouragement to Catholics to prove themselves English by abandoning all attempts to reCatholicise the country. Practically speaking, it made no sense to alienate people when one could neutralise them by presenting them with normative ideals of behaviour. Still, as is the case with Hastings, we get the impression that although they do make allowances for loyal Catholics, they often slip into the habit of execrating all Papists and their language often casts into doubt the national standing of the entire group. The more 'Catholic' one is (in terms of international sympathies and missionary drive), the less English: that appears to be the logic. There is a progressive scale of alienation: the Jesuits are at one extreme and the 'loyalists' on the edge, potentially if not actually a danger to national man.

Two other elements are also to be uncovered in Sutcliffe's polemic. Like Hastings, he too uses the idea that there is something defective about the affections of Papists. He seized upon Persons' claim that recusants served the monarch 'with body, goods, and life' and disapprovingly – even damningly – remarked that 'he neither mentioneth the heart, nor the inward affection'.¹⁰² He also claimed at one point that the Jesuits are 'all linked in affection with the Spaniard', thus permitting them no national sentiment of their own.¹⁰³ What comes across even more strikingly is his perception of Papists as unfree agents rather than as free actors. He sweepingly depicts all the Spanish and Italians as the Pope's agents, and the Jesuits and the plotters in Elizabeth's day as agents of both Pope and Spain.¹⁰⁴ And surely he had Persons, among others, on his mind when he asked: 'Will you give credence to those, that are by the Italian and Spaniard hired to speake?'¹⁰⁵ He felt that such agents should even be deprived of a creditable voice for they were merely mouthpieces for their masters and not voices in their own right: they did not speak plainly or transparently.

This is a crucial distinction which we touched on in Hastings but which needs to be recovered more thoroughly as it is very much part of the substratum of this way of thinking as well as, of course, bearing strong resemblances to political discourses on liberty as they will emerge in the early

¹⁰² [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 155.

¹⁰³ [Sutcliffe] 1600b, p. 110.

¹⁰⁴ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, pp. 64, 128. See also [Sutcliffe] 1600b, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 128.

Stuart period. The key inferences to be made are the following: if you are an agent of someone else, essentially your will is not your own. It follows that you may act, but only in response to directions from those 'above' you, therefore your obedience is blind (the idea of being in thrall rather than subject is a key one), and your agency irresponsible and corrosive. As a free agent, and all these are 'us true Englishmen', then you are, after a manner of speaking, a person in your own right, acting your own part. The theatrical metaphor lies deep as do ideas about how best to represent oneself, typical early-modern preoccupations. Now it is important to note that, in this way of thinking, the true Englishman, although free, is subject to certain realities (like the monarchy and government), but the motivation comes, as it were, from below, from himself. They seem to regard this sort of subjecthood entirely in keeping with right reason and liberty: the monarch does not impose loyalty upon Englishmen so much as 'we are Englishmen and therefore loyal to the Queen and country'. It is interesting just how much emphasis is laid on the archetypal Englishman in this discourse. He is at the very roots of what constitutes the distinctiveness of the polity. The contrary reasoning can also be drawn syllogistically in the following way. Being a member of the Roman Catholic Church entails a subjection to a foreign power. A true Englishman will of course stand up for England. Therefore no true Englishman can be a Catholic (unless he holds aloof from Rome).

The gauntlet was thus thrown down and Persons, inevitably, did 'speak out' in reply. In 1599, there was *A temperate vvard-vword* and in 1602 *The Warn word to Sir Francis Hastings wast word*. Persons had his eye on a full-scale reply to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* which had been republished in 1596 but this rather more immediate controversy allowed him to make his case in a less scholarly manner.¹⁰⁶ There are many ways of tackling his replies but our questions centre around whether or not he had an equivalent idiom of his own about nationality and whether he made strategic inroads into their favoured vocabulary so as to re-appropriate it to his own ends? To both we are forced to give a negative reply – albeit a qualified one. It is true that Persons, by then twenty-one years a Jesuit priest, most of which time he had spent abroad, did make some kind of appeal to the fact of his readers being English, but mostly to drum up a sense of unity in the wake of recent divisions and changes: 'we are English-men, and we talke to men of the same language and nation [...], many have seen the change, and knew the state of things [...] before the alteration'. It was

¹⁰⁶ Edwards 1995 and Carrafiello 1998 for general biographical details of Persons.

reinforced by the nostalgic recall of an anterior unity: the Reformation was responsible for all the divisions ‘among ourselves’.¹⁰⁷ Hastings had stressed England’s blessings under Elizabeth; Persons, its lamentable failure to secure unity. However, all this was unlikely to win a case in the present. He does not – and it is hard not to see this as an unfortunate omission – convincingly champion the Englishness of the recusants or Jesuits in the fifth and sixth encounter of the *VVard-vvord*. Being so occupied in the negative case – proving that they were not traitors – meant that the positive case did not stand out sufficiently clearly.

Most illuminating of all are the two intertextual show-downs between Persons, on the one hand and one or both of his opponents on the other. The first concerns the rhetoric of the plain and true English heart which Hastings had been so enthusiastic about exploiting. Persons picked up on this emphasis, found it to be nonsensical and proceeded to rip the idea apart. The phrase that he lit upon was the one where Hastings had asserted that those who were truly English would be incorruptible in their dealings with bewitching recusants and that the ‘bare sense of a true English heart’ would always be able to distinguish.¹⁰⁸ Bareness for him carried with it the wholly positively connotations of plainness, integrity and honesty, something that was made even more patent in his *Apologie* of 1600 when he returned to the idea, clarifying it still further by linking it firmly to the law of nature; his point being that even without the benefits of Divine or civil law, ‘it is such a heart, as hauing onely the light of nature [...] would not so brutishly seeke the life of their lawfull Soueraigne, to the betraying of their countrie into the handes of straungers’.¹⁰⁹ Persons reveals the workings of his mind when he simply refuses to fight on these grounds, for, as he said, ‘we do measure the matter by an other balance, then by the sense of so bare an English heart’.¹¹⁰ This moment in the exchange reveals just how different these two are in the orientation of their ideas. For the knight, as we have seen, the logic of the simple English heart was utterly fundamental; for Persons not so. It is an egregious basis for any argument.

Persons then proceeded to deconstruct and ridicule what his opponent may have meant by this ‘measure’ of Englishness. If in its original state, the heart praised by the other was, he contends with some asperity, not Christian at all, but a ‘hard heathenish’ one. Nor does the fact that it is

¹⁰⁷ [Persons] 1599, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Hastings 1598, p. 86.

¹⁰⁹ Hastings 1598, p. 171.

¹¹⁰ [Persons] 1599, p. 82. His sixth encounter deals with the case of recusants.

English add to its credit, because ‘if you do adde the English cut’, it is even worse than in the state of nature, considering how ‘hartes go there for the most parte among protestantes at this day’. To add a ‘cut’ is somewhat oxymoronic but appropriate. What Persons probably means is that the Reformation has added what was not there before, and taken away what was. Besides, he goes on blisteringly, the fact of one’s heart being confined to English sympathies showed petty-mindedness and abject servility in the extreme.

[I]f it be so truly and barely English, as it hath seen no other countries, nor knowen other paradice then English earth, nor thought of other blisse then with you is commonly treated, and that it be as servilly tyed to oxen, and steeres, and other temporal base commodities, as your soule sheweth itself to be.¹¹¹

Neither Persons’ God nor his world-view was especially English. He has no sensitive national consciousness about these matters and is blistering about any attempt to construct such. As a well-travelled man (having lived in Prague, Rome, Padua, Venice, Paris, and Spain), he mocks the narrow parochialism that Hastings’ ‘measure’ implied. His vision was so narrow that he could envisage no other paradise than an ‘English earth’. There is a critique of uncouth ruralism in the passage – Hastings’ family were landowners – and a scathing disdain for the idea of a national utopia, wedded to base things like cows and commodities. We also note that he tries to turn the accusation of servility against his opponent. Hastings’ ‘bareness’ is Persons’ ‘baseness’; his freedom is the other’s boorishness; his prosperity is the other’s parochialism.

Persons does not stop there. Relentlessly, he moved on to exploit the theological resonances of the comment, taking issue with the description of ‘bareness’ as something positive, because all it brought to mind was ‘your English sole faith [*sola fides*] and bare belief’. The ‘your’ English distanced himself somewhat: he seemed to take positive pride in not having a narrow English heart – nationally, culturally, and theologically. Fundamentally, he was insinuating that the heart described and endorsed by Hastings was incapable of displaying or, for that matter, recognising goodness or greatness, being merely tied to its antipathies, – or as Persons spelt them out here – ‘to the contempt and hatred of all good woorkes’, and ‘to resist the bewitching of recusants good life [... and of] Christ himself’.¹¹² Persons shows himself quite the controversialist, with plenty of

¹¹¹ [Persons] 1599, p. 81.

¹¹² [Persons] 1599, pp. 81–82.

stomach for a good fight. It is an unambiguously combative response to a discourse based around a particular vision of national identity and is relevant for us because it shows that not every polemicist was persuaded by the easily-used, easily-accessible emotionally-charged idiom about what Englishmen ought to do *qua* Englishmen and how they ought to feel. Yet, strategically, although his mockery is refreshingly iconoclastic, it may have been ill-timed. If the only time he met his opponent on his own terms was to scoff at them, then this did not give him a chance to play the loyalist card.

The other striking instance of complete divergence on this subject occurs in the traditional staging of national enemies in the work of the Protestant controversialists and Persons' refusal to do anything of the sort. With Hastings and Sutcliffe, it is as we would expect: foreigners, especially the Spaniards, are type-cast as the villains. In the opening image of *A watch-word*, Hastings conjured up a vivid image of the 'raging hearts' of Rome and Spain as if the very places could be personified in their antipathy to England.¹¹³ If Hastings does make clear distinctions between the influence of the two, it is along the lines that the latter was the political arm of the former and consequently, to his mind, more of an immediate threat. Sutcliffe is more careful in his distinctions in this regard: for him, there is a definite hierarchy of danger: the Spanish are enemies but on the bottom rung, the Pope and his agents are worse, while the recusants are the worst of all.¹¹⁴ In any case, it is principally in Hastings' work that we locate an entire 'argument' – if it can be called such – built upon the depiction of the national character of the 'Spaniard' very much in the style of the black legend. It is also significant because it attracts the attention of Persons, whose links with Spain were profound and who, on the head of it, launched a devastating critique of the idea of national typology in his eighth encounter.¹¹⁵

Hastings claimed that the natural bent of the Spaniard lay in ambition and treachery, and that, backed by Rome and Romanists, they would not rest until England was enslaved.¹¹⁶ He is the 'proude tyrannical Spaniard' of the *leyenda negra*, the endlessly repeated characterisation of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century polemics. What would happen once, or what would have happened if the 'rauening' creature – and the beast-like adjective is deliberate – did 'catch hold on vs' called forth some of his

¹¹³ Hastings 1598, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, p. 148.

¹¹⁵ [Persons] 1599, pp. 102–113.

¹¹⁶ Hastings 1598, p. 53.

grittiest speculation. The Englishman's womenfolk would be deflowered: the connection between national seduction and physical defilement, while not explicit here, is to be inferred; his sons, the future of the country would be subjected to slavery, while he himself would either face a 'lingring tormenting life, or a bloody cruell death'.¹¹⁷ In either case, a disaster. If Philip had got his way in the 1550s, legal deformation would have followed physical degradation, with common law giving way to an inquisition. Hastings' lurid depiction was the standard vision by then but it was no less compelling, serving both as a sharp warning and a reminder to the true freedom-loving national man to count his blessings.

For Persons, this lazy stereotyping is utterly nonsensical and he devoted the whole of his eighth and final encounter to rebutting these claims thoroughly. He *does* have something new to say here, something different: the strongest explicit statement to be found in the polemical literature of the period *against* the whole notion of national character and national stereotyping. In that, he appears more modern than so many of his contemporaries: the simple moral geography which stated that the Spanish were tyrannical, the Italians crafty, the Flemish drunks, the French flighty, he thinks entirely vacuous. There is something impressively free about the way he ridicules the idea that there are such things as generic national characterisations, asserting that in every nation there were in fact 'all sortes'.¹¹⁸ Cutting through swathes of invective and fallacy, he argues forcefully that there are no national types, merely individuals, and that it would be as ridiculous to depict all Spaniards in terms of 'the Spaniard', as to judge Englishmen on the basis of a few unrepresentative examples. The passage is worth quoting in full.

[W]hat reason is there [...] that these defectes should be attributed vniversally to the whole Spanish nation, wherin there are to be found thousands that haue no part nor fault, as on the other syde, if some English-men as they passe ouer other countries, by sea and land at this daye should behaue themselves scandalously, by gluttonie and drunkenness (as diuers haue byn said to do) *is it a lawfull consequence to say or think, that all English are such at home, and that these are the qualities of the English nation, as Sir Francis sayth here of the Spaniardes?*¹¹⁹

The disreputable English travellers that satirists loved to hate: were they representative of the nation at large? Persons' answer is a resounding

¹¹⁷ Hastings 1598, pp. 86–88.

¹¹⁸ [Persons] 1599, p. 105.

¹¹⁹ [Persons] 1599, p. 105. My italics.

negative. Enjoying the rout he was making, he continued slyly that supposing there was a situation in which a particular English knight produced a book full of lies and calumnies, it would not be at all fair if foreigners judged all English knights to be so 'fond and frantik'. The implication lay open and wounding that Sir Francis was not the typical Englishman any more than he was the typical knight.¹²⁰ The nation was a sum of its individuals not a collectivity of 'types'. Persons was also bold to assert the positive in England's past relationship to Spain and to point out that it was not merely – or even primarily the Spaniards who hated the English but the English who had mistread and misinterpreted the Spaniard. Moreover, he accounted for anti-Spanish prejudice not only in terms of anti-Catholicism, but also in terms of sheer envy at their success, something that his opponents would have been loathe to admit, but which, given Spanish greatness on the world stage, was a fair judgement.¹²¹

In sum, what we have here is an extremely strong statement of an anti-essentialist position on national identity. Persons' scheme of things did not allow for the moral judgements of nations which was an habitual fallback position for a certain type of early-modern commentator. For him, there was no such thing as a pure and unadulterated epitome of national being and consequently, attempts to generalise about this matter deserved only derision. There was no set canon of foreign villains. This was certainly the more intellectually sophisticated point of view; but the battle for minds and hearts is not necessarily won by the better argument. Saying so did not chime at all well with the polemic of the age which thrived on a diet of anthropological Manichaeism. Given his position, he could perhaps do no less, but one cannot help feeling once again that although technically successful in shredding his adversary's argument on this point, he was strategically less than canny. There was intellectual merit in his critique but his very warmth in coming to the defence of a national enemy was hardly likely to recommend him to English readers of a certain variety. And, of course, whatever he said would be seen through the lens of his reputation as the most un-English of Englishmen. The very subtlety of his approach would count against him because subtlety was just one of those qualities which plain people abhorred. Hastings was surely not alone in attributing such counter-cultural opinions to the habitual Jesuit addiction to Spain.¹²²

¹²⁰ [Persons] 1599, p. 105.

¹²¹ [Persons] 1599, p. 104.

¹²² [Persons] 1599, pp. 104–110; Hastings 1600, p. 162.

Hastings hardly modified his views on the matter when counter-attacking.¹²³ There was one small concession, it is true, so small that it is in danger of being overlooked, when he acknowledged the existence of a remnant of Spaniards who did not have the typical disposition. Nevertheless, and he struck out again, the bloody, tyrannous, ravening and voluptuous 'humours are in the generalitie of them'.¹²⁴ Apart from this small allowance, he showed, if possible, more vehemence in depicting the innate 'cautele [cunning] of the Spaniards nature' in 1600 than he had two years previously, brandishing examples which bolstered his monolithic schema.¹²⁵ His purpose here was still exhortative, 'to put our men in mind of the Spaniards humours'.¹²⁶ As before, he was much given to speculation on what would have happened had England taken a different course, through, for instance, Elizabeth's marriage into Spain. In that case, he had no hesitation in saying that it would have led 'to the killing of all true English hearts'.¹²⁷ Sutcliffe was somewhat more even-handed. Perhaps he was a little embarrassed by his co-religionist's generic judgements; in any case, he made greater concessions, and gave a more balanced picture of Anglo-Spanish dealings in the past than Hastings was capable of doing.¹²⁸ Still from the Protestant side, a very simplified vision emerged: there was a great comfort in pawning traditional stereotypes and indulging in the pantomime play between the good English and the villainous other.

By 1604 this particular episode had either spun itself out, or perhaps, considering the internal evidence, it is better to speak of it as having been cut short. In 1602, Persons had made it clear that he envisaged a whole series of refutations to the claims made by the Knight: of the eight 'encounters' or points of debate, which he highlighted in 1599, he now focused on the first two alone. He never got around to completing the rest systematically, perhaps because the events of 1605 overtook him and made answering another kind of question more urgent. Persons, despite or perhaps because of his skills as a controversialist, did not meet them on their level to any great degree, considering it, as he made clear, too petty and parochial. Thus it came about that he only addressed the narrowly polemical questions but failed to make the emotive case, assuage their fears of the

¹²³ Hastings 1600, pp. 194–215.

¹²⁴ Hastings 1600, p. 197.

¹²⁵ Hastings 1600, p. 197.

¹²⁶ Hastings 1600, p. 196.

¹²⁷ Hastings 1600, p. 205.

¹²⁸ [Sutcliffe] 1600a, pp. 205, 189–192.

enemy within or convince readers that English Papists were as truly and really English as their Protestant brethren. Furthermore, instead of capturing and colonising the language of his opponents, he merely ridiculed it, thereby missing the opportunity of re-appropriating the rhetoric of Englishness that the others had so thoroughly cornered. The ultimate irony of the exchange thus may be that Robert Persons, who was so often vilified on all sides for being the archetype of the 'politique' Jesuit, showed himself here to be not 'politique' enough.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FABRICATION OF A JESUITED MOCK WEAL

CATHOLIC REASSERTIONS OF ENGLISHNESS

One of the principal dangers in this subject is to see the struggle as between ‘two tightly consolidated blocs, Roman and Protestant.’¹ Binaries were attractive to polemicists but as historians, one is rightly sceptical about their truth-value. There was much contestation both within as well as between Catholic and Protestant factions. As regards the perceptions of national status with which we are concerned, not all Protestants would have felt Catholics to be un-English, especially when social similarities or geographical proximity were such as to override religious divisions. Quite understandably, many Protestants would have had more in common with Catholic neighbours of a similar social standing than they would have had with coreligionists further down or up the social scale. Besides, in a population of 4 million, the 40,000 or so remaining Catholics did not seem so much of a threat. Catholics, for their part, having started to accept minority status from the end of the 1580s onwards were finding a *modus vivendi* under the Protestant regime and, some spectacular exceptions aside (the most infamous being the Gunpowder Plot), proved to be moderately successful at adapting in the Jacobean period.² No doubt they continued to see themselves as English despite the prevalent rhetoric of estrangement, but to date, they had not done a convincing job of asserting it in print. At the cusp of the new century, we find evidence of a desire among a sector of the Catholic community to do just that: to recapture lost ground and to reclaim their status as true sons of the nation. Their success was limited. Certainly, they did not manage to reverse the lazy stereotype regarding the innate foreignness of popery, but they did manage to help channel it ever more into an anti-Jesuit direction, thus, to a certain extent, taking the heat off the majority at the expense of a minority. The greatest irony was that, in making a case for loyal English Catholics, they exposed and exacerbated intra-Catholic disunity. This was unfortunate as far as presenting

¹ Questier 1996, p. 9.

² Questier 1996, p. 4.

a united front was concerned but altogether inevitable because the only way loyalist Catholics had of escaping the accusation of un-Englishness was to place the blame on the Jesuits and their followers (the Jesuited), all the while insisting on the purity of their own credentials. The Jesuited were readily sacrificed on the altar of the nation.

It was ironic that the proximate occasion should have been the Archpriest controversy from 1598 onwards, for, considering that the appointment of a senior cleric to oversee the English mission was meant to assuage tensions rather than stir them up, it ought not, strictly speaking, have been a controversy at all. Although George Blackwell, the archpriest appointed by Rome, was not himself a Jesuit, his brief to work in close consultation with the superior of the Society in England made it appear to some secular priests and interested onlookers that he was something of a puppet, and they more puppet-like still. Such a state of affairs rankled with many, although not perhaps as many as the pamphlet overflow would lead us to believe.³ Added to the news of Persons' re-appointment as rector of the English college in Rome in the same year, the whole was seen as an unwarranted Jesuit take-over of the English mission.

Accusations of excessive Jesuit influence have to be balanced against the bare facts: the actual numbers of Jesuits working on the ground in England was very small. In 1593, there were merely 6; by 1598, the number had increased to 14. By 1610, there were 51. At any one time, some would have been in prison.⁴ Still, despite small numbers, they were deemed to have disproportionate influence throughout the period, and the general fear was compounded by the knowledge of the Jesuits' expulsion from France 1594 to 1603 and the speedy translation and publication of French anti-Jesuit texts in England.⁵ Although the Archpriest controversy has a narrowly technical side involving clerics annoyed at the preferment of others, the affair has wider significance in that it afforded an opportunity to some spokesmen for the Catholic community to drive a wedge between the true Catholic English and those tainted with Jesuitism. It is the most striking instance in the whole period of Catholics entering the polemical

³ We do not know how great the split was amongst the seculars on this matter. Most would appear to have accepted the appointment (Pritchard 1979, p. 120), but some of the more vocal ones did not. 33 priests signed the appeal on 17 November 1600.

⁴ Foley 1877–83, vol. 7, lxvi–lxix.

⁵ See for example the Étienne Pasquier *The Jesuite displayed* (1594) and *The Jesuites Catechisme* (1602), and also Antoine Arnauld *The coppie of the Anti-Spaniard* (1590), *The arraignment of the whole society of Jesuits in France* (1594) and *Le franc discours A discourse, presented of late to the French King* (1602).

fray and battling to reassert their Englishness not only against consistently negative Protestant propaganda but against what they perceived as the subversive internationalism of the Society of Jesus.

It is the voice of Anthony Copley that stands out most clearly in this endeavour. As a layman, he was freer from the internal clerical wrangling which characterised some of the other interventions. Two works of his are notable. *An ansvvere to a letter of a Iesvited gentleman* and *Another letter of Mr. A.C. to his dis-Iesvited kinseman*, published in adjacent years, were framed as private letters, but writings of over a hundred and over eighty pages respectively were so obviously destined for publication from the start that the epistolary exclusivity is merely a veil.⁶ His 'dear cousin' stands in, as it were, for all the deceived Jesuited of England, a cautionary tale for his coreligionists. It is not the least of ironies that the Catholic Copley was responsible for bringing the opprobrious words if not the concepts of 'Jesuitism' and the 'Jesuited' into the printed English language, adding them to the growing body of words to describe a twisted nature.⁷ However, he is marginally more optimistic about conversion: holding out the possibility, from the recovery of his cousin, that even the Jesuited could become properly English again.

What makes Copley's efforts to argue his case all the more creditable is the narrowness of the plank on which he finds himself. What he had to do involved at least three different balancing acts of which he cannot but be acutely aware. First, he wanted to state firmly that Catholic identity could be validly held in conjunction with national allegiance, but in so doing, he had to avoid eulogizing the past, making abrasive comments about the present, or advancing imprudent speculations about the return of the old religion in glory. Secondly, he had to come up with a convincing distinction between the Jesuited English and other English Catholics to replace the prevalent axiom which tended to work against all. At the same time, he was not to make his criticism of them so damning as to leave no possibility for a process of what he inelegantly referred to as dis-Jesuitism. Thirdly, it was out of the question that he would back down on the Roman element of Catholicism, although it was going to be necessary to keep it

⁶ The second letter comes with a third added on, entitled 'A third letter of Mr A.C. apologetical for himself against the calumnies contained against him in a certain Jesuited libel intituled 'A manifestation of folly and bad spirit' in which he replies to [Persons] 1601.

⁷ The *OED* does acknowledge that the first appearance of 'Jesuited' was in C[opley] 1601. But it sets a latter date for the appearance of Jesuitism, tracing it to Barlow 1609. In fact, it should be dated to the works of Copley and Bagshaw some seven years before. See, for example, C[opley] 1601, p. 39; [Bagshaw] 1601, p. 3. Iesuiticall is a word they also use. [Bagshaw] 1601, sig. a4^v; C[opley] 1601, pp. 70, 120.

muted and contained and to explain away the uncomfortable aspects which Protestant writers had relentlessly exposed. He was going to have to find a way of taking the sting out of popery. These were not easy tasks, and his manner of engaging with them shows some ingenuity and a measure of originality.

The way in which he develops his ideas about nature in connection with nation and religion in these texts is one his most effective ways of presenting his case. For a start, it is not human nature that is under sharp focus but a particular application of it, differentiated along national lines. Identification with one's country wells up, he believes from the 'ingenerate law of nature' and thus to go against one's country in any way is not only *contra ius gentium* but also, he hastens to add, 'vnnaturall, yea and against all grace', that is to say, not just a legal infraction against the conventions but something that contradicts the profound natural logic of being.⁸ So for him, one's true nature is nationally defined, and he goes on to articulate it in a specifically English context. His version of what English nature should entail draws heavily on the Protestant hegemonic vision, for all that he is Catholic. His point is, undoubtedly, that Catholics can share in this too, and that they can be at one with their Protestant countrymen. The most striking feature is the emphasis on liberty. There is a deep repulsion to subjection visible throughout – most of all at the culmination of an intensely lyrical passage glorifying England, when he winds up by considering how 'dishonourable and abominable' it would be to 'true English-nature and valour' to become subject to Spain.⁹ Freedom is emphasised to counteract the axiomatic association between popery and slavery. He is the first Catholic controversialist to insist on breaking apart the association, and therefore, one might conclude, the only one who took it seriously enough in the first place. Indeed, it is in his text that we find the most idiosyncratic analogies on the subject. It is unthinkable 'as hitherto *England* hath bin selfely substantiue so it scorne to become now an adiectiue, much more subiectiue to *Spaine* or anie other nation in the world'.¹⁰ So also Englishmen, as independent stand-alone 'nouns', cannot consent to lower themselves to merely adjectival status: the English Spaniard is a grammatical barbarity as well as a moral oxymoron. The theme recurs in a less poetic way in his 1602 letter where he says that it is incumbent upon the Queen to ensure that England 'subsist of its selfe

⁸ C[opley] 1601, pp. 11, 40.

⁹ C[opley] 1601, p. 48.

¹⁰ C[opley] 1601, p. 73.

secure and English [...] without being beholding'.¹¹ We recall that this is precisely the language that has been used repeatedly to describe the unnatural behaviour of Catholics in other polemical works. Here, he deliberately appropriates the same idiom and insists on sharing this common ground with Protestants.

Furthermore, he clearly wants to show that loyal English Catholics share the same prejudices and antipathies towards the ways of being of their national enemies as their Protestant countrymen. '[W]e' as Englishmen would never be able to abide Spanish 'humours and fashions'.¹² It is a simple statement but highly revealing. Copley, it would appear, wants to shrug off the constant corrosive cultural associations that Protestant writers have created between English Catholics and Spaniards, in a language which portrayed the former as being infected by Hispanic humours. We note, *en passant*, that what Persons refused to do (i.e. buy into stereotyping), Copley does with great gusto, having no particular intellectual scruples on the matter.

Another way in which he makes his case is to argue on the basis of numbers that the vast majority of English Catholics are truly English. It is a reaction to the exaggerated view that in every Papist heart there lurked a traitor in potential. There are, he claims, 40,000 Catholics in the country. Out of these, most are peaceable, and this meant that '*England* hath as true English-Catholickes in it, as it hath Catholicke-English'.¹³ He reverses the terms rather pertly: it is all one. Neither one takes precedence over the other. How to explain away the fact that the plots do tend to come from Catholics? Copley has a neat reply ready. If they are not loyally English, then they are not properly Catholic either: they have been Jesuited. This is his way of turning the aggressive anti-Catholic rhetoric away from the body as a whole and towards a limb that he thinks easy to amputate. These confident statements about the Englishness of Catholics have also to be seen against the background of rather more ambiguous sentiments. He evidently felt an urgent need to remind his co-religionists of their fundamental duties: 'euer let vs that are true Catholikes perseuer as we are and ought no lesse true English'.¹⁴ The letters are injunctions rather than commentaries.

¹¹ C[opley] 1602, p. 44.

¹² C[opley] 1602, p. 17.

¹³ C[opley] 1601, pp. 98–99. We cannot be certain of the figure, given the spectrum-like nature of religious affiliation especially in penal times, but his estimate seems fairly accurate, according to modern data. By 1640, the number may have risen to 60,000. Bossy 1975, pp. 188, 193.

¹⁴ C[opley] 1602, p. 44.

Personally, he expressed his comfort in the compatibility of his dual identity which rested 'vpon true-Catholicke and English loyaltie'.¹⁵ He had previously stated that he was prepared to go to any length of mortification rather than give up on this: 'rather then be so vn-Catholicke and vn-English, I protest I had rather neuer eate bit of fish or flesh whiles I liue'.¹⁶ Even more emphatically, he advanced the view, radical in its way, that to be Catholic was actually to be more English, not less: 'let vs remember we are Englishmen, and also Catholicks, *whereby bound to be the rather true English*'.¹⁷ He repeats this the following year, saying that 'it were a maruell if Englishmen, especially Catholickes, who (as such) ought to be the best and loyallest subiects'.¹⁸ Why does he advocate that Catholics show themselves to be more English than other English people? Two reasons may be inferred. Firstly, being true to one's nation is in keeping with religious truths and these a Catholic should respect more than anybody else. Secondly, it is his way of saying that his co-religionists need to prove their critics wrong: they themselves must restore their own image and standing after the contestations of recent decades. This is an entirely new idea. Of course, in the subsequent history of English Catholics, particularly upper class ones, their cultivated sense of 'Englishness' has indeed been remarkable, proved, not least, after the passage of William Pitt's relief bill in the 1790s, by their disproportionate presence in the armed forces of the country and shown in their consistent (and, at times, dramatic) lack of solidarity with Irish Catholics (seen as being irredeemably other). The 'Cisalpine' rather than the 'Ultramontane' spirit has also been a feature of the minority community, as they stayed aloof from Rome as much as possible, so as to avoid accusations of excesses of papistry. One historian of the subject has indeed affirmed that a 'line of spiritual descent' [...] can be traced from the lay opponents of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century through the supporters of the oath of allegiance under James I' to the Cisalpine English Catholics of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.¹⁹ However, this may be, in the early 1600s, Copley's is the first call in print for Catholics to be more loyal to the present regime, its government and its liberties than their Protestant counterparts. It is a plea for Catholics to become more English than the Protestants. They have something to prove.

¹⁵ C[opley] 1601, p. 118.

¹⁶ C[opley] 1601, p. 74.

¹⁷ C[opley] 1601, p. 73. My italics.

¹⁸ C[opley] 1602, pp. 15, 17.

¹⁹ Mathew 1936, p. 148.

The allegiance of priests in particular was, inevitably, an issue, and Copley would go out of his way to endorse the secular priests of whom there were several hundred in England at that time. He insisted that they alone were the 'naturall broode of our English Church', and that they possessed 'pure English nature and alleageance'.²⁰ They were not spies for Rome. Copley does not sidestep an awkward issue: in the 1580s, it was they who had welcomed the Jesuits in the first instance. How is Copley going to get around this? The argument that he makes in their regard shows some astuteness. He cannot deny the fact but he does mitigate the blame accorded to them. His summation of the episode is that, although it was surely a *faux pas*, it was a comprehensible one, born of naïveté rather than malice. Furthermore, even their defects are mitigated by the fact that they are not peculiar to them as a class of men but lamentably common to the whole nation.

They like simple-ciuill English-men doing them [the Jesuits] at the beginning all the honour that might be, whereby to bring them (being straungers) in acquaintance with our Countrey [...] have wrought them such an existimation, as now (we see) cuts their throates, through their vngratefull making use of such their curtesies against them.²¹

There are a number of features evident here. Firstly, the guilelessness of the English priests is a backhanded compliment: even though it has led them astray in this case, it is surely to be preferred to all the 'cosining constructions' of the Jesuits.²² Besides, it has resonances of plainness and sincerity on which so many of his contemporaries set so high a value. Also notable is the reference to their simple and honest civility, an implicit contrast to the Jesuits' false gallantry. Secondly, we note that he talks of the early Jesuit arrivals as 'strangers'. This is untrue. They were all Englishmen, but his point is that they had been made into foreigners by their sojourns abroad. Subsequent efforts made by the seculars to convert them back to native ways were doomed to failure, eliciting only a response of rank ingratitude. Crucially, his perspective widens at this point, and instead of holding the seculars responsible, he shifts the blame from the seculars to the nation at large, saying 'And so vaine a Nation are we, and euer were, to praise outlandish wares though less good (nay bad) aboue

²⁰ C[opley] 1601, p. 19; C[opley] 1602, p. 44. He calls the seculars the seminary priests. The remaining Marian priests would not have been under the surveillance of the Archpriest. See Pritchard 1979, p. 120.

²¹ C[opley] 1601, p. 37.

²² C[opley] 1601, p. 84.

our owne'.²³ In other words, this is just one incident of many, and much of a colour with the national penchant for the strange, the unfortunate habit of looking abroad rather than within for things of value. So Catholic priests are not exceptional in being 'taken in' by outlandish imports. They have been cozened but then again, so has everybody. Catholic secular priests are 'English' even in their weaknesses. It is the old story, familiar through study of the Elizabethan cultural commentaries, of imitation: lamentable, of course, but not exclusively a Popish fault.

Probing his attitude to the Jesuits somewhat more requires engagement with a loaded question, uttered a little over half-way through *A letter*. He asks if 'these men [are] either Catholicks or true Englishmen'.²⁴ It is a question that elicits a strong negative, and that, not just in the face of the conventional evidence he marshals, but in the face of the language he uses so powerfully to amputate them from any sense of either. He voices the usual critique – from the impertinence of the Society's name to their vainglory, but the two points which really stand out as interesting are when he treats of them as aliens and as ubiquitous. Naturally, he will say that he is merely showing up how they have constructed themselves and that he is describing the reality rather than judging them from a sense of 'private grudge'.²⁵ The Jesuits, he maintains, are 'construing themselves *verissimè alienos* afore all others' and all the worse here in England where they are 'aliens from all English-nature, Spanish-aliens, aliens to all that is called English saue onlie English monie'.²⁶ What does it mean to construe oneself? In this text, it evidently means exactly the reverse of letting one's true nature emerge. It is an artificial activity of self-fashioning, self-fabrication even. The only 'English' item in their make-up is something that they take by stealth: English money, an imputation that they are financially insatiable and dependent on the grace and favour of the great, a common imputation against the Society.

The other resonant way in which he seeks to divorce Jesuitism from Englishness is by talking about its clerics as 'Ubiquitaries', that is to say people who gave the impression of being everywhere at once. Copley is extremely critical of their habits as 'indiuidua vaga and vndependant of any bodie at al'.²⁷ Somewhat ironically, the Jesuits are commonly pictured at both extremes of individualism and communality, dependence and

²³ C[opley] 1601, p. 37.

²⁴ C[opley] 1601, p. 90.

²⁵ C[opley] 1602, p. 61 (3rd letter).

²⁶ C[opley] 1601, p. 84.

²⁷ C[opley] 1601, pp. 27, 118.

independence. Sometimes they are depicted as an army on the move, none of them having any will of their own, but for Copley, they are wandering, aimless individuals, roaming the world intent on mischief. Moreover, he stresses their negative independence, that is to say their freedom of proper attachments and of the right sorts of bonds rather than the more commonly-mentioned slavish dependence at this point. If we are to tease out Copley's hostility towards cosmopolitanism somewhat more, we could say that the state of being ubiquitous, for him, denotes pejoratively what Catholicism denotes positively. Rootlessness was the converse of an authentic universality, and the shifting Machiavellian lifestyle often attributed to the Society flourished in such mobile conditions. Thus its members, lacking the bonds which would tie them to any civil society except their own, cannot be accommodated in this layman's vision of what ought to constitute a stable national community. Such men have excluded themselves from communion in the nation: 'What will ye haue of Vbiquitaries' he asks rhetorically 'other then mis-nature, or rather no nature at all?'²⁸ The concept of misnature is worth dwelling upon; he had mentioned it before in the letter.²⁹ Misnature is a perversion of the essence of one's being; indeed, to employ the analogy of the journey, which is very much in keeping with his ideas about ubiquity, it is as if the Jesuits have turned nature off course. In talking of their having no nature at all as he does at this point, he takes this idea one step further. English Jesuits are unnatural not just in the weaker sense that they are national anomalies but in the much stronger sense that they are completely cut off, that their nature has been uprooted rather than simply derouted. This is because, he goes on to say, such ubiquitous 'neuer hauing of their owne nation, but of a stranger ouer them, whereby to be directed Englishly'.³⁰ The last fraction of the phrase may be understood a reference to the fact that their actions are being directed from outside towards England, but crucially *not* in an English manner. They are only true to the rule of strangers.

If the Jesuits are aliens and ubiquitous, they are also akin to fallen man. They have spread sin, but national as well as moral sin. That English nature should be 'so stained' by the English Jesuits and Jesuited is a most shameful thing, the inference being that as they gain more and more into the 'hearts of Englishmen' (as he says they are), national nature will be increasingly scarred and distorted. To underscore his argument, there is

²⁸ C[opley] 1601, p. 118.

²⁹ C[opley] 1601, p. 65.

³⁰ C[opley] 1601, p. 118. The irony of this is that Copley himself after his exile travelled to Jerusalem, and then to Brussels, Rome and The Hague.

an extraordinary nationalistic usage of Thomistic theology at this point. Aquinas, in a celebrated phrase, had said that grace does not destroy but build upon nature. Copley twists this idea to his own ends: 'A shame that Religion should be so profaned, or English nature so stained: grace neuer vsing to preuaricate nature but to accomplish it'.³¹ The use to which it is put here is novel and not at all what Aquinas had in mind but Copley is keen to appropriate the authoritative moral theological language in the Catholic tradition so as to make his point more substantial.

This makes it very interesting indeed. For Copley, nature is to be understood as one's national properties and allegiances: that is all. Aquinas was talking about an unrestricted *humanitas*, which was emphatically not delimited by nation, nor by religion for that matter. Now Copley's thesis is that the Jesuits have got it wrong both ways. They manifest a 'mis-nature', and also, one could say, a spiritual dis-grace. If we draw his thought beyond the point where he is explicit, we see that, just as nature is the ground and grace is the edifice, he presents his case on the basis that one's fundamental identity is national, and that religious loyalty, although no less important, is superimposed. The English Jesuits, in abandoning the foundations of who they are, are building upon sand. Nevertheless, and this is what makes Copley a reasonably buoyant commentator on the state of affairs, he still holds out the possibility of such recalcitrants dis-Jesuiting themselves. Unlike some of the Protestant propagandists, degeneration was, to his mind, reversible to some extent.³²

If Jesuits were problematic for Copley's vision of Englishness, what about Rome? How does he try to neutralise its problematic status in late Elizabethan England? Rome is there in the background, *sotto voce* as it were, to the main theme. Maybe his frequent usage of the word Christendom is a way of de-emphasising the foreign element of it all. When he does refer to the Pope, his role is considered uniquely as it affects Englishmen. The Bull of 1570 was inconsiderable in that it left 'English hearts' intact, not 'disallegeanced so from her Maiestie' because it did not implicate any foreign powers. He wilfully ignores the generally received interpretation of this episode. Besides, as he explains later, Catholics ought not to feel compelled to obey Papal Bulls that come from the pope

³¹ C[opley] 1601, p. 39. Aquinas 1963, I, p. 30, Prima Pars Q1 a.8, ad. 2. '[G]ratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat'. This indicates that he had some theological education. He spent two years each in Rouen and Rome, including a year and a half in the English college in the latter. According to Persons he was going to become a priest, a claim which he flatly denied. C[opley] 1602, pp. 52–4 (3rd letter).

³² C[opley] 1601, p. 70; C[opley] 1602, p. 44.

as men, not as popes.³³ This position is a little semantic, it must be confessed, but necessary to allay Protestant fears that Catholics must obey everything imposed from above. The Roman dimension is anodyne, unthreatening: it is not the supranational power competing for the hearts of Englishmen. It is an essentially religious authority and its political role is relegated to the background. The loyal Catholic can be Roman (if not Papist) and English at one and the same time.

Yet in softening down references to Rome, he does not altogether drop the idea of the reconversion of England to the old faith. His vision of the future combines both trusting abandonment and a resolute nationalist imperative, the former because of his providentialism, the latter because, whatever happens, he stresses that it is necessary to do everything in an English way. Any change, in other words, must be the result of an internal process not outside interference. For a Catholic writer of the time, there is an unusual degree of *laissez-aller* in the statement 'why not let *England* continue English, and worke itself Catholicke againe (if it please God) in English manner?'³⁴ We are far removed here from the activist rhetoric of Persons and other robustly assertive Catholic restorationists. Copley later expanded on the idea of a national way forward, citing the need to look within for true solutions to their own problems. 'If we our selues within our selues banisht religion, why may not we our selues within our selues bring it in againe?'³⁵ The conversion of England is, for Copley, an entirely domestic affair, and has to remain so. If the situation is to change back, it will be a gradual and organic process, involving no international histrionics. Moreover he is prudent enough to recognise that even if things do not radically revert to old ways, the toleration for which Catholics hope in 1601 must be achieved within this frame and that they must avoid bringing to bear outside pressure on national policy. 'And far more Catholicke, and farre more naturall it is, to hope one day to be beholding to our owne State for Catholicke libertie, then to a forraine, with so desperate conditions and against all religion.'³⁶ The future, as he repeatedly brings out is in God's hands, especially as regards the conversion of the Queen.³⁷ Yet there is a clear imperative for the present which he announces, in clarion tones,

³³ C[opley] 1601, p. 48; C[opley] 1602, p. 41; C[opley] 1601, p. 39; C[opley] 1601, p. 73.

³⁴ C[opley] 1601, p. 54.

³⁵ C[opley] 1601, p. 66.

³⁶ C[opley] 1601, p. 66. There is an oblique plea in the 1602 letter, p. 44 where he says at the very end, 'Neuerthelesse it may be that casting downe by chance her Queenely eye vpon these our Appellant fathers, and vs their childrens thus loyall cariage to her State, she will in time be pleased to be less heauie Princesse vnto vs, if not indulgent'.

³⁷ C[opley] 1602, p. 44.

at the culminating point of his first letter. 'Stand we [...] that are *Englands* vpon English, and let all forraine rule goe by'.³⁸ In sum, Copley's letters are a first attempt in print to make Catholicism compatible with Englishness again. Against the pervasively stigmatising discourse, against the popular stereotypes of Popery, Copley sought to do battle. No doubt, in so doing, he expressed what many inarticulate loyalists had felt over many decades. That he makes his case at the expense of the Jesuits and those who follow them was inevitable. There was only one prejudice that was stronger and more capacious than anti-popery and that was anti-jesuitism.

Another voice that made similar claims at the time of the Archpriest dilemma was that of Thomas Bluet in his 1601 work entitled *Important considerations, which ought to moue all true and sound Catholikes, who are not wholly Iesuited*. In the disproportionately long preface, he stresses how urgent a task it is for his co-religionists who are not *wholly Iesuited* to present a coherent front. He addresses his readers 'as you are Catholike' and also in the same breadth 'as you are English'; and again as 'Catholikes and English, or if you please English Catholikes'. Like Copley, English identity is seen as natural, Catholic identity supernatural and both are inherently complementary.³⁹ He enjoins his co-religionists to live up to their double duty: 'yet were we all bound by our Catholike profession [...] by our loyal naturall English affection: to haue opposed our sleues to the Iesuiticall or Spanish faction'.⁴⁰ He warns them that if they do turn traitors, they will be despised and despoiled.

Neuer shall any Prince, people, or nation point at us: for traitors, unnaturall Englishmen: laugh us to scorne [...]: after they haue had the sacke and spoyle of our cuntry by our meanes.⁴¹

He also integrates the popular Jesuitophobic rhetoric of Protestants: the 'forreine Iesuiticall practises' are contrasted in the *Considerations* with innately English activities.⁴² All the usual accusations from 'unnatural designments', to 'bondage', 'inueigling', 'intincements' and indeed the attempts to overthrow this 'flourishing common wealth' are in evidence. It would be hard to find a Protestant text more completely saturated in this idiom. He specifies that the Jesuits are 'Hispaniated, and transported in

³⁸ C[opley] 1601, p. 65.

³⁹ Bluet 1601, *2-*2^v.

⁴⁰ Bluet 1601, **2.

⁴¹ Bluet 1601, sig. A2^v.

⁴² Bluet 1601, p. 28.

those humours the better to resemble and imitate their founder'.⁴³ It is a small point but an important one that the Englishman is regarded as having a 'nature' and the Spaniard merely 'humours'. The former demanded reverence in seventeenth-century thought: there was a fixed innateness about its workings in man, even if it did not, unfortunately, guarantee inviolability. The notion of a humour had acquired the connotation of irrationality by the early 1600s and it is this that both Copley and Bluet seem to be playing on.⁴⁴

Another very important part of what Bluet seeks to do, like Copley, is to restore the national credibility of secular priests (of which body he forms part). In contending that they were the real 'fathers' of the English mission, he says that it is not primarily because they are holier, although he does later imply this by saying that they have more martyrs, but because they are truly English 'naturall English subiects [...] unfeinedly vowed friends by birth, bloud, education, affection, religion and all motiues'.⁴⁵ These motives are reaffirmed by their behaviour, which is, as he later points out, characterised, unsurprisingly, by 'plaine dealing'.⁴⁶ What we find in Bluet is an impassioned appeal to English Catholics to side with true English priests and not to stain their 'English innate loyaltie, with Jesuiticall conspiracie of a Spanish invasion.' If they do take the other side, he makes no secret of it that the 'present state' would 'cut you off' and also that they would bring down upon the whole nation the most disastrous kind of ruin. In an extraordinarily rapt piece of prose, he declares that never shall any such fate befall England through the means of loyal secular priests. Two examples of his poetic defence of Englishness will suffice. Never shall 'Noble or Generous hart be puld down nor their ancient inheritance, [...] and patrimony' be taken from them 'by our procurement' and never shall the 'Vermilion blush of English virgins' 'be profited and made common to the abortives of the hote Spanish clime by our doing'.⁴⁷ All the staple features of the *leyenda negra* are there: the innocent English pitted against the seducing Spaniard. It is only novel because of its Catholic provenance.

The third Catholic text which seeks to remove the 'stain' of Jesuitism from English Catholicism is Christopher Bagshaw's *A sparing discoverie of our English Jesuits*. This is an exhortation 'unto all true English hearted

⁴³ Bluet 1601, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Bluet 1601, **3, **3^v, **2^v, OED sub humour.

⁴⁵ Bluet 1601, **2^v.

⁴⁶ Bluet 1601, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Bluet 1601, sigs. A2–A3.

Catholickes' to beware the 'Iesuiticall poyson'.⁴⁸ There may be marginally more compromise here for he does concede that the Order in itself is to be honoured, having been approved by the Pope. Nevertheless, as few people live according to their calling, he can inculcate them at will.⁴⁹ If there is a certain ambivalence here, it is not in his interest to acknowledge it further, and throughout he rehearses the traditional critique of their politiquing, meddling, ambition and dubious forms of spirituality, all perhaps best summed up in the reference to the ensemble of 'Machiavellian practises,' cue, it seems, for an authorial shudder.⁵⁰ Crucially, he believes that no Jesuit retains his original birth-right; the 'Inuentor of their order being a Spaniard [...] of what country soeuer any [...] are by their birth; in their hearts and practises they are altogether Spanish.'⁵¹ It is a phrase that Thomas Bell would go on to quote triumphantly a year later, his implication being that if Catholic priests think that a Jesuit cannot be English, then the matter is all the more clear: they have incriminated their own confrères.⁵² It is this axiom in any case that for Bagshaw is *hors de question*. Whilst he admits that some Jesuits may be good men, he adds immediately 'I doubt those are not Engl[ish]'. Not content with being aliens themselves, they were always trying to alienate the minds of Englishmen.⁵³

All adds up to the fact that one cannot be both a Jesuit and truly English at one time. Nor does he allow for people to 'dis-Jesuit' themselves as Copley had done. Indeed, there almost seems no hope for them; at the very end he sketches out a demonic chain of command, where the Archpriest Blackwell looks to Henry Garnett who looks to Persons who in turn looks to the devil.⁵⁴ But as we have established, such polemic ranges from the profound to the casual; if the demonic is at one end of a scale, the reference to their 'Hispanicall conceits' is at the other.⁵⁵ The usage here is on a par, in a sense, with the idea of humours which we have previously had occasion to investigate;⁵⁶ its vanity invites irreverence, its strangeness contempt. Certainly, Bagshaw is divided between taking the threat seriously and thus fearing it as devilish, and taking it lightly and mocking it. Perhaps the implication is, like it was in Bluet's *Important Considerations*,

⁴⁸ Bagshaw 1601, sig. a4^v.

⁴⁹ Bagshaw 1601, pp. 6–7.

⁵⁰ Bagshaw 1601, pp. 6, 7, 16–17, 21, 23–4, 28, 6, a2.

⁵¹ Bagshaw 1601, p. 7.

⁵² See below p. 185.

⁵³ Bagshaw 1601, sig. a2.

⁵⁴ Bagshaw 1601, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Bagshaw 1601, p. 3.

⁵⁶ See above pp. 164, 171, 179.

that the truly English have integrated identities – he *does* use this concept of integrity when ironizing on Persons' lack of it⁵⁷ – while the Hispanicised English have mere 'conceits'. If so, this would tie in very properly with the rather turgid opening image of a picture of Venus, painted so as to please the eye yet in reality concealing the person of a strumpet, a 'common queane'. In the same way as all her perfection was merely 'complementall', so the English Jesuits too have superficial conceits which pass for nature, but are in reality unnatural foreign accretions, purposefully misleading. Bagshaw is insistent that they are counterfeit Englishmen intent on bringing in a 'mock-weale', an utter inversion of the true order in church and state. This mock-weal will be characterised by despotism and oligarchical power because the Jesuits know well 'how to refine a Monarchie into the form of a Prouince.' Like Copley, Bagshaw also makes the most of the motif of the freedom-loving true Catholic Englishman. When he is depicting the havoc that Jesuits would inflict on England, he does not merely mention the danger to the privileges of the higher orders but also the dangers to the 'free holder and Tenant in fee simple of all degrees'. Everybody would suffer. He ends with the sardonic Latin tag: 'A Machinationibus Parsoni, libera nos Domine'.⁵⁸

Catholic polemics during the Archpriest controversy fracture the straight-line of the story and make it much thicker and more interesting. No longer was it just a matter of Protestants accusing Catholics of being un-English; now Catholics weighed in on the debate and boldly reasserted their national credentials and accused their Jesuited brethren instead. Although, as Questier points out for a later instance of intra-Catholic disagreement, these 'spats and disputes do generally look rather pernicky and tedious', they were in fact one of the 'central processes by which Catholicism in England was identified, defined and redefined'.⁵⁹ How successful were they? That is indeed a rather more difficult question to answer. It is true to say that anti-Catholicism was becoming more and more fixed in the groove of anti-Jesuitism in the 1600s, and undoubtedly such texts had their part to play in this development (we have seen how they were responsible for inventing/importing what would become conventional words to deride the order). Nevertheless, it is also possible that the increasingly prevalent identification of Jesuitism with un-Englishness would have happened without such interventions as Copley's, Bagshaw's

⁵⁷ Bagshaw 1601, p. 39.

⁵⁸ Bagshaw 1601, sigs. A3, A3^v, a2^r, a2^v, p. 70.

⁵⁹ Questier 2005, p. 7.

and Bluet's. Marotti comments on the fear caused by the increasing numbers of Jesuits in the country: the mission would be 106-strong by 1620 and 180 twenty years later.⁶⁰ So context alone would have contributed towards an increasing tide of hostility. Perhaps then the real measure of the success of anti-Jesuit Catholic polemic in the early 1600s is its impact on loyalist Catholics themselves to whom it was, after all, primarily addressed. They now had champions in print and more reason for drawing distinctions between themselves and a more Romanist, less authentically national element in their community. There was nothing as comforting as the neuroticism of fine discriminations: to readjust the line between the dutiful and the subversive so that they were unquestionably on the right side was useful if they desired to reintegrate fully.

As regards the print response to Catholic anti-Jesuitism, two texts in particular are noteworthy, representing both the Jesuit self-defence and a Protestant interjection. Persons was, as ever, a rogue controversialist and in *A manifestation of the great folly and bad spirit of certayne in England calling themselues secular priestes*, he playfully turned the tables on his opponents, undercutting their own boasts of English nature by talking about their humours. Anybody who has read their works, he says, has received thereby a very 'strange opinion of English mens humors, when they are in passion.' Folly, indiscretion, exaggerated language: Persons' accusations show a wearied controversialist dealing with people who are, intellectually, beneath him.⁶¹ Furthermore, he takes the time to quote entire the wordy passage of Bluet's opening and says that it is not entirely without merit.

All dearly affected [...], as wel for gyfts of graces giuen you, as you are Catholike [...] as also for the gifts of nature giuen you as you are English [...] giue me leaue by an epistle pathetical in one general passage to speake vnto you all alike, in two adoptive surnames, Catholike and English.⁶²

However, he observes that his subsequent fulminations against Jesuits and the archpriest show him as lacking in wisdom and some of the virtues befitting a Christian Catholic. It is rather sly, but as previously, we note that Persons never enters controversies with the desire to 'soothe' the plain-speaking, plain-dealing Englishman. He is never arguing on a 'national' platform at all. The unJesuited Catholics had cornered the rhetoric of Englishness.

⁶⁰ Marotti 1999, p. 14.

⁶¹ Person 1602, p. 1.

⁶² Persons 1602, p. 19.

As for what the established authorities made of the Archpriest controversy, much of that was made evident by the new wave of legislation in 5 November 1602. They accepted the sliding scale of Englishness after their own fashion: the Jesuits were given 30 days to leave the country, the others a more generous allowance of 3 months. It was on the whole a rather poor consolation. As for the reaction among Protestant polemicists, it is to that, in the voice of Bell, that we shall now turn. He brings a distinctive perspective to bear on such issues: having abandoned the Roman Catholic secular priesthood in the 1590s, he had comfortably found his way into a government pension, meted out on the understanding that he would use his inside knowledge to attack the old religion. After the spate of fierce internecine Catholic disagreements of the early 1600s, there was no one more fitting to remind 'all true hearted English subiects' of the lessons to be learned.⁶³ These lessons were all the more important given the context of succession in which he wrote. James' mother was Catholic and he himself, although Protestant, was an unknown quantity. This succession was not a subdued affair but very much in the public domain: there were many voices eager to inform the Scottish king of whom he was dealing with and of how things were done in the south. This kind of principle seems to be acting on Bell in *The Anatomie of Popish Tyrannie*. Standing out from the conventional *epistle dedicatorie*, there is a eulogy commemorating Elizabeth and hailing James, in the course of which he reassures Englishmen and defines the King's mission along papophobic lines with the words:

Yet English hearts be not dismaide,
King Iames is our regent
Hence Poperie certes he will supplant.⁶⁴

Thus the new monarch is required to fit in with the existing expectations of English hearts, rather than the other way around. The monarch is the incomer, an important bulwark against Popish tyranny, it is true, yet it is Englishmen who constitute the true point of stability against whose expectations and principles he must measure all his actions. It is noteworthy, at the same time, that his message of reassurance is for English not for British hearts. Indeed, there is little consciousness here of the effects of the Union of the Crowns.⁶⁵

⁶³ Bell 1603, fo. 4^v.

⁶⁴ Bell 1603, sig. A2^r.

⁶⁵ There is one exception: Bell 1603, sig. A3^r, where he says that the overthrow or conversion of Papists will lead to the 'comfort of all his true hearted subiects, English, Scottish, and Irish'. References to Britain never becomes a motif in the way that the English dimension does.

There is nothing outstandingly original in Bell's understanding of what it is to have a national nature. For him, 'true English natures' are measured by the traditional combination of loyalty and affection to monarch and country, as well as the requisite determination to give strangers a wide berth. Papists have excluded themselves from this, and thus should not expect any legislative tolerance. He is mystified that

Disloyall papists still presume,
A tollerate to craue.⁶⁶

He is able to assume a bland union of sentiment among the true-hearted when faced with the recent intra-Catholic divisions. An enemy's confusion must always be pleasing. 'Hence proceedeth that rare conceiued ioy, which hath enuironed me on euerie side. And which (I am well assured,) cannot but bring great contentment to your Lordship, and to all true hearted English subiects'. By 1606, when he came to writing *The Popes Funerall*, this sentiment of antipathy was still more emphatic. His wish that Papists might be 'stricken dead' came with the corollary that true-hearted English subjects would receive 'unspeakable endlesse comfort' from the fact.⁶⁷ The old prejudice was very much alive.

Yet, although Bell expresses a generic anti-Popery in these ways, his particular focus is on the Jesuits and the Jesuited. Bell's stance on them is partly explained by the fact that in former days he was a secular priest and so would have shared the traditional animus towards the upstart Society.⁶⁸ But he is also reflecting the wider trend whereby anti-popish sentiment was being channelled into anti-Jesuitism. However much attitudes might relax to law-abiding Catholics (and there is a visible relaxation under the Stuarts), attitudes to the Jesuits would remain intransigently hostile. He was quick, we notice, to have picked up the word 'Jesuited' from Copley, using it to tar a whole sector of Catholics, lay as well as clerical. This is what he does right from the title page, announcing a 'plaine declaration and Christian censure' and battling against '*English hispanized Iesuites* and their '*Jesuited Arch-priest*'. The tone is quite venomous.⁶⁹ Indeed, there is an explosion of far-fetched vocabulary. In the preface to the gentle reader, the enemies are again singled out, this time as '*Englist* [sic]

⁶⁶ Bell 1603, p. 64, sig. A2^v.

⁶⁷ Bell 1603, ¶ 2^v. The lordship in question is the Bishop of Durham to whom the work is dedicated. Bell 1606, sigs. A5^r–A5^v.

⁶⁸ He grudgingly admits that there is a 'better sort' of secular priest but not a better sort of Jesuit. Bell 1603, p. 81, sig. B1^v.

⁶⁹ Bell 1603, Title page.

Spaniolized Iesuites with all Iesuited popelings'.⁷⁰ The word popeling has echoes of hireling, with all that this implied of subservience. These are preposterous collocations indeed – as preposterous as the realities they are meant to describe. Neither he nor anyone who thought like this was likely to be convinced by Richard Smith's counterargument in *An Answer to Thomas Bels late Challenge* that the foreignness of the Pope was actually an advantage when it came to internal English affairs, because he would deal in the manner of a 'stranger dispassionately'.⁷¹ One's national allegiance was not fit matter for dispassionate analysis. The heart should be engaged and partisan.

In a subsequent pamphlet, *The downfall of popery: proposed by way of a new challenge to all the English Jesuits and Jesuited or Italianized papists*, the Hispanic taint gave way to the Italianate when the matter was more doctrinal.⁷² In both cases, with the turning of the adjective into a pejorative form (-ized), he wanted to mimic the ugly reality of those who have turned their English natures into something else, something less. This sweeping challenge echoes through his works, and one of the effects of the repetition *ad nauseam* is that, in much the same way that Anthony's insidious insistence on Brutus' honour in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* leads us to doubt its veracity, Bell's challenge to the *English* Jesuits and Jesuited Papists makes us entirely sceptical of their credibility as Englishmen at all.⁷³

The greatest irony (for the Catholics of Copley's ilk) in Bell's polemic was the way he exploited what they had to say about the Jesuits, but never gave any endorsement to their earnest declarations of loyalty and true allegiance. He was simply not interested in defending the Englishness of some Catholics; his burden was to alienate them all. The fact that the Society had been condemned by co-religionists only added strength to his argument. It is in the way of being his trump card. He directs his readers' attention, for example, to the part in Copley's *An ansvere to a letter of a Iesvited gentleman*, where he had excluded the Jesuits from possession of true Catholic religion and 'true English nature and valure'.⁷⁴ Bell adds a 'marke well this lesson' in the margin at this point, a didactic nudge: his readers need only concern themselves with the appropriate lessons to be drawn from that particular controversy. We have already seen how Bell quotes triumphantly Bagshaw's damning statement about the foreignness

⁷⁰ Bell 1603, sig. A3^r.

⁷¹ Smith 1605, p. 20.

⁷² Bell 1604, Title Page.

⁷³ See, for example, Bell 1605, p. 22; Bell 1606, sig. E3^r.

⁷⁴ Bell 1603, p. 21. Quoting C[opley] 1601, p. 70.

of Jesuits. They stood incriminated by their own: this is enough for him to prove that the whole community of popery represents ‘troubles, cruelties and garboyles’.⁷⁵

Although much of his thinking is fairly crude diatribe, he does articulate a concept of ‘formalism’ which is of some interest. He has evidently been much struck by the comment of a Scottish Jesuit, Alexander Hays who, ‘out of the abundance of his heart’, is credited with having spoken the following words: ‘Hitherto [...] we haue beene Spayniards, but now we are constrained to be French. It is all one, we must formalize until a fitter season’.⁷⁶ In short, what they are being told to do when on mission is to temporise, make shift, and play parts as convenient for the time being. Bell finds this chameleon-like behaviour altogether unacceptable: they ‘will be Spaniards, or Frenchmen, or whatsoever else, if opportunities be offered thereunto’. They take on the form of something else but have no substance to back it up. The idea of the Jesuits being archetypes of formalism is of a piece with the idea that they were courtiers, a view that he had already expressed. It also tallied with the accusation of colour-changing. Members of the Society, he said, ‘varie their colours like the Camelion’.⁷⁷ This was not just a reference to the Jesuits usage of multiple disguises to help them pass unnoticed in dangerous territory. It was also an accusation that their identity was contingent on circumstances.

Accusations of formalism have a particular resonance in relation to language and rhetoric. One of the most notorious controversies of the era was that surrounding equivocation and mental reservation. Equivocation had first come to prominence in an English context in the trial of Robert Southwell in 1595 and was even then criticised by Sir Edward Coke. Henry Garnett wrote *A Treatise of Equivocation* in the same year, stating the uses and limitations of the practice but it remained unpublished. The issue was to become ever more problematic in the 1606 trial of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, especially during Garnett’s own trial. When in moral *extremis*, the logic went, a person could, consciously and deliberately, use ambivalent words, or ‘hold’ something back. This offered self-protection or protection of a cause, and was regarded by some theologians as an ethically-defensible position when faced with contradictory

⁷⁵ See above, pp. 180–181 Bell 1603, pp. 2–3.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Bell 1603, p. 54. The only Hay matching the description that I have been able to locate is John Hay, who became a Jesuit and went to Scotland 1578. He notes during his time there that Jesuits are being called a new race of persons. Hay to Mercurian, Paris 9 November 1579, quoted in Forbes-Leith 1885, pp. 141–165.

⁷⁷ Bell 1603, pp. 2, 54, 58.

demands for truth-telling and secret-keeping, but Bell and many other contemporaries saw it as the most sinister of practices. He redefines it for his readers 'in plain English' as lying and cogging.⁷⁸ What he is effectively saying here is that the Jesuits' very usage of language – however much they conceal unpleasant realities by ornate Latinate terms like *mentalis restrictio* – needs demotic translation if it is to be understood and thus repulsed by right-living and right-speaking Englishmen. The subordination of meaning to form is pure casuistry. He eschews all pretension to rhetoric (although, as we have established that in itself is a rhetorical ploy) and is careful to draw attention every so often in his account to the fact that he for one is speaking 'in plaine English'.⁷⁹ Bell may not be a particularly profound thinker, but he has caught the flavour of some of the discourses of the day. These moments of his exposition open up the deeper recesses of contemporary thought on what it was to be English and indeed what it was to be 'true' and 'plain'. In his shambling and none too sophisticated way, in the very vitriol of his assumptions and judgements, he is pushing towards an essentialist view of national nature, just as some of his polemical predecessors were doing. This English nature, if abandoned either wilfully through malice, or unconsciously through naïveté, left one dispersed amidst a multitude of superficial and perverting forms. By acting 'in a character', the Jesuits acted out of character, their native character at least, which to Bell, was the one that really mattered.

STAGING ENGLISHNESS AND JESUITISM

The two major dramas of the early 1600s in which English Catholics played a part – the Gunpowder Plot and the Oath of Allegiance controversy – cast a long shadow over all subsequent thinking in their regard. Both, furthermore, could be said to have had prominent Jesuit dimensions. Jesuit confessors were implicated in the first because, although knowing and disapproving of the plans, they were not permitted to break the seal of confession, a right to silence that was savaged in Henry Garnett's 1606 trial.⁸⁰ In the subsequent allegiance dilemma of 1606 onwards, Jesuits in general opposed taking the oath.⁸¹ Nevertheless, neither controversy gives

⁷⁸ Bell 1603, p. 29.

⁷⁹ Bell 1603, p. 29; Bell 1604, sig. Ai^v; Bell 1606, sigs. C1^r, I3^v.

⁸⁰ Caraman 1964 provides the most thorough description of this episode.

⁸¹ Sommerville 1981 provides the most in-depth account of the controversy surrounding the Oath of Allegiance.

immediate rise to the sort of explicit reflection on Englishness that we have been considering. In the first instance, it could be because the plot was an event that corroborated what had already been said about Popish treachery. It was a manifestation in itself: one did not need to prove anything after it, or convince anyone that there was a serious threat. That the participants in the Oath of Allegiance controversy did not choose to argue in the language of Englishness gives us pause. It becomes understandable when one considers that the authors who, in Johann Sommerville's words, included 'some of the best minds in Europe for a decade' produced works of high theology and political theory, addressed to their fellow polemicists above the heads of the populace, as it were, and thrashing out the question of allegiance in all its dimensions and reverberations.⁸² Unlike the sources already considered, the interventions in this debate lasting from 1606 to 1614 were not formulated as appeals to the true-hearted Englishman, or as direct warnings to him to avoid degeneration from that state. This gives rise to an interesting insight in itself: discourses which give prominent place to the idiom of national identity are more likely to be (relatively) demotic than high-brow.

There is no question but that religious conflict was the chief drama of the era and appropriately enough, one of the most salient texts in the later period is a play, namely the *succès de scandale* of its day, Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chesse*, produced in 1624. This particular drama is, one might even say, the high point in the representation of dichotomous English and Jesuited identities.⁸³ Given the prevalence of theatrical motifs throughout this discourse, it is only fitting that the polarised identities should be played out in front of an audience of tens of thousands. In fact, it adds not a little to the interest to say that this was the most watched play of the whole era during the short space of its performance: about a tenth of London's entire population saw it.⁸⁴ One contemporary noted how it was 'followed wth extraordinarie concourse, and frequented by all sorts of people old and younge, rich and poore, masters and servants, papists and puritans'.⁸⁵ In many cases, they saw what they wanted to see, and what constant propaganda had prepared them for: the triumph of the

⁸² Sommerville 1981, p. 372. Contributions to the debate include [James I] 1607; [Persons] 1608; Bellarmine 1608; Andrewes 1609.

⁸³ Figure 2 represents the frontispiece to this work.

⁸⁴ Corns 1999, 12.

⁸⁵ Chamberlain to Carleton 21 August, 1624. Quoted in Bald 1929, p. 163. See also *Cal of S.P. (Ven.)* vol. 18, no. 577.

plain-dealing English over the scheming Papist foreigner. They had the thrill of seeing themselves endangered and almost seduced on the stage, but at last win out over their traditional enemy. After nine enormously successful consecutive nights, it was controversially stopped because the Spanish Ambassador complained (in French) that it was against the 'reputation and civility of the English nation'. The King took action and author and actors were themselves called before the Privy Council.⁸⁶

The popularity of the play had much to do with the immediate context, that is to say with Prince Charles' recent unpopular voyage to Spain in the company of the Duke of Buckingham in search of a Spanish bride, the elusive Infanta Maria Anna. This was meant to be the culmination of a rapprochement between the Stuarts and the Spanish Habsburgs that had preoccupied James in his later years. It was also regarded as a possible way of helping to settle the European war, on-going since 1618. But all this was anathema to a certain type of Englishman. One could say that, in some respects, *A Game at Chesse* harkens back to the writings of some of the Elizabethan writers in its scepticism about high-status diplomatic manoeuvrings and its deliberate rootedness in 'common-man' agendas and principles. The match (and indeed the idea of Catholic-Protestant unity) was 'cross-grained generally unto the inclination of the people of England'.⁸⁷ In any case, the royal tide was turning in their favour, because the marriage negotiation had definitively broken down by the end of 1623, and Charles came back keen for war. The pro- and anti-war lobbies fought it out in the subsequent 1624 parliament. Middleton's play, it could well be argued, is an example of literary war-mongering. Its themes, however, range beyond the narrowly topical, drawing on more general anti-Spanish prejudice with which many theatre-goers in the Stuart period would have very familiar. The play also exploits, to a quite extreme degree, the anti-Jesuit animus, by now an engrained groove of thought. Both prejudices had come down to the late Jacobean generation, gaining accretions along the way, and were linked together irrevocably in many minds.

Middleton chose to represent the international scene as a chess board on which was being played a fiercely serious game between the White House, representing England, and the Black, the Jesuited regime of Habsburg Spain.⁸⁸ So much of the literature has fashioned forth 'types'

⁸⁶ A copy of the Ambassador's letter is to be found in Phialas 1954, pp. 389–399. My translation.

⁸⁷ Warwick 1813, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Upon the chess metaphor and violations of the game's rules within the play see Limon 1986, pp. 98–104, 109.

and 'anti-types': the conceit of the game of chess allowed Middleton to characterise players both as individuals and as symbols. The White King is clearly James I; the Black King, Philip IV whilst Charles and the Duke of Buckingham figure as the White Knight and Duke. Count Gondomar, the hated Spanish Ambassador, appears as the villainous Black Knight and Count Olivares, the royal favourite and director of Spanish foreign policy as the Black Duke.⁸⁹ Many of the other pieces, especially the pawns, are principally to be understood symbolically. Interestingly, the sub-plot in which they figure indeed is particularly important in this play, absorbs more textual space and is characterised by some very striking scenes. There are a few particularly identifiable characters among them but the main point about them is that they could be *anybody* English or Spanish. The battle between the two houses is construed not merely – or primarily – as a *grande affaire d'état* in which ordinary people do not matter. Middleton's point is that everyone has their part to play in ensuring that England wins this struggle for itself.⁹⁰

The anti-Catholic animus in this play is based on the assumption that Catholicism, particularly in its 'Jesuited' manifestation, fully identifies with and indeed is behind the policies of Habsburg Spain and that, together, they are inimical to what constitutes Englishness, as mediated through its people and institutions. This is Middleton's purpose in thrusting forward the figure of Ignatius at the very outset, with error at his feet, for it is thanks to him and the 'children of my cunning' that such a game is played out in the first instance.⁹¹ He has fathered generations of Spaniards to thwart England. That theirs is pre-eminently a political mission is revealed most strikingly of all by the Black Bishop's Pawn, the archetypal devious Jesuit, who presents a letter from the Assistant Fathers, naming the countries where they have ambitions: *Anglica* is the first word to emerge in the secret missive which has been written with lemon juice. The Jesuits are utterly at one with the secular Spanish powers in this desire for universal dominion: it is their 'mayne worke, the great Existence / The Hope monarchall'.⁹² Catholics are associated with the wrong kind of

⁸⁹ Middleton takes some dramatic liberties with the form of a game of chess: Dukes are of course interlopers. For more possible identifications see Bald 1929, p. 11.

⁹⁰ Notably the White King's Pawn was meant to be Lord Cranfield, the Lord Treasurer. Marotti concludes that the Black Queen's Pawn is Mary Ward, an English nun, who set up the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Ignatian model: thus a female Jesuit, in Middleton's view. Marotti 1999, p. 21.

⁹¹ Middleton 1929, The Induction, line 54.

⁹² Middleton 1929, I.1. 327, 315.

political activism and a very unfortunate type of universalism. This corresponds with the long-held commonplace that Popery was not merely a profession but a central government, acting through national governments. Particularly striking is the Black Knight's depiction of the acquisition of world hegemony. Spain wants to consume other nations as if they were courses in a meal. France, for example, was the lean, Germany the lard, and Venice the gravy. As for England,

Wee count but the White Kingdome [...]

The garden for our Cooke to pick his Sallets'.⁹³

The Jesuited Spaniards endeavour to achieve global domination through the usual methods of deceit, seduction, craft, and various subtleties in word and deed. The Black Bishop's Pawn, Machiavellian to the core, defends his attempted seduction on the grounds that it too is forwarding the great cause by indirect ways. The end justifies all their means. Generic and crude the characterisations may well be, but this is a good example of the efficacy of popular theatre in feeding off all the conventional stereotypes. The caricatures have been fashioned repeatedly over two to three generations at least so that by now, the audience are within the same intellectual cocoon.

Compared to the colourful, if woefully stereotypical, Spanish personages, the White House appears rather anaemic and pallid: yet in a sense their relative passivity is the whole point: they are emphatically *not* playing the game in the *politique* way that their adversaries are. They are characterised by the absence of deceit, disguise, and corruption. This theme is heralded from the start in the familiar equivalence between Englishness and plain dealing.

Plaine-dealing (thus) by wisedomes guide,

Defeats the cheats of Craft and Pride.⁹⁴

Plain dealing is a refusal to 'deal' at all in the wheedling, corrupt manner characteristic of the way the Spaniards are depicted as using throughout. *They* after all are the ones to refer regularly to 'our practice' and business.⁹⁵ But Middleton was thus facing a problem. The victory of the English side had to be brought about in such a way as to preserve their plainness: they could not resort to any trick or manoeuvre without undermining their own nature. The resultant check-mate by discovery was his solution. It

⁹³ Middleton 1929, V.3. 93–4.

⁹⁴ Middleton 1929, p. 47.

⁹⁵ Middleton 1929, I.1.119.

involved the White Knight bringing the Black Knight and Duke to the confession of their own duplicity: the former affirmed that dissimulation is the 'prime State-Verture' and admitted that their side have always dissembled, upon which he is promptly check-mated.⁹⁶ The English keep distant from the machinations of the game and still triumph. The absence of 'colour' both literally and metaphorically was thus a point in their favour.

There is another plausible reason for the relative dramatic pallor of the White side. Middleton, it would appear, was more concerned with the idea of an attack on things English than on describing Englishness itself. Hence it was appropriate that it be represented by the vulnerable, virginal, but curiously robust and ultimately victorious pieces. Despite his ultimate triumph, the White Knight was in an extremely vulnerable position for much of the play, having being almost entrapped by the other side.

I should transgresse sure,
Were I to change my side, as you have much wrought mee to it.⁹⁷

Charles who, as heir, should have been a national bulwark had revealed a very vacillating dimension of late. The whole drama is overlaid with the metaphors of deformation and seduction: even in his opening speech, Ignatius is made to speak of deflowering truth and goodness.⁹⁸ Nowhere is this made more clear than in the sub-plot, involving the eminently manipulable and manipulative pawns. Dramatically, these types afforded Middleton the flexibility to present threats to the integrity of the faith and to the life of the nation more imaginatively. Much revolves around the fate of one of them: the White Queen's pawn and the attempts against her spiritual and physical integrity by the Black Bishop's Pawn, aided and abetted by the Black Queen's pawn. The attempts on her virtue include seduction under the guise of spiritual direction, and when that comes to nought, through courtly disguise. Each time, she is extricated.⁹⁹ Yet despite her ultimate safety, Middleton does not intend to underplay the fact that there is a serious threat to national integrity, both in its spiritual and physical dimensions, and that this threat is just as much about common man or woman as it is about dynastic shifts on high. There is no room for anyone to be complacent.

⁹⁶ Middleton 1929, V.3.166.

⁹⁷ Middleton 1929, V.3.66.

⁹⁸ Middleton 1929, Induction, ln 10.

⁹⁹ Middleton 1929, I.1; III.3–IV.1.

Worryingly, the danger was often unrecognised by those responsible for the House: James, as White King, showed himself blind to it.¹⁰⁰ Towards the end of the play, addressing her attacker, this wronged Pawn utters the most direct statement of the play, an explicit warning to the audience.

for such a one as you
Is able to deceiue a mightie Audience,
Naye, those you haue seducst if there bee anie
In the Assemblie, if they see what manner
You playe youre Game with me, they cannot loue you.¹⁰¹

Just as Copley had called at the turn of the century for the Jesuited to dis-jesuit themselves so as to become fully English again, so Middleton, in a very different way, was issuing this same appeal to audiences at the Globe. There were Papists, as an observer noted, among them. Dramatised, the choice remained as stark: English or Jesuited but never both. The threat of seduction was represented on a grander scale when the White Queen herself, representing the Church of England, was set upon by the Fat Bishop in the fourth act. The stakes were even higher here, because if she was lost to the enemy, the game was well and truly crippled.

You aimde at no lesse person then the Queene
The glorie of the game if shee were wun
The way were open to the Master Check.¹⁰²

This time the White King does act and rescues his consort, a reassurance to the audience that the King would wake up to danger before it was too late and would preserve the non-Catholic, non-Spanish character of his country.

One thing that the conceit of a chess game allows Middleton to do very well is to show up the ambiguities at the very heart of the English experience. In the play, one moved across the board and was captured; in real-life, one could switch sides wilfully or be passively seduced. The defections he depicts, it may be said at once, are all one way: it is the White pieces who reveal their falsity and move to the other side, the English who are the turn-coats. Naturally, the Black side are active in trying to win over adherents: when the two Houses face each other for the first time in

¹⁰⁰ See Middleton 1929, II.2.

¹⁰¹ Middleton 1929, V.2.32. My italics.

¹⁰² Middleton 1929, IV.4.77. Limon 1986 p. 102 holds the White Queen to represent Elizabeth I.

Act III, the Black Bishop looks across at his counterpart and wishes that he were in his diocese and then he would 'soone change his whiteness'.¹⁰³ But the actual defections are not, in reality, due to their activity so much as to the voluntary betrayal of the White traitors. As Jerzy Limon points out, in order to 'make his point clear even to children, Middleton constantly employs the simplest device in drama – his characters revealing their true nature to readers or spectators.'¹⁰⁴ And true nature is revealed, in this dichromatic play, by 'stripping' off the surface colour to reveal what is beneath. It is entirely of a piece with the rhetoric problematising cosmetics and clothing that we have seen at earlier points in the story.

The most significant defection is that of the White King's Pawn, meant to represent Lionel Cranfield, the Lord Treasurer, who had supported the Spanish match (probably because of the prospect of a large Habsburg dowry) and was opposed to war with Spain, mostly because he knew it would be a financial disaster for the country. However, an appreciation of his prudence does not figure in Middleton's depiction. Instead, Cranfield, by now the first earl of Middlesex, is represented as the archetype of the slippery, disloyal English court politician who never acts in the public interest. He declares his treachery before the Black Knight, by pointing to the disjunction between his external habit and his heart.

You see my outside, you know my heart K^t
Great difference in the colour.¹⁰⁵

His whiteness – his identity as a loyal Englishman – is merely painted on; the orientation of his heart speaks him to be a Hispanic alien. The disadvantage, as Middleton hastens to remind us, is at once national and personal. It means that he is going to play false in foreign policy: thus his promise that he will 'keepe all Supplies back, both in meanes and men/ That maye raiye agaynst you'. He has also been personally duped. The Black Knight gloats over the fact that he has been doubly fooled '[o]ut of thy Fayth, from thy Alleagance', thus becoming a 'lost Pawne', doomed to perdition.¹⁰⁶ Middleton does not say what fate is meted out to him there and then, but we do know that another traitor – the White Bishop's

¹⁰³ Middleton 1929, III.1.282.

¹⁰⁴ Limon 1986, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Middleton 1929, I.1.345. For an alternative and perhaps better version see [Middleton] 1625, sig. C3^r: 'You see my outside, but not my heart /Great difference in the colour.'

¹⁰⁶ Middleton 1929, I.1.352, 359.

Pawn – is castrated: Middleton wanting to point out the emasculating effects of going over to the dark side.¹⁰⁷

The dramatic high point of the work comes in the central confrontation of the two Houses in the third Act, when the King's Pawn's double-doubling is exposed.

This whitenes uppon him, is but the Leprousie
of pure dissumulation.

Sensationally, his upper garment is removed to reveal that he is half black, that, as the Spanish side reveals crowingly, 'his hart, and his Intents, are of our Colour'. This revelation leads the white King to disown him there and then in public.¹⁰⁸ What this scene shows up so well is the great possibilities that the drama offers to show the kind of things that polemicists have been talking about for years. The fact that a character is partially stripped on stage and nationally repudiated is to declare, in dramatic terms, that any palliation of a national enemy means that one is not fully English at all.¹⁰⁹ The attention accorded to these ambivalent characters shows an anxiety at the heart of his vision, a belief that the English were not just passive victims, but in some cases actually willing to 'go over' and to fall prey to Hispanic and Jesuit forces. Middleton's solution is that they must be removed, as a canker on the body politic. In this play, the conflict between what it was to be Spanish and to be English was 'played out', and, far from being totally Manichean as its extended chess form might imply, it constantly draws our attention to a more complicated reality. Anglo-Spanish relations were ultimately not just a black and white conflict: there were various shades of white, and some were less English than others.

MACHIAVELS AND MERCURIES IN THE CAROLINE ERA

One of the clearest statements subsequent to this about the incompatibility of Englishness and Jesuitism is to be found in Henry Burton's *The Baiting of the Popes Bull*, published in 1627. Throughout his writings, this

¹⁰⁷ Middleton 1929, II.1.267–271.

¹⁰⁸ Middleton 1929, III.1.295, 297.

¹⁰⁹ Another instance of ambiguity is the Fat Bishop. Alone among the pieces, he did not bear a coloured appellation, being supposed to represent Marco Antonio De Dominis, the ex-archbishop of Spalato who had spent the last decade flirting with Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism in a very ambiguous way, so much so that it was pointless to classify him as anything except as a turn-coat. He turns himself over to the black side eventually. Middleton 1929, III.1.329–344.

independent minister who would become one of the key voices in the opposition to the Arminianism of Archbishop William Laud and indeed of prelacy in general, gave priority to apocalyptic interpretations of the current state of affair.¹¹⁰ *The Baiting* contains some uncomfortable 'home' truths aimed at the royal court (it is dedicated to both Charles and the Duke of Buckingham) and also a specific section in which he appeals directly to English Catholics to declare their colours. This is the twenty-page 'Aduertisement to those my Countrymen whom the Pope calleth his *Catholicke sonnes*' attached to the end of the pamphlet. The whole text has to be read contextually. The Oath of Allegiance was being urged anew on Roman Catholics and on 30 May 1626, a papal breve of Urban VIII had objected to its form. This is another moment of show-down, a point at which the conflicting nature of their identities is made particularly acute.

Burton urges on them a consciousness of country which should come before all else: 'My natiue brethren Countrymen, or (if you will) *Romane Catholickes*'. The effect of an address like this is to lay claim on them by virtue of the first; the latter is rather grudging. Being English ought to matter more to them than being Roman. He is goading them to prove themselves true, declaring it his intention to 'assay at least what [...] English spirit is left in you, as not altogether eaten out'.¹¹¹ He expresses both hope and doubt about their capacity for integration, oscillating between confidence that his voice will be heard by 'all' of them and pessimism that it will be heard at all, seeing that they have been so blinded and deafened by their 'obedience' and are in a state of 'benumbednesse'.¹¹² Nevertheless, he would not be addressing Catholics in the first place if he believed them to be an entirely lost cause, and it is in this light that we can read his exhortations to them to show themselves to be 'not onely Rationall Creatures, but English-men', indeed 'true hearted English-men'.¹¹³ Many English Protestants had long since accepted, in practice, the residuum of Catholics in the country, as long as they were not actively subversive. Burton, however, is adamant that they abandon and abhor the Pope who is 'author and abettor of conspiracies and treasons' as a necessary precondition for their re-admittance into the good graces of the nation.¹¹⁴ What Catholics had to

¹¹⁰ See, for example, B[urton] (1628). *The Seven Vials*.

¹¹¹ B[urton] 1627, p. 74.

¹¹² B[urton] 1627, p. 74, gathering 5^{3r}, pp. 23, 60, 64, 74.

¹¹³ B[urton] 1627, gathering 5^{3r}, p. 23.

¹¹⁴ B[urton] 1627, pp. 94–95.

do to prove themselves English, according to Burton, was to recognise the importance of historic liberty. It is crucial that they realise that their form of subjection to an outside power cuts them off from the healthy national body. He quotes the twelfth-century chronicler, Alfred of Beverley, to emphasise this point:

Libera gens, cui libera mens, & libera lingua,
Sed lingua melior, libera [sic].
A Nation free, whose minde, whose tongue is free:
But hand then tongue will better, freer be.

The sense of the second line is a little difficult.¹¹⁵ What it seems to mean is that for a people to have a free mind and a free speech, whilst good, is not enough; they also must be free to act. This freedom from subjection will in turn enhance freedom of speech. This quotation, positioned as it is in the Advertisement to Catholics, has a very special resonance for them. They are not to forget that liberty is their defining mark if they are to remain part of the nation at all.

But if Burton still believes that some Roman Catholics can be prevailed upon to bear national sentiments, he affords no possibility of repentance to the Jesuited. They are the absolute renegades. 'I except and exclude the Iesuites from my least hope of perswading them' he declares. To have a 'true *English* heart in him vn-Iesuited' was with him an axiom of the first order.¹¹⁶ His opinions show how little English Protestant views of the Jesuits had evolved since the 1580s. Whilst mainstream anti-Catholic prejudice fluctuated and was combined with some measure of practical toleration, anti-Jesuitism remained a constant. Although the order, under the generalship of Claudio Acquaviva had accepted the French parliament's condemnation of Juan de Mariana's *De rege et regis institutione*, and banned the Society from publishing on the subject of papal authority, nothing, it would seem, could reverse their reputation as treacherous, regicidal, and dishonest.¹¹⁷ From the secondary dedication to the Duke of Buckingham, Burton wants to leave us in no doubt about two opposing

¹¹⁵ Quoted in B[urton] 1627, pp. 78–79. Beverley wrote a chronicle entitled *Annales sive Historia de gestis regum Britanniae* in 1143. The second line does not scan: it ought to be a hexameter or pentameter. There is an alternative phrasing which makes more sense. 'Libera gens cui libera mens et libera lingua /Sed lingua melior liberiorque manus'.

¹¹⁶ B[urton] 1627, pp. 4, 60.

¹¹⁷ De Mariana 1599. In 1610, the book was publicly burned in Paris by the executioner. Nelson charts how the Jesuits distanced themselves from the problematic legacy of the text. Nelson c2005, pp. 168–171.

categories of being: the Englishmen whom he stands for ('As for me, I am an English-man, a free borne subiect, a true louer of my King and Countrey') and the Jesuited who are amputated from the body politic altogether and who ought to be chased out of the country at once. In a way that recalls the polemical writing of the Elizabethan era, his rhetorical persona is very much that of the simple man who finds it his duty to speak up and instruct his superiors: 'shall I bee silent? shall I not speake? shall I not *lift vp my voice like a trumpet?*' He resorts to the usual tactic of half-apologising for his boldness and expressing his confidence that his Grace will 'pardon a fooles bluntnesse.' Of course, this is mere prevaricating obsequiousness. He really believes that his advice is of sterling worth, and that he is the plain Englishman aware of obvious dangers to which people in higher positions seem oblivious.

He warns Buckingham against the complacent advice of lackeys who 'sow Pillowes vnder your Elbowes'. If anyone tries to prevent his message from reaching its audience, Burton declares that they are either a Jesuit themselves or must have a 'Jesuiticall spirit'. In short, they make it their business to smother the truth. Jesuits are, after all, the 'most exquisite Artists in the science of flattery'.¹¹⁸ He urges upon Buckingham a radical course of action, necessary for national salvation. These Jesuits are wily game-players: they '*play at fast and loose*'. The authorities of the country must beat them at their own game. 'How then shall these *Proteus-like Foxes* be taken? Certainly there is no other way, but to hunt them out with the Kings owne doggs. Your Grace is the great *Iusticiarius Forestae*.'¹¹⁹

The reference to the hunt is combined with some other striking images. The identification of the Jesuit(ed) with the figure of the Machiavel has been mentioned before, but not thoroughly investigated. This identification had been building up over the decades, in part due to the historical accident that the works of Machiavelli had become widely available in England from the 1580s onwards, that is to say at the very moment at which Jesuit presence in the country began to make itself felt.¹²⁰ For Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, the Machiavel was the ideal stage villain: a ruthless and sinister figure, a deft user of masks and strategies, and a cynical manipulator of men. He was deeply theatrical by definition, a man who was clever at acting parts. For many Protestant (and some Catholic) polemicists, it was as if the Jesuits were living Machiavels: they

¹¹⁸ B[urton] 1627, gatherings **r, **2r-2v, **3v.

¹¹⁹ B[urton] 1627, sigs. a2r-a2v.

¹²⁰ Raab 1964, p. 53.

were the stage villains given walk-on parts in English life. For Burton, the main reason why the Jesuits are un-persuadable (and therefore irredeemable) is that the English and Christian spirit in them had given way to the 'pragmaticall, and worse then Machiauellian'.¹²¹

Burton also compares the Jesuits to 'Mercuries', especially in their infestation of the royal court. Mercury, in early-modern alchemy, was used to transmute base metals into gold, but there is something false, something suspect about the Jesuit transmutation: they are gilding and glossing over real substances. They may have the capacity to charm 'the chiefest' but it is with 'counterfeit adoration'.¹²² Also known as quicksilver, mercury furthermore conjured up the notion of rapid unpredictable changes. As Henrietta Maria had brought Capuchin and Oratorian chaplains in her entourage, the idea of the Jesuits infesting the court was assuredly exaggerated. Nevertheless, she was linked with Jesuitism in the public mind and although Burton avoids mentioning her by name, he undoubtedly has her on his mind. He urges Buckingham to bestir himself and do what he can to purge the court, his own household and the whole nation of these mercurial figures.

Throughout so many of the texts which seek to talk about identity, the notion of 'shaping' and 'fashioning' have been central. In the *Baiting*, Burton makes a rather extreme case that the Jesuited are not, in fact, real men but 'in mans shape'. They are truly fabricated. It is with perceptible relief that he turns from then to speak to 'men, to English men, to wise men'.¹²³ But he cannot stay away from his enemies for long and he proceeds to compare them to modern-day Circes. Just as Circe, the Greek goddess of magic and enchantment, sorcery even, was said to change her enemies into animals, so, with 'their Circean Cup', did the Jesuits 'transforme our English, as Vlisses his men, into Hogges'. The heavily gendered imagery is not accidental. As the female Circe is a danger to the manhood of Ulysses, the courtly Jesuits are an equivalent threat to proper English manhood. Their seduction methods are similar to hers. Circes had used the trap of luxury, providing men with honey, wine and good food: in short, in an English context, the decadent life of the court. The Jesuits' subtle skill is to exploit the worst 'natiue' property of Englishmen, that is their 'itching affection after noueltie and change'. They know their target, know just how to entice. Circe drugs her victims; Burton uses the language

¹²¹ B[urton] 1627, p. 74.

¹²² B[urton] 1627, gathering **r, **2'.

¹²³ B[urton] 1627, pp. 75–76.

of benumbedness, sensual lethargy and torpor to conjure up the danger in which English men (especially the elite) find themselves.¹²⁴

As is habitual in many of the works we have already considered in connection with this theme, there is a significant speculative content to the work, as Burton focused on 'the great if', imagining what would come about if there an invasion by a Catholic prince, and English Catholics *en masse* betrayed England to Rome and Spain. This is a version of the *damno et dedacore* theme: the obsession with a great falling-off. The Jesuited heart is by definition Spanish, because for him the Spanish King is always master: behind any scent of a plot there must be 'Jesuitticall Illusions'. According to Burton, commonsense and reason prove that the Englishman is capable of experiencing far greater happiness under the government of a 'natiue King' than under a 'Spanish yoake'. Because, as it is now, the Englishman is free; 'English liberty' is a collocation that sits easily with his thinking. 'And tell me now O yee *English Romain Catholickes*, do yee enuy the happnesse of the Spanish yoake? Is it so sweete, trow you, to exchange for it your English liberty?'¹²⁵ This is all conventional material.

But, to further underline his point, he uses a particular argument in which he insists that the Spaniards actually envy the English, and that he has personal knowledge of the fact. When informed 'how free we were in England from such bondage', they 'deeply sighed (as far as they durst) saying, *England was happy*'. Oh to be in England! His depiction of the Spaniard betrays the same fixation with extremes of class with which we have become familiar in representations of the French. 'How base and wretched is the whole Commonaltie of that Nation, though *Natiues*!' It is important for his argument that the Spaniards should be seen as slaves in their own country, so they are hardly likely to export anything else. Even the 'monyed man' there has no permission to purchase lands or buy himself good food. Those whom they conquer will feel the brunt of the yoke even worse of course: 'you must not looke [...] to be vsed together so fauorably, as your Don is: For he is Natiue of Spaine: you Aliens'.¹²⁶

He is also extremely insistent that a free way of life is something that even English Catholics participate in, insofar as they are English, and that in no way should they forfeit this for an illusory happiness under Spanish rule. Addressing them directly, he asks them 'what liberty doe not euen

¹²⁴ B[urton] 1627, pp. 74, 76, 79.

¹²⁵ B[urton] 1627, sig. a3^r, pp. 60, 76, 78.

¹²⁶ B[urton] 1627, pp. 77, 78.

you yourselues here inioy? wherein are you restrained, vnlesse a little in that wherein it were happy for you [...] I meane your Romish Religion? He urges them to judge between the slavish condition that even *they* would have to endure under the Spaniard, and that native condition 'which yee were before, when yee liued like free English men, euery man vnder his owne Vine and vnder his own Figtree'. There is something more Biblical than English about this utopian vision, it must be said, but all this to persuade Papists that it is naïve of them to imagine that they will be 'Magnificoes' or 'Grandees' in a new Hispanic regime, warning them instead that they would be more like 'Grand Deuills'. 'Iesuiticall eloquence' will lead them to their own self-destruction. The fact that the Spaniards have as their motto: '*Amo proditionem, odi Proditorem; I loue the Treason, but hate the Traytor*' should be a disincentive to English Papists to consider switching sides.¹²⁷

Trying to convince readers that their self-interest lay in preserving the *status quo* rather than changing it was a common ploy when addressing Catholics. One element, however, is very distinctively presented and it concerns the matter of legitimate civic insurrection. What Burton has to suggest may even have subversive implications. As far as he is concerned, the fact that the Spanish have not had a major revolt in recent history is not indicative of positive harmony. In reality, the 'Don' is so poor that 'he cannot chuse but bee true'. It is a revealing statement. They do not have rebellions because the 'poore snakes are kept so cold, that they want courage and strength to sting'. This is in direct contrast to an English way of doing things: 'in England it is otherwise'.¹²⁸ There, men who are able to exercise reason and common sense would never have let things come to such a pass. That strikes one as a rather daring statement in 1627, prescient even. There is an uncomfortable message here for the authorities if they wished to take it. The English can choose to be true, but also choose not to be true to the monarch if his actions do not favour liberty.

So this means that, for Burton, if the English *did* rebel for a reasonable cause, it would mean being true to themselves. That would be legitimate. In other words, allegiance to royalty is conditional on their being able to pursue a free form of life. Fidelity to the King may be one of their best 'natiue properties', but it is qualified by these other statements.¹²⁹ There is a certain gap opening up between loyalty to one's king and loyalty to one's

¹²⁷ B[urton] 1627, pp. 78–80.

¹²⁸ B[urton] 1627, p. 78.

¹²⁹ B[urton] 1627, p. 79.

country. If one really identifies with the latter, one might have to 'sting' the former. He might need a lesson. There is a message here for the young, fairly inexperienced Charles to whom the work is dedicated. Like some of the other texts we have considered, among them those of Aylmer and Stubbes, this is a piece of writing which seeks to influence the King as to the state of public opinion. Naturally, Burton could not realistically have expected him to read what he had to say, but in writing it, he is contributing to opinion on the issue and helping to form an articulate public space where matters of high political import are discussed.

To cover himself, Burton immediately appeals to two respectable authorities to substantiate his views on the actively free nature of the English people. One is that of Alfred of Beverley previously cited. The other is Henry IV who *'full well knew the humour of the English'* and is said to have advised his son on his death-bed *'of English men, so long as the[y] haue wealth and riches, so long shalt thou haue obeysance: but when they be poore, then are they ready to make insurrections at euery motion'*.¹³⁰ Their freedom is constituted, in part, by the capacity to rebel. It is as if he is saying to Charles: recognise who you are dealing with, learn who we are as a people, look at historical antecedents, and be aware that the English will defend their liberty actively. Monarchs come and go: they must remain within the tradition of the people if they are to fulfil their duty adequately. That seems to be his point and it is a politically charged one. Again, Burton is posing as another plain man not just offering counsel but laying down a kind of challenge to his social and political superiors. It will be a challenge that will be stated in more purely political terms in the same era, as we shall see in due course.¹³¹

THE TRIUMPH OF A STEREOTYPE

Every element of the discourse was in place by the time of Charles' disastrous episode in personal rule. To the patina of prejudices and assumptions, nothing especially new was added subsequently, although there were, to be sure, new contexts which called forth strong articulations of the un-Englishness of popery. These contexts included the activities of the heartily-disliked Catholic French Queen, a court which looked increasingly European in style (and therefore papist), cases of high-society

¹³⁰ B[urton] 1627, pp. 78, 79.

¹³¹ See below pp. 218–225, 262–272.

conversions, and, most of all, Archbishop William Laud's apparently Romanising policy. Although it was something Laud himself would have denied, the mere hint that England was backtracking into old ways provoked predictable reactions, especially when he acceded to the see of Canterbury in 1633.¹³² All the old assumptions and prejudices stood people in good stead: now they had something concrete to protest about. William Prynne, very much Burton's comrade-in-arms throughout the period, was especially notable for the vitriol and persistence of his anti-Laudian writings.¹³³ Although theology is a large focus, with Prynne, a national consciousness was always very much in the background of whatever he wrote, just as it was there more explicitly in his criticisms of the cultural habits of the elite.¹³⁴ A few of his comments in *A quench-coale* of 1637 are of especial relevance. Boasting of its 'unpolished' quality, he claims to be doing only what a 'plain-dealing English-man' would do, that is defending the established Church of England, and 'without flattery or partiality' exposing the recent attempts to 'usher in Popery by degrees'. More graphically, he refers to the 'blackslidings' to Popery which have 'crept' into the country of late. This is well-worn idiom with which we are well familiar: it could even have been said by Stubbes. But this is not an appeal to fellow countrymen to remain English at heart or to Catholics to rectify their dispositions. Rather it is an appeal to the King himself, to whom he dedicates the work. As with Burton, he could not have expected the royal dedicatee to read it; nevertheless he was exercising his right as common man. Charles is perforce reliant on advice – he 'commonly see[s] with other mens eyes' – what he should do, Prynne seems to be saying, is to see with common men's eyes.¹³⁵ By presenting his case like this, Prynne was, consciously or unconsciously building upon a century-old tradition of setting the plain Englishman in opposition to the crafty Romanist, and using that as a means of telling even the monarch what was best to do. Once again, the monarchy, advised by 'evil' councillors, had to

¹³² Yet this has to be set alongside Laud's less than favourable views of Catholics and Catholicism. He played a role in hunting out recusants and opposed the Catholic flavour of Henrietta Maria's court. In 1637, he brought about a proclamation against court conversions to Roman Catholicism. His relations with the papal emissary Gregorio Panzani and papal agent George Con were hostile. In 1639 he again published *A Relation of the Conference between William Lawd [...] and Mr Fisher, the Jesuite* in expanded form which showed hostility to the dogmas or practices of Rome. *ODNB*.

¹³³ Both Burton and Prynne were on trial before the Star Chamber for sedition in 1637, along with John Bastwick.

¹³⁴ See above p. 120.

¹³⁵ [Prynne] 1637, pp. 3–5.

be instructed in the right. Prynne was styling himself to be both dutiful subject and active citizen.

The anti-Roman animus in the final, catastrophic decade or so of the reign of Charles I did not, of course, disappear although the manifestations of it prove less revealing for us. Three features stand out in service of the grand narrative. The Catholic financial contribution towards the Bishops wars in 1639 and 1640, limited though it was, and the machinations of Henrietta Maria's court circle to secure papal and French support for Charles did little for the national credibility of any of them.¹³⁶ The Irish rebellion in the autumn of 1641, and its lurid representation in John Temple's account somewhat later as a murderous plot to extirpate all English Protestants, lent direct proof to those whose vision was already defined by anti-Romanism.¹³⁷ The recruitment of papists in the royalist armies brought the threat ever closer, and Charles was, at the very least, tarnished by association, seen as being caught up in a popish plot which would destroy the whole country.

With all this in the air, the early 1640s would appear to be a prime place for the sort of reflections with which we have been concerned. Yet there is little of it to be found in the panic-driven literature of that time. The initial climate of terror, so well described by Robin Clifton, was conducive to hysteria more than anything, and what we expect and indeed find is the prevalence of an apocalyptic tone which offers prophecies more than observations. Consequently, although the link between Popery and arbitrary tyranny was often reaffirmed, and the danger of both to England stated on multiple occasions, there is less considered reflection about what it meant to be English in this context. All the fierce dichotomies of the discourse are regurgitated but nothing particularly new emerges. One could say that the logic of this discourse plays itself out fully in the cries of grand conspiracy, roused and orchestrated principally by John Pym, outstandingly at the beginning of the Long Parliament.¹³⁸ Religion was the first of his heads of grievances in his memorable speech of 7 November 1640, and he outlines three predictable culprits: the 'Papists party' who sought to alter national religion, the Church of England clergy who are, he argues, edging for union with Rome, and most importantly, the devious

¹³⁶ Albion 1935; Hibbard 1983; White 2006.

¹³⁷ Temple 1646.

¹³⁸ In the Short Parliament, Pym's 17 April speech had announced religious innovations as the second of his grievances Kenyon 1966, pp. 198–200.

agents for 'Spain and other kingdoms'.¹³⁹ The nature of Pym's national construction against Popery is by now generic but not the less potent for that: it has soaked up so much cultural resonance since the early days of Elizabeth's reign. People know exactly what he means when he refers to such subversive 'agents'.

Furthermore, Pym exploited the revelations about an army plot in May 1641 to bolster the idea of a full-scale popish plot and the subsequent Oath of Association which all MPs were required to take committed them to maintaining and defending the church 'against all Popery and Popish innovation within this realm' and expressed the conviction that the 'designs of the priests and Jesuits, and other adherents of the see of Rome' were behind the recent endeavours to subvert the law of the land and to 'introduce the exercise of an arbitrary and tyrannical government'.¹⁴⁰ The *Grand Remonstrance* itself, later that same year, was premised on the principle that, as 'loyal subjects', they could not endure the growing influence of 'malignant parties' who 'set up and acted by the subtle practice of the Jesuits and other engineers and factors for Rome'.¹⁴¹ This is staple reactionary fare and a repetition of themes that have long been worked over. The same goes for the rest of Pym's contribution to the anti-Catholicism of this period: the motif is deeply embedded but he does not intellectualise it.¹⁴²

What is happening in the 1640s is the acting out of this century's old prejudice. The mere rumour of popish plotting was enough to cause panics and riots especially in cities during the years 1640 to 1642, but this, although it resulted in physical violence, would not appear to have led to sustained reflection on what it signified or was supposed to achieve.¹⁴³ Then there was the apocalyptic strain of thinking which received a whole new lease of life in the disturbing circumstances of civil war. In this narrative, Rome had its established place.¹⁴⁴ But now Rome itself had many

¹³⁹ Kenyon 1966, p. 204.

¹⁴⁰ Kenyon 1966, pp. 222–223.

¹⁴¹ Kenyon 1966, p. 299.

¹⁴² Consider, for example, Pym 1641a; Pym 1641b; Pym 1641c.

¹⁴³ Clifton 1971, pp. 25–33. He notes (p. 32) that the panics came to a halt after 1642 once the war began, and this 'despite the confusion and defeats of war, the open presence of Catholics in the royalists' army, Charles's negotiations to add Irishmen to his forces, and the most strenuous efforts of Catholic-baiting parliamentary propagandists'. He is puzzled by this, but notes (pp. 41–42) that there were pressing economic factors in 1640–2 which accounted for an upsurge in the popular animus against Catholics, and also that the war showed their weakness as a force.

¹⁴⁴ Christianson 1978 takes the apocalyptic strain in Protestant thinking from Reformation to the eve of the Civil War. For an account of apocalyptic thinking until 1645 see Firth 1975; also Hill 1990.

more contenders for the attribution of Babylon: there were a host of potential players, depending on what side one took. In many cases, religious or quasi-religious writings which are more concerned with proving a spiritual case do not yield considerations of what made the Englishman true. Furthermore, there was a sense in which the phenomenon of popery had picked up so many resonances in an English context, had become identified with so many things that people held to be inimical, that it was, if not meaninglessly applied in the 1640s, at least so loose a term as to be able to serve as a kind of random accusation of any group that went against one's own beliefs or policies. And so, practically all groups, as Clifton notes, were imputed to be papist at some point – Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Brownists, Familists, Seekers, Anabaptists, and Ranters, not to speak of the royalists themselves.¹⁴⁵ For this, various reasons could be cited, from sedition and treasonable instincts, to unscriptural beliefs and immoral practices. This looseness of ascription is indicative in itself. Anyone whose national credentials were in doubt was, for the time being at least, considered Popish. That, in itself, attests not only to the power of the construction but also to its considerable plasticity. Romanism meant everything that many Englishmen thought they were not. But if this discourse becomes hopelessly vague in the 1640s, it was the moment of maturity for other, more purely political discourses about what it was to be English. It is (however sloppily) taken for granted in mainstream polemic that the true Englishman is not Popish and especially not Jesuited by the end of the period. But what sort of creature ought he be, politically? For that, we must backtrack.

¹⁴⁵ Clifton 1971, p. 33, n. 56.

PART THREE
THE FREE ENGLISHMAN

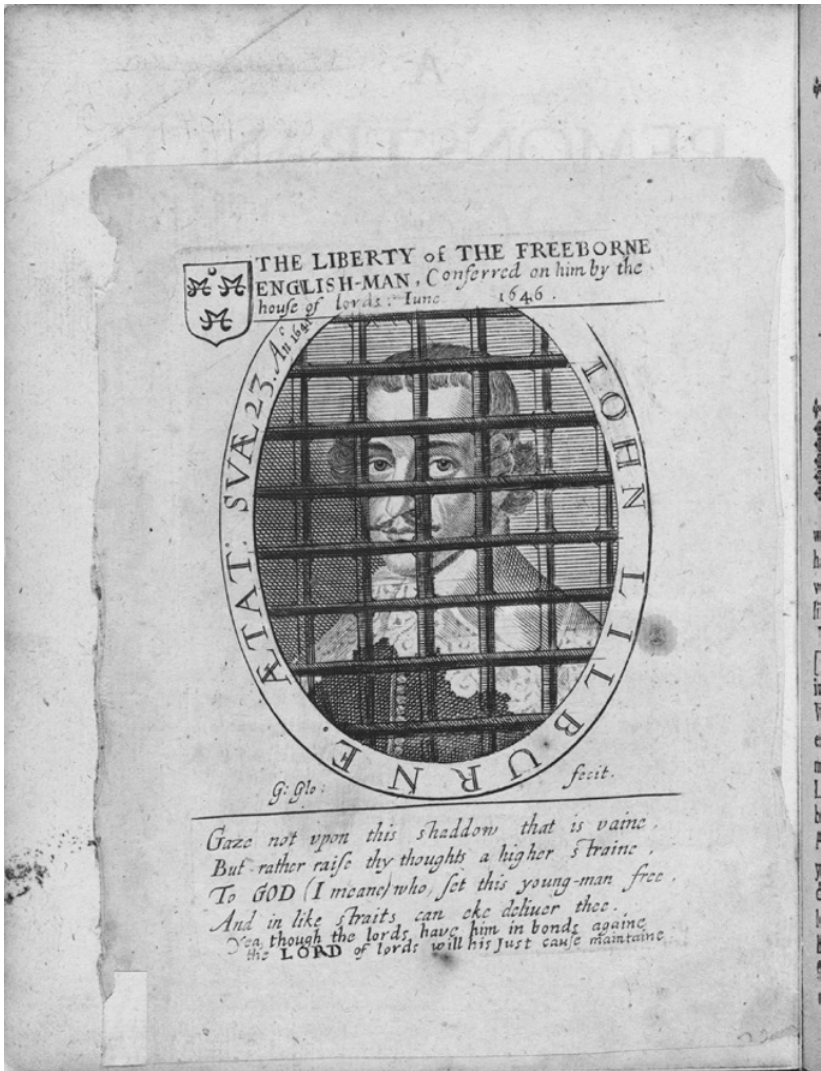


Figure 3. 1646 frontispiece of *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens*, With the kind permission of Houghton Library, Harvard University.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GROWTH OF A RHETORIC OF LIBERTY

Liberty in early-modern England has long been a favoured subject of historians of all shades of opinion, with the result that there are a plethora of interpretative frameworks for its consideration, from the traditional Whig and Marxist approaches through to the Skinnerian.¹ Yet the identification of liberty with ideas about the national self, although it has often been remarked upon, has not been satisfactorily recovered.² It is true to say that England acquired a reputation for liberty in the seventeenth century that was only partially deserved but wholly believed. It is also true to say that there was no national myth more potent in the next few centuries, no triumphalist collocation more likely to be brandished in the face of foreign powers, than that of 'English liberty'. But it does not suffice to acknowledge the ideological outcome and simply leave it at that. The key to unlocking the back-story lies in recovering the expansive rhetoric surrounding the freeman in the first half of the seventeenth century. Unaccountably, the figure of the English freeman has not always been given his due share of attention in studies of parliamentary thought in the Stuart period.³ Nor, with the notable exception of the work of Rachel Foxley, has his significance in the agenda of the radical movements of the 1640s been adequately probed.⁴ Yet rhetorically, he is a crucial figure in all parliamentary debates and pamphlet polemics, a recurrence that reveals something fundamental about the nature and structures of political thought at this time. If the restoration of liberties or liberty itself is the

¹ Hexter 1992 provides a recent quasi-Whig reading, approaching the issue with the intention of separating out the beginning of 'modern freedom'. He finds it in the enactment of the Petition of Right in 1628 (Hexter 1992, x, p. 1). From a Marxist point of view see the discussion of some seventeenth-century political thinkers in Macpherson 1964. He sees the thought of the Levellers unproblematically as an example of democracy *avant la lettre*. McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 22. For a neo-classical interpretation based on a recovery of political languages, see Skinner 1998.

² Hexter 1992 ed., p. 13; Zaller 1992, p. 224.

³ The neglect is not absolute. For the ways in which a Roman understanding of the free man filtered through into seventeenth-century discourse, see Skinner 1998; Skinner 2002, II, pp. 286–343; Skinner 2006, pp. 156–70. For general remarks on the centrality of the figure of the freeman in the Commons Debates from 1604 to 1629 see Harris Sacks 1992, pp. 85–6.

⁴ Foxley 2001 and Foxley 2004, pp. 849–874.

ultimate goal, then arguments drawn from ideas about national nature are a vital means to the achievement of that end. It may indeed be argued that national identity was being construed in and through increasingly powerful (and radical) narratives about liberty and that the centre of these narratives is the person of the English freeman.

How are we to understand him? It is necessary, at the outset, to differentiate between two distinct if intersecting lines in the literature. The exercise is artificial to the extent that the two discourses run alongside each other, but necessary to the extent that there really were some distinct issues at play. Both pertain to the construction of the Englishman who was free in two senses. One we may call that of the Englishman as rights-bearer, the other that of the English freeman as understood in a neo-Roman sense. The first involves the elaboration of certain rights and liberties as being constitutive of Englishness. Liberty here is particular, itemised, and discriminative, subject to the scrutiny of lawyers and the legally-minded. A contemporary defined a *libertas* as a 'privilege held by grant or prescription'.⁵ In practice, these were plural privileges, plural 'liberties'. In that sense, there is a medieval resonance to the concept and indeed, its defenders are most adamant in avowing this whenever the opportunity arises. Yet, they are doing something more than just claiming historic privileges for the Englishman: they are reinventing his rights to meet their present needs and counteract what they see as national threats.

The second strand of thinking owes more to ideas drawn from both Roman law and the Roman histories. It presents freedom as the status proper to the Englishman, and regards it as threatened not merely by the exercise of arbitrary power but by its very existence. It is more about the state of liberty (in the singular) than the mere possession of particular liberties (in the plural). This narrative had obvious appeal to the most classically-minded of the generation: in giving the Englishman a Roman pedigree with all that this implies, it ultimately sought to re-imagine the national story in a grander way and, in 1649, in a way that was supposed to open up a whole new era of doing politics. Skinner has indeed uncovered the seventeenth-century incarnation of the Roman *liber homo* in the literature but it is the artifice of his Englishness, the nature of his integration into contemporary tropes that needs to be further investigated to bring greater completion to this story.⁶

⁵ Cowell 1607, sig. Sf2r. See also comment upon this in Foxley 2004, p. 858.

⁶ Skinner 1998, Skinner 2002, II pp. 286–343, Skinner 2006, pp. 156–170.

There is a significant amount of overlap between the two stories, which is entirely understandable given that they both emerge from the same contexts of debate between ruler and ruled: that delicate balancing act between the royal prerogative and the subject's rights, as they 'jostle together' in Christopher Wandesford's expressive phrase, throughout early Stuart parliaments.⁷ The purpose of building up the profile of the free Englishman or, for that matter, the free-born Englishman is always and invariably polemical. There are perceived attacks upon him which result in very outspoken defences and considerable agitation: there is simply no neutral ground at all. Everything to do with this figure is political. These will not therefore be arguments of leisure but of urgency: the tone is predictably forceful, even strident, throughout. We find that the narratives start taking hold from the 1610s onwards, when there is a growing sense that the Englishman's very birth-rights are being eroded from within. His cause is felt to be in dire need of championing. Later, Charles I's even more unpopular fiscal expedients would be regarded as jeopardising not only the status of parliament but the status of his people as well, thus arousing reflections about the nature of the individual's rights and liberties and, more profoundly, about what was in keeping with the very nature of the Englishman and the polity and what was not. Finally, in the Civil War period, the floodgates of thought are truly opened wide and there is an efflorescence of reflection on what it meant to possess true liberty. This is a context in which the freeman comes into his own. In some hands, he is even partially democratised: he is now potentially everyman, every *English* man, at least. But this was a controversial leap to make. It had seemed, up to a certain point, as if there was general consensus among those who championed his cause. But this was superficial, for when the discourse went 'out of bounds' in the 1640s, there was found to be little ultimate agreement upon what it might entail in practice. So this becomes as much a narrative of dissonance as it once was of unity. It does not end in the advocacy of one homogenous view-point but fractures irreparably. In that sense, it fails, ultimately, to be a language of real consensus.

This, in general terms, is the political trajectory of the two stories. Complementing the political aspects are its legal and civic dimensions. Recourse to some argument of law is a constant motif, and it will become evident how a respectable and technical vocabulary about liberties, privileges and birth-rights was harnessed to serve wider ends during the

⁷ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 103.

debates.⁸ One could indeed maintain that a fairly routine legal vocabulary was fully politicised in this period to the extent that this vocabulary overflowed into an ethos of nationality that was of great moral resonance for the age. Law is not at all narrowly construed. The very technicalities seem to be swept up into the swirling debates about identity and status in the Caroline period. Notable examples will be Edward Coke's exploitation of the concept of the tenant-at-will and John Lilburne's usage of the concept of free-birth. In these and in many other instances, we see a whole rhetoric reworked and transformed from within. It is an illustrative example of the octopoid nature of identity construction.

The discourse is also a civic one. It seeks to bring the virtuous man – subject or citizen – to the fore and to problematise the figure of the 'slavish' dependent. The civic virtues, such as courage, military readiness, honesty and reason cluster around political and legal definitions of what it meant to be an Englishman. So also do values such as economic industriousness and cultivation of property. Liberty was found to be 'the salt that seasoned all'.⁹ The central moral question is under the auspices of which authority could the Englishman truly be himself and cultivate these virtues and values? Some still answer that he can live under a monarchy as long as that monarchy is bounded. It is a matter of where to draw the line. Others answer still more radically that he must rule himself. Whatever direction their thought pulls, a neo-Stoical ethos of self-government, of plainness and an eschewal of excess and licence are very much present. The ideal very obviously conflicted with many of the fashionable realities of the day. The parliamentarians, lawyers, and writers whom we shall study are stern moralists as much as they are political thinkers.

⁸ Weston 2004, pp. 374–411 provides an introduction to the state of common law in early-modern England. A more general historical overview is provided by Baker 1971.

⁹ Peard in Cope 1977, p. 172.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RIGHTS-BEARING ENGLISHMAN

EARLY STATEMENTS IN PARLIAMENT

In the early days of the Long Parliament, George Digby, MP for Dorset, made a passionate plea for those liberties that ‘speak us Englishmen’ and moved for a committee to consider the deplorable state into which the nation had fallen.¹ Digby was both a royalist and also (at this point in time) a critic of the excesses of royalism. He would later find himself very much on King Charles’ side in the Civil War. In his original position in 1640, however, he showed himself to be a very typical parliamentarian. It had become largely a matter of political consensus that inherited liberties constituted true Englishness and that the moderate exercise of regal power was desirable and indeed necessary for the preservation of the nation. What we witness is a process whereby Englishness becomes a key political language from about 1610 onwards, bandied about by parliamentarians and lawyers, all of whom would have considered themselves reasonably conservative and none of whom would have gone out of their way to be subversive. By 1640, the congerie of idea was well-established and Digby’s comment was nothing more – or less – than a commonplace. But the decade then beginning would transform a parliamentary commonplace into an explosive populist language used by highly-politicised laymen to argue for ends as extreme as adult masculine suffrage. How did such evolutions and revolutions occur?

This immensely significant and varied polemic about Englishness emerged out of the conflicts about money which besmirched the reputations of both the early Stuarts and did so much to sour political relations in the polity. Undoubtedly neither James nor his son, Charles intended to unleash such a furore, had not expected to fall foul of such powerful forms of protest as called their very identity and status into question, but in their

¹ *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 2, p. 664. Recorded as being spoken by George Digby. There is a note to say that the speech is undated but that it is likely to have been spoken at the beginning of the session in November. It was then that he proposed the committee.

urgent need for money, they both became involved in technically legal but practically and politically repugnant means to achieve it. The controversies in question – notably the Impositions, the Five Knights' Case, Ship Money, the granting of monopolies – have been well worked-over in the literature, and for those who like to read the signs of encroaching civil war, there is plenty of evidence in each which provides background explanation. But my interest in the controversies does not so much lie in this conventional framework of interpretation. Money matters have a tendency of transcending themselves and in this case, they touched upon a whole range of susceptibilities and ignited latent and novel views about the status of an Englishman. These much-hated Stuart fiscal experiments gave debates about identity a vitality and a contemporary political relevance that they had not possessed before when trailed merely on sociocultural phenomena. At no other time in England's early-modern period, I would contend, was the fiscal question so intimately bound up with powerful constructions of what it was to be English.

Indeed, construction is an optimum word for what was being done. It implies agency and invention. Those who use the free Englishman as their parliamentary or public platform are doing something essentially new, for all that so many of them say that they are merely faithful witnessing to the past. It becomes clear when considering the sources that in thrashing out the constitutional and legal issues raised by the usage of the royal prerogative, parliamentarians and polemicists are not primarily reflecting on the pre-existing state of the Englishman. They may *say* that they are doing this. They will be found constantly claiming to be restoring the past. They will even claim that the current debates are about the past. They are not. Their usage of historical example and tradition is entirely politicised and agenda-driven. Arcane and mainstream medieval precedents are dusted down and polished up for contemporary usage. They desperately want to prove their point. This was from first to last a contemporary language, informed by the contexts of the day.

It is not always an establishment language – the Levellers would become notorious for taking it to what many thought an unacceptable extreme – but notably, it started off by being eminently respectable. Its early statements come from the interiors of Westminster; its expression is the doing of well-educated, cautiously-minded parliamentarians, proud of their status but anxious also to preserve their relationship with the King. Nobody could accuse the common lawyers who were such a prominent force in Stuart parliaments of undue radicalism. Yet it was precisely because they

were given respect for their mandarin-like capacity to unveil the mysteries of medieval laws that they were able to be more radical than they seemed or even aspired to be. The potential for radicalism was most often hidden from themselves.

The opening drama occurs in the fierce debates that characterised the fourth session of James I's first parliament in 1610. Here it is possible to single out some key strands of thought which laid the basis for subsequent depictions of the Englishman as historic rights-bearer. Impositions were the issue at stake. The value of an earlier parliamentary subsidy (1605–06) had not stretched as far as the extravagant James needed and he had decided to resort to exacting impositions without parliamentary consent, that is to say without the consent of the body of free Englishmen legally convoked.² The test case for this in 1606 ruled in favour of the King against John Bates, a wayward merchant of the Levant Company who had been unwilling to pay a duty on currants. This bold decision did not fill parliamentarians with confidence, more especially as the Barons of the Exchequer claimed that the King had absolute as well as ordinary power, and that the former was for the safety of the nation and could vary with circumstance, according to his royal wisdom. It seemed to constitute a nefarious precedent for future actions of the sort and when parliament did gather in 1610, its members were determined to make the point that such hand-handed behaviour was unacceptable. Much has been written about parliament's defence of its own rights and liberties in this context: the debates are a veritable treasure-trove for considerations of custom, precedent and privilege. They are also the first time when we witness a deliberate politico-legal proclamation of what it is to be an Englishman in this newly threatening context.

Apart from Thomas Hedley's contribution, which will be discussed at a later point, there were three whose interventions lay themselves open to this kind of reading. All three were lawyers who made their mark as prominent critics of the Impositions. The most arresting contribution is that of James Whitelocke. Born in 1570, he was an Oxford man and a product of the Inns of Court. An outspoken critic of recent government policy, he was in 1610 responsible for transforming the terms of the debate between royalty and parliament into something which cut much more deeply than a mere matter of financial disagreement. His central accusation was that

² See Coward 2003, pp. 140–142; Hirst 1999, pp. 89–92.

James' actions were essentially unconstitutional. England was a distinctive entity and impositions eroded that very distinctiveness.

[T]he ancient frame of the commonwealth is much altered in points wherein it differs in fortune and blessedness from many other commonwealths.

He proceeds to get to the core of what he thinks makes Englishmen distinctive.

One is that *we are masters of our own* and can have nothing taken from us without our consents; another that laws cannot be made without our consents, and the edict of a prince is not a law; the third is that the parliament is the storehouse of our liberties.³

Several ideas bear commentary here. The notion of mastery is a crucial one. In this conscious or unconscious allusion to classical ideals, Whitelocke wanted to conjure up the host of desirable values and virtues involved in being a political master. Only those who had self-mastery could govern their passions, their households and indeed take part in good government. He was not beholden to others but had attained to full, rational masculinity. The giving and withholding of consent was intimately related to mastery and freedom. In that simple act, one showed the capacity to determine communal destiny as regards tax or trade or whatever the matter was. Being deprived of such a power was felt to be akin to slavery – a tacit implication here but one which would, in due course, receive much airing.

Nicholas Fuller's weighty speech of 23 June, which provoked such 'a great Silence' in the Commons, was another example of an intervention in which deeper issues were put forward and assumptions laid bare.⁴ It can appear to be a straightforward and conservative plea to the King that 'all clerks and laymen of this land shall have their laws, liberties, and free customs as largely and wholly as they have used to have the same at any time when they had them best' yet there is more to it.⁵ Speaking from a lawyer's perspective – and one with previous experience of conflict with government – he elaborates upon an argument for the 'freedom of the subject' that enthrones the legal inheritance of the land.⁶

³ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 109. My italics.

⁴ *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 1, p. 443. Quoted in *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 165. See below pp. 257–262 for analysis of Thomas Hedley's speech.

⁵ Read Foster 1966 II p. 165.

⁶ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 152.

One of the hinge ideas is that impositions are a foreign stratagem not a truly native one. The last time it occurred, he avers, was during Queen Mary I's time and this was because she had the temerity to marry a 'stranger', Philip II of Spain. It was under his baleful influence that she 'began a strange and new course of imposition [...] being *seduced by foreign advice*, which was apparently against the laws of the realm and liberty of the subjects'. This was an outlandish anomaly of decades ago: he is adamant that this Marian policy is 'not to be made a precedent'.⁷

The argument that impositions were foreign accretions was a crude but effective one. Who in parliament wanted to return to Marian times notorious to the mind of the Protestant Englishman in so many ways? But there is a sense also in which the argument is a more pointed one than first appears. James was a Scot and also, in his way, a foreigner unused to English ways. Parliament had been aware of this from the start and were more or less overt in their desire to educate their monarch. A mere fifteen months after James had first succeeded to the English throne, the Commons had drafted a document entitled 'The form of Apology and Satisfaction' which purported to enlighten the incoming ruler as to how relations between crown and subject were conducted in England.⁸ There is no doubt but that Anglo-Scottish tensions were still alive in 1610, more particularly because there was general anger at his generous grants to Scots who had crossed the border with him since 1603. Given this charged context, it is thus plausible to read Fuller's fulmination against foreignness as an oblique warning for James. Indeed, he proceeded to call upon His Majesty immediately afterwards in that speech. He left eloquently unspoken the implication that a Scot had no more right than a foreign prince to tinker with English laws and rights.

It was not the first time Fuller had made some kind of reference to the fact of James being a 'stranger' to English government. In May, he had felt the need to remind the King that he was dealing with Englishmen and an English way of doing things. 'The King speaks of France and Spain what they may do, I pray let us be true to the King and true to ourselves and let him know what by the laws of England he may do.'⁹ There are more loyalties at issue than mere personal loyalty to a monarch; there is a loyalty to their liberties – a trueness to themselves – which is just as important and which makes them speak out as right-thinking men. Englishmen cannot

⁷ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, pp. 164–165. My italics.

⁸ For a copy of this document see Tanner 1930, pp. 217–230.

⁹ Read Foster 1966 II, p. 109.

be treated as Scotsmen nor as Frenchmen or Spaniards. It simply will not do.

One other notable contribution is that of Thomas Wentworth. This was not the Wentworth who would become the Earl of Strafford, but the lawyer who represented the city of Oxford in every Stuart parliament prior to 1640. He was a vocal defender of native liberties and advocated that his fellow parliamentarians show that 'our fidelity to our country [lay] in preserving their liberties which they have lost.'¹⁰ For him the important civic activity for the Englishman of the day was to restore permanent liberties. So patriotism and duty were again not just glossed as loyalty to a monarch. It is interesting that Wentworth can talk about nationality without necessarily bringing everything back to the subjects' relation to the monarch. In other words, the condition of being a subject, even when acknowledged, was not the limit of what could be said about the Englishman. There is a free space 'untouched' by monarchy and best left alone for the happiness of all concerned. He got into trouble for his views and James eventually found an excuse to punish him in 1614. This rhetoric was already one of disruptive potential.

What emerges from such injections in 1610 are three major themes that will reoccur. First, the Stuarts are foreign in orientation and need to be instructed in English ways. Second, there is something distinctively free about the English system and therefore about the Englishman himself. Third, it is the parliament's duty to uphold this by all the means within its power. The lines of polemic had been laid. After all the debates and complaints, James still managed to extract a grant of £100,000 but it fell a long way short of the sum he had hoped to gain. And the price even for such a small gain was, in terms of ideological rift, high. James had unwittingly touched some very sensitive nerves in the first decade of his rule by exercising his prerogative right in defiance of the legal-historical *persona* of the Englishman as embodied by the representative assembly of parliament.

THE 1628 SYNTHESIS OF RIGHTS

Reflection on the rights-bearing Englishman became more politically significant and sensitive under Caroline rule. Like his father, Charles seemed immediately to affront an English ways of doing things: he would also

¹⁰ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 108.

need to be 'taught', if indeed he was amenable. Context was crucial. In 1626, the King had announced a proposal for a loan which brought in over £250,000 over a twelve month period. This was a direct result of the Duke of Buckingham's ill-timed and expensive offensives in Spain and France. Precedent and tradition had been observed in the imposition of the loan but it was obviously not a popular measure and seemed to exacerbate the nefarious trends of the previous two decades. Several dozen gentlemen were arrested for refusing to pay. The parliament of 1628 opened mere months after the Five Knights' Case of 1627 which had upheld the king's right to imprison those who would not pay the forced loan. A common-law court had ruled in favour of the king because it had no way of asserting control over his prerogative. This defeat proved to be a natural focal point for airing grievances more widely, and re-asserting the injured principles of historic rights in an ever more robust way.¹¹ If, by observing the letter of the law, a common-law court had failed the cause of English liberty, then a parliament politicising the common law would succeed. The resulting Petition of Right was, as they saw it, a major advance for their cause.

One of the points of interest, for us, lies in the 'lineage argument' made by these angry and fearful parliamentarians. What they do in 1628 is effectively to historicise the Englishman. Making a plausible case to their fellow politicians and to the monarch entailed, to a considerable degree, the excavation of the medieval past to make it yield political capital in the present. The main hinge upon which all arguments turned was that there was no disjunction between the historic and actual rights constitutive of Englishness. An argument drawn from the 1100s was also an argument for the 1620s. The claim was that of a continuous line which had not been broken and which must not be threatened now. The many influential lawyers, active in Commons and on its committees and subcommittees, were responsible for this scholarly historicisation. Edward Coke, the best known, then making his last and most remarkable appearance in parliament, argued against the recent disregard of the principle of *habeas corpus* by quietly transposing the neutral language of chapter 29 of the Magna Carta '*nullus liber homo imprisonetur*' to the more pointed assertion that 'the freedom of an Englishman' consisted in not being imprisoned 'without cause shown'.¹² Truly, there was no gap.

¹¹ Coward 2003, p. 163.

¹² Sheppard 2003, vol. 3, p. 1243.

John Selden's arguments against discretionary imprisonment also reveal a seamless elision between past and present. He was not only an extremely able and respected jurist but having been counsel for the defence when the five knights were refused bail through a writ of *habeas corpus*, he had mastered the legal and constitutional issues involved: he was thus supremely active in the committees. He suggested a perfect fit between those recognised in Magna Carta as *liberi* and his audience: 'All admit we are *liberi homines*' and 'Liberty and villeinage, I need not prove to those that are all *liberi*'.¹³ Again, the most arresting element is the kind of unproblematic identification it assumes between twelfth-century and present-day realities. Such was the power of the myth of the Charter, lovingly embroidered by later generations. Anne Pallister shrewdly notes the nature of the transposition. The Charter, from having been 'a limited document relating to certain specific feudal rights', came to be 'revered as the source of a vast conglomeration of ancient rights and liberties'.¹⁴ It was, in short, the Englishman's political baptism and its effects were transcendently important. Never was this one document more relevant to national self-construction as in these decades.

Even more cautiously conservative types in the late spring of 1628 made the lineage argument too. Henry Marten was an interesting case. A graduate in civil rather than common law, he was not an opponent of the King's discretionary power to impose martial law (as many were) and was one of the most moderate in expressing his views. But even he was also seriously concerned to defend the national legacy, expressing it in terms which once again annihilated the distance between past and present by remarking that he was 'an Englishman, and ha[d] an inheritance which I will keep if I can'.¹⁵ So there seems to have been some consensus on the matter that his inheritance was somehow endangered. It was not a fringe view by any means. Of course, these men, even the more assertive ones, kept the ideas very much within their zone of comfort. They are speaking 'in-house', as it were, and not trying to make socially radical points about the implications of national freedom, although when these are made in the 1640s, the example of the men of 1628 will indeed be invoked.

What were these earnest parliamentarians trying to do by conflating the past and present? First, they were seeking to give their claims greater legitimacy. Such was the innate veneration for the past that if one could

¹³ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 151, 154.

¹⁴ Pallister 1971, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 553.

prove that something had always been the case and that royal policy was just a temporary aberration, the case was very strong indeed in one's favour. Secondly, the strategy gave an apparent homogeneity to what was in reality an eclectic patchwork of rights with plenty of internal anomalies, anachronisms and contradictions. Speakers chose to ignore whatever did not fit with their interpretation. Now it was undue royal prerogative that took on the appearance of a haphazard collection of unprincipled and un-English expedients. The past spoke clearly and reasonably. Today's Englishman was its inheritor. What is, in effect, being made is the emphatic claim that this is *the* national story, not just one possible narrative amongst others. Identities are formed to a large extent from the stories people chose to tell about themselves and in 1628, it was the lawyers who got the opportunity to tell a story of their making. It is then that we happen upon a particularly significant moment of communal autobiography – or perhaps more correctly, autofiction.

The appeal to antiquity is also of interest because antiquity was perceived as safe terrain upon which to argue. Not without some truth does Scott note that change was 'dynamite in the early-modern period – arguably the modern in early modern.'¹⁶ Accordingly, eliding the present and past had the effect of downplaying the potential radicalism of their ideas. Some recognised that they were pushing forward in a new direction. John Eliot, a member for the county of Cornwall, thought they were reinterpreting and expanding past law: 'All that we seek is but the explanation of the law, [...] the old put in a fuller sense'.¹⁷ Mostly, however there was a denial that anything novel was being contemplated. '[I]t is no new language that we speak' Thomas Sherwill insisted, whilst Thomas Wentworth, in a speech which prefigured the Petition of Right itself, denied that they sought 'new things' but merely a return to 'our ancient sober vital liberties'.¹⁸

It all sounded very soothing and they surely meant what they said but were they right? What they *say* they are doing is not always what they actually *are* doing in this polemic. There were certainly elements of the new in their utterances, although couched in the respectably antiquated. A prominent new dimension is the use of Englishness as a rallying rhetoric for purposes other than traditional loyalist ones. Whilst it is tempting to neglect this aspect in parliamentary debates, given the fact that the

¹⁶ Scott 2011, p. 42.

¹⁷ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3, p. 173.

¹⁸ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3, p. 191. *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 60, 63.

reported interventions are often fragmentary and even obscure in places, it would be quite unwise. The spoken nature of the locutions and the charged context in which they were uttered gives their expression special resonance, and while we cannot very well recover how they were delivered, there are clues in the language as to what they most wanted to emphasise. It is very clear that something different to the usual invocations of loyalist patriotism is being ignited. Englishness becomes shorthand for all that has been raised in parliament in an atmosphere of protest. There is a significant contrast to be drawn early on in this regard, revealing differing royal and parliamentary agendas. Charles, in his opening speech of 17 March, sought to rally the two Houses in the face of the threatening situation in Europe with appeals to 'English courage'.¹⁹ This was simple, crowd-rousing Henry V, Crispin's Day and Merrie England material: appeal to Englishness had traditional usages in times of military crisis. With the nation on a war footing and money badly needed, Charles was not hesitant in employing the usual register.

But a mere five days later, Sir Robert Phelips, MP for Somerset, modulated this idea rather differently, suggesting that such courage was better applied to the domestic situation. If there was anything to be feared, it was more the 'violation of public rights at home' than a foreign enemy. Thus was Charles' traditionalist patriotic rhetoric turned back upon itself. He and his assertive ministers were on a collision course in terms of rhetoric alone. Whereas Charles had fretted about the externals, the real threat, Phelips contended, was within and therefore genuine patriotism lay in seeking to have those wrongs redressed. In this mission, they must not be cowed by the powers above them because such 'fears [...] become not Englishmen'.²⁰ Returning somewhat later to the motif of fearlessness, he affirmed that '[w]e came here free men and sit here fearless men'.²¹ English courage was invoked but with a very different agenda. Again in oblique dialogue with Charles, this was uttered in response to the latter's restriction of the Commons' free speech and his grudging attitude to their proposals for the Petition of Right in early June. He could afford to speak boldly. Charles' position was weak because both Houses had ratified the document in late May. Phelips was thus speaking with the strength of consensus behind him so he was now all the more daring in urging his fellow MPs on to complete their victory. Of a similar colour is a remark made by

¹⁹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 5.

²⁰ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 61.

²¹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 4, p. 152.

Sir Edward Giles around the same time to the effect that instead of sitting as 'men daunted' in the face of opposition from above, they should 'put on the spirits of Englishmen and speak to purpose'.²² Invoking the national spirit was his way of urging them to go ahead with their plans regardless, an antidote to the near paralysis which their cowed attitude to authority had induced. Rhetorical clues as to what was happening are therefore crucial. Charles' generic appeal to English courage was quickly diverted away from traditional patriotism and refocused instead on national right. When parliamentarians appropriated this rather conventional idiom, it became politicised in an altogether different way to that originally intended. This was indeed a new twist.

There is another rhetorical clue that ideas about Englishness were evolving in a more assertive and radical direction. The very touchstone of this complexity is the co-existence of two languages (and identities) which seem to be pulling in two different directions. The first is the language of subjecthood; the second, the language of freedom. In 1628, there is palpable tension between the two. Both can coexist but they are not identical. Ideally, Phelips wants his fellow commoners to fulfil their duties both as 'loyal subjects and good Englishmen'. The immediate context in which he uttered this was especially sensitive. In response to Commons' demands, Charles had just offered a compromise proposal, which was to confirm the Magna Carta and the six statutes as a matter of grace but not of right. But this would obviously not satisfy. Was the good Englishman invariably a loyal subject in the way the king wished? If there were circumstances which made a disjunction possible, these surely were the ones.²³

How best to reconcile these two identities? It was a challenging task although in 1628, complete disenchantment had not yet set in as to its practicality. It would be tempting, although not fully accurate, to plot a simple evolution from the discourse of subject to that of the freeman, linking the emergence of more autonomous ideas about status with the frequency of the latter in the literature. Certainly, the increasing evidence of the language of the English freeman and the self-confidence and autonomy it denoted is one proof that parliamentarians were making more robust statements about their legal identity. Nevertheless, most of them were still devoted to the monarchy and they took their role as members of His Majesty's parliament seriously. The Petition tries to make both

²² *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 4, p. 123.

²³ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3, p. 256.

identities compatible again: satisfying both affiliations. It could be argued that it does neither to either party's satisfaction. The King felt imposed upon and parliamentarians did not feel that they had managed to fence off the area where they must rule themselves: the petition was not, in the end, given the force of statute.

If anything, the language of the Petition set beside the language of the debate shows a certain disjunction. The former uses the conventional idiom of obedience. Written from the perspective of 'your Majesty's subjects', it is a good example of the cloaking of division in a rhetoric of harmonious hierarchy.²⁴ Such submissive language hardly does justice to the assertive content of what has gone before. Here if anything, there was a perceptible shift in emphasis from subject to freeman, announced on 3 April, over a week into the debates on the subject. The Commons resolved upon setting up a committee to look into the 'personal liberty of the subjects and the propriety of their goods', and Selden, when reporting back after the committee had met, suggested '[u]pon the question concerning the property of goods, that instead of 'subject of England', they should put in "free man"'.²⁵ It was a small but telling readjustment, indicating that it was primarily as freeman not as subject that they were touched by recent encroachments. It is unsurprising to find that a later conference between Lords and Commons in mid-April took the same tone, dealing with the 'liberty of the person of every free man'.²⁶ So a gap was opening up: one can no longer reduce the Englishman's status to considerations of his relationship with royalty without provoking resistance.

The Petition of Right thus emerges from a crucible of competing rhetorics with their many underlying assumptions. As a petition, it is the most loyal of all forms of protest. But within that loyal form, there are complex layers. It is, after all, a petition of right, not a demand for graciousness. The document is rooted in the reality of who parliamentarians have constructed themselves to be and that, as we have seen, includes a highly selective and sophisticated reading of the past. They claim an historic duty as Englishmen to assert their rights. Edward Coke's comment that the Commons have 'done like good Englishmen to desire their liberty' is a revealing phrase.²⁷ Expectations of unified behaviour flow from

²⁴ The full text of the petition is to be found in *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, pp. 66–70.

²⁵ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 289.

²⁶ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 490.

²⁷ *Proceedings in Parliament 1628*, p. 70.

consensual agreement about historic rights: all present, he wants to suggest, are truly English and therefore they cannot do other than assert their liberties. It is not merely that he is making a point about the Englishman's innate character here. What such a statement really seeks to do is to guide and direct his future. It seeks to create a unity among the like-minded, to forge a communal sense of self which will be inviolable. He is carving out a space where they can be just themselves. It is, whether he is willing to acknowledge it or not, a rhetoric of resistance. There will be more such statements about national homogeneity in the polemic of the Levellers but for now, it is a muted but clear statement from the elite. Coke said this in April; the following month, he was appointed to lead the committee responsible for drafting the Petition. He was a crucial figure in bringing the petition about and, given his status as the grand old man in parliament, his utterances carried particular power over his hearers.

At the heart therefore of all the 1628 arguments in favour of particular rights and liberties lay an appeal to their national content and a recourse to the transcendent type of Englishman who merely needed some minor adjustments to transform his thirteenth-century self into the incarnation of the present-day. Many of the parliamentarians wanted to set this in stone: to cement their vision with a constitutionally-binding statutory bill of rights. The Petition of 7 June was, after over two months of debating, the only workable compromise. Yet compromise though it may have been, it too came to be considered as something of a framing document in the path towards reclaiming liberties already rightfully their own. Like the Charter itself, of which it was a 'branch' according to Coke, the Petition was thought to confirm rather than create native liberties.²⁸

The 1630s are ostensibly a lull time in the evolution of this particular discourse of Englishness. The official channel of protest, parliament, was in abeyance and Charles was in full enjoyment of his time of 'personal rule'. But undoubtedly, the groundwork of polemic had been well-laid in the previous decade and resentments grew at every sign that the Petition of Right was a dead letter and that Charles intended to flout the freeman. The discourse was very easily revived in the 1640s. It had exactly the same character as before except that it was used more aggressively and indeed, in due course, divisively. In the early days of the Long Parliament, it was

²⁸ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 4, p. 299. I treat of Coke's contribution in greater depth below pp. 270–272.

still a mainstream form of protest which could unite people who ended up on different sides in the subsequent Civil War. The intervention made by George Digby, second earl of Bristol and member for Dorset, is a notable example. He spoke lyrically of 'our liberties' as 'the very spirit and essence of our weal, which should differ us from slaves, and speak us Englishmen'.²⁹ Digby was then in his radical phase of opposition, but within a year, he had become one of the king's most prominent defenders in the Lords.

The most interesting piece of evidence for the fact that the discourse about English liberties was not just appropriated by radicals is to be found in a powerful interjection made by Edward Sackville, the fourth Earl of Dorset. Sackville, a typical Caroline courtier in many ways, had moved to royalist Oxford where the King had set up court in 1642 and was very much a middle-way figure trying to reconcile opposing camps. Faced with the breakdown of law-and-order, he was, however, quick to urge against proposals made in 1643 by the first Earl of Bristol, the father of George Digby, that the English should follow the Spanish example in government and take a firm line in disciplining the people. Bristol, entrenched in conservatism, had made the point that there was no possibility of civil war there because Spanish subjects were 'truly Subjects' and their Sovereign 'truly a Sovereign', implying that the English were uppity rebels and the monarch, politically impotent.

Dorset retorted that the Spaniards were 'scarcely removed a Degree from Slaves' whereas in England, freedom, through dint of long grant to ancestors, had become so engrained as to constitute a 'second nature'. So much had the idea of the innateness of freedom taken hold that it was now the central part of their national character. He warned that it would not be safe for the King to strive to introduce 'the *Spanish* Government upon this free-born Nation'. Nor was it to be expected that the people would 'suffer that to be inforced upon them'.³⁰ The story of the failure of the King to modify his attitude in a way that contented everyone is a story well told elsewhere, but what draws our attention is how the rhetoric of Englishness and liberty is capable of surfacing in royalist Oxford, and that it was not just the radical reformers who had taken its implications to heart.

²⁹ *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 2, p. 664.

³⁰ Rushworth 1692, Part III, vol. 2, pp. 127–129. Dorset's moderation as a constitutional royalist has been discussed in Smith 1991, pp. 797–829.

LIBERTIES AS POPULAR POLEMIC

In the 1640s there occurs a distinct change in tempo in this story, as well as a new character. So far, one could make the case for the rhetoric of rights and Englishness being an ‘in-house language’: a discourse employed and exploited primarily by lawyers and parliamentarians. Westminster was its main playhouse; its limits were set by the conventions of the setting and the reflex conservatism of its membership. The public resonance of such ideas was more limited although, undoubtedly, some general prescriptions and protests were seeping through. In the crisis-driven years of civil war, when everybody had something to say, such ideas went viral. With a few Latin tags from the lawyers to add respectability, eager polemicists made sure that these ideas erupted onto the streets of London. In particular, it was that amorphous grouping known to history as the Levellers who took the initiative in propagating the narrative and channelling it into a new direction. It is among them rather than in the statements of the Long Parliament that we find the best evidence for the continuing dynamism of this polemic.

It will be argued that in their fervent (and fervid) writings from 1646 to 1649, the vision of the Englishman as rights-bearer truly came of age. This coming-of-age meant in practice two things. It meant, firstly, politicisation and popularisation of the standard protest narrative. The charged circumstances of Civil War gave all issues a new edge. The lawyer’s construction could have been accused of being rather dry and abstruse. Now, it was no longer merely a matter of intellectually resisting the ‘incroachments, oppressions and great exactions upon our liberties’; it was something over which actual blood had been shed. This made it a more enervating context altogether: it brought the debate out of parliament onto the streets. The fight for English liberties could be seen as a sort of national crusade, no longer confined to the traditional political classes. Thus John Lilburne could say in the same summer as the battles of Naseby and Langport, that ‘the Englishman’s liberty’ was something ‘for which we have fought so long, and adventured all’. The fight for the future of the country was a reality by which all had been touched, not merely the few who had been embroiled in the legal test cases of former years.³¹

³¹ [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646, pp. 3, 9. This pamphlet, entitled *Liberty vindicated against Slavery*, was written by a professed ‘lover of his country’. It is most often attributed to Lilburne but there is a case for attributing it to Overton. See *ODNB*.

That is not to say that the Levellers were a mass movement: they never attained that kind of status although, as we shall see, they claim it constantly. They tended to be popular with minor property owners, London artisans and the New Model Army. They were nonetheless intentionally demotic and desirous of reaching the masses. Erudite elite statements gave way to the popular platform and the cheaply-produced pamphlet. By the 1640s, we must factor in that 78% of male Londoners were literate.³² Levellers appealed constantly over the heads of authority to common man. Authority itself being so shaky, there was no other way to give themselves legitimation. Their favoured collocation – the freeborn Englishman – and their choice of the pamphlet medium as a vehicle of expression are indicative of publicists determined to give their views the widest possible audience. They also had innovative techniques of reaching new hearers, by setting up at street corners, for example, and handing out thousands of petitions.³³

The second way in which this line of thought reaches maturity involves a new extremism at the level of ideas. In becoming demotic in tone, their ideas also became more democratic, something simply never envisaged by the learned Coke and his brethren. It could be said that these autonomous *gens de lettres* (if that is not too grand a word for them) carried the discourse to its logical conclusion. The freeman always had the potential to be any Englishman. How far these democratic notions stretched will be examined in due course but for now, it suffices to say that they imagined wide political consequences flowing from the fact of English birth. They were far from convinced that the new polity as it was emerging was very good at making these changes happen and thus they acted as revolutionary watchdogs, assessing how the new authorities measured up to, or failed to measure up to their strident demands.

To enter fully into their thinking about freedom and national identity is firstly to engage with the self-presentation of one man, namely John Lilburne. If, as David Wootton says, the ‘whole history of the movement was written in the court case of its leader’, it is also true to say that a particular story of Englishness emerges from the very persona he constructs for himself out of the dramatic twists and turns of his public life which saw him periodically incarcerated in the Fleet prison, Newgate or the Tower, always there, he claimed, as the just man wronged, never the actual

³² Watt 1991, p. 7.

³³ Foxley 2001, pp. 153–209.

aggressor.³⁴ It was with his pen, inveterately over-active, that he took his revenge, and in so doing, mounted one of the most striking polemical campaigns of the decade: a total of 40 pamphlets in the years 1646 to 1649. They were not striking for their rhetorical sophistication, or their intellectual grasp of the complexities of the common or natural law, but rather for their strident insistence on a few basic truths, of which the most basic was that the author wrote as an Englishman, as *the* Englishman in fact, to his fellow countrymen.

He was, in fact, relentlessly egotistical in a most politically relevant way. Joseph Frank partially misses the point when he claims that theory was subordinate to self-propaganda in his writings. Haller and Davies also fail to see the tactical importance of his self-centredness. 'At no time [than in *Legall Fundamentall Liberties*] did he give clearer evidence of being much more than a quarrelsome egoist'.³⁵ Lilburne's propaganda is exceptionally self-regarding, it is true, but it is not purely self-indulgent. In reality, he was at his most effective as a strategist when he was propagating his own self-image. It is not just that he presented himself as an individual: it was that he presented himself as every Englishman – just like Cloth Breeches, the very touchstone of the nation. He made his own situation speak for that of every one of his brethren.³⁶ He claimed to be living in his person the struggles and sufferings of the decade and he would not be silent about it. Statements about his own behaviour were easily transformed into national ones: in a petition to parliament, for example, he expressed the identity of interest between defending 'his own liberty, and [that] of all the free-men of *England*'.³⁷ His persona was indistinguishable from the multitude: he signed himself on one occasion as 'An honest true-bred free Englishman', one of the crowd.³⁸ On another occasion, with greater self-regard, he affirmed that the 'Commons of England are not a little concerned in me'.³⁹ He becomes, according to his own construction, the Englishman of the decade. He may not have had 'legitimate' power but he claims something more potent: representative power. That is mandate enough.

As this is something novel in the literature, we must probe reader response to judge how successful he was in purveying this self-image. Was he seen as standing for, messiah-like, the salvation of national liberties?

³⁴ Wootton 2004, p. 424.

³⁵ Frank 1955, p. 58. Haller and Davies 1964, p. 29.

³⁶ Foxley 2001, p. 1.

³⁷ Lilburne [2 November] 1646, p. 72.

³⁸ Lilburne [4 August] 1649, p. 82.

³⁹ Lilburne [25 June] 1647, p. 4.

Was he afforded that recognition by opponents and supporters alike? Even before the main brunt of his polemical writings, he had already earned the soubriquet of 'free born John' after his infamous clash with Star Chamber in 1638, and this reputation he retained throughout the 1640s. It could not have been more fortuitous. Thousands would sign petitions in his favour and in that very act, politicise themselves. He also had particular confreres who were ready to support his claims. William Walwyn, who had become his friend when campaigning with other sectaries in 1645, championed his cause the following year, saying that 'the worthy gentle mans case is mine, and every mans'.⁴⁰ Lilburne could not have hoped for more generous support.

For Richard Overton, he became a quasi-royal figure, hailed on the title page of *An Alarum to the House of Lords* as the '*Defendour of the Faith, And of his Countries Freedoms*'. As far as we can discern, he had come into contact with Lilburne maybe as early as 1644 through Nicholas Tew, a Baptist printer in London.⁴¹ The titles do not surprise. Lilburne is the new monarch of English liberty: it was a job best done from below when authority was abusive, exploitative and arbitrary. Overton continued to use him as somebody who bore the person of the nation. What was being done to him in prison was, in a sense, being done to everyone. If he was only allowed supervised visits from friends, this was tantamount to an insult to all. It was undertaken with no 'sense of his, and our Nationall Rights and Freedoms'.⁴² Overton took pride in the fact that he himself was becoming like the other 'worthy and famous sufferers' for the 'country's rights and freedoms' when he was imprisoned in Newgate some time later. He adopted the same manner of self-presentation as Lilburne had done throughout.

[W]ere it simply against me in particular, it were of less moment; but in somuch as these Lords have intrenched actually on the rights and properties of one Commoner in particular, *they have done it virtually unto all*; for by the same rule they have made this inroad upon mine, they *may* do it unto all.⁴³

The concept of 'virtual' representation was a powerful one.

There is evidence to suggest that the authorities were very worried about the success of Lilburne's public image. His popular persona represented a

⁴⁰ Walwyn [29 June] 1646 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 217. His case 'concerns all the people of England'.

⁴¹ Overton 1646a, Title Page.

⁴² Overton 1646a, p. 5.

⁴³ Overton 1646b, p. 19. My italics.

challenge to a government which claimed to have restored liberties but which was manifestly failing many people. The most striking moment of confrontation surrounds a picture of Lilburne which the government ordered burned. The image constituted the frontispiece of *A Remonstrance of many Thousand Citizens, and other free-born people of England*. Produced by Overton and assisted by Walwyn in the summer of 1646, this was a manifesto of their differences from the Presbyterian-dominated House of Commons. Its tone was a defiant *cri de Coeur* against arbitrary power, craft, policies and court arts and a vociferous demand for justice and plain-dealing. The way that they chose to sum all this up was through the depiction of their imprisoned leader. A half-portrait of Lilburne is visible behind bars, the emblem of victimised righteousness. The satiric inscription reads:

THE LIBERTY OF THE FREE-BORNE ENGLISHMAN CONFERRED ON HIM
BY THE HOUSE OF LORDS.⁴⁴

This was the ultimate identification of man and cause. His sufferings in prison were construed as a visual symbol of what was capable of happening to any Englishman. It is not surprising that the House of Lords in particular took fright. The caption aligned them with the forces of unfreedom and crippling authoritarianism. Lilburne's image as iconic Englishman was subversive because he was a man who advocated that full political rights should be consequent on English birth. He was a man unimpressed by compromise with past dispensations. Subversive ideas easily took hold in London: the literate population was larger there than elsewhere and, in any case, the picture spoke for itself. When the Lords ordered many Leveller pamphlets to be burned, this image was mentioned in particular. They were afraid of the 'high esteem' tending towards hero-worship that it denoted in the people.⁴⁵ The power of his image was thus recognised even by his enemies.

There was, of course, very little that adversaries could do to counter his claim to be the representative of wronged Englishness: that indeed was one of the reasons for its success as a tactic. On one occasion at least, an opponent tried to wrest this symbolic self-description from him. It occurred at his trial in 1649 where he was accused of inspiring a mutiny at Burford, Oxfordshire. The crime was no less than treason against the new republic. A hostile attorney, objecting to his denunciations of the present

⁴⁴ Overton and Walwyn 1646, Frontispiece. See figure 3.

⁴⁵ *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 3, p. 498.

government as tyrannical and treacherous, said that ‘there is no *Englishman* (as Mr *Lilburn* so often stiles himself to be) will *own* such words or acts as these are’.⁴⁶ Even so, it sounded weak. Lilburne had spent the previous three years identifying himself with the wider cause. He was, in the eyes of many, the very personification of Englishness. So overjoyed were Londoners at his subsequent acquittal that there were bonfires lit, and a medal struck in celebration. Tellingly, the commemorative medal bore his image and the names of the jury who had acquitted him. After the acquittal at his re-trial in 1653, two other medals were struck. These were the high point of Lilburnism: his self-propaganda had become a national cause.

If Lilburne’s self-presentation was key to Leveller success among a significant sector of the London population, so also was the usage of inclusive language throughout their print offerings. In the sense that they were independent and non-establishment, they were freer in what they could say and made use of every opportunity to woo over as wide an audience as possible. The common shavings of language that filled their pamphlets and petitions are revelatory in this regard: their appeal was to the general public regardless of status. The frequent collocations involving *an*, *any*, *every*, and *all* Englishman generalised the claims that they were making and nationalised the attitudes expressed. The usage of the indefinite in Lilburne’s resolve to ‘stand and here to dye upon the principles of an Englishman’ is a good example of this.⁴⁷ Thomas Rainborough, both naval officer and colonel of foot, with his peculiar talent for bringing arguments back to fundamentals, insisted frequently on the rights of *any*, *every*, and *all* Englishman with dramatic effects, as we shall see, at Putney.⁴⁸ Instances could be multiplied, but needlessly. There is truly an explosion of such language.

Another notable trait of their idiom is the frequent usage of the first person plural. They abandon privileged authorial aloofness to join readers in the common quest of demanding, or rather reclaiming what was their due. It was a strategic way of assuming shared values and beliefs and it makes the sources pacy and compelling. It is striking, for example, in *A New Found Stratagem*, when the writer, probably Overton, enquired as to the whereabouts of ‘*our* lawes and *our* liberties [...] for which we have paid

⁴⁶ [Lilburne] [November] 1649, pp. 68–69.

⁴⁷ [Lilburne] [November] 1649, pp. 33–34.

⁴⁸ See Woodhouse 1938, pp. 55–56. Also see below pp. 287–291 for further discussion of Putney.

so dear'; it is also patent in Lilburne's sweeping language of 'we the Freemen of *England*'. Michael Mendle has observed that the 'we's of identity' drove Leveller interjections at Putney.⁴⁹ The same could be said of their *oeuvre* at large. They are writing into existence the united front that they desire. By employing these patterns of language in such a consistent and emphatic way, Levellers spoke potently of what united them: their identity as Englishmen. This habit outraged critics because, just as with the Lilburnian self-presentation, there was little they could do about it. '[B]e modest for once, act not as if you were *all*' George Masterson protested in 1648.⁵⁰ The Levellers were not *all* but through their vociferous publications, they had cornered this powerfully-binding rhetoric.

Another great strength of Leveller rhetoric and polemic was its insistence on the dichotomy between the true and the false Englishman. Their capacity to reduce the complex affiliations of the day into simple categories was breath-taking. They became self-appointed judges of national authenticity. This claim to moral power was a powerful tool of affirmation and critique. It is immediately noticeable from even a cursory reading of their pamphlets just how often they employ correlates such as true, true-hearted, and true-bred in relation to the Englishman. At first blush, this might seem a mere habit of rhetoric, innocent of any particular purpose, but it is surely quite deliberate, one of the effects being to suborn the readership into acquiescence with its terms of reference. Who would be likely to deny that they were true-hearted? Many would have denied what the Levellers claimed it meant, but many also would have been susceptible to its lure. Instead of using the petty divisive labels of the day as their main points of reference – e.g. Presbyterian, Independent – they swept all before them by this simple division between the true and false.

The true Englishmen, from whose ranks they claimed to be drawn – Lilburne for example retrospectively justifies all his actions as those of 'an honest, true-bred Englishman'⁵¹ – shared similar aspirations and ought to be treated in the same way. Overton was firm: 'see Englishmen, that have true hearts [...] ye that desire the [...] rights, liberties and freedoms of this

⁴⁹ [Overton] 1647b, p. 9. My italics. Neither the *ESTC* or *EEBO* attributes this work which was published anonymously to Overton. In doing so, I am following the *ODNB*. [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646, p. 3. Mendle 2001, p. 125.

⁵⁰ Masterson 1648, p. 37.

⁵¹ Lilburne [4 August] 1649, p. 11. For other usages of this motif of trueness consider Lilburne 1639, p. 12; [Lilburne] [10 October] 1645, p. 32; Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 21.

Nation'.⁵² Walwyn, also in 1646, urged the parliament not to abandon their resolutions to grant liberties in the face of opposition, because once they thought seriously about the nature of the 'true Englishmans temper', they would know that the majority were on the side of liberty.⁵³ This is an indicative statement in two ways: firstly in its unswerving conviction that knowledge of the national character was necessary for those who presumed to take the reins of government, and secondly in its demonstration of a very characteristic Leveller ambiguity with relation to numbers. They were, it is true, a fringe movement, but this never stopped them from making the expansive claim that they knew exactly what the national temper was. The rhetoric of trueness was not only a description however: it also functioned as a challenge. It was a call to readers to inform themselves of what was occurring and to take action accordingly. Lilburne's *The peoples Prerogative* was written for the 'instruction, information and benefit of all true hearted Englishmen'.⁵⁴ It was also at times a sort of call to arms. When used as a direct mode of address, this becomes especially perceptible. 'Oh all true hearted Englishmen help me to grapple with their [the Lords'] law-lesse greatnesse' urged Lilburne in 1648.⁵⁵

THE NEW ENEMIES OF LIBERTY

Who constituted the 'untrue' Englishmen as far as the Levellers were concerned? During the few short years of the height of their activity, it became an overcrowded and eclectic gathering for the Levellers had a real talent for making enemies. Each ruling group was, at some stage, deemed at fault. Indeed, at first glance, its range of enemies is puzzling. From our perspective, it ceases to be a puzzle. Since what they were essentially arguing about was the rights-bearing Englishman, it is understandable that their attitude to the various authorities would shift according as they promoted his cause or endangered him. So even although there is some nimble side-stepping and chameleon shifts of attitudes, there is still genuine coherence at base. It is in only in this sense that we can understand Lilburne's boast that he had contested 'with all sorts, and kinds of persons' who were destroying personal and national liberty, and his subsequent

⁵² Overton 1646b, p. 5.

⁵³ Walwyn [18 May] 1646 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 204.

⁵⁴ Lilburne [14 February] 1648, Title page.

⁵⁵ Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 21.

claim in 1648 that the Levellers 'never changed their principles to this day'.⁵⁶ One principle at least was a constant.

The House of Lords was always a particular target. Lilburne had a particular grudge against them because of his treatment at their hands.⁵⁷ Overton raged against them, colourfully calling them '*Arbitrary Vipers or Pests*', '*Egyptian Grashoppers*' and '*Norman Invaders and Destroyers* of the Commons legal inheritance and birth-right'.⁵⁸ He could not think of language strong enough. The Commons, which from 1645 Lilburne regarded as the rightful supreme power in England, soon tarnished itself and found itself accused of all manner of crimes. Addressing the Parliament, by then five years sitting and still unresponsive to real national grievances, he sternly tells them that 'you have forfeited your essence and being'. Such a situation was not to be 'endured by the honourable free men of England'. He objected, among other things, to its longevity consequent on the lack of elections, and believed it to be turning into a kind of permanent hereditary body, sitting 'as long as they pleased': in short, another arbitrary authority undermining the Englishman's status.⁵⁹ After Pride's Purge in December 1648, he was not alone in seeing the rump as a *junta* rather than a parliament, bent on the destruction of liberties. *Plus ça change*. More than 200 parliamentarians had been denied entrance into the House or had stayed away 'voluntarily'. The Rump had taken the law into its own hands and there was not a true Englishman left among them.

By 1649, therefore, the Leveller attitude toward parliament was one of absolute disgust: it had replaced the King in being as 'arbitrary, as the Great Turke', having the liberties of Englishmen at its 'beck and command', and thus making them 'more slaves then ever'. There had been a time when the way of serving the cause of liberty was through Parliament but this was no longer the case. The situation was worse than it had ever been: 'all the honest men in England (that in the integrity of their hearts had adhered to the Parliament, and vigorously acted against the King) where [sic.] destroyed and undone and the liberties of England now in a worse condition, then they were before any of this late blood shed for them'.⁶⁰ Indeed, Lilburne went so far as to venture that a king would be preferable to the new tyranny: at least one knew where one stood. In any case, he felt

⁵⁶ Lilburne [6 June] 1646, p. 16; Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 2.

⁵⁷ [Lilburne] [13 November] 1646.

⁵⁸ Overton 1647a, p. 3. See also, for example, Lilburne [27 February] 1648.

⁵⁹ Lilburne [25 June] 1647, p. 38; Lilburne [30 April] 1647, p. 22.

⁶⁰ Lilburne [6 October] 1649, pp. 12, 4; Lilburne [10 August] 1649, p. 33.

that two competing tyrannies would keep each other in check. Cynically, one might argue that he felt safe saying this now that the King was dead. But it appears that he did mean what he said. After all, he had refused to be on the High Court that had condemned Charles. He had been offered a place 'perhaps in the belief that his anti-monarchism was so strong as to overcome what might have been thought to be a merely tactical revulsion.'⁶¹ But he refused to have anything to do with the trial because the corruption of the parliament rendered the whole process illegitimate. It is an interesting twist in the Lilburnian story and shows just how far his disenchantment with Commons extended.

Not merely institutions but individuals felt the brunt of Leveller accusations of un-Englishness. Colonel Baxter, who rode roughshod over Lilburne's arguments for *habeas corpus* when giving a warrant with no legal cause, was deemed not to possess a 'spark of a true bred Englishman' and was comparable to a Turkish 'Janisarie'.⁶² But real wrath was reserved for no less a person than Oliver Cromwell. He had a long way to fall. Having seemed like the bright hope for national liberties and, as Lilburne said, the very 'glory of Englishmen', he had not fulfilled expectations in the least. By 1649, he was being described as the 'basest' of the nation', colluding to 'make us slaves and vassals'. The enmity between Cromwell and Lilburne was of recent date; back in 1640 it was Cromwell who had helped secure his release from Fleet Street prison. But the events of the second half of the decade had driven them apart. By its end, Lilburne was in a position to deplore the way that his 'Will' had replaced that of the king with similar effects.⁶³ The remark had a certain prescience. As the revolution receded, he already noticed the incipient Bonapartism of the future Lord Protector and he wished to call a halt whilst there was still time.⁶⁴ If, in Lilburne's dramatization of identity politics, he took on the role of saviour, Cromwell was, undoubtedly, Satan.

The Levellers were, therefore, particularly good at delivering pronouncements of national excommunication. Excoriation came easily to them. But it goes much deeper than invective because what they do in the process is appropriate, or seek to appropriate, the very language of the laws of treason. We have seen in relation to certain socio-cultural matters

⁶¹ *ODNB* sub John Lilburne.

⁶² Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 25.

⁶³ [Lilburne] [November] 1649, p. 113; Lilburne [10 August] 1649, pp. 33, 29, 6. For some interesting comments on *An Impeachment* see Carlin 1984, pp. 958–960.

⁶⁴ On the subject of Cromwell's persona, more will be said later. See below p. 288.

how treachery was construed outside the narrow framework of its legal definition. What is most interesting here is the free usage of this legal idiom by people who are outside the established circles of political power. It is thus an extremely controversial discourse to use and all the more so because the circumstances are so highly-charged. Unsurprisingly, some of the leaders will themselves have to face treason trials. Throughout their *oeuvre*, they offer a powerfully populist definition of what it is to be a traitor to the national cause. What then is their definition? Simply this: that the only treachery for an Englishman is to betray his or his compatriot's liberties. That is the crime that deserves death. Walwyn rails against the powers that be, describing them as 'the most treacherous upon earth, and not worthy the name of true Englishmen or Christians'.⁶⁵ The first Leveller pamphlet to call for execution of the treacherous King is Overton's *Regall Tyrannie Discovered*, published in January 1647.

The Levellers see themselves beleaguered by traitors on all sides but they want to hold out. They can do none other. Lilburne, bound in conscience to 'God, my selfe, mine and my Countrey' flatly refused to turn 'traytor to my Liberties', proclaiming his own activities as an heroic and virtuous effort to maintain liberties 'against all traytorly oppugners thereof'.⁶⁶ And in 1649, with Lilburne's disillusionment at its height, addressing John Bradshaw who has asked him a question to which the answer would be a self-incrimination, he claimed that *he* would rather 'be hanged, before I would do so base, and un-Englishman-like an Action, to betray my Liberty'. The violence in the image may be explicitly directed against himself, but the scorn is reserved for his opponents who have effectively 'un-Englished' themselves in abandoning the cause of liberty. This is where the weight of the judgement lies. In another place, he compared it to a kind of legal suicide, like cutting one's own throat.⁶⁷ In fearlessly applying the emotive word of treachery to his opponents, it is no wonder that Lilburne and his co-workers were *habitués* of the prison circuit. Parliament was understandably uncomfortable with the free, cheeky and ultimately illegitimate usage of this term in cheap, popular pamphlets. Language had been taken out of the realm of the government and put into a new context: the Levellers were indeed doing something new and uncomfortably subversive.

⁶⁵ Walwyn [18 May] 1646 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 203.

⁶⁶ Lilburne [13 November] 1646, p. 3; Lilburne [6 June] 1646, p. 16. For another example of the language of betrayal see Overton 1646b, p. 19.

⁶⁷ *The picture of the Councel of State*, [11 April] 1649, p. 12. Lilburne [23 June] 1646, p. 4.

REVOLUTIONARY IMPLICATIONS

The novel Leveller treatment of the subject of treason invites us to probe more carefully their understanding of the law and its implications for national man. It is in this regard that they show themselves at their most ideologically revolutionary. We have traced how a certain politicised construction of national identity first emerged in the lawyer-dominated parliamentary debates and committees of the early Stuart period, with the experts in the minutiae of common-law precedent having weighed in very heavily. The Leveller contribution must be understood in this context. A crucial means of transmission between these two political 'generations', if you will, were the legal works and commentaries published in the 1620s, which thus entered the public domain. This meant that by the 1640s, those with no training or expertise could inform themselves by reading the respected legal texts of the day and would have felt entitled to comment. Lilburne, an autodidact in such matters, was much influenced by Coke's *Commentarie upon Littleton* (1628). *Coke on Littleton*, as it was known, was the first of four volumes in the *Institutes of the Laws of England* and these claimed to do for England what the Justinian Code had done for Rome. Would Coke and his lawyer brethren have been horrified at the grubby hands of the Levellers thumbing over medieval precedent and arguing for such radical political consequences? One might imagine so, but that, in any case, is exactly what the Levellers did, becoming in the process 'lawyers of the street'.

Now there has been a variety of work done upon the Levellers' relationship to natural and common-law theories.⁶⁸ Legal terms and legal phraseology fill their cheaply-produced pamphlets: a clear break-down has thus occurred between 'elite' and 'common' frames of reference. There is a slip-page between the kinds of law invoked. Both natural and common law cases are presented: in rhyming off the list of 'naturall, rationall, nationall, and legall liberties', as Lilburne does, there is evidence of a mind willing to argue on any front for dearly-held principles, and certainly not given to making nice distinctions that could be divisive.⁶⁹ Moreover, as Foxley

⁶⁸ Wootton 2004, pp. 412–442 and Gleissner 1980, pp. 74–89 present the natural law case. For treatment of the historical and common-law case see Seaberg 1981, pp. 791–806 and Foxley 2004, pp. 862–867. Foxley asserts that common-law thinking held more sway in Lilburne's thinking and that natural law thinking was more dominant in his colleagues. Foxley 2004, p. 850.

⁶⁹ Lilburne [18 December] 1646, p. 1. In the *Free-mans freedom vindicated* [23 June] 1646, p. 5 Lilburne lists them as 'native, naturall, just, legall and hereditary freedoms and liberties'.

says, 'natural law never eclipses English law, precisely because Lilburne's version of English liberties can be vindicated by natural alongside national law'.⁷⁰ A vision of what it was to be English undergirds all Leveller treatment of the law, I would argue. There is no division, as they see it, between what is national and what is natural. In defending 'native liberties, proprieties, and freedoms' for example, Lilburne is in fact playing on the dual sense of native: both as something inherent to the nature of the people and also something inherited by the law of the land.⁷¹

Leveller usage of the law is also relevant for another reason. They show themselves men of their day in picking up on the contemporary controversy surrounding the Norman Yoke, and using it to defend their ideas about national identity. In 1642, an early fourteenth-century compilation *The Mirror of Justices* was published in which the word was first used. Rapidly, the theory that England had undergone an historic oppression under the Normans became a fashionable position. The Levellers were as anti-Norman in their reading of history as they were anti-French in their reading of current affairs. Yet, there was a problem. The Magna Carta which *Vox Plebis* hailed as 'a perpetual establishment of liberty to all free-born Englishmen and their heirs' had been granted by a Norman king and thus its status as a native source became rather more complicated.⁷² Lilburne got around it by saying that this, 'the Englishmans inheritance', had been wrung from the unwilling Norman.⁷³ In seeking for its 'Marrow and Soule', he was concerned to extract what was truly essential for application to the present circumstances: the spirit over the letter of the law.⁷⁴ In the 1646 *Remonstrance*, Overton and Walwyn called it a 'beggarly thing', containing many elements of 'intolerable bondage', elements only exacerbated by continued examples of misgovernment right the way to the present.⁷⁵

The latter's attitude to the Charter was particularly irregular, and for that reason highly indicative of the difficulties of integrating it with their conceptions of what being English meant in the contemporary world. His mixed feelings are illustrated in the statements that it was both a 'messe of

⁷⁰ Foxley 2004, p. 867. See also pp. 859–62.

⁷¹ Lilburne [6 January] 1646, p. 60. He uses native in the sense of national in [10 August] 1649, p. 22. For these two meanings and their currency at the time see *OED* sub native 1a and 9a. Signs of natural law thinking are especially evident in Lilburne [1 March] 1649.

⁷² Overton and Marten 1646, p. 7 (recte p. 9).

⁷³ Lilburne [6 June] 1646, p. 15.

⁷⁴ Lilburne [14 February] 1648, subtitle.

⁷⁵ Overton and Walwyn 1646, p. 15.

pottage', but nonetheless a 'part of the peoples rights and liberties'.⁷⁶ He tries to express the duality of it by analogy with the plainly-dressed Englishman and the overdressed Frenchified gallant, stereotypes with which his readers would have been well-familiar. The good substance of the charter is perennially English; the ephemeral, garish elements are like 'French garb' (and his readers are well aware of what *that* means). He optimistically believes that although they cloak, they can never fully conceal what is truly English.

[A]s an Englishman is to be known from a Frenchman amongst a thousand, though he labor to fashion himself as the most Frenchified Gallant; so are our true English Liberties, contained in the Magna Charta, as easy to be differenced from amidst that superstitious and in some measure, tyrannical heap cast upon him.⁷⁷

This statement provides a telling cross-over between the cultural discourse of plainness and the political discourse about freedom. Once again, this is a polemic which passionately insists on getting back to basics, to the roots of one's nationality: it seeks to strip down all foreign excesses.

The Levellers' free usage of the law is further brought out in their discussions about the actual rights and liberties of the Englishman. What, it may well be asked, does their Englishman look like? Or at least what is the *beau idéal* which they hope will emerge from the revolutionary crucible? The key to their thinking on the subject lies in their delineation of two personae: the freeborn Englishman and the freeman of England. Much rests on this. Historians have often taken these motifs for granted as part of the rhetorical landscape of that era of crisis without fully exploring their meanings, implications and what was being done by insisting upon them. However, the importance of such collocations has been recognised by both Elisabeth Tuttle and Rachael Foxley. For the former, the concept of free birth was 'one of the keys to the political thought gradually elaborated by the Levellers from the beginning of the civil war'; for the latter, it was 'shorthand for an emerging concept of citizenship'.⁷⁸ Both have a point; what needs to be uncovered here is the valiant attempt to turn these collocations into the ideological bedrock of a new social and political order. This rhetoric would politicise the notion of Englishness in an unprecedentedly radical way.

⁷⁶ Walwyn [October] 1645 in McMichael and Taft 1989, pp. 148, 147.

⁷⁷ Walwyn [2 December] 1651 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 438.

⁷⁸ Tuttle 1989, p. 51, my translation of the French; Foxley 2004, p. 851.

First, we need to note the degree in which their usage of such terms was novel. Before the 1640s, both collocations had lived fairly sequestered lives, important to common lawyers, parliamentarians and those of propertied background. They were essentially the rhetorical property of the privileged, articulated in certain milieus for particular ends. The Levellers, for whom there was no intellectual 'private property', changed the register completely. They made the most of the fact that freedom of birth was a socially levelling concept. Their reading of the matter meant bringing their arguments constantly back to the simple fact of having a birthright and inheritance that was both legally binding and distinctively English. They made a point of writing explicitly to these freeborn people, that is to say, to anybody.⁷⁹ Certain 'logical' consequences followed for the Levellers. The birth-right and inheritance guaranteed to an Englishman, *any* Englishman indeed, for free-birth was not portrayed as an exclusive notion, 'all Englishmen being all born free alike' was inviolable: it could not legitimately be taken away from them. In certain circumstances, of course, some malfeasants might be legitimately deprived of the use of their freedoms.⁸⁰ How did those who oppose their reading of free-birth respond? In a sense, the strategy left-footed critics because they could hardly come out in opposition to 'free-birth' itself, only to what the Levellers meant by 'free-birth', which was altogether weaker. Tellingly, a frustrated writer tried to counter the ubiquity of the collocation by judging it to be redundant: 'are there any Englishmen that are not *free-borne*?' he asked. 'Why doe you distinguish your selves?'⁸¹ But they did distinguish themselves because they felt that there was a need to do so. They knew that the concept had been bandied around in parliament for decades but that its limited implications had been taken for granted up until then. They took pride in the fact that they were the first to draw from it consequences potentially so far-reaching that they would naturally discomfit the propertied.

Their language combines both old and new in a novel and controversial synthesis. Overton, for example, emphasised that freeborn status was a matter not of grace but of right. Those words recall the language leading up to the Petition of Right in 1628, yet how differently they are now being

⁷⁹ The title page of [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646 proclaims that it is 'published for the use of all the Free-borne of *England* whom it equally concernes'; that of Overton's 1646b, that it is 'published for the public benefit of all the Free-born people of England'.

⁸⁰ Lilburne [4 August] 1649, p. 72.

⁸¹ Masterson 1648, p. 37.

used. Overton is using them to argue that it was not fair for 'one to have all, and another nothing', not fair that national birthrights and freedoms should be made into '*great Mens Alms*', at the whim of the donor.⁸² In effect, what he is saying is that rights should not be doled out as arbitrary and inconsistent gestures of *Noblesse oblige*. Back in 1628, the argument of 'right' was employed to complain against the King's methods of extracting money from the propertied; now, it is employed much more generally on behalf of the population as a whole. The concepts have exploded. Notably different also is the absence of the language of subjecthood. In 1628, freedom and subjecthood had been yoked together, albeit in a rather tense relationship. But the Levellers have cut free of the latter. Their relationship with the new authorities is highly fraught.

Then comes the energy of their construction, their capacious vision of what English birth ought to entail. This fact of free birth, they emphasise, is not a dry legal fact: it is meant to have actual consequences. For Lilburne, this is primarily about having an 'equall interest and property in the Law'.⁸³ In fact so fundamental is the law to this individual, that we may see Lilburne's reference to the legal man of England as a synonym for free birth. He is born into the polity so.⁸⁴ At times he conjoined the two, as in his 1646 Petition, when he described himself as a 'legall and freeborn *Englishman*', who 'ought' to enjoy 'the benefit of all the lawes, [and] liberties [...] of a free-born man and a commoner of *England*'.⁸⁵ The primary property of the Englishman is therefore in the law. In that regard all are equal. Any physical property he may have – any landed interest, for example, is secondary: it is not germane to the central issue.

English free-birth status should have many other practical consequences in political, social, economic and religious domains. In one sense, the Levellers could be said to collate a mongrel set of rights for their Englishmen. *Habeas corpus* is, of course, high on the list, and among the many others are 'grand issues' like religious toleration, voting and freedom of speech, and more particular ones, like the administration of proportionate punishments, the end of monopolies and tithes, fair prison conditions, and the right to engage in a free trade.⁸⁶ It is revealing that

⁸² Overton 1646b, p. 7.

⁸³ Lilburne [2 November] 1646, p. 11.

⁸⁴ Lilburne [30 April] 1647, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Lilburne [2 November] 1646, p. 71. See also '*I am a free-born English-man, and have lived a legall man thereof all my dayes*'. Lilburne [30 January] 1647, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Lilburne [25 June] 1647 contains a list of demands, pp. 33–34. For prison rights see also Overton 1646a, p. 5; Overton 1647c, pp. 8–9. For a thorough statement on the toleration of

even when they were claiming rights on behalf of particular groups, they based them first of all on the free birth guaranteed to all. Walwyn's claim on behalf of sectaries having 'as good claimes to Freedome, as any sorts of men whatsoever; because free-born' is an instance of this.⁸⁷ The loose diversity of their programme is so considerable that Foxley's neat judgement about Lilburne in particular having created a 'unified set of rights which applied not haphazardly and individually but as a package and evenly to a whole section of the population' somewhat overestimates overall homogeneity.⁸⁸ However the eclecticism is not necessarily a weakness, not, at least, for an investigation of this sort, because in the sense that they were constructing a new national profile through a host of different rights consequent on free-birth, there was indeed a unity. This was the point upon which they all converged.

The complementary collocation was the figure of the freeman. This persona, obviously in near relation to the free-born Englishman, nonetheless brings to the fore some distinct aspects. The two, as we shall see, were not entirely equivalent. It was possible to be free born and yet not have quite attained the status of freeman. It was also possible to have been a freeman and to have lost that status, either permanently or temporarily. The designation suggests the adult male who had retained, within civil association, the freedom of the freeborn man. For the authors of *Vox Plebis*, this figure could be entirely lifted out of the Magna Carta and placed in a contemporary context; after quoting from the twenty-ninth chapter, it was asserted that 'In this few words lies conched [sic] the liberty of the whole *English Nation*. This word, *liber Homo*, or free man extends to all manner of English people'.⁸⁹ 'All manner' was happily vague, but one could thrive very well on generalities as long as one was not called to put them into practice and the Levellers, admittedly, never were. The *liber homo* of chapter twenty nine had been a very useful figure before in the 1610s and 1620s. Yet what is being done with him is new and nowhere more so than in their relatively egalitarian tone.

It is, undoubtedly, a controversial point as to whether the Levellers were genuinely democratic or whether their position was much more qualified. Certainly, in an age where less than 10% of adult males were entitled to

sectaries, consider Walwyn [29 January] 1646 in McMichael and Taft 1989, pp. 154–172. The particular issue of suffrage will be discussed below.

⁸⁷ Walwyn [29 January] 1646 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 163.

⁸⁸ Foxley 2004, p. 861.

⁸⁹ Overton and Marten 1646, p. 10. The *ESTC* attributes this to the former alone. I follow the *ODNB* in affirming that Henry Marten may have had a hand in it also.

vote, the Levellers were comparatively inclusive. Already by 1645, there was a foretaste of demands to come in *Englands Birth-right Justified against all arbitrary usurpation*, a work traditionally ascribed to Lilburne but possibly Overton's.

[O]ught not the Free-men of *England*, who have laboured in these destroying times, both to preserve the Parliament, and their owne native freedoms and Birth-rights, not only to chuse new Members, where they are wanting once every yeere, but also to renew and inquire once a yeere, after the behaviour and carriage of those they have chosen?⁹⁰

Something much wider than the traditional reference to the forty-shilling freeholder is being mooted here: nothing less than a conferral of full political profile on the rights-bearing Englishman. This simply had not been an issue in the restive parliaments of the Jacobean and Caroline years. The aim then was more to ward off threats and restore the *status quo* than to push forward inexorably into the actual implications of his status.

Increasingly, the Levellers became confident in articulating a new normative vision of how politics should be done. Rhetorical inclusiveness was absolute: extending to all Englishmen as Englishmen. It was already patent in Lilburne's *Rash Oaths* for example, when he proposed, with a glorious vagueness, that 'every free man of *England*, as well poor as rich, [...] may have a Vote in chusing those that are to make the law, it being a maxim in nature, that no man iustly can be bound without his consent'.⁹¹ Nowhere was it clearer than in Thomas Rainborough's celebrated declaration a few months later that the 'poorest he that is in *England* hath a life to live as the greatest he', in which he included a political life.⁹² This propensity to make political capital out of the legal definitions of an Englishman was what made the Leveller contribution to the development of this figure different from anything else that had gone before, a point that Foxley has also commented upon. Indeed for her, it was their 'greatest innovation' to use the already existing language of the English freeman to draw 'further conclusions about political rights from that', and nowhere more so than in this particular case of voting rights.⁹³ They were prophets of a new dispensation in which nationality was made to count for something, politically-speaking.

⁹⁰ [Lilburne] [10 October] 1645, p. 33.

⁹¹ Lilburne [25 June] 1647, p. 50.

⁹² Lilburne [2 November] 1646, p. 38; Woodhouse 1938, p. 53.

⁹³ Foxley 2001, p. 46.

Yet this proto-democratic vision of Englishness, if you will, needs some qualification. It has been a much-debated question for various reasons. First, the Levellers themselves had no unified position to which all adhered: Lilburne himself was not straightforward on the subject. Secondly, there are ambiguities in our (and probably also their) understanding as to what they may have understood by the servants and beggars who are generally left disenfranchised in their schemes for the future. This would mean excluding many or few, as the case may be.⁹⁴ Moreover, as Barry Coward rightly has it, few Levellers had ever 'bothered to work out exactly the technical details of an extended, reformed franchise', and thus did not present an entirely unified front, as is evident most especially at Putney.⁹⁵ But why should this be expected of them? They were not statisticians dealing in numbers of prospective voters; that was not what they were aiming to do. In any case, nobody was very clear about statistics; even in the nineteenth century, the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, presiding over the second reform Act of 1867, considered the outcome a 'leap in the dark' because none knew just how many would be enfranchised by the measure. Trying to pin the Levellers down to a percentage of enfranchisement would be to impose upon them *our* way of thinking rather than listening to theirs.

Their question is rather who must perforce be excluded from the rights consequent on a free English status. It is upon these limitations that we need to train a particular spotlight, for here it is that the distinctions between birth rights and status rights emerge very clearly. Something is to be inferred from two statements of Lilburne's: in 1646, he claimed his status as an English free-man 'who to his knowledge never did any act that deserveth the forfeiting of his birth-right'. Three years later, he was to insist the same.

I [...] have never done any act that did put me out of a Legal capacity to claim the utmost punctilio, benefit, and privilege that the Laws and Liberties of England will afford to any of you here present, or any other man in the whole Nation.⁹⁶

In short, there were acts which could deprive one of one's status. A free-man was a freeborn man who had come to his maturity, especially in the

⁹⁴ For different views on Leveller ideas about suffrage see Macpherson 1962, pp. 107–59; Thomas 1972, pp. 57–78; Wende 1974, pp. 147–173.

⁹⁵ Coward 2003, pp. 232–233.

⁹⁶ Lilburne [23 June] 1646, p. 10; *The picture of the Council of State* [11 April] 1649, p. 4.

civic sense. To participate in the full privileges of the polity was more than just to have the luck of being born English. Thus it was logical that voting, the acme of the rights claimed for the Englishman, was reserved in a very few but important ways.

The kinds of exceptions generally made are revealing. The first of three *Agreements of the People* outlined at Putney on 3 November 1647, suggested merely that votes would be more 'indifferently proportioned'.⁹⁷ The second agreement of 15 December 1648 excluded those who did not contribute to poor relief (an obvious category of dependence).⁹⁸ The third, optimistically intended as a 'Peace-offering to the Free people of this Nation' and produced by Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton and Thomas Prince when in the Tower in the spring of 1649 was more precise. It excluded males under the age of 20, servants, those in receipt of alms, and those who had been servants of the king in arms. Criminals were also mentioned on occasion.⁹⁹ Culpable or not, these people had not attained or had abandoned altogether the full maturity of status to which their birth had entitled them. They ought to have been freemen: they had the potential to be so, but for one reason or another, they were considered outside the political pale. To us, such limitations seem to be symptomatic of a partial not to say problematic inclusiveness, and might make us rather sceptical about the all-embracing rhetoric that they employ at one and the same time. Yet that would be to impose something of our own vision on what is best seen entirely from their perspective. They did not, it would appear, suspect *themselves* of any degree of self-contradiction and thus it was that they could quite happily limit full participation in some of the rights that were constitutive of Englishness, all the while maintaining a supremely unifying language of inclusion.

But even such exceptions cannot detract from the fact that the Levellers were proposing a full-scale model of nationality centred around engaged citizenship. Their view of citizenship is never merely about the minutiae of political and legal rights but involves moral values and virtues. That there are layers of thick association in their depiction of the freeman will already have been apprehended in their advocacy of free, plain speech.¹⁰⁰ There were other layers too. The chief of these were rationality, agency

⁹⁷ Woodhouse 1938, p. 444.

⁹⁸ *An Agreement of the Free People of England* [21 August] 1649, p. 3. For the second Agreement see Wolfe 1944, p. 297.

⁹⁹ Consider Lilburne [10 August] 1649, p. 50. The age-barrier here is 21 not 20.

¹⁰⁰ See above pp. 45–47.

and militancy. These immediately smack of classical tenets, and it could be said that the Levellers were bringing into the popular sphere ideas which had grown up in very different circles. The language of civic virtue was being colonised by a group who were committed to doing different things within it. Ironically, for somebody with an intuitive but hardly logical mind himself, Lilburne constantly emphasised the importance of reason: in *Rash Oaths* for example, he presumes that 'every unbiased, impartial and rationally man in *England*' would agree that Parliament had violated laws and liberties and that they were setting up a 'perfect tyranny'. The appropriation of reason was important for the Leveller vision of English identity in three ways. First, it sought to deflect the criticism that their agenda was driven by impulses. Classical and contemporary discourse emphasised that rationality moderated the passions: it was a mark of political maturity and the Levellers want to lay claim to this. Second, they want to emphasise that the only way of rationally following through the logic of the law was to be in agreement with their opinion. Lilburne made much of the point in his 1649 trial. He insisted that his trial be open and public as becomes 'an understanding *Englishman*'. He also ordered a copy of the indictment so that he could make his defence 'as becomes a rationally English man'.¹⁰¹ He wanted to portray himself as a representative of all those well-informed and politically-aware people who were treated as if they were ignorant and impulsive, incapable of making informed political choices. Thirdly, the appeal to rationality was a shrewd way of wrong-footing opponents from the start. No-one would self-select as irrational; it adds one more complexity to thinking up a riposte. As so often with Lilburne, one finds oneself suborned. He repeats himself endlessly; his strategies are unpolished and relatively crude, but he was, nonetheless, strangely compelling. His rhetoric was certainly efficacious in 1649. The court-room was so packed at his trial that the doors were left open and the crowd milled outside to see him acquitted. He had turned himself into a *cause célèbre*. Ironically, a verdict of guilty, in making him a martyr, might have made his cause flourish even more, but that is in the realm of the hypothetical.

The Englishman was not only plain and rational, he was also, in Leveller polemic, a truly active citizen. The value that Cicero had invested in the

¹⁰¹ Lilburne [25 June] 1647, p. 50; [Lilburne] [November] 1649, pp. 5, 30. Of a piece was his earlier appeal to all 'rationally men in England' to acknowledge the corruption of the House of Lords. Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 8.

vita activa had become very much a humanist rallying cry in the sixteenth century. By the 1640s, the idea had become part of the political vernacular and its classical echoes are only dimly perceptible among the Levellers. More important for them is the necessity of taking part in contemporary political theatre. Indeed, a generally useful way of interpreting their views is to consider the underlying theatrical metaphors at work. It is not too much of a leap to regard the Levellers themselves as public actors, staging themselves for an excitable audience. Their whole *oeuvre* could be said to concern what parts one should play in the 1640s. Their answer is to play your true self: to represent yourself properly as an Englishman. Englishness lay not just in 'having' liberties, but in defending them, and what is more, going to any length to defend them. In *A Whip*, Lilburne claimed to have 'plaid the part of a faithfull Englishman' in 'maintaining and uistifying my liberties'. The Lords, by contrast, played 'the parts of usurping tyrants and destroyers of law and liberty'.¹⁰² This imagery reveals much about their reflection on identity. Identity is performance and agency. It is not a passive state, or at least, it ought not be. Being English means girding up one's loins and *staging* oneself as English, in short, doing something about it. They wanted to get people to 'live up to the standards of English citizenship by being active and vigilant in their demands for their rights'.¹⁰³ It is a new departure.

Levellers constantly urge agency upon their readers. Lilburne tells them in the rousing opening of the *Free-mans freedom vindicated* that they the '[t]rue bred *Englishmen*' have 'a life to lay down' and that they must do so 'for the defence of your just Liberties and Freedomes'.¹⁰⁴ This is rallying material. It is a call to action and to arms. Passivity was condemned: to submit quietly to the erosion of freedom was tantamount to actively betraying them. A citizen is not a creature to whom something happens: a citizen is an actor. For Lilburne, anything was preferable to passivity: he would go to any length so as not 'to be made a slave to any whomsoever, either by a voluntary giving up, or in silent suffering to be taken from me, my native, naturall, just legall and hereditary freedoms and liberties'.¹⁰⁵ And if one way of playing the Englishman was to maintain liberties, the converse was resisting anyone who threatened them: 'be sure you play the

¹⁰² Lilburne [27 February] 1648, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Foxley 2001, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Lilburne [23 June] 1646, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Lilburne [23 June] 1646, p. 5.

Englishman, not foolish'y or willingly to betray your liberties into their hands'.¹⁰⁶

An active male citizenry was invariably militant. It was inevitable that any reflection on Englishness in the 1640s would bear marks of a military ideal, and that the ethos would reek of the atmosphere of the army camp and gunpowder. The Leveller-type of desirable Englishman was not an aesthetic creature, least of all now; he was fashioned out of very different materials to the gentleman and courtier. Their man had no airs and graces. Military values had shaved down the ideal to its very basics: fellows of 'plain and uncoined constancy',¹⁰⁷ in short, soldiers or soldiers-of-the-press, warriors of print. Lilburne was a some-time Lieutenant-Colonel of dragoons as well as a writer. In 1646, he hailed what the army had already achieved. National liberties had been recovered by purchase, at the price of the lives and blood of 'more then a Milion of true harted and Free-borne Englishmen'.¹⁰⁸ How soldiers were dealt with was emblematic of how the nation as a whole was treated. If the rank-and-file were not properly accommodated after their heroic 'sacrifice', then the case looked bleak for the population at large.¹⁰⁹ It was not that army rights were deemed to be separate from common ones, but rather that soldiers were in a better position to lobby, because they had fought to preserve them. John Wildman made it clear at Putney in the autumn of the following year that the army were not just demanding what was their due as soldiers whose pay was in arrears, but, in what evidently was a weightier matter for him, as Englishmen. Just as 'the malice of [...] enemies' would have deprived – he actually uses the word 'bereaved' – them of their liberties 'as Englishmen', so also it was 'as Englishmen' that they demanded redress of rights.¹¹⁰ And Rainborough pointed out with eloquent simplicity that the soldiers 'are Englishmen. They have now nothing to say for themselves.'¹¹¹ Their actions spoke for themselves. They had played their part.

¹⁰⁶ Lilburne [28 January] 1648, Postscript, unpaginated.

¹⁰⁷ Shakespeare *Henry V*.

¹⁰⁸ [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646, p. 12. See also his praise for them because they refused to buckle under the 'Arbitrary power of the State', instead agreeing to stand together not just as fellow soldiers, but 'as English men, [...] upon Principles of Right and Freedome'. Lilburne *A Defence for the honest Nownsubstantive Soldiers of the Army*, added to Lilburne [14 February] 1648, p. 42.

¹⁰⁹ For a full account of Leveller relationship to the New Model army see Kishlansky 1979, pp. 795–824.

¹¹⁰ Woodhouse 1938, p. 90.

¹¹¹ Woodhouse 1938, p. 67.

The opposite of the Levellers' true English citizen is the persona of the slave. As will be obvious by now, their definition precluded systemic 'enslavement', however they might choose to construe that concept. Lilburne's declaration 'I am a free-man of England, and therefore I am not to be used as a Slave, or Vassall,' expresses this with epigrammatic force, as did his comment in *The Lawes Funerall* that 'so much am I an *Englishman*, and free from the principals of slavery'.¹¹² However, being free from the *principles* did not unfortunately secure him from the reality, and that understandably was what goaded him throughout. Less profound than neo-classical thinking on the subject, Levellers tended to confine themselves to arguing that the actual loss of liberties was what made one a slave. It was, in the words of their March petition of 1647, a case of 'our liberties [being] so essential to our freedome' that 'our condition, without the same [...would be] absolute slavery'.¹¹³

Nonetheless, it was the Leveller leader with most in the way of classical background who presented the most compelling vision of a slavish state of being. For Overton in *A Defiance against All Arbitrary Usurpations*, pessimism was the only emotion possible when he considered how arbitrary encroachment and invasions on the 'naturall Rights, proprieties, and freedoms of the people of this Nation' had 'vassalaged' spirits, which were essentially 'noble and free'.¹¹⁴ They are Englishmen denatured and unmanned as he makes clear in a particularly powerful passage.

The poor deceived people are even (in a manner) bestialized in their understandings, become so stupide, and grosly ignorant of themselves, and of their own natural immunities, that they are even degenerated from being men, and (as it were) unman'd, *not able to define themselves by birth or nature*, more than what they have by wealth, stature or shape, and as bruits they'll live and die for want of knowledge, being void of the use of Reason for want of capacitie to discern, wherof, and how far God by nature hath made them free.¹¹⁵

These pitiful creatures, crucially, are unable to 'define themselves' as men, as Englishmen, and as Christian. They can treat only of matters of secondary importance, like wealth and status. But in being ignorant of who and what they are, they lack any capacity for political maturity and considered

¹¹² Lilburne [13 November] 1646, p. 3; Lilburne [15 May] 1648, p. 29.

¹¹³ Appended to Walwyn [14 June] 1647 in McMichael and Taft 1989, p. 287 and probably written by him in April 1647.

¹¹⁴ Overton 1646b, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Overton 1646b, p. 2. My italics. For a reading of how Overton may be said to outline an argument for liberty with neo-classical resonances in 1646c see Skinner 2006, p. 164.

action. Freedom alone gives them this capacity; without it, they are like beasts, living a useless and irrational life. It is a very strong statement indeed of a dystopic universe.

To ignore the themes of masculinity and religion out of a desire to focus on the national alone would be to miss out on the rich web of association being built around the un-English creature, and cause us to give an unduly stripped interpretation of a much richer ideology. A grasp of the degree to which Leveller thinking centred on the masculine creature and his values is vital to any understanding of their thinking. This is why the slave is particularly despised: he is a man, but not manly. When Lilburne says that slavish treatment is below '*any man that is a man*', what he is also saying is that it is below any man that is an Englishman, as a later sweeping reference to 'all men, as Englishmen' confirms.¹¹⁶ Slavery was not merely corrosive of the political animal: it was also a spiritual falling-off. Overton described how the Presbyterian tyranny would stretch over souls and establish religion 'as Mahomet established his Alchoran', with as much force.¹¹⁷ The play on national spirit is also visible in Lilburne's harsh judgment of the soldiers of the General's Regiment of horse, quoted by the clerk at his trial in 1649. In suppressing the relievers of the people, they have sought 'to break and vassalage the spirits of all the *English* which in all ages have had the preheminiencies of other Nations'.¹¹⁸ Slavery ossified the national character.

When looking for contemporary cautionary examples, the Turks, the 'Pesants in *France*' and 'the Boors in *Flanders*' (under the Spanish) were all very useful examples.¹¹⁹ Overton, in criticising the Presbyterian majority in parliament for its plan to disband the New Model army in 1647, saw decline and fall in foreign terms.

[Y]ee shall not more be ruled by a known law, as free men of *England*, but curbed and governed by the sword as the Pesants be of *France*, and the inslaved Bores of *Flanders* who indeed [...] are wholly and all they have at their lawlesse Masters dispose.¹²⁰

Turkey was the ultimate example because it represented not merely political tyranny but also oppressive religious rule. When inveighing against his

¹¹⁶ Lilburne [15 May] 1648, p. 29; Lilburne [10 August] 1649, p. 37.

¹¹⁷ Overton 1646b, p. 1; [Overton] 1647b, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ [Lilburne] [November] 1649, p. 113. See below pp. 280–286 for Milton's interpretation of the national spirit.

¹¹⁹ Lilburne [30 April] 1647, p. 22.

¹²⁰ Overton 1647b, pp. 9–10.

experience of imprisonment, Lilburne threw open the question: 'What is Paganisme or Turkish slavery if this be not such? If *this be the Englishmans Liberty, what is servitude?*'¹²¹ The lists were generic but not unconsidered. Such stereotypes of the slavish were commonplaces by the 1640s. There is a difference though. They were now being used with more of a political edge against the enemy within. They are being directed against those who were supposed to have saved the country from one form of arbitrary power. The trope of the 'poor spoyled free-borne English-man' therefore, as developed in Leveller argumentation, provided a clear illustration of the readily-assumed and often reiterated association between the slavish and the foreign.¹²² Depicting the slavish other was one more way of emphasising that the national quintessence revolved around liberties.

The Levellers thus offer a distinct contribution to the seventeenth-century narrative surrounding English rights and liberties. As we know, theirs was not the model which was taken up by establishment politicians and in that sense, it could be said (and has often been said) that they were a failure. But in the history of ideas, success matters less, and the nature of the articulation more. These strident radicals show us how far one could run with ideas about national identity, how far they could be politicised. Intellectual magpies that they are, they take liberties with conventions of rhetoric and of law and build a much more capacious narrative than anything previously mooted. Traditional allegiances all fade into the background. Historians of modern nationalism often claim that the phenomenon occurs at a time when horizontal bonds of association begin to acquire primacy over hierarchical vertical ones. Although in the 1640s, this time had clearly not arrived, the Levellers were, in their way, nationalists *avant la lettre* and this is what makes them, in terms of intellectual history, distinctly significant, and their vision an unprecedented one.

¹²¹ [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646, p. 24.

¹²² [Lilburne] [21 August] 1646, p. 13.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NEO-CLASSICAL ENGLISHMAN

THE ROMAN TRADITION

Seeing Englishness as a congerie of rights and liberties with more or less radical implications was but one way of construing nationality in political terms. The other major line of thinking is related but distinct. It emerges from the same crucible of parliamentary controversy and it too treats of the liberty of the Englishman. But it is less a revived 'medieval' story and more of a neo-classical one: in that sense it espouses an even more capacious and venerable lineage and it sets itself in a much larger historic-political narrative than that provided by the common law. The root of the matter is the appropriation of ancient Roman heritage and thought for present-day political ends. Reflecting the burgeoning role of the classics in the humanist curriculum, the educated men of the seventeenth century found it easy and alluring to draw parallels, to tell classical stories about themselves, and to adopt some of the most prized values of *Romanitas* and its grimmest cautionary tales for their own usage.

England's self-identification with the classical world has, naturally, taken many forms throughout modern history. The most pronounced occurs centuries later in the British Empire of the Victorian age. The culmination of this identification with *Romanitas* lay, it could well be argued, in Lord Palmerston's resonant defence of the Gibraltarian (and therefore British) Don Pacifico in 1850 on front of the House of Lords. 'As the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say, *Civis Romanus sum*, so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him from injustice and wrong.'¹ This was a statement made in the high-noon of Britain's imperial greatness when she was confident in her status as the new Rome.

In the seventeenth century, the nature of the self-identification is rather different. The tone is less one of self-glorification and complacency and more one of preoccupation and anxiety. The early-modern English were

¹ *Hansard* CXII (3d Ser.), pp. 380–444.

not masters of their world, far from it: even in their own country, their sense of political mastery was threatened. Rome was supremely useful. A moderately-sized power seeking to construct a respectable identity could be sure of finding in her history and literature examples, lessons and warnings, as well as a comprehensive ethos surrounding liberty which was more than just an assortment of rights. It was a suitable backdrop for the massiveness of the endeavour of reclaiming what they felt to be lacking in their own politics. This story ends up in the full-blown classical republicanism of John Milton and although this will be aborted in 1660, it is a vitally important episode in which national identity is re-imagined along neo-Roman lines.

Several strands of Roman thought were especially fitting for usage and politicisation in the fraught and difficult circumstances of the 1600s, in particular the complex of moral ideas surrounding liberty, virtue, law and authority. Through its historians, orators and rhetoricians, the Roman republic had acquired a sort of mythic status. Its ideal man was the active citizen of upright virtue, nowhere better portrayed than in the works of Cicero, texts very highly-regarded in the early-modern humanist curriculum. The Roman historians were also extraordinarily influential, notably Sallust and Tacitus. The former had woven a compelling narrative of corruption in high places and treated of the oligarchies which had eroded Roman political culture and civic virtue. The latter charted the decline of Roman power and the growth of license and decadence and attributed it all to the loss of liberty.² These were ripe stories ready for the plucking, easily translated into the idiom of the day. Those well-familiar with Roman historiography had, therefore, a ready-made diagnosis of the evils of arbitrary power and they bore the fall of Rome before their eyes just as much as its early glories. The neo-Roman account is thus set in a historically dramatic context of a fall from glory.

Another crucially influential strand of thought was drawn from the Roman legal heritage.³ The *Corpus Juris Civilis* was compiled by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD and articulated some basic distinctions that would prove crucial to the case being made here. First was the legal definition of the free citizen who was male, rational, and a householder. Then there was the emphatic binary opposition in the Graeco-Roman world between freemen and slaves. '[A]ll men' proclaims

² Cicero 1928, 1942; Sallust 1931; Tacitus 1925, 1937.

³ See, for example, Skinner 2002, II, pp. 286–307 and Skinner 2006, pp. 156–170.

the code 'are either free, or slaves.' The code elaborated in depth upon the status-differences of those who were 'sui iuris' (under their own law and thus independent) and those who were 'alieni iuris' (under another's law and thus dependent). The fundamental point about the Roman definition of slavery was that the slaves were in the power (*potestas*) of their masters. Whether he ruled them with a rod of iron, or gently, they were still slaves. The fact that their life might be harsh or comfortable depending on the character or whim of the master did not change their legal state. Slavery was, it could be said, a full-time status. In Roman law, there were two ways of being a slave: either one could be born into a condition of slavery if it were a law of the nation or one could become one through conquest and defeat. Now although the distinction between the free and the slaves could not be applied exactly to seventeenth-century England (where there were, in truth, no slaves), it carried powerful metaphoric value. Furthermore, the idea that those born free could become enslaved by means of tyranny and conquest was a fearsome thought that exercised the imagination of some of the more classically-oriented polemicists.

What then are the differences between this neo-Roman story and the common-law story about English liberty apart from their admittedly different origins? I would argue that those who explored concepts of Roman *libertas* in a seventeenth-century context were excavating more deeply into the question than contemporaries who just demanded the restoration of key rights. The polemic of 'rights' contented itself with crying traitor whenever a right or liberty was interfered with. It was focused on the oppression of the moment, as it were. This other strand of thinking has more to say about fundamental conditions and states of being, and with quasi-philosophical questions about what or what does not make for freedom. It seeks to tackle the roots and not just the branches of the issue. Skinner plots this thinking along these lines:

[U]nder the rule of law, it remains possible to live as a free-man. To retain this status, [...] two conditions must in turn be satisfied. One is that you should be able to exercise your rights and liberties without undue interference. While this is a necessary condition, however, it is not sufficient, for it is possible to enjoy your liberties to the fullest degree without being a free-man. If the continuation of your liberties depends upon the arbitrary will of anyone else, then you are not a free-man but a slave, even though you may have the fullest *de facto* enjoyment of your liberties and may therefore be able to act entirely as you choose.⁴

⁴ Skinner 2006, p. 157. For an influential interpretation of Republican freedom, understood as non-domination rather than as non-interference see Pettit 1997.

The discrimination is a nice but significant one. The unsettling conviction which exposure to Roman tenets confronts them with is that one may have liberties and still be unfree. This mines all sense of complacency. For the King to palliate and satisfy demands will not make the underlying problem go away. It is the mere *fact* of arbitrary power which eliminates freedom, regardless of whether or not it is exercised. If conditions are not propitious to freedom understood in this sense, then one is not free. The only alternative, and it is a discourse, like the last, in which legal terminology is constantly being exploited for its emotive and moral overtones, is that one has the status of a bondman or slave. In other words, it is the looming 'might' of the discretionary powers of the monarch, which may or may not be activated in a manner that undermine specific rights and liberties, which is of grave concern.⁵

Thus runs the general nature of the idea. My argument, rooted in this, is that such writers and speakers are seeking at once to 'Romanise' the national story and nationalise a Roman story. By Romanising the national story, they make it rather more epic than it is: a modest power seeking a big canvas for its internal debates and divisions. By nationalising the Roman story, they consciously draw on both moral-philosophy and legal traditions and directly map them onto present circumstances. The 'matching' seems to fit in a gloriously simple way. Arbitrariness destroys freedom and breeds a cowed spirit, a loss of public virtue and general decadence. Rome is the example of what may happen and Rome inevitably falls. Furthermore, arbitrariness in the modern world, so the story goes, is a property of foreign cultures notably the Italian states, France and the Ottoman Empire. Result: misery. The evidence, they claim, is before their very eyes.

By contrast, the Englishman is free and ought to live in a free condition. What is needed, to restore national greatness, is the establishment of permanent conditions which respect this. If not, he will become a slave, like the foreigners who are not used to anything better. They become so degraded that they do not know the extent of their own degradation. Their very ignorance is its measure. And this is where moral philosophy enters

⁵ Compare, for example, the Levellers, who, given the practical bent of their mindset, tended to focus more on the overt manifestations of arbitrariness, railing in *An Agreement of the Free People of England* against the 'exercise of an unlimited or Arbitrary power'. *An Agreement of the Free People* [21 August] 1649, p. 2. As I have suggested above (pp. 250–251), Overton, with his classical education, straddles the two. It is not allowing me do this, for whatever vexing reason.

in because arbitrariness and freedom are not just regarded as political concepts: they are shorthand for execrable or admirable attributes on both a personal or national level. Being dependent on the will of another meant being servile, and servile people were not capable of virtue or learning. Nor were they sufficiently manly: they were creature-like. Arbitrariness, it was felt, was also a perverse determinant of both action and inaction. The latter indeed is just as, if not more significant, since it was just as much about what one did *not* do in such an oppressive system as about what one was forced to do. One self-censored and hung back: in short, one refrained. The resultant man was seen as apathetic and purposeless, a useless man of affairs, an uncultured creature and a cowardly soldier and this in turn had a negative impact upon the economic, intellectual and, crucially, military might of the whole nation. All these dimensions of national life were brought under the master-tropes of arbitrariness and freedom. The construction was very broad indeed.

THE SPECTRE OF NATIONAL DECLINE

It is Thomas Hedley's lengthy oration during the debates on Impositions on 28 June 1610 that provides the most memorable exposition of this way of thinking in all four of the Jacobean parliaments. His argument against Impositions ranges beyond the immediate question – at the end he recognises that his zeal has 'transported' him – and, in delving deeply into the impact that they have upon the 'ancient freedom and liberty of the subjects of England', is an apt example of how the practical question concerning rights was raised to another level.⁶ As a sergeant-at-law, it was only to be expected that he would trace the genealogy of English rights and liberties from the mists of time to their restoration in the Great Charter and their present-day application, and all this he does with some ardour. Yet his vision, deeply imbued with reverence for the common law as it is – at one stage he describes it as a 'garment fitted to the body'⁷ – goes beyond the generic recapitulation of its *précis* in two main ways. The first consists in his ability to combine the traditional vocabulary with much more far-reaching ways of talking about the implications of the Impositions. The second lies in his engagement with classical thought. His vision draws heavily on Tacitus and Cicero and on the tenets of Roman law, points that

⁶ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, pp. 190, 197.

⁷ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, pp. 180, 190.

Markku Peltonen has uncovered.⁸ It awaits to be seen how *Romanitas* was Englished.

A sign that he is working off two canvases is his sensitively distinct usage of the words 'liberties' and 'liberty'. The former suggests the medieval understanding involving very particular privileges meted out to various groups within society; the latter the more capacious concept I have described. His 'liberty', although Roman, is not tinged with republicanism. Allegiance to a royal figure is 'proper' to his Englishman. He argues that the monarch's sovereignty and the subjects' liberty were as 'twins', unable to 'subsist without the other', and uses Tacitus' defence of the mixed principle in Roman rule to make the case that, if well-conducted, liberty can dwell in a polity so constructed as England is.⁹ Yet, that is not what he sees happening before his eyes. Instead, arbitrary power is making a 'promiscuous confusion of a freeman and a bound slave'.¹⁰ It is confounding the whole system.

One of the strongest statements of the entire speech immediately follows. '[S]lavery', proclaims Hedley, 'is [...] repugnant to the nature of an Englishman'.¹¹ This is the very taproot of his thought. What strikes one, first, is that he has chosen to refer to the 'nature of an Englishman' in preference to the 'nature of an English subject', in all probability because the latter would not be an adequate summation of the essential character. Also notable is the very inclusivity of such a remark. He does not confine himself to saying that slavery was repugnant to the propertied English freeman as in parliament assembled. That would have been a conventional elite position. His point thus remains open to the widest interpretation. That is not to say that there is even a hint of the democratic in Hedley – that was far from his intent – but he is determined to bring out the freedom of condition which all Englishmen share.

The puzzle remains at this point in the speech as to what he actually means by nature. How is this 'natural' instinct for freedom brought about in the Englishman and conversely, how do foreign nationals end up pusillanimous and cowed? He answers this himself at a later point. Innate character does explain a little. So also does climate. On both he is, however, rather tantalisingly vague, saying merely that these things are not 'utterly without their operation and influence'. His real conviction is that what has

⁸ Peltonen 1995, pp. 320–328.

⁹ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 191.

¹⁰ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 192.

¹¹ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 192.

nurtured liberty in the Englishman have been artificial constructs, namely the 'laws, liberties and government of this realm'.¹² So, in this interpretation, the 'national character' is not a pre-legal entity, but something that is itself constituted by law. The nature of an Englishman he refers to is thus not what it may have been like in the state of nature, but the distinctive self that has emerged out of the laws and liberties 'of this realm'. It is that kind of self that cannot endure slavery.

It is thus precisely at this point that he succeeds in pushing the debate beyond the defence of the individual's endangered rights and a simple construction of the Englishman as rights-bearer. On reflecting on what is repugnant to the nature of the Englishman, he is not talking primarily of a loss of rights; what is repugnant to an Englishman is living in subjection to arbitrary power of the sort that is being claimed by the crown. That is the deep 'confusion' he speaks of. It is more than a loss of specific legal attributes: it is a confusion of state. Expanding on this in the specific case of possessing goods, he underlines that it is the capacity to possess goods freely, more than the actual possession that counts: 'it is not so much to lose all a man's wealth as the power of holding it, for that is nothing else but bondage, or the condition of a villein'.¹³ For him, profit and property, otherwise goods and land, constituted the heart of personal liberty. That capacity for ownership, 'the power of holding', is what creates a free condition, and it is this that is being put in jeopardy. He subsequently drove the point home: 'So if the liberty of the subject be in this point impeached, that their lands and goods be any way in the king's absolute power to be taken from them, then they are [...] little better than the king's bondmen'.¹⁴ This is his worrying conclusion, phrased in a careful conditional way. Englishmen were not only in danger of becoming slaves, they already were.

The series of negative consequences which would follow in the wake of such a predicament both personally and nationally are described in terms which reveal the extent of his saturation in the classical narratives of decline from glory. The Roman republican story, which eloquently harnessed liberty to exceptional military glory and active civic virtue, was closely followed by the declinist narrative, which branded arbitrariness and slavery together with civic inactivity and physical and moral

¹² *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 196.

¹³ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 194.

¹⁴ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 194.

turpitude.¹⁵ In Hedley's speech, both dimensions receive a vivid contemporary retelling. He predicted that Englishmen, having once realised that their lands and goods were in the 'absolute power and command of another' would fall prey to a 'drooping dismayedness', a state of communal melancholia which would leave the country in no fit state to achieve anything.¹⁶ Being 'king's bondmen' would make them poor and would disincentive their inclination to make something of their lives.¹⁷ Poverty would abase and demean their spirit. Crucially, the fact of arbitrary power would also render them un-English. They would, one and all, become 'like to the peasants in other countries'. What is Hedley doing in such a statement? He continues that foreign peasants 'be no soldiers nor will be ever made any': in short, they cannot be relied upon to defend their country because they are too subservient and miserable. This is quite a judgement. By contrast, he maintains that 'every Englishman is as fit for a soldier as the gentleman elsewhere'.¹⁸ So the English system breeds a distinctive kind of man, especially evident in his military calibre. His reason is that the Englishman is free, whatever his social status. The foreign peasant is, in effect, a slave. The slave does not have civic spirit: he is merely the hand that toils but has no other function. As such, he is 'neither fit to do service to his country in war nor peace'.¹⁹

The more subtle qualitative distinction being made here pertains to the implied contrast between the fighting spirit of the Englishman and that of the foreign gentleman. Hedley's subtext carries the emphatic message that the freedom and thus the military prowess of the latter are of a different order entirely to that of the English. The foreign gentleman's loyalty and civic patriotism were guaranteed merely by the fact of his possession of a high social status, determined by the amount of lands and goods he had. Special privilege had won him for the country's cause. *Noblesse*, in effect, obliged him. The prowess of the Englishman, by contrast, came simply with being a freeman of his country, and with having legal assurances in place that gave him the requisite spirit for the fight. He knew that he would be fighting to retain that very freedom. Subject only to laws to which he had consented by representation in Parliament, Hedley's point is

¹⁵ Upon the range of political themes transmitted to early-modern English society pre-eminently from classical sources see Skinner 2002, II, pp. 289–290, 312–318.

¹⁶ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 196.

¹⁷ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 194.

¹⁸ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, pp. 194–195.

¹⁹ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 194.

that he was a more uniform creature across social groupings than foreigners could hope to be. Hedley went even further in a subsequent passage, contending that the common Englishman was actually superior to the gentry of other nations when in active service. The infantry drawn from the commons make 'better soldiers [...] for their courage is equal, because their freedom and liberty is equal with theirs'.²⁰ Again, it is quite a bold statement and one that, in factual terms, must be treated sceptically.

Hedley's vision here is part of a more generally decipherable tendency across the discourses to talk about foreign systems in terms of their polarisation between classes that we have noted before. This strategy had its uses, not least because it made it seem as if being English transcended even legitimate social divisions. Hedley is not a 'leveller' in the proto-democratic sense developed in the 1640s, but there is, nevertheless, a certain 'levelling' in his idealisation of the national man. He is, of course, far too complacent about the capacity of the English system and values to transcend social divisions and militate against extremes of privilege and poverty. There indubitably was not quite the massive difference he claimed to observe. An English peasant in Yorkshire would have had far more in common with his Breton equivalent than he avers. English soldiery would not have been the strongest in Europe in 1610, far from it in fact. In contrast to the French, for example, England had no standing army. But it is his strident truth-claim with its subtext of anxiety which interests us more than its truth-value which is obviously dubious. His vision, closely linking national identity with the conditions conducive to manly flourishing, has at its heart the 'armed citizen', a Roman type dressed up to be English.²¹

Hedley's reading of the Englishman as he is and as he is in danger of becoming also encompasses peace time as well as war. The free Englishman could be expected to work hard and cultivate commerce – an interesting pragmatic emphasis that will later be of great importance in the development of classical liberalism. His man is *homo reciprocans* who contributes to the improvement of the country which has given him freedom. Thus trade and industry can thrive. The reality of the day, however, is not at all propitious: he claims to observe a 'general decay of trade and traffic' resultant on the recent Impositions, and he darkly emphasises that such a policy affected everyone in the nation, 'touch[ing] all the commons as well as the merchant'.²² His dire warning is that Englishmen, in such unnatural

²⁰ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 195.

²¹ Peltonen 1995, p. 222.

²² *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, pp. 183, 196.

conditions, will have no interest in engaging in commerce: being uncertain as to when their profits will be taken from them, 'they will use little care or industry to get that which they cannot keep'.²³ Initiative would be pointless in such precarious circumstances. The story of the decline of national man is developed in just those areas – war and the economy – upon which an early Stuart parliament were most likely to be sensitive.

Hedley's critique of the current *ad-hoc* royal policies thus ranges widely and deeply and, in its usage of classical tropes and contemporary examples, is without doubt the most profound statement of protest offered in the parliamentary session in 1610. But what then is Hedley's solution and how radical is it? His negative construction is particularly emphatic, but does he leave us with positive clues as to how exactly it will be necessary to curb the royal prerogative, that factor which, when unregulated, inhibited every aspect of life? Although we can see elements in his thought which anticipate republicanism, he must not be read anachronistically as a closet anti-monarchist. He is not. What he does see the need for is a set limit on royal prerogative: a legal definition which would guard against arbitrary power. He was quite urgent in maintaining that Englishmen should no longer countenance that 'prerogative [...] that shakes this so long settled freedom of the subject in point of profit or property, hazards [...] to unjoint the whole frame of this so ancient, honourable and happy state'.²⁴ Hedley's was thus a voice urging a legal definition of where royal prerogative ended and the free Englishman was able to enjoy his liberty unimpeded.

THE BRINK OF DEGENERATION

What Hedley had gestured at – the condition of liberty without which particular liberties were so much dead matter – became a much more pronounced preoccupation in the third parliament of King Charles I's reign. It is apparent that underneath the clamorous articulation of particular rights, existential questions were being asked. Who are Englishmen that the King should treat them so summarily according to his whim? This underlying question was particularly evident in the early stages of the debate when concerns were at their broadest, and before the participants descended into the particular details of various rights and the relentless

²³ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 194.

²⁴ *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, vol. 2, p. 197.

wrangling over form. In fact, it could be said that the delay on voting the subsidy, which the King urged on them, was due, in no small degree, to the raising of this fundamental speculation. The very first day of the debate, it was articulated by Francis Seymour, always concerned with legal correctness, who wanted to know whether they were in a position to vote subsidies at all, because 'if his Majesty be persuaded by any to take from his subjects what he will and when it pleaseth him, I would gladly know what we have to give?' Petulant although such a question is, we notice how careful he is to avoid outright accusations, choosing instead a more neutral phrasing which left hearers to decide 'if' such arbitrary conditions were really in force.²⁵

The following day, it was suggested rather slyly, that the 'best way' to expedite the King's business was to 'clear whether we be bondmen or subjects'. Certainly, it would not be the speediest way. Whether this was Nathaniel Rich's personal view or an order of the House is unclear but that this was a deliberately roundabout way of approaching the king's urgent financial business is patent.²⁶ The King wanted money fast: they wanted reassurance. They declared that they could not vote on subsidies until the question of their status was definitively cleared. It was a fine delaying tactic and a form of obstructionism, and more than that, it was a protest against the fact that their powers should be turned on and off like a tap. The question was voiced again by Robert Phelps and Dudley Digges soon after. The former laid it down as a prerequisite that 'we must first know whether we have a being before we go to the maintaining of our well being'. They wanted to know what their conditions of being were because on that, everything depended.²⁷ The need to clarify fundamentals before doing the practical business of parliament was a common thread in the debates from March onwards, leading John Scudamore to recall how often he had heard it said that 'we could not fall to resolution to supply his Majesty *till we knew whether we were slaves or bondmen*; that our vital liberties did in a manner want life'.²⁸ It is unsurprising that a major constitutional document emerges from this crisis of identity.

The question that they were asking was, in a sense, rhetorical. Representatives were quite clear on how they ought to be treated as Englishmen and were not themselves in doubt about their status: their

²⁵ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 56.

²⁶ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 85.

²⁷ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 92, 89.

²⁸ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3, p. 193. My italics.

assumptions about freedom ran deep. Rather were they exposing the king's arbitrariness for what it was: the attitude of a tyrant to slaves, rather than that of a king to freemen. What they said was more for his benefit than for their own. Like Hedley, there was a conviction that the King ought to be legally constrained. 'That king that is not tied to the laws is a king of slaves', Digges said emphatically.²⁹ The King responded to such obvious and continued prodding (however much he may have felt that they were being pedantic,) by issuing a reassurance, transmitted through Mr Secretary Coke on 3 April, to the effect that his 'greatest glory' was to be a 'King of free men and not of villeins'.³⁰ This is a good example of the interaction between parliamentary manoeuvre and royal response. Yet, it is also an example of its inadequacy. Charles clearly thought verbal palliation sufficient, but such assurances were likely to ring false when he had treated them like slaves and for as long as he had the capacity to treat them as slaves.

The matter turned on the nature of subjection that was in keeping with the historical and legal person of the Englishman. Nobody speaking in the debates of 1628 was so radical as to renounce all forms of subjection; the tone is not anti-monarchical although the language can be quite boldly assertive. What was rejected was the unreasonable and ahistorical subjection of Englishmen to the king's mere will and in its stead was enthroned the law of the land, before which both King and people were subject. Consent, whether as original contract or a parliamentary assent to royal policy, was written into this relationship. In this, as John Eliot tactfully put it, lay the greatness of kingly power – 'the freedom of his people, to be a king of free men, not of slaves'.³¹ In this lay also, the logic went, the greatness of the people. Not only was it, as Coke insisted 'no honour to a king or kingdom, to be a king of bondmen or slaves' but it demeaned and incapacitated a whole population.³² 'The king that is not limited rules slaves that cannot serve him' was another pithy saying of Digges.³³ In short, it redounded badly on everybody. Being enslaved took away the virtue of public service as well as initiative in its performance. In fact, it could be said that they are 'acting' out the very apathy induced by such treatment by their delay in getting to business and voting the subsidy. Both their

²⁹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 66.

³⁰ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 278.

³¹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3, p. 8.

³² Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, pp. 1246–1247.

³³ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 71.

rhetoric and their inaction speak as one. The King's arbitrariness prevented them from freely granting him the gift of money partly because it ruled out secure possession and partly also because it factored in the possibility of compulsion. No gift of money (and money, being the sinews of war, gave power to act on the international scene) was possible until they knew for certain what their position was, and whether it was in their gift at all.³⁴

It was Sir Robert Phelips who offered one of the most thorough explorations of this fundamental condition in its intimate connection with what it was to be English. This was because he saw no point in talking glibly of 'our liberties', if liberty itself was lacking, for 'what may a man call his if not his liberty?' We note that he is less worked up about the sums involved in non-parliamentary taxation than in the underlying point of the matter. 'Nay, I can live though I pay excises and impositions for more than I do, but to have my liberty (which is the soul of my life) taken from me by power' is repugnant.³⁵ In this vision, it is the *fact* of prerogative, which he calls 'Necessity', that is so problematic. While the king 'craves our assistance to revive again his honor and the honor of our nation', the people want not just an end to the practice of arbitrary arrest, but real 'assurance of being free from those calamities'.³⁶ Legal assurance is vital so that the Englishman genuinely experiences his free condition: it is not enough merely to roll back on previous decisions, for doing so would fail signally to address the root problem.

Phelips has a very forceful way of personifying royal arbitrariness. It is firstly an 'armed man', he says, striking when least expected. It is also 'an evil conselor', inventing stratagems and impositions which have nothing to do with the real good of the country. There is even the bold inference that Charles has become like the infamous Turkish janissary 'who placeth his halberd at the door and there he is master of the house'.³⁷ In this vivid image, the Englishman must always be on the watch, never completely master of his house (the metaphor of mastery runs deep), never assured of his freedom but always having to look over his shoulder. A master of that sort may appear at any time to make demands, according to personal caprice. There is no logic or rationality to it. Phelips' image represents the King as alien. Perhaps we can understand the strength of this image rather

³⁴ *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 3, p. 193.

³⁵ *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 2, p. 63.

³⁶ *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 2, p. 63.

³⁷ *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 2, p. 62.

better if we regard the allusion with the Turkish janissary in the early-modern world as having had roughly the same rhetorical potency as the image of the German or Soviet citizen fearing the Gestapo or KGB's knock on the door in the middle of the night would come to have in the mid-twentieth century. In other words, it is an extremely emotive analogy and as such, a rather daringly impudent one.

In his far-reaching speech of 25 March, his agenda was brought out even more fully. The three points that he outlined for his fellow MPs' consideration were firstly, that they needed to think of the 'thing' itself (i.e. the state of liberty), secondly of the 'right' (its particular manifestations) and thirdly of the 'particular violations and oppressions' put upon it.³⁸ Such systematic thinking on the subject was welcome. Evidence for how he handled the second and third point is virtually non-existent, either because he was interrupted or because it was not recorded; however in piecing together the variant but complementary readings in the different manuscripts, we obtain an excellent reconstruction of the first, and for our purposes, the most relevant point. The Stowe manuscript reports him as saying that 'Convenient liberty is the only mark of a true Englishman'.³⁹ The phrase is particularly rich in what it assumes about the centrality and the distinctiveness of this condition. It is the *sine qua non* of his political and legal being, that which makes him stand out from all others. Another version records him as declaring that 'This liberty is properly belonging to us'.⁴⁰ In Newdegate's report of the speech, it is Phelips' opinion about the system rather than the person that are recorded, but it bears the same hallmarks of his general attitude. 'The condition of a freeman is to live where there is not *dominum regale* but *dominium regale politicum*, and this is the state of England'.⁴¹

Another member of parliament who had spoken out earlier the same day on the point of liberty was Dudley Digges. Never having been a lawyer, he always wisely made a point of leaving discussion about the minutiae of

³⁸ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 99, 106, 109. The second point is given as 'right' in the latter two versions of the speech; the first has it as 'reason.' It is unclear whether he is referring to the subjects' 'right' or the King's right. The former, seemingly implied by the phrasing in his third point ('violations put upon it'), would refer to the particular rights they would need to discuss after having first considered their liberty. The latter looks more likely in the third version of the speech, where soon afterwards, he demands an Attorney to come and 'defend the King's right' before the Commons (p. 109). In either case, 'right' is more appropriate than 'reason'.

³⁹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 106. (Stowe Ms 366).

⁴⁰ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 99.

⁴¹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 109.

'rights' to others, something that left him free to probe the underlying issues, and by doing so, to raise the level of the debate.⁴² Walter Erle and Nathaniel Rich had been detailing, in rather technical fashion before a Committee of the Whole House, the problems with unregulated imprisonment and the forced loans, when Digges, typically on his own track, interposed to bring the debate back to the fundamentals as he saw them. 'It comforts me much to read what Englishmen do above others, because their persons are not touched but are free men'.⁴³ Undoubtedly, there was an element of tongue-in-cheek about this apparently confident utterance, because the problem was that their persons *were* being touched. But his point is very similar to Hedley's and borrows consciously or unconsciously on classical tropes that a free man had the incentive to throw himself into an active and productive life, without looking over his shoulder in fear of the heavy hand.

His people of contrast were the Turks (again), the Egyptians and especially the Muscovites. They were examples of what happened to men when living under arbitrary rule, what he termed, with a perceptible shudder, 'the mischief of the contrary in other nations'. He was particularly anxious to tell of his Muscovite experiences. As a matter of fact, he had not acquitted himself with glory in 1618, when he was asked by James I to bring a loan from the Muscovy and East Companies to the needy Tsar; the latter had outwitted his secretary and he had come home humiliated.⁴⁴ But of course, none of that matters here. Digges' task is to show that English superiority is based on their freedom. In one version of his speech, he claims that one English mariner is superior to five Muscovites. This is reasonably modest in comparison with the other version, which is more exaggerated.

The Muscovites are so cowed with these arbitrary commands that I knew not the time when a few English and Scots have beaten I know not how many thousand of their best horsemen out of the field.⁴⁵

Thus does he emphasise the sense of physical and moral debility ('beaten' and 'cowed') induced by arbitrariness. Once again, as we saw with Hedley,

⁴² *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 106, 334. The actual expression, the point of liberty, is John Eliot's uttered on 25 March, one of the key days for the exploration of the profound issues affected by royal policy, *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 99.

⁴³ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 99. Erle's and Rich's interventions are to be found on pp. 98–99 and p. 105 respectively.

⁴⁴ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 66. See *ODNB* sub Digges.

⁴⁵ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 66, 71. The latter is that found in the Stowe Ms 366.

there is an insistence that English valour is not just the property of one privileged class of people. There is that incipient contrast between the inadequacy of a presumably upper-class foreign cavalry and the common-or-garden English (and in this case, Scots) military men. The speech also serves as an oblique warning to Charles of how much he also stands to lose by 'degenerating us', an expression whose very etymology evokes the notion of departing from ancestral quality.⁴⁶ So caught up is he in the belief that an Englishman's freedom is innate that he makes the suggestion that they do not need to make a point of claiming 'liberty' at all. Properly understood, freedom could not be granted back to an Englishman by the monarch: it was already his. What they should actually call for is justice, 'a claim more pertinent for both the subject to ask and the King to grant'.⁴⁷

If both he and Phelips were merely the most successful in uncovering the very premise of holding liberties as the fact of having liberty, the question remains to be asked in what sense such ideas were explicitly coloured by ideas and instances drawn from the Roman histories and the conceptions of freedom as expressed in Roman law? Of course, all the parliamentary men who had attended one of the universities – and there were many of them, including Digges – would have been required to read Cicero, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus in their originals. Furthermore, the popularity of vernacular translations from Nicholas Grimalde's version of Cicero's *De Officiis* in 1556 had made classical ideas more accessible than ever to the growing reading public.⁴⁸ The *De Officiis* was, in any case, one of the standard texts of the grammar schools for learning Latin. Parliamentarians would have been well familiar with the lines of the Roman stories of liberty and degeneration: it was an essential part of their mental furniture. Although the connection is not always made explicit, there is no doubt, from the nature and emphases of their reflections, but that much has been absorbed from Roman thought.

On many occasions, however, the connection between the English predicament and the classical world of antiquity is brought out very explicitly indeed. In his first major speech on 22 March, Phelips – referring to an incident in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* – sarcastically compares the sitting of parliament to the annual holiday in ancient Rome when slaves got a brief respite from their state. 'This assembly with some differences may hold

⁴⁶ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 71.

⁴⁷ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 105.

⁴⁸ Skinner 2002, II, pp. 313–314 gives details of such translations.

some resemblance with that.' The only difference was that those slaves became as they were before, whereas "'tis our hopes to return free men'.⁴⁹ Later he made use of Livy's account of the decline of Rome under the Decemvirate to highlight English losses under the conditions of arbitrary power. The passages in Livy had deplored how the oligarchy ruled without magistrates and committed 'many insolent parts'. Phelips drew home the point of comparison. 'There are decemviri or Marcus Claudians which for their own ends and lusts will draw the country into any inconvenience.'⁵⁰ The alternative version has him say that '[t]here's now a decemvir in every county and amongst that decemvir there's some Claudius Appius that seeks their own revenge'. In other words, Charles has spawned mini-tyrants, collectors and administrators who enact the royal will and who replicate arbitrariness in the various regions of the country. Not just Rome but Greece was a source-book of examples. Sir John Eliot, speaking the same day, averred how the broken and unfree condition of Lacedaemonians 'now reflects upon us', thus closing the gap between the men of antiquity and the Englishmen of the present. Livy had said:

And you who without wals for the space almost of eight hundred yeeres had lived in freedome, yea, and for a certaine time also had ben maisters of Greece, became slaves during a hundred yeeres, enclosed and restrained within walls as if yee had benee settered by the feet. Now as touching the lawes, which yee pretend to have been taken away by us, I suppose verily that the tyrants they were, who deprived the Lacedaemonians of their auncient lawes.⁵¹

It was a sober warning indeed.

Apart from these explicit references, there are more general classical overtones in the 1628 debates. If one takes that dearly-held connection between freedom and military success, constantly repeated in the Roman histories, Phelips' remark that it is to the liberty of England that one may ascribe its 'great victories in wars' will sound very familiar. It is also, from the point of view of fact, a huge overstatement. England's 'great' victories in wars are suspiciously missing in 1628 and she certainly does not rank as the top Eurasian military power. Laurence Whitaker's forward-looking resolve in the immediate aftermath of the Resolutions taken by the

⁴⁹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 61. Macrobius 1960, 1.10.22, p. 73. See *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 61, n. 24.

⁵⁰ Livy 1600, pp. 87, 111–12; *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 73, 62.

⁵¹ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 72 (and n. 91). The passage he is referring to especially appears to be Livy 1600, Bk 39, p. 1047.

Commons on 3 April, that '[a]s we have recovered ourselves to be free English, so let us desire to make ourselves victorious Englishmen abroad' is a better reflection of the aspirations of England in this regard.⁵²

There are also significant traces of neo-classicism in the insistence that moral and economic flourishing is due to freedom: '[w]ere it not for that and religion, I should desire to live in another country', Digges declared.⁵³ Furthermore, in the emphatic usage of the vocabulary of slavery which surpasses the narrower concept of villeinage, a neo-classical reading seems peculiarly fitting. Strictly speaking, it expressed more extreme a reality than villeinage, involving full ownership of the person, described in Roman law as being subject to the 'dominion of someone else'.⁵⁴ Henry Sherfield pointed out that the Englishman was now 'in worse case than a villein': if the King could decide on a whim to imprison him he was really in a state of 'thralldom'.⁵⁵

From the similarity of some of the themes, it has become evident that the Roman and common law of 1628 cases run alongside each other and mutually support each other, even if they have rather distinct premises. There is one especially relevant overlap between the two cases which we have not yet had occasion to consider. This lies in the category of the 'tenant-at-will'. It is Sir Edward Coke who exploits the dual potential of this idea. Although principally interpreted for what he has to say on the common law, his years at Trinity College, Cambridge sowed the seed of his comprehensive knowledge of the Roman authors, and it is not difficult to see large traces of Roman ideas in his thought. His definition of the tenant-at-will draws on that of Thomas Littleton's: he is somebody who had 'no certain sure estate', who holds his land 'at the will of the lessor' in such a way that the latter can eject him 'at what time it pleaseth him'. Now when Coke is articulating this in *The first part of the Institutes of the lawes of England*, he is stating the conventional legal point. However, when speaking in parliament he is doing something rather different.⁵⁶ He now uses it in a more general way. He says that 'for a freeman to be tenant at

⁵² *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 124, 310.

⁵³ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 99.

⁵⁴ *Digest of Justinian 1985*, vol. 1, bk 1 ch 5, p. 15.

⁵⁵ *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 189, 208.

⁵⁶ Littleton 1600, fo. 14^v; Coke 1628, fos. 56^r–57^v. In parliament, it is a concept which he first outlines on 29 March, and to which he returns on several occasions. Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, pp. 1237, 1248, 1259. I use Sheppard's *Selected Writings of Edward Coke* vol. 3, and cross-reference to the *Commons Debates 1628*, where applicable. There are slight variations in spelling and punctuation as well as content. In most cases, I cite Sheppard directly, otherwise as indicated.

will *for his liberty*, he could never agree to it.' We note that he has added in the rider: 'for his liberty' which changes the definition altogether. He is being therefore a little slippery, even disingenuous in saying that this 'was a tenure that could not be found in all Littleton'.⁵⁷ Littleton had been talking about nothing more than a way of leasing property; Coke was seeking to make a wider point. One of the more intriguing aspects of the debates indeed has been how lawyers politicise the law but insist that they are not: there is no more interesting example than this.

For Coke, one might be a mere holder of property or certain rights, without ever being the genuine owner of one's own liberty, and what was the point, he facetiously asked, of having 'property in a goose and not liberty in my person'.⁵⁸ More seriously, he wonders if there is any use in holding lands and inheritance for years or even for life, if all the while one is 'a tenant at will for my liberty', and thus unsure as to when it will be taken from one.⁵⁹ The stress on an enslaved will, reminiscent of Roman thinking about being under the dominion of a master, frames the case not in terms of what has actually happened but in terms of the possibility of it ever happening. It is that possibility, lodged in the inscrutable and unregulated will of another that destroys liberty before ever it comes to particular rights. In a rather provocative moment, he muses upon whether there is much purpose in parliament sitting in such circumstances, because although only a tiny minority were physically imprisoned through refusing the forced loan, the fact was that all Englishmen and women were 'imprisonable'. However remote, the chance that 'we may be all thus committed' was the issue that worked him above all.⁶⁰

At the root of his arguments therefore was a terrifying vision of what actually was happening to the Englishman and the nation under the sway of monarchical will and pleasure. The first and last of the general reasons in his long speech of 3 April present in dramatic terms a sort of convergence between Roman and medieval stories.⁶¹ With the combination of

⁵⁷ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1259, [17 April]. My italics.

⁵⁸ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1237; *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 191. For Cresheld, a lawyer, 'It is the body and sole distinction of freemen that they cannot be imprisoned at pleasure'. *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 151.

⁵⁹ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1237; *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, p. 191.

⁶⁰ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1245.

⁶¹ This speech is reported on 7 April in *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 2, pp. 356–358. There it is divided up into nine General Reasons. As it is a composite text, it has omissions, and yet in places it is clearer because more concise. I shall refer to both versions as appropriate to come up with a fuller interpretation, and indicate differences in the footnotes where requisite.

dry legality and the undercurrent of urgency characteristic to him, he plots out the downward steps of degeneration in general terms: 'an imprisoned man is upon will and pleasure: 1., a bondman; 2., worse than a bondman; 3., not so much as a man'.⁶² This was decline and fall indeed. He called it '*damno et dedecore*': damnation and disgrace. This, of course, is pure Roman. In a semantic study of dishonour and shame in Latin, Jean-Francois Thomas makes the point that linking the two terms was habitual and that the *dedecore* sums up the process expressed by *damno*: in short it completely destroys the prestige of a person or an entity. The Roman histories were obsessed with a sort of absolute decline, what Thomas calls a veritable annihilation of society.⁶³

Coke and others simply lift this story and apply it to England. Suffocation of liberty jeopardises its military profile, because the 'valor and prowess' which distinguished them among the nations of the world, when free, would be a thing of the past in adverse conditions.⁶⁴ As regards industry and the arts, his question was who would think it worthwhile to engage in any useful profession, 'either of war, merchandise, or of any liberal knowledge if he be but tenant at will of his liberty?' Uncertainty of condition – the lack of assurance, so much a feature in Phelips' case also as we have seen – would stunt his performance: 'no tenant at will support or improve any thing because he has no certain estate'.⁶⁵ The picture he is sketching is that of a nation composed of Englishmen who would be characterised by what they would not do or achieve. As he thunderously phrases it, there would be a 'destruction of the endeavours of all men'.⁶⁶ So even Coke, the doyen of the common law, also draws upon classical thought to argue for English liberty. He had a dramatic sense, after all, and mapping Romanitas to the affairs of Caroline England raised the stakes of the matter and gave the arguments a larger canvas of presentation and a rhetorical grandeur of their own. 1628 was therefore a crucial moment in the evolution of this narrative.

⁶² Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1244. The *Commons Debates* II, pp. 356–7 does not give this in so many words, but both have 'no man can be imprisoned at the will and pleasure of any, but that he is bond and a villain'.

⁶³ Thomas 2007, pp. 28–29. My translation.

⁶⁴ *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 2, pp. 357–358.

⁶⁵ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1248; *Commons Debates* 1628, vol. 2, p. 358.

⁶⁶ Sheppard c2003, vol. 3, p. 1248. When he sums up his speech, the consequences are summed up in the 'Loss of honour, profit, security, industry'.

THE CLASSICAL REPUBLICAN TURN

The preoccupation with *prima facie* conditions surfaced again in the first parliament assembled after the eleven years of personal rule: the short parliament of 13 April to 5 May 1640. The immediate source of dispute was the extension of ship money to inland counties from June 1635; the burning case was that of John Hampden in 1637 when his refusal to pay the tax was controversially overruled by the narrowest of margins.⁶⁷ One of the MPs, George Peard, who had personally refused to pay the tax in 1639 was now very outspoken, saying resentfully that '[s]laves did but restore but free men give Shipp money', a very familiar argument by now.⁶⁸ He actually went so far as to call the Ship Money an abomination and upon being rebuked for such excess of language, he excused himself by saying that 'had an English heart and he hoped others had English ears'.⁶⁹ Englishness is by now firmly attached, among a whole generation of parliamentarians to liberty; we are very far indeed from a passive, 'Crispin's-Day' sort of patriotic narrative which consisted in following where the King led. As to what that liberty might entail, that, in practice, would prove more controversial as the events of the decade would show, but at least in 1640, there is in place a certain consensus among a wide spectrum of politicians that Englishness is not compatible with arbitrary power. Nor is such a view confined to parliament. An anonymous author of a pamphlet justified war in 1642 with the reason that 'the government of this kingdome may not be reduced to the condition of other countries, which are not governed by Parliament nor Lawes, but by the will of the Prince and his Favourites'.⁷⁰

But was Englishness compatible with monarchy at all? That is the more radical question that does follow for some thinkers and writers in the heady vortex of events that follow. Such a question would be unthinkable without the preceding rhetoric which had so thoroughly exposed the tensions between being a subject and being free. Yet, it is a much larger question altogether and one that permits full integration of the Roman story into a contemporary context. Its two most prominent spokesmen are Henry Parker and John Milton. Parker was a major polemical figure of the decade. Principally associated with the cause of parliamentary absolutism,

⁶⁷ Coward 2003, pp. 168–169 gives a fuller description of this crisis.

⁶⁸ *Proceedings of the Short Parliament of 1640*, p. 172.

⁶⁹ *Proceedings of the Short Parliament of 1640*, p. 173.

⁷⁰ Anon, *A Remonstrance in defence of the Lords and Commons in Parliament 1642*, p. 5.

he is also important for presenting a neo-Roman understanding of the contemporary English situation which has much to tell us.⁷¹ From his very first entry into polemics, *The Case of Shipmony* in 1640, it is notable that, despite his training, he avoided making the common-law case to any considerable degree. Neglect in itself is a statement: in fact, he was rather sceptical about the common law, being much more interested, as Skinner has concluded, in making the classical case.⁷²

The lineaments of such a way of thinking are revealed in his considerations about prerogative. He muses upon 'what prerogative the peoples good [...] will beare', and concludes that if it is unbounded 'wherein doe we differ in condition from the most abject of all bondslaves', and, still more exaggeratedly, the 'most despicable slaves in the whole world'.⁷³ Also in evidence is the Roman construct, as described, of the uncertainty of one's condition as the very hallmark of slavery.

I doe not say that this king *will* falsifie, it is enough that we all, and all that we have are at his discretion if he will falsifie, though vast power be not abused, *yet it is a great mischiefe that it may*.⁷⁴

The distinction between this and, for instance, Lilburne's thinking is patent. The latter mostly focuses on the exercise of arbitrary power in specific circumstances as a quotation from the *Engagement Vindicated* makes clear: it is 'not so much Titles as tyrannous, or arbitrary actions that make the people miserable'.⁷⁵ Parker saw more deeply into the situation and desired to present a much more philosophically disturbing set of observations.

By 1642, when he came to pen both *Some few observations upon His Majesties late answer to the declaration or remonstrance of 19 May* and *Observations upon Some of His Majesties Late Answers and Expresses* in July, he was freer still in the expression of such beliefs.⁷⁶ He wondered what Englishmen's freedom and patrimony was worth when it is was still 'held upon the Kings meer courtesie?'⁷⁷ A ruler's 'meer courtesie' was the very annulment of liberty. A year later in *Accomodation cordially desired*,

⁷¹ A general interpretation of Parker's activity in the Civil War may be found in Mendle 1995.

⁷² Skinner 2002, II, pp. 334–339.

⁷³ [Parker] 1640, pp. 5, 22, 21.

⁷⁴ [Parker] 1640, pp. 24–25. My italics.

⁷⁵ Lilburne [23 January] 1650, p. 6.

⁷⁶ [Parker] 1642a and [Parker] 1642b.

⁷⁷ [Parker] 1642a, p. 10.

he returned to this theme using a similar language. 'Where the King is sole Law-maker all things are subject to his meer discretion, and a greater bondage than this never was nor can be'.⁷⁸ He was also emphatic in grounding his views in a fundamental Ciceronian legal principle, that of 'salus populi suprema lex'. The good of the people was a law before which all others 'almost stoope' and he developed the case that parliament was the real determinant of what constituted this.⁷⁹

As well as ideas about prerogative, slavery and the common good, one theme that Parker develops especially clearly is that of the Englishman as prisoner in his own country. This appears most forcefully in *The Case*. We recall that in Roman law, there were two ways of being a slave: either through birth or conquest. As he is quite clear that the Englishman is born free, he turns to the only other possible conclusion: the Englishman has been conquered in his own land. '[W]herein doth he excel the Captives condition?' he asks aggressively.⁸⁰ A little later in the text, he put the question still more forcefully. '[D]id not this *Ship-scot* over-throw all popolar *Liberty*, and so threaten as great a mischief as any *Conquest* can?' Its interrogative status is purely rhetorical: he is really convinced that it is so. In a later work, he insists that it is 'unnaturall for any Nation to give away its owne proprietie in it selfe absolutely, and to subject it selfe to a condition of servilitie below men.'⁸¹ The language of what is and what is natural for a nation to do speaks powerfully of the quasi-personification of the nation which has been a theme throughout these discourses. Nations have, he would argue, a property in themselves, and cannot abrogate this without real loss. What was suggested in the parliamentary rhetoric of the 1610s and 20s is given here a much more ample and confident articulation.

Insisting upon domestic conquest enables him to style the authorities as alien subjugators. He draws an incisive parallel between the Roman army, who used the excuse of bad treatment by their Senators and General for refusing to fight the enemy, and the poor performance – the 'faint resistance' – of the English in the recent Bishops' Wars, especially in August 1640, when the Scots crossed the border unopposed, fought at Newburn and occupied Newcastle. Just as the Romans had found it the lesser of two evils to be 'slaughtered by *Strangers*', than 'Enthralled by their *Country-men*', English attitudes of late had seemed to suggest that

⁷⁸ [Parker] 1643a, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Cicero 1928, III.III.8, p. 466. For instances see [Parker] 1640, p. 7; [Parker] 1642b, p. 3.

⁸⁰ [Parker] 1640, p. 23.

⁸¹ [Parker] 1642b, p. 20.

they were as 'miserable already as the Scots could make them'.⁸² He returned to this image before the end of *The Case* in a way that sums up all his equivalences between foreignness and slavery.

Such unnaturall slavery seems to mee to be attendant upon this all-devouring project, and such infamy to our Ancestors, our Lawes, and our selves, [...] that I cannot imagine how any forraigne conquest should induce any thing more to be detested and abhorred.⁸³

This statement appears all the stronger when taken together with his treatment of foreign people. As Parker reworks the classical narratives of civic degeneration and disintegration consequent on loss of liberty by dwelling upon notorious examples in the contemporary world. *The Case* presents us with his list of unfortunates: Mahometan slaves, French peasants, the Milanese, Neapolitans and Sicilians all live in a 'wretched', 'oppressed' and 'inthralled' state because they are subject to a power that is above law. The Germans and Dutch are exempted from such ignominy, so too are the Spaniards, rather more surprisingly, considering the general stereotype.⁸⁴ Two of the depictions stand out more than others for the energy which he puts into getting them across. The Turkish stereotype is particularly drawn out. Lamentably, being under a monarchical regime which invents taxes like ship-money and which 'knows no bounds but its owne will', means that even 'the Turkes are not more servile than we are'.⁸⁵ There is no room for complacency. Immediately after, he wonders what the Englishmen may hold 'but at the Kings mere discretion,' to which he wants to force the reader into answering nothing.⁸⁶

But the real warning is provided by the French and Parker treats of this more thoroughly than any other polemicist. Indeed, his thought on the subject evolves over the course of the two years 1640–42. It is from here out that the anti-French construction will take on particular political weight and carry on doing so after the Restoration and later Stuart flirtations with France. Louis XIII's reign was drawing to a close in the early 1640s and the lines had already been established of *pouvoir absolu* at home and empire abroad. The growing might of their Gallic neighbour was ever

⁸² [Parker] 1640, p. 28.

⁸³ [Parker] 1640, p. 44.

⁸⁴ [Parker] 1640, p. 23.

⁸⁵ [Parker] 1640, p. 22.

⁸⁶ [Parker] 1640, p. 23.

more concerning; the rising splendour of the *Grand Siècle* ever more obnoxiously visible. Accordingly, one would expect a certain amount of resentment from English writers: a cautionary tale of luxury, the unbridled license of the élite, and the disgraceful poverty of the lower orders. France was Parker's late-antique Rome, as it were. In reality, France was (as yet) nothing of the kind. Cardinal Richelieu's policy of centralisation had made the country, in effect, more governable. The new style in government was not creeping and covert but modernising, overt and (so far) successful. But this 'governability', for observers such as Parker, came at too high a price. Their *raison d'état* politics made the state into an arbitrary and opaque mechanism for control.

Such a way of ruling the people backfired on the whole country, Parker argued with great passion. For one thing, this 'great *Prerogative*' of Louis XIII had made the condition of the peasants 'deplorable'. This had moral as well as practical effects because 'poverty depresses the spirit of a Nation', something he duly reasserted in 1642 with the conviction that 'were the peasants there more free, they would be more rich and magnanimous'.⁸⁷ Money being 'the sinews of warre', the French King's poverty would make him 'impotent' in its financing and conduct.⁸⁸ Militarily, therefore, an unfree France was very vulnerable. This was factually problematic but ideologically potent. It was one of the intellectual naiveties (or deliberate stratagems) of these writers to claim to believe that absolute government was ineffective as well as unprincipled. That is to say, they liked to argue that there were no concrete gains to be had from such a system. They were, of course, wrong. A year following, French dominance was asserted over Spain at the battle of Rocroi in 1643, leading to more than a century of European hegemony. Parker prefers to stay within his nationally sheltered bunker and cite lessons from the classics which often fit ill with the real events unfolding around him.

There follows a rousing and provocative passage just before the peroration of *The Case* which points beyond the economic question.

[W]ere the King of France, King of an Infantry, as he is onely of a Cavalry, were he a King of men, as he is onely of beasts, had he a power over hearts as he hath over hands, that Country would be twice as puissant as it is.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ [Parker] 1640, pp. 44–45; [Parker] 1642b, p. 2.

⁸⁸ [Parker] 1640, p. 45.

⁸⁹ [Parker] 1640, p. 45.

His point is that France would be twice as powerful, twice as impressive a country if the King treated his nation more equally. The depiction of the French here harkens back to the tradition that we have described as welling up in the Elizabethan period. Aylmer and Stubbes made a similar case.⁹⁰ The French are depicted as either one of two extremes: either as upper-class cavalier (in this case) and courtier (in others) or as a wretched peasant. It is the traditional Manichean vision of an alien society: not one that permits of a *via media*. Here the animus has a new political urgency. The strength of the English army in the celebrated conflicts with France in medieval times had been its bow-wielding infantry, and Parker wanted to bring home how damaging it would be if Charles acted justly only towards his cavaliers and tyrannically towards everyone else. His underlying and as yet implicit question in *The Case* was whether the English were becoming unmanly, dehumanised – beastly – like the French, a nation poised uncomfortably between slavish underlings and slavishly toadying elites. Pressing in upon his thought also is the old problem of allegiance. Based on the force of the King's fiat as in France, it could only command the externals – the 'hands' of the population – but is incapable of evoking the real loyalty of the 'heart'. One cannot really govern, still less bind a nation through arbitrary power.

The cautionary tale provided by the example of the French surfaced once again to preoccupy him in May 1642 in *Some few observations* after the controversy over the 'negative voice' had come to a head. The king's veto of the Militia ordinance in February had left parliament in disarray, making more radical opposition to prerogative possible. In these circumstances, Parker's evocation of the state of France was bound to be an emotive one and this time, he did not leave comparisons implied. If Kings have 'Arbitrary unbounded sway' and nations can neither 'set limits, or judge of limits set to sovereignty' then 'all nations are equally slaves'. If so, he continued, with biting irony:

we in *England* are borne to no more by the Laws of *England* then the Asanine Peasants of *France* are there, whose Wooden shoes and Canvas Breeches sufficiently proclaim, what a blessednesse it is to be borne under a meer divine Prerogative.

The implication is that 'we in England' were born to more; it was an aberration that reduced 'us' to slavery and hence to poverty.⁹¹ Again, the reference to the animal-like nature of the French is striking; in the *Case*, he had

⁹⁰ See above pp. 131–141.

⁹¹ [Parker] 1642a, p. 15.

referred to the King of France as 'King of Asses'.⁹² It is systemically brutish and inhumane.

Several months later, in the most influential of all his pamphlets, the *Observations*, the trope is still present, except that the situation has declined so steeply that he 'need not speake of France, and other Countries, where together with these generall Assemblies, all liberty is falne to the ground; I need not travel further than our stories'.⁹³ In the space of two intense years Parker's thought had progressed from holding up France as a warning and now lamenting that the foretold degeneration had really arrived on Albion's shores. The wheel had come full circle. There was no option but resistance. It was a text which pre-empted crisis and indeed, civil war broke out a mere month later. Parker's work is a model of the marriage of antique concepts to present-day concerns in the immediate pre-Civil War period. He has a capacious neo-Roman vision of English liberty and an equally capacious vision of the consequences of its loss: both aspects make him a contributor of note in this discourse.

Many critics wrote hostile replies to the *Observations* but they did not counter him with an alternative to his neo-classical rhetoric of Englishness. Nevertheless, the longest reply, entitled *The Serpent Salve*, written by the royalist bishop John Bramhall, contained an interesting angle on the whole question. Bramhall makes the point that France's power and magnificence is greater than at any point since the time of Charlemagne and that Parker's argument does not therefore stand up to factual scrutiny. Yet, he concedes the point that French peasants are in a bad way (but not, he adds, nearly as bad as during their civil wars). Still, their situation is not what a royalist would want for his own country. Bramhall also does not wish to have a King of slaves but a King of hearts, hands and subjects. Here too the ideal of the Englishman as being a mean between social extremes is present: 'if the Subjects of *France* be Peasants, and the Subjects of *Germany* be Princes, God send us Englishmen to keep a mean; between both extremes'. This, he says, is a historic reality: something established in the country by 'our Fore-Fathers'. Not only republicans but royalists too could make a point of endorsing the 'average' national man. So even if their visions of liberty were widely different, there was a kind of consensus upon the idea of the English golden mean.⁹⁴

⁹² [Parker] 1640, p. 44.

⁹³ [Parker] 1642b, p. 24.

⁹⁴ [Bramhall] 1643, p. 16.

The political thought of John Milton, susceptible to so many diverse readings, may be considered as the most eloquent example of the way in which the republican value of liberty was thoroughly Englished. Familiar with Milton's championing of the good old cause in a language rich with Tacitean and Sallustian assumptions we may well be;⁹⁵ it is nonetheless necessary to consider more closely how classical thought and the exigencies of the moment combined to produce in his mind an expansive vision of what it was to be English in the grand style. This vision takes on particular significance in 1649 when regicide leads to a republic, and England is forced to define itself anew without the conventional parameters of monarchical authority. Milton, it could be said, is chief herald of the new order, iconic defender of the 'new man'.

Even before that, when the revolution was yet in its infancy and its course uncertain, Milton had weighed in on a crucial debate surrounding censorship and in so doing, showed a nexus of opinions surrounding freedom of speech and political life which will be duly important in this way of thinking. In June 1643, the Long Parliament had ordered that all books be officially licensed, meaning that every book would have to pass a censor before publication. This was to stem the tide of cheap, sensational polemical texts which the establishment feared would turn the world upside down. Milton's response was the celebrated *Areopagitica*, published in 1644, in defence of the existence of an uncensored print culture. For him, the basis of the matter was the incompatibility between English values and the censorship of the press. He uses a small, perhaps slightly facetious point of language to prove that censorship is indeed a foreign stratagem. There is no vernacular equivalent for the word 'Imprimatur' because 'our English, the language of men ever famous, and foremost in the achievements of liberty, will not easily finde servile letters anow to spell such a dictatorie presumption English'.⁹⁶ English cannot be twisted to serve the cause of compulsion in little matters as in great. It is a free discourse belonging to a free people and is part of what constitutes their particular greatness. Culturally, the practice of censorship, he claims to be of one piece with the baffling and obfuscatory behaviour of court. The censor's marks, he inventively compares to courtiers 'complementing and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences', giving each other needless courtesies and not speaking for themselves. Placing itself in the context of

⁹⁵ See the discussions of classical influences on Milton's thought in Armitage 1995, pp. 206–14; Skinner 2002, II, pp. 298–307.

⁹⁶ Milton 1959, p. 505.

anti-aulic polemic more widely, here it is the text which has been abused, the *words* which are cringing. The licensed text is no longer plain, no longer native: it does not speak unvarnished truths but is entirely filleted.⁹⁷

What France had been for Parker, the Italian states were for Milton in the *Areopagitica*: the *locus classicus* of slavish wretchedness in the contemporary world. For a student of the ancient republic as he was, their decline from days of glory was all the more to be lamented. His experience in Italy in the late 1630s deeply coloured his views thereafter so unsurprisingly, censorship is described as an ‘apishly Romanizing’ device.⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, what he has in mind particularly here is the Court of Rome whose *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* had been established in 1559. Its absolute condemnations of texts and its mitigated condemnations – *donec corrigatur* (forbidden until corrected) and *donec expurgetur* (forbidden until purged) – would have been known to Milton through his conversations with the Italian intelligentsia and seen as examples of Papal arbitrary power.

Whilst other authors have focused on the economic and political consequences of arbitrary power abroad, the chief disadvantage for Milton is the ‘servil condition’ of their learning – in short the paucity of their intellectual culture. This is a new angle that other sources, with their more pragmatic emphases, have hardly touched upon. For Milton, it is a primary mark of distinction between Italy and England, recognised as such by Italian ‘learned men’. Deploring the flattery and rhetorical obfuscation (‘fustian’) forced upon them by their unfree state, they look eagerly to England as a ‘place of *Philosophic* freedom’. The opinion of informed outsiders is used to give strength to his case but was it really as he presented it? It sounds more like the Anglophilia among French *philosophes* in the Age of Enlightenment. Can Italian elites really have envied Englishmen in quite the way he suggests? For more than a century previously, it had been the English who had emulated the Italians although as Hale points out they had very rarely explicitly acknowledged this contemporary influence.⁹⁹ Had England really achieved the reputation for freedom that Milton claims? No doubt he is swelling the story somewhat. In any case, whether or not it is so, the subtlety of Milton’s play of perspective is considerable. By citing the positive views of others, he could at once imply that the reality was not so rosy, but also use foreign opinion as a cause for

⁹⁷ Milton 1959, p. 504. See above pp. 73–74.

⁹⁸ Milton 1959, p. 504.

⁹⁹ Hale 2005, p. 19.

optimism. 'I tooke it as a pledge of future happiness that other Nations were so perswaded of her liberty'. That outsiders were closer to knowing the true English spirit than the English *Romanizers* was not only ironic, it was also in the way of being a challenge to Englishmen to get their own house in order.¹⁰⁰

The spirit of liberty as seized upon in the *Areopagitica* is at once exaltation of what has already been achieved by the English nation and an exhortation to pursue it even further. Both are particularly patent in the rhetorical high-point of the work, when he urges the Lords and Commons of England against moving ahead with their policy of censorship in words as memorable as they are eloquent.

[C]onsider what Nation it is wherof ye are, and wherof ye are the governours: a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discours, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to.¹⁰¹

He goes on in a similar vein to proclaim the superiority of national learning, language, theology, and the very uniqueness indeed of their divine calling, leading him to make the celebrated statement that God reveals Himself 'as his manner is, first to his English-men'. As his manner is: how could it be any other way? Making all these achievements possible is liberty. Liberty is, for Milton, one could say, the central part of an English *sonderweg*: their special path of distinction in world-historical terms. The task for the government is to realise that the 'pursuance of truth and freedom' are vital to the 'mould and temper' of the people and to govern on that basis.¹⁰² Already, he glories in evidence of recent progress in that regard. The loosening of oppressive bonds, over the last few years, has 'rarify'd and enlightn'd our spirits', and 'enfranchis'd, enlarg'd and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves'.¹⁰³ The people are elevated. This is lyricism pure and simple and his earlier injunction to the reader to '[b]ehold now this vast City; a City of Refuge, a mansion house of liberty' is of a similar colour. England is truly liberty's home.¹⁰⁴ We have seen the different ways in which parliamentary and non-parliamentary spokesmen dramatized such causes but nobody does so more impressively than Milton who seeks to make it transcendent in his luminous

¹⁰⁰ Milton 1959, pp. 537–538.

¹⁰¹ Milton 1959, p. 551.

¹⁰² Milton 1959, p. 555.

¹⁰³ Milton 1959, p. 559.

¹⁰⁴ Milton 1959, pp. 553–554.

prosody. These statements are meant to carry the resonance of a national epic in prose. Then again, one would expect no less.

However lyrical Milton might be, complacent he was not: his concern, articulated already in 1644, was that this freedom, so recently restored, might again be lost. The licensing law was only the tip of an iceberg: it was always possible that 'we can grow ignorant again, brutish, formall, and slavish, as ye found us', and that it would be parliament, once instrumental in promoting the cause of right, who might prove to be 'lesse the lovers, lesse the founders of our true liberty' was the most painful irony of all. He does not shrink from calling this a form of political infanticide, where the unnatural fathers 'dispatch at will' the flourishing child of liberty they themselves had produced. Once again subject to a will he did not own, the Englishman stood to loose that which constituted his very self: 'they who counsel ye to such a suppressing, doe as good as bid ye suppress your selves', a statement that once again affirms that proportionally as they have liberty, English people are more truly themselves.¹⁰⁵

There is, it must be admitted, the habitual paradox evident in Milton's stance on this subject. Desirous as he is to suggest that liberty is innate to England and the English, and that it is a quality no less prized by right-thinking men abroad as it is at home, he still needs to insist on the recency of its recovery and credit parliament with that achievement. But if parliament is to be credited with that achievement, they can also be blamed firstly for not achieving enough and secondly for clawing back on what has been conceded. It is this unresolved tension that he continued to tease out in later works without ever fully solving the matter to his satisfaction. He is at once lyrically buoyant and compulsively fretful: reassuring readers in the grand style of the indefectibility of English liberty but also obsessing over the divisions of the past and the dangers of the future where nothing is as secure or as reassuring as he would like. Milton's reflections on being English therefore, although epic-sounding, are constructions of anxiety and unease.

His theory of a full-blown republican Englishry is to be found in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, written during Charles I's trial in January 1649. Wedding national identity and classical republicanism was a new departure. Although there were historic tensions between subjection to the monarchy and free status, it was only in 1649 on the death of Charles that it became urgently necessary to reimagine national identity in its totality

¹⁰⁵ Milton 1959, p. 559.

without any reference to monarchy. The disjunction was stupendous. As we know the experiment would last a mere ten years but it is nonetheless a very significant interlude. It is important to realise that Milton was employed by the new regime to write a defence of the regicide. He was an obvious choice: grandiose rhetoric such as his came across with the requisite impression of legitimacy, even magnificence. Predictably, he offers more than just a defence of the regicide: he offers a republican definition of what the new Englishman should (and should not) be. First though, he must dismiss the ghost of Charles I and he does so by saying that by being tyrannous, he was, in effect, a foreign conqueror and the only option was resistance.

For no Prince so native but professes to hold by Law; which when he himself overturns, breaking all the Covnants and Oaths that [...] were the bond and allegiance between him and his people, what differs he from an outlandish King, or from an enemy?¹⁰⁶

He sharpens the point of this general statement by claiming that the King of Spain has an equal right to govern Englishmen as a King of England does to 'govern us tyrannically,' in other words, no right at all.¹⁰⁷ He rests his case.

In the new post-monarchical country, how does Milton think Englishmen will be? He envisages a 'straiter bond' between his fellow countrymen. This has two possible meanings. He could be referring to the restoration of harmony after the Civil War which had split the population apart so very divisively. It could also mean that he was desirous of emphasising horizontal national bonds over vertical 'hierarchical' ones. Now that there is no authority claiming divine right to rule, 'straiter' bonds can exist in society. But, even now, Milton, with his purist intransigence, has no balm for his country. They will not all live in peace and harmony if they do not agree on the fundamental value of freedom. If they do, they are truly English and thus welcome in the new polity. This is the essence of republican man. 'He therefore that keeps peace with me, neer or remote, of whatsoever Nation, is to mee as farr as all civil and human offices an Englishman and a neighbour'.¹⁰⁸ So he would relate to foreigners as Englishmen, proportionately as they oppose the tyranny that enslaves. It is somewhat ironic that his notions of universal brotherhood would so quickly become nationalised.

¹⁰⁶ Milton 1962a, pp. 213–214.

¹⁰⁷ Milton 1962a, p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ Milton 1962a, pp. 214–215.

For those who do resist freedom and are to be cut off, he has strong words of excommunication.

[I]f an Englishman forgetting all Laws, human, civil and religious, offend against life and liberty, to him offended and to the Law in his behalf, though born in the same womb, he is no better then a Turk, a Sarasin, a Heathen.

It is extraordinary how unyielding his language still is. The man who hankers after the past and who is not willing to reconstruct himself as Republican man is not truly English at all. He is a canker in the body politic. Such are invariably and in every context to be construed as 'op'n enemies and invaders'. This was justification enough for the last eight years. In short, war against an 'unfree' type and you war against a foreigner. Fighting them 'differs nothing from the law of forren hostility'.¹⁰⁹ His retrospective analysis of the civil war then seems to suggest that it was not a *true* civil war in the real meaning of the term because both sides were not equally English. The 'cavaliers' were foreign.

The Tenure then is not a soothing attempt to restore harmony at the close of fiercely contentious decade: it is a fresh challenge to commit oneself to a republican national ideal and outlaw those who will not. The anxiety we noted as a trait in the *Areopagitica* is also present in *The Tenure*. If anything, it is even more acute because there is now more to lose. He holds out the fearsome possibility that the English people might after all 'show themselves *by nature* slaves, and arrant beasts' and that they might want the lazy comfort of ignorance, subservience and superstition. His worst fear is that the English may prove 'not fitt for that liberty which they cri'd out and bellow'd for'.¹¹⁰ The Civil War may have been over and the King fated, but free government was not by any means secure and the republican Englishman as yet more of an ideological construct than a reality.

In the *Eikonoklastēs* too, the question of a new construction of identity absorbs him. It is an official work of the new regime devoted to 'smashing the posthumous image of the King' as Martin Dzelzainis puts it.¹¹¹ The image, unlike the king himself, had stubbornly refused to die at the appointed moment. But the text is indeed more than that. It is an attempt to refute the whole paltry system of government under monarchy with its bantam 'liberties' and its irrational privileges. Charles had left a dangerous political testament. Published just days after his execution, the *Eikōn*

¹⁰⁹ Milton 1962a, pp. 214–215.

¹¹⁰ Milton 1962b, p. 581. My italics.

¹¹¹ Dzelzainis 1995, p. 19.

Basilikē had become extremely popular throughout Europe. What the revolutionaries had done was on show, vulnerable. Milton wants to deconstruct the royalist case completely. He wants to prove that all of Charles' – or at any rate John Gauden's – ideas about liberty were rudimentary and wrong. The *Eikōn* presents the traditional case that liberties were part of 'civill Justice', and compatible with rightful prerogative. Charles had had no intention of ruling his people other than as Subjects; no intention of ever treating them 'as Slaves'. He advocated the 'continuance of 'ingenuous Liberties' and this, for him, consisted in 'the enjoyment of the fruits of their industry, and the benefit of those Lawes to which themselves have consented'.¹¹²

What then was the trouble? This sort of conservative attitude to liberty is precisely the attitude that Milton attacks. That may be what Charles thought he was doing but he had no idea of what it was like to be 'our selves' under his rule. What Charles could offer was less than their due. His conception of liberties was inadequate: 'we expect therefore something more, that must distinguish free Government from slavish'. And, in answer to Charles' claim that industry benefited in such a system, Milton ridicules this by asking 'what Privilege is that, above what the *Turks, Jewes, and Mores* enjoy under the Turkish Monarchy?'¹¹³ As for the so-called legal benefits, he curtly ripostes that 'we never had it under him'. Not only were some laws ill-executed, but the existence of an all-powerful will and voice became the 'transcendent and ultimat Law above all our Lawes', and that meant nothing less than tyranny.¹¹⁴ For men in general, but particularly for Englishmen, 'not to have in our selves, though vaunting to be free-born, the power of our own freedom [...] is a degree lower then not to have the property of our own goods'. In his scheme of things, freedom of state was indeed 'much nearer, much more natural, and more worth' to the Englishman than just about anything else. If there was one lesson that he wanted to be drawn from the events of the 1640s, it was that. Milton is truly the image-breaker of the decade seeking to recreate and to re-imagine England and the English upon wholly different lines.¹¹⁵ He would not succeed in any long-term sense but he, more than anyone, had tried to turn political ideas into a classical republican reality.

¹¹² Charles I [1649], p. 238. For the part played by John Gauden in the ghost-writing the *Eikōn* see *ODNB* sub Charles I.

¹¹³ Milton 1962b, pp. 574–575.

¹¹⁴ Milton 1962b, p. 575.

¹¹⁵ Milton 1962b, p. 454.

THE 'FATE' OF ENGLISH LIBERTY

In the light of both discussions about liberty, it is possible to articulate a new interpretation of what happened at the meetings of the General Army Council at Putney in 1647.¹¹⁶ This was a constitutional struggle in the heart of the New Model Army, pitting Leveller-inspired agitators against the Grandees. The former were agitating for the dissolution of parliament and the calling of a new one based on a more democratic male franchise, which they claimed to be the culmination of the rights fought for since 1642. The grandees, by contrast, saw it a wholly misguided application of civil war principles, and a form of rule by the emotional, irrational mob. For our purposes, it is a revealing moment of show-down between the two visions of liberty we have described, the one to a greater or lesser extent demotic, the other classically patrician. Making the radical case with lush Lilburnian rhetoric (Lilburne himself was, inevitably, in prison) were prominent radicals such as Colonel Thomas Rainborough, Edward Sexby, and John Wildman, all three of them outspoken, their sympathies intensified by their army service and their feeling of being hard done-by. Opposing them were the formidable figures of Oliver Cromwell and Henry Ireton, for whom the call expressed in *An Agreement of the People* for fairer electoral redistribution meant only one thing: universal manhood suffrage, to them, an inimical course of action.¹¹⁷ Somewhere in the middle was the Leveller, Maximilian Petty.

The most passionate argument was uttered by Colonel Rainborough, whose fervent conviction that the 'poorest he' of the country had just as much right to choose the government under which he was to live as the 'greatest he' has come down as the most memorable utterance of the debate.¹¹⁸ Having absorbed Lilburne's stance on the political rights consequent upon the fact of being a freeborn man, he cannot well comprehend 'how it comes about that there is such a propriety in some freeborn Englishmen, and not [in] others'.¹¹⁹ Consent was written into his model of the new polity: 'every man born in England cannot, ought not, neither by the Law of God nor the Law of Nature, to be exempted from the choice of those who are to make laws for him to live under'.¹²⁰ As far as he is

¹¹⁶ This is not to suggest that the Levellers spoke with one voice. There were differences in how far they carried their vision. Consider Thomas 1972, pp. 57–78.

¹¹⁷ Woodhouse 1938, pp. 443–444.

¹¹⁸ Woodhouse 1938, p. 53.

¹¹⁹ Woodhouse 1938, p. 64.

¹²⁰ Woodhouse 1938, pp. 56, 61.

concerned, anybody who doubts these things is surely not properly English.¹²¹ Wildman, for whom it was a principle of the first order that 'every person in England hath as clear a right to elect his representative as the greatest person in England', lent him full-throated support as also did Sexby who described the purpose of the wars as the effort to recover 'our birthright and privileges as Englishmen'.¹²² They even, in a rough way, began to consider the matter in purely numeric terms. If the ratio of unenfranchised adult males to voters stood currently at 5:1, then the only possible and terrifying conclusion was that the 'greatest part of the nation be enslaved'.¹²³ Their pitch is that this unjust system be overturned and a new order be born. Putney is, in effect, the culmination of all their pleas to date: the plea for a polity based on national (notably male) criteria.

For Cromwell, this position was sheer madness. He had never seen eye to eye with the Leveller vision of liberty and Englishness, least of all then, when the authorities were trying to bring some semblance of order into a disorderly state. He is, of course, an especially interesting figure and this episode sheds a light on a central paradox. Dubbed 'God's Englishman', he seems at first blush to be the model of a certain type of Englishness that writers, all along, have been at pains to construct. If we were looking for an 'archetype', a model who would seem to embody traits being construed elsewhere as national, it could very well be he. He was a man of the mean. Although of gentry background and well-connected, he did not draw down on himself negative attention by being outrageously privileged. He was plain and bluff: this was the man, after all, who instructed that his portrait be taken 'warts and all'. He could never be accused of effeminacy and did not dress in an outlandish manner. He insisted on liberty and his credentials are unambiguously un-Catholic. He seems, in many ways, like an embodiment of Cloth Breeches, waging battle against a Caroline-era Velvet Breeches. That, in any case, is the image that Cromwell liked to present himself and also, to a certain extent, the one that traditional historiography espouses.

His image, however, did not reflect the agenda. What we find is that unlike the Levellers, he does not see in the idea of 'Englishness' much political potential; on the contrary, he sees it as being a harbinger of huge disorder and further conflict. So at Putney, the statements of Rainborough and his associates strike him as a lunatic-fringe vision which would result

¹²¹ Woodhouse 1938, p. 53.

¹²² Woodhouse 1938, pp. 66, 69.

¹²³ Woodhouse 1938, pp. 61, 67.

in 'confusion [...] utter confusion'. Rather than considering shared liberties as the salve to heal England's wounds, he considers that it would make England like Switzerland 'one canton [...] against another.'¹²⁴ And so on. Cromwell, bluff Englishman though he appears to be, is not at all in sympathy with any truly radical reading of Englishness because he quite simply believes it to be destabilizing and anarchic. It is a point worth dwelling on and one that transfers nicely into the Commonwealth era of the 1650s. Drawing out the full political consequences from the fact of being English never became part of his agenda during his time in office as Lord Protector. There is a revealingly conservative ring to his statement to his first parliament: 'A nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman: that is a good interest of the nation and a great one.'¹²⁵ Interest more than identity politics would once again be the order of the day.

But all that lay in the future. Now at Putney, he was supported by his son-in-law, Ireton who evoked the neo-Roman case much more thoroughly but divorced it from any hint of the demotic. Having a stake in the nation is not a matter of 'free-birth', he insisted: it was a matter of having an independent will. It is notable indeed that Ireton avoids using the collocation of the *free born Englishman*, undoubtedly because of its by now strongly egalitarian connotations. The figure at the heart of his analysis is rather the 'freeman without dependence'.¹²⁶ He proceeds to savage his opponents' case.

This, I perceive, is pressed as that which is so essential and due: the right of the people of this kingdom, and *as they are the people of this kingdom*, distinct and divided from other people, and that we must for this right lay aside all other considerations [...] For my part, I think it is no right at all.¹²⁷

In his minimalist understanding and with his legalistic turn of mind – he had trained in Middle Temple – English birth entitled one to certain natural goods merely, but not the political good of representation. When he formulates a list of natural rights enjoyed by the fact of 'being born in England', they are rudimentary in the extreme; it seems like a *reductio ad absurdum*. He lists the right to air, place, ground, the freedom of the highways and sustenance.¹²⁸ It is hard not to hear a mocking tone behind this elaboration of rather obvious entitlements, just as later, deep sarcasm is

¹²⁴ Cromwell 1937, p. 518.

¹²⁵ Quoted Hill 1970, p. 205.

¹²⁶ Woodhouse 1938, p. 58.

¹²⁷ Woodhouse 1938, p. 53. My italics.

¹²⁸ Woodhouse 1938, p. 54.

apparent in Cromwell's comment that, if Rainborough had his way, then men that had 'no interest but the interest of breathing' should vote in elections.¹²⁹ Ireton's average Englishman is physically free, but not in a way that translates into a free condition.

The only people who are truly free in his eyes (and therefore fully entitled) are those who have property: '[a]ll the main thing that I speak for, is because I would have an eye to property'.¹³⁰ This alone was guarantor against returning to a slavish polity. 'If there be anything at all that is a foundation of liberty it is this, that those who shall choose the law-makers shall be men freed from dependence upon others'.¹³¹ His fear was that if *all* Englishmen were entitled to vote, then non-property owners would vote in the same way as their masters, and thus lead to a situation whereby an unfree system of government would once again be imposed on England, a grim prospect.

If you do extend the latitude [...] that any man shall have a voice in election [...] you will put it into the hands of men to choose [not] of men [desirous] to preserve their liberty, [but of men] who will give it away.¹³²

He wants to rein in the disorderly demands of the past six years, fearing that too extreme a change will only end in the destruction of everything that they hoped to achieve. This is a purer Roman line on the whole question, of course, and one that reflects its more patrician inheritance. And that is, ultimately, one of the main divergences between these two lines of thought. Although they have often run in parallel, the discourse on liberties did ultimately become a more inclusive one, whilst the discourse of liberty remained in a more constricted frame.

It seems as if these two positions are irreconcilable but Maximilian Petty's views are a mixture of both. He kept in raw form the Leveller view that birth-right alone confers political status; and his judgment that 'all inhabitants that have not lost their birthright should have an equal voice in elections' appears as extensive as any. However, when he descends to the technicalities of who should and should not vote, he ruled out the participation of apprentices, servants and those who took alms on the grounds that they had become dependent 'upon the will of other men' and fearful of displeasing them.¹³³ By the standards of Rainborough, this was a

¹²⁹ Woodhouse 1938, p. 59.

¹³⁰ Woodhouse 1938, p. 57.

¹³¹ Woodhouse 1938, p. 82.

¹³² Woodhouse 1938, p. 82.

¹³³ Woodhouse 1938, pp. 53, 83.

particularly large swathe of exclusions, but the most interesting aspect is the way he both retains the perception that Englishness granted one rights, but crossed the two ideas about liberty, and ends up in a position conceptually more like Ireton's. All were English but some were more English than others.

It is somewhat ironic, although understandable, that both of these revolutionary groupings making claims for the future should so thoroughly disagree upon the political consequences of national identity. Not only, as Michael Mendle says, do they put forward 'two different claim-rights to the kingdom' but also 'two different notions of what it was to be English': one restrictive and the other capacious.¹³⁴ Rainborough had uttered the truism in the heat of the debate that '[i]f we can agree where the liberty and freedom of the people lies, that will do all'.¹³⁵ Yet they could not agree to where it lay, or how it might drive the direction of the new system, or how evenly it might be distributed. Despite sharing the view that the old system was corrupt, arbitrary and slavish, there was ultimately no consensus as to what definitions of 'liberty' or 'political Englishness' entailed. They could not agree upon what to 'do' with the concept. Revolutionaries were divided: the spirit of change was, already by the late 1640s, seriously in doubt. Discourses about freedom, however robust and strident, however shared between the educated and the more popular pundits, had failed to produce homogenous thinking about what the future should look like.

In the early Stuart period, identity politics is starting to emerge through emphatic correlations between Englishness and liberty although what consequences ought to flow from this widely differed from one sector of political polemicists to the next. It was, above all, a political discourse, coming out of parliamentary debates over the king's rights and expressing itself through tensions between their existence as subjects and as free-men. It was also a legal and a civic discourse, drawing freely on medieval and Roman inheritances. In a regard of the latter, it could lay claim to attracting the minds of the political neo-classicists who were seeking to recreate the country in an altogether new image. Furthermore, and perhaps most tellingly, it showed itself to be an explosive public discourse in the Civil War period: cheaply available and potentially massively disruptive. What about its long-term impacts? In one sense, these discourses do not substantially change systems. The Levellers declined in the early 1650s.

¹³⁴ Mendle 2001, p. 136.

¹³⁵ Woodhouse 1938, p. 68.

The Republican episode was aborted. The Stuart monarchy would be restored in 1660. But what remained was important too. What remained was a belief in the Englishness of liberty, which would be played out once again in the Glorious Revolution and beyond. What remained also was a belief that the French in particular were slavish and doomed: this would continue to form part of the national structure of prejudice until at least the Revolutionary period (which was, naturally, seen as the sorry but inevitable end of a long story of arbitrary power and decadence). It did not much matter that these stories were riddled with internal contradictions and did not necessarily match up to real conditions of life either at home or abroad. What mattered was that they were widely believed (even in very crude form) and widely perpetuated (one thinks of Hogarth's 1748 *Gate of Calais* which is a classic version of the above told in pictorial form.) In short, the stories repeatedly told about the Englishness of liberty were given a place of honour in the national shrine. What had been said and written on the subject in the first half of the seventeenth century somehow mattered.

CONCLUSION

So what was it to be considered thoroughly English in the century from 1550 to 1650? The importance of an investigation across several domains when dealing with a subject as ‘thick’ in resonances as national identity is now obvious. Identities were construed, prescribed and rejected through ideas about behaviour, manners, aesthetics, politics and religion. These domains were not in the least discrete: they overlap constantly, showing the relevance of Pocock’s conviction that for a history of ideas to be truly plausible, it needs to be traced through ‘variant acts in the same language’.¹ Only then do we see a certain coherence developing through the welter of issues. There have been many points of convergence. Concerns about plain speech could also be concerns about political freedom. Disguising oneself through dress was construed not merely as a social *faux-pas*; it could also be a sign of cultural or indeed religious treachery. The radical anti-establishment polemic of the 1640s undoubtedly owes something of its tone to the anti-aulic satire of the Elizabethan era which problematised excess and license. There was no neat division in the early-modern English mind between culture, religion and politics which has been reason enough for considering all three in their interactions. Taken collectively, many of these voices speak as one or at least select material from the same broad value-system.

We are thus in a position to understand the contours and complexities of their ideas much better than heretofore. There emerge very strong and convergent convictions around what Englishness consists in, in the values it embodies and excludes. That these are propelled by both positive and negative attitudes has been evident throughout. It has even seemed at times that the series of powerful negatives – that the English are not flamboyant, not slavish, not Jesuited – have surpassed the positive because of the energy with which they were expressed. Still, what generated even the harshest of strictures and the most vicious of satires was a positive picture of what it meant to be a man of the nation. Yet, for all the purse-lipped convictions, the crystal-clear pieties of national identity are shattered at every point in the story. Identities were thick rather than thin, contested not consonant, fugal not fixed. Ideals had a very problematic relationship

¹ Pocock 1987, pp. 26–27.

with reality and thus discourses of Englishness tell us little about how people actually lived their lives. Lived experience, as ever, is more elusive.

Yet, such discourses do tell us many important things about this society and its values, aspirations and interactions. They speak, first of all, of the power of a comparatively new print culture, where an indeterminate public was to be reached and won over in ways that made sense to them. A rhetoric of national identity is one of its more obvious fruits. The insistence on the public dimension is crucial. Essentially, this rhetoric is not about private individuals: it is about constructing the public man. One might say that the Englishman, as he is construed, has no private life. He is on stage: his virtues and vices reflect upon the nation. This is a rhetoric which helps shape post-Reformation print culture and public debate, for even when the discussions are parliamentary, they open out to a wider audience, especially in the London metropolis. It is also highly significant that these are not views that emanate from the inner sanctum of royal or ecclesiastical establishment. Nationality is not the construct of one particular institution; it is often not institutionally framed at all. It rarely bears, as it were, the official 'stamp'. It is neither state-driven nor church-driven, although it involves, at times, appeals to both. There is no homogeneous agenda as such behind its emergence, although it often acquires a political tone in particular contexts. It is a dynamic and self-propelling discourse, one that, in various ways, becomes a vital part of polemical writing and social commentary. Indeed, it could be seen as one of the more strikingly spontaneous ways in which writers in the late Tudor and early Stuart periods reach out to their readerships and seek to fashion their opinions. The language of national identity, it could be argued, serves these men of letters particularly well. It enables them to make brisk normative judgements about a whole host of matters. It is trenchant, robust and flexible. It is a language filled with implicit assumptions, one which seeks to build up authorial-reader collusion – an appeal to a shared value-system that in reality may or may not be shared.

This language, used so very freely, also allows for the combination of new imperatives with old. In other words, it permits the assertion of an organic unity between Englishness past and present. Medieval stories were made to serve novel purposes; classical stories were duly updated and nationalised. As we have repeatedly seen, the selection of past narratives was also, in many ways, the invention of the past. The 'medieval' inheritance of liberty was not nearly as coherent or comprehensive as was claimed. The vaunted simplicity of traditional clothing and speech would be questioned by medievalists. And the past could not be divorced from

Roman Catholicism however much they wished. Given the creative usages of the past, we must seriously question whether these discourses are so traditionalist as they sometimes seem. If we imagine a spectrum from traditionalism to radicalism, where do we position the prevalent rhetoric of identity? There was much in it that was traditional – or at least faux-traditional. Loyalty to established authority, compatibility with social hierarchies, and nostalgia frequently appear. Yet, it was never merely as passive or as quiescent as this might imply. It was a language used to discomfit upstarts and pretenders, and also, at times, the established elites. It was not meant to bring balm on society. The languages of the past were not being used for antiquarian purposes. They were given a distinct edge. The rhetoric of Englishness even becomes, in some hands, a way of legitimating a variety of positions which might be considered subversive by authorities. It is no surprise to find the extremes of republicanism and democracy expressed under its aegis by 1650. In no other language could the case be so compelling made.

These findings prompt us to ask how unique this ‘self-fashioning’ was to England at the time. First, it must be restated that a simplified moral geography was a common feature of many European countries in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance era. It was not just English writers who deployed a rhetoric of nationality and mapped defects onto foreigners. If many cultures were indeed producing their own versions of a moral geography at around this time, we must then ask if the *particular* claims that the English made about themselves were at all distinctive to them. In short, were they the only ones with a very fulsome construction of the national man as plain, free and Protestant? In the current state of literature on the subject of the construction of other identities, a full judgment cannot yet be reached. Certainly, there are intimations of overlaps, some of which we have had occasion to note. A veneration of plainness does emerge in other places where luxury and magnificence dominate the life of the social elite, for example, in Valois and later Bourbon France.² But, for obvious reasons, a construction of anti-Catholicism and of freedom does not become nationalised in a similar way there.

The comparisons that bear more weight and indeed may prove illuminating are with Germany: both the construction of identity in the humanist era and the one which was peddled to the educated and then to the masses in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Rublack has done

² See Smith 1966. See also above p. 28 n 9.

some research into the former, primarily in relation to fashion. She has described the growth of a sense of Germanness which was Tacitean and anti-Italian, and one which insisted on plainness and freedom. This she positions as flourishing by the end of the fifteenth century: Conrad Celtis' *Germana Generalis* of 1498 is a key text in which one may detect the first emergence of a 'German nationalistic ideology.'³ Later, visions of freedom wedded to nationality were very much part of the story that Lutheran states would tell about themselves in central Europe. In a later century, a powerful narrative builds upon this more consequentially. It begins with Johann Gottfried Herder and the Romantics, emphasising the native manly plainness of the German *volk*, uncorrupted in the prelapsarian splendour of his *Wald Heimat* (forest homeland). Also in evidence was an expanding literature construing a story of national liberty backdated to Luther's recantation of the Church of Rome. It is not at all surprising that one of the first organized 'nationalist' events in Germany was the Wartburg festival of 1817, commemorating the three hundredth anniversary of the 95 theses. All this occurs before and is indeed in complex relation to the eventual unification of Germany under Prussia in 1871. But the resemblances in the claims made and the arguments put forward for national distinctiveness and superiority are noteworthy and intriguing. So the only other truly powerful *congerie* of these claims occurs in Germany in these two periods.

This affords a nice point of comparison. We have often had occasion to point to the Saxonist and Teutonic elements in English self-consciousness: it is as if they saw themselves as common brethren of plain men, purer and more manly than the Mediterranean peoples. It should come as no surprise that we are happening upon the traditionally conceived fault-line between the Roman and the Germanic, an extremely powerful factor in the construction of modern European identities. Still, for all the resemblances, there was that, I would argue, which made the English endeavour distinct. Germany in the early-modern era was ill-defined and utterly non-homogenous: it was made up of so many different territories. The Augsburg principle finally hatched in 1555 ensured that those territories would agree to differ religiously: diversity was legitimated and accepted. Germanness was much more difficult to 'imagine' as a unity. In the 1400s and 1500s, it never became politicised in quite the same way. As England was a tighter, more compact entity with clearer boundaries (including that of the sea),

³ Rublack 2010, pp. 124–175, p. 129.

it was not only easier to 'imagine' nationality but any reflection on it would have a political resonance. More people could make sense of it than could the extremely diverse people who loosely constituted Germandom make sense of unified Germanness. So I would hazard that the combination of the claims (plain, free, unCatholic) *was*, even if not particular to, particularly forceful in England in this time, and indeed of especial significance for her future.

What indeed lay in that future? It is beyond the remit of this book to follow this through in any great depth but it is possible to sketch the trajectory of some of these themes and envisage how they mapped themselves onto later ages. This involves seeking to understand how ideas about Englishness related to ideas about Britishness. At the outset, I established that invocations of the former were much more powerful than invocations of the latter from 1550–1650. But how would the seismic changes of the next 100 years transform the national story? By then, the British Empire would be a truly great maritime power, boasting a surging population, strong commercial and manufacturing sectors, the makings of an agricultural revolution, and colonies in North America, the sugar islands in the Caribbean and footholds in Bengal. There was simply a larger canvas to work off. It is worth asking whether and to what extent earlier ideas about English identity came to inform ideas about British identity and indeed Britain's sense of mission in the world. It can plausibly be argued that they did and that, to a significant extent. The narratives of plainness, freedom and anti-Catholicism proved sufficiently powerful and ripe for the plucking: they were lifted and transferred in their essentials to a later era and were, moreover, combined with newer features such as commercial triumphalism, imperial imperatives and a culture of politeness. It could be maintained that the Englishness that we have recovered is one of the foremost intellectual contexts for the growth of British imperial ideology. The best way of seeing the interrelationships between Englishness, Britishness and the British Empire is, as David Armitage says, in terms of 'mutually constitutive processes'.⁴

How might this have manifested itself? As regards the trope of national plainness, the appearance of John Bull as the personification of national character in 1712 and his evolution throughout the century was critical: he could well be regarded as the lineal descendent of Cloth Breeches, bluff, plain-talking and stolid. James Boswell's depiction of John Bull as the

⁴ Armitage 2000, p. 62.

blunt *true-born* Englishman is a comment rich in history, the early articulation of which we have had occasion to examine. Even apart from an evolving national stereotype, the value of plainness was taken up more widely in the eighteenth century: Paul Langford, arguing that it was a 'favourite Augustan value', depicts a 'cult of the natural' for which the English came to be known (and admired) throughout Europe. He treats of the phenomenon of the renunciation of rhetoric in the evocation of the plain-spoken Englishman.⁵ As regards fashions, there is a sense in which the veneration for 'plainness' in masculine dress became a triumphant statement at least amongst the elites. The starting point for this story is, Kuchta would have it, in 1666 when Charles II adopted the three-piece suit, thus ushering in what he calls the modern era of masculine aesthetics which renounced the overly-elaborate male 'peacock' style fashionable in the French court for at least two centuries. From our point of view, the most revealing aspect is the patent sense of English self-consciousness about this phenomenon and the continuously antagonistic reflection upon French ways offered repeatedly in the course of the next 150 years. It is a comparative story told with a particular relish in the 1790s when accounting for the destruction of an effete French aristocracy. There is a complacent belief that plainness and its corollary, honest living, has helped to ward off revolutionary fervour at home.⁶

The theme of liberty also proved adaptable in a subsequent era as a frame for both English and British identities. After the Glorious Revolution, the English and later the British sense of self revolved around its perceived achievement of political liberty. The country itself and the character of the Englishman and the Briton were felt to be 'peculiarly free'. Its reputation for political liberty both at home and abroad – one thinks inevitably of the excitable Anglomania among the French *philosophes* in the 1700s – thus waxed high, although it was always the case that the reputation exceeded the reality by some distance. But as Linda Colley has said, such 'sustaining national myths' did not depend on their being true to be potent and popular.⁷ There are some differences, however, between the visions of liberty that we have uncovered and later ones. There would seem to have been a certain quietening of the 'extreme' versions of the narrative of liberty for a considerable while. Not until John Wilkes in the 1760s and 1770s do we find a figure, reminiscent of Lilburne, claiming so very emphatically to

⁵ Langford 2000, p. 85.

⁶ Kuchta 2002, p. 2.

⁷ Colley 1992, pp. 32–33.

personify liberty, that being the hallmark of an Englishness which is under real threat.⁸ As for republican liberty, that officially died a death after the Restoration only to be stirred up again, unsuccessfully, in the late eighteenth century. Still the obsession with the possibility of arbitrary power remained engrained as did the centrality of a narrative of civic virtue consequent on a free state. These ideas were part of their self-understanding, but they could be kept within conservative bounds. The concept of English liberty, in short, which had flirted with the extremes in the 1600s, became the establishment value of the *via media*. Instead of something to be achieved, it was something considered already achieved, a triumphantly secure national identity, except at moments of notable crisis. There are two further points to be made a propos the trajectory of the narrative of national liberty, two points indeed which distinguish it from that which has gone before. From the late seventeenth century onwards, the virtues of a free-people came to be construed, ever more, in commercial terms. Freedom was credited with driving their economic success and this very success made them freer. There were earlier intimations of this way of thinking in the sources but it would become much more pronounced in the following century. The other evolving aspect concerns liberty not merely as something possessed by the English to a peculiar degree, but something to be exported. In short, liberty acquired a missionary dimension as the British Empire came to regard itself as a bringer of liberty to the world. This discourse thus did not remain closed in upon itself but opened out with important long-term ideological consequences.

Englishness also remained fixed in an anti-Catholic mould, a mould set ever firmer during Britain's titanic struggles with France in the 1700s. Anti-Catholicism too fed in to a construction of Britishness, serving as a 'powerful cement between the English, the Welsh and the Scots.'⁹ A British Protestant power was deemed to have a benign global effect in contrast with the false universalism of Rome and the rampant arbitrariness of France. The nature of the construction was similar to what went before, except that it became even more popular, owing to the freeing of the printing press in 1695. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was reproduced again and again, notably in 1732, 1761, 1776, 1784 and 1795 and became, along with the Bible, the most commonly-owned book in the country. That said, the transition was not entirely seamless. Scotland had historically closer connections

⁸ Colley 1992, pp. 111–113.

⁹ Colley 1992, p. 23.

with Catholic France, and indeed a substantial Catholic population. This would have to be managed carefully especially after 1745. Furthermore, the Irish entry into the United Kingdom in 1801 would severely problematise the connection between anti-Catholicism and British identity, and emancipation, however delayed, was from then on, inevitable, coming eventually in 1829. That said, official eschewal of anti-Catholicism did not immediately alter the mentalities which had been engrained for centuries.

All three themes, plainness, liberty and anti-Catholicism were thus well-adapted to long-term national self-fashioning and indeed imperial self-glorification when Britain became more confident in its own stature and secure in its power. But this was all in the future. For Tudor and Stuart forebears, there was little complacency about what lay ahead. It is true that they often imagined it as glorious and triumphant; but at other times, it looked frighteningly dystopic. They clearly regarded themselves poised at a decisive moment of history, with the fate of their nation in their hands. Could one go so far as to say that they were creating a kind of national epic, dramatizing the choices and realities faced by their reasonably important but not front-rank country? Unsurprisingly, the greatest epic writer in the English language found himself involved in writing a national consciousness into existence. Perhaps epic is to go too far but certainly, it is a deeply theatrical construction throughout, even in its rejection of the theatrical. That raises a most crucial point about what they were doing. They were, it could be said, reflecting on their role in a changing world. What part would the English play in modern history? What would they become? What person would they bear? Who were they anyway, in the scheme of things? In real terms, they did not count for all that much. In 1550, they constituted 3 million or a mere 3.1% of the population of Europe. By 1650, the figure had risen to 5.2, that is to say 4.7 %. Yet France counted for 18 % by that time; the Italian states for over 10 % and Spain for 6.3 %. Nobody in particular wanted to speak English and few sought to emulate them either. They were an offshore island, the dominant player in the British Isles, certainly, but as yet, they were not exactly at the heart of things: a relative pygmy among giants.

So who then were the English of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries? Quite simply, they were a second-rate power telling grandiose stories about themselves. It was because they told them so often and in print that they lasted. By 1650, they had developed a powerful narrative about themselves. It was not altogether homogenous and it certainly did not fit all the realities – what narrative could? But it worked for

them. It resonated with different sorts of people in a variety of ways: it could, as we have seen, work with and against the grain of the establishment. It was both prescriptive and descriptive. It had all the advantages of an intellectual *via media*. It had a core of assumptions and beliefs but it had flexibility too, which would help when translated to meet the ideological needs of a later age. The English commoner could take consolation from the *idea* that he was freer than the Frenchman. The English country gentleman could pride himself on the idea that his lifestyle was more worthy and plain than the courtiers abroad. Even English Catholics would set themselves apart from coreligionists and play down their Roman credentials in order to be considered truly English. The English had a narrative of distinctiveness and superiority long before they acquired greatness or before greatness was thrust upon them. Darkening the horizon was a belief that their patrimony was in danger of being submerged and lost. The narrative of Englishness was not merely – or even mainly – comforting; it also spurred them on.

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