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Author(s) : Seok Min YUN

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Conscience, Authority, and Andrew Marvell's *The First Anniversary**

Seok Min YUN (Yonsei University)

I. Introduction: Conscience in Crisis and Authority in Power

The purpose of this essay is to read carefully, analyze closely, and thereby hopefully, propose a fresh interpretation of, Andrew Marvell's *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness Lord Protector* (1655; hereafter *The First Anniversary*). My aim, however, is not to pin down the only way of looking at the poem, whose complexity and elusiveness have long yielded a myriad of scholarly efforts to clarify the poet's nebulous posture, nor do I dare to claim that the arguments laid out in this essay can overshadow those long-accumulated works of a joint intellectual labour chiefly made by literary critics and early modern historians.[1] My concern is rather to place *The First Anniversary* within the internal progress of Marvell's Interregnum poetry, thus bringing to light the ways in which the text interacts and intersects with its exterior historical and political contexts.

* Portions of this essay were previously read at the Annual Meeting of the Korean Society of the Milton and Early Modern English Studies, Onyang Hot Spring Hotel, Onyang, South Korea. For their judicious comments and helpful feedback, I would like to thank my discussant and others who were present at the conference.

1. Critics have often left *The First Anniversary* aside as structurally undisciplined and thematically incoherent, hence less important than Marvell's other two Cromwell poems, attributing its lack of unity to the transitional fluctuations of its author and detecting no more than ample evidence of "intellectual subservience and artless 'propaganda'" (Patterson, *Andrew Marvell* 39-40). R. I. V. Hodge, for instance, devalues the poem as a disjointed work that "does not hang together" (112) as a whole and asserts that Marvell is nowhere fully in control solely except in the Amphion section (112). Derek Hirst, however, wishes to take the very inscrutability of the poem as evidence of greater significance, labeling it "the longest and thematically most complex of the three" Cromwell poems ("'That Sober Liberty'" 17).

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Admittedly, Marvell has long been seen as a poet whose message is characteristic less of coherency and gravitas than of inconsistency and opaqueness. Consensus has thus been made that any attempt to construct his fixed, unalterable image is futile and quickly defeated. In the late 1640s, he was an unknown poet, but not one who was devoid of his own astute perceptions of the vagaries and convulsions of the civil wars. Little evidence remains about his affiliation during the wartime, but numerous indications are readily detectable which may substantiate his sympathy for those who fell fighting for the King—even an indication of his explicitly pugnacious mind of a Royalist bent. During the Interregnum, he was a Cromwellian, no less determined than John Milton, presumably the most indefatigable of all English republicans during the 1650s. The two poets' postures were almost exceptionally identical in paying homage to the elevation of Oliver Cromwell, the alleged usurper granted with the *de facto* Sword, though they were later to diverge in face of the statesman's fall on the eve of 1660. After the Restoration, Marvell was a Whig, one of the busiest champions of religious toleration and civic liberties during the late seventeenth-century. Faced with a resurgent episcopate of the Anglican parliaments and Clarendon's nefarious treatments of the affairs of state, Marvell's career was thus made anew as a polemicist and politician deeply committed to the incipient ideology of the Whig party yet to be formed.

In all likelihood, it may be this Chameleon-like political mutation he has undergone throughout the mid-seventeenth century that impedes a clear-cut definition of *The First Anniversary*. It was primarily written to celebrate and commemorate the first year of the establishment of Cromwell's Protectorate, a novel political order which displaced the former regime called the free Commonwealth. Its initial full title, *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness Lord Protector*, deserves careful scrutiny, as it was deliberately intended to embrace a range of meanings which might obscure one single recipient to whom it was dedicated. At first glance, it appears to be a work of panegyric—panegyric in praise of the Lord Protector who came to power in late 1653. Thus read, one may argue that it purposefully enacts a more reinforced endorsement of Cromwell, "the War's and Fortune's son" (*An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* 113; hereafter *An Horatian Ode*),[2]

2. Citations from Marvell's poetry are taken from *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*,

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who has back in 1650 still remained far short of the poet's unconditional praise for his alignment with the unjustifiably effective power of the Sword. It then is to the Cromwell of mid-fifties that Marvell's *de jure* affirmation is explicitly dedicated in *The First Anniversary*. Yet, viewed from another perspective, particularly from the viewpoint of the mid-1650s' dominant language, "the Government" could also refer to a constitutional document named "the Instrument of Government" which mapped out a state as envisioned by Cromwellian Protectorate. Hence, it could entirely be plausible that *The First Anniversary* was largely deemed as a deliberation on the Instrument of Government, the first written constitution that defined and drafted a set of new religious and political orders intrinsic to the Protectorate (Raymond, "Framing Liberty" 316; Raymond, "A Cromwellian Center?" 145).

The questions I want to raise are the following: Is there another way of looking at *The First Anniversary* except either as a work of panegyric or as a work of constitution? Didn't Marvell try to achieve something more personal and therefore more germane exclusively to himself other than merely making public commentaries on the affairs of *real politik*? It is at this point that I want to return to my previous suggestion that *The First Anniversary* be placed in the internal progress of Marvell's Interregnum trajectory of life. The government which came to power in the late 1640s was not entirely free of the constraints of its pre-history: its initial life began with Pride's Purge in December 1648, which was an arbitrarily made military intervention in the consciliar authority. The imposed Oath of Allegiance, which led to a tumultuous series of pamphlet wars later dubbed the Engagement Controversy, laid claim to the internal domain of private conscience, whose moral crisis engendered the specific casuistical problem concerning whether obedience could conscientiously be paid to a government justified merely by possession of the effective sword (Pocock, "*Oceana*: Its Ideological Context" 29). When Marvell moved over 1649-50 from an initially royalist position towards one in which he expressed an unmistakable defense of the Parliamentarians' triumph, he was certainly undergoing a moral crisis, equipped with no external authority to which he could look for the ultimate Justice: like

ed. Nigel Smith (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007). All further citations from the poems will be indicated in parentheses with title of the poem (where necessary) and line numbers.

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many other seventeenth century Englishmen, he was lonely left in possession of his own conscience faced with the collapse of older forms of allegiance, both political and religious (Thomas 29-30). It therefore is little wonder that Marvell's early-fifties' poetry sets forth numerous indications of his wavering postures in face of circumstances which theory and experience equally find unprecedented and inscrutable.

Here I must be excused from elaborating further on Marvell's oscillating postures because it has almost become a truism that ambivalence is a most central and recurrent theme in Marvell's early-fifties' works: as far as the Commonwealth period (1649-53) goes, no single resolution seems to be made in Marvell's mind between Cromwell's rise to power and Charles I's fall to defeat in *An Horatian Ode* (1650), between the ascendancy of the Roundhead Cause and the decline of the Cavalier Cause in *Tom May's Death* (1650), and between Cromwell's pre-emptive invasion of Scotland and Fairfax's retreat from this unwarrantable campaign in *Upon Appleton House, to My Lord Fairfax* (1652). In short, during the earlier years of the new Republic, Marvell's conscience remained in crisis, that is, in its peculiar dialectics with Cromwell's *de facto* authorities which were yet on probation. In the meantime, the Republic was gradually coming closer to its end, and, only five years after its inauguration, it was replaced by Cromwell's Protectorate. Although it was seen by such a classical republican as James Harrington, Marvell's intimate crony during the 1650s, "as a botched compromise between older forms of government and a truly grounded republican constitution" (qtd. in Norbrook, "The English Revolution" 236-37), Marvell saw in such an irreversible progress of Interregnum history a critical moment of reconciliation at which conscience could be freed of a moral crisis it had earlier been entangled in. It is by the time of *The First Anniversary* that the poet is enabled to be in ready to praise Cromwell's deeds both at home and abroad (Worden, *Literature and Politics* 140): conscience in crisis disappeared and so did all the previous elements of doubt and admonition. From then onward, Marvell's path began to converge in Cromwell's: the poet's private conscience and the statesman's public authority met in mid-fifties.

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II. Conscience at Ease with "That Providence"

The critical moment for the resolution came as conscience began to look to the sovereignty of providential force for the divine manipulator of secular history. If during the first half of the 1650s Cromwell had yet been on probation, the moment at which *The First Anniversary* emerged was the time to endorse the providential mandate he was entrusted with in 1654. The poem's preoccupation with the language of reformed theology (Spurr 162) plays a vital role in reinforcing the belief that Cromwell of mid-fifties was chosen by God for some climactic purpose yet to be revealed. The panoply of religious themes inherent in the poem thus indicates a manifest departure from the ambivalent oscillation at work in Marvell's early-fifties' poetry. *The First Anniversary* presents an unmistakable recognition of providential force at work behind Cromwell's elevation, and this appeal to religious beliefs endows Marvell's work with a profound feeling of certainty, which has hardly been perceptible in his earlier poems:

> What since he did, an higher force him pushed
> Still from behind, and it before him rushed,
> Though undiscerned among the tumult blind,
> Who think those high decrees by man designed.
> 'Twas heaven would not that his pow'r should cease,
> But walk still middle betwixt war and peace;
> Choosing each stone, and poising every weight,
> Trying the measures of the breadth and height
> Here pulling down, and there erecting new,
> Founding a firm state by proportions true.
> (*The First Anniversary* 239-48)

The notable sequence of "an higher force" (239), "those high decrees" (242), and "heaven" (243) serves to identify what has by far pushed forward the progress of "restless Cromwell" (*An Horatian Ode* 9) throughout the first half of the Interregnum period. Interestingly, this repetitive appeal to some higher force that moves ahead of a human agent anticipates, and bears a remarkable similarity to, the opening lines of Marvell's last Cromwell poem:

> That Providence which had so long the care

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> Of Cromwell's head, and numbered ev'ry hair,
> Now in itself (the glass where all appears)
> Had seen the period of his golden years:
> And thenceforth only did attend to trace
> What death might least so fair a life deface.
> (*A Poem on the Death of His Late Highness the Lord Protector* 1-6; hereafter *A Poem*)

A Poem's identification of "an higher force" (*The First Anniversary* 239) is more straightforward and palpable than *The First Anniversary*'s: the force is now named "That Providence" (*A Poem* 1), which has ceaselessly pushed him "still from behind, and…before him rushed" (*The First Anniversary* 240). Providence thus comes to the fore, in Marvell's second Cromwell poem, albeit unmentioned, as well as in his third, as a main actor that takes full control over the secular reign of Cromwell, and this unflagging insistence on the sovereignty of divine providence marks off the second and third Cromwell poems from the first. While in *An Horatian Ode* an acquiescence to Cromwell's rise to power is inescapable because "'[t]is madness to resist or blame/ The force of angry heaven's flame" (25-26), in *The First Anniversary* providential heaven is not scary at all; rather it plays a paramount role in tackling the spate of moral dilemmas faced by Marvell at the outset of the Interregnum. In so far as Cromwell is entrusted with a providential role in 1654, a demand for obedience to his authority, albeit allegedly arbitrary, is not incompatible with a voice of private conscience: Marvell of mid-fifties thus reconciles conscience with authority by looking to "That Providence" for the ultimate Justice. For this reason, the ways in which Marvell endorses Cromwell's irreplaceable role are bound to vary in his two Cromwell poems: *An Horatian Ode*'s Cromwell merits submission because, "if we would speak true,/ Much to the man is due" (27-28), whereas *The First Anniversary*'s Cromwell deserves obedience because "If these the times, then this must be the man" (143-44). *An Horatian Ode*'s appeal to truth resonates with the arguments of the *de facto* theorists in the early 1650s, and it is accordingly apart from any kind of moral judgment that Marvell's *de facto* endorsement of Cromwell of 1650 takes place: for *An Horatian Ode*'s Marvell, as it were, what is actual is understood as equivalent to what is rational and vice versa, so truth must be given full deference, "as it is now established," however dire it may be, for the protection of the subjects and the stability

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of the nation only come from the full recognition thereof.[3] *The First Anniversary*, however, points towards a chiliastic sense of the present moment —a feeling of urgency that the last day is at hand. For the very reason, by the time of *The First Anniversary*, conscience no longer wavers in the face of a moral crisis; Cromwell's authority must be recognized not because it has proven to be *de jure* but because it has proven to be nominated by "That Providence": the time has come, as it were, for the man in power to take a leadership and rule over the whole country in crisis. Providence thus transcends all political debates over one of the most abiding and contestable issues, that is, the issue of legitimacy; its decree is unconditional and absolute, so much so that it may well claim all reasons to ask for an immediate obedience. In short, its chosen time must not be missed at any cost. What looms up before Marvell of 1654 is therefore "Foreshortened Time" (*The First Anniversary* 139) which would "soon precipitate the latest day" (140), and it is upon this strong conviction that Cromwell's rule is the most timely one for the present moment that the strongest argument for reconciliation of conscience with authority can be hammered out. To sum up, if one should give obedience to the rule of the Lord Protector, it is precisely because he is entrusted with a providential mandate that is germane exclusively to the moment at which *The First Anniversary* is being written.

What befalls a providential leader as a cardinal mission is therefore to prove that he can seize the opportunity that is approaching—a unique chance that might never come again if it is now missed. For this reason, providential plan cannot be accomplished unless assisted by Time's favour. Accordingly, *The First Anniversary* gives a special status to the motif of time, and more significantly, to Cromwell's mastery over time (Stocker 15-17; McGlamery 20), as in a stark contrast to all others who are in arrear of, and lay obstacles to, the unstoppable progress of it. As a divinely mandated ruler of the state, Cromwell is depicted as most sensitive to the flow and velocity of time, as controlled and urged by Providence, and to this particular aspect of his protagonist does Marvell pay special attention throughout the poem. Thus the thrust of the poem becomes

3. For a superb, earliest attempt to place *An Horatian Ode* within the early 1650s' discursive context of *de facto* arguments see Wallace; for a pioneering, well-documented survey of the ramifications of the Engagement Controversy, see Burgess.

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comparative (Zwicker, "Models of Governance" 5), for Marvell aims at a magnification of Cromwell's progressive vitality by juxtaposing all that are in character completely different from, and opposite to, this diligent statesman. First of all, the comparative section begins with a representation of Cromwell as in a series of peculiar contrasts, primarily with all sluggish monarchs abroad. Cromwell completes "in one year the work of ages" (14); heavy monarchs never make even "one thing" done (22) during their reign. Equipped with great energy, Cromwell contrasts and renews "scattered Time" (13); "more slow and brittle than the China clay" (20), kings remain "[i]n the same posture" (18) even after "all Platonic years" (17) have passed. Marvell's critique of "heavy monarchs" here should not be literally taken as part of an age-old attack on monarchy as a defeated constitutional system made by a republican poet. David Norbrook, for instance, makes a fresh attempt to situate *The First Anniversary* within the mid-1650s' republican discourse by looking closely at the ways in which Marvell portrays Cromwell as a supreme legislator, as canonized by Machiavelli, "seizing a unique *occasione* for constitutional reform" (*Writing the English Republic* 343). However, as Edward Holberton rightly points out, given that the most conspicuous path of mid-fifties' republicans runs on to hold Cromwell's immense power in check (101), *The First Anniversary*'s drift is unmistakably anti-republican: Marvell's Cromwell in *The First Anniversary* is not confined within *hic et nunc*, nor can his vigorous move be held back by the so-called republican checks. What Marvell does in the poem, then, is not so much to engage himself with the language of republicanism of mid-fifties as to cautiously distance himself from the Protectorate's republican enemies by highlighting the immense vigor of Cromwell's unique peculiarity specifically concocted and favoured by "That Providence." Looked at in this regard, when Marvell explicitly states in the middle of the poem that "to be Cromwell was a greater thing,/ Than ought below, or yet above a king" (*The First Anniversary* 225-26), it is not simply intended as a pre-emptive condemnation of Cromwell's feasible acceptance of kingship, nor a thinly veiled warning against his alleged ambition for a brand-new kind of monarch restored, if in all but name.[4] Rather, it seems that emphasis needs to be placed

4. Norbrook's attempt to align *The First Anniversary* with the language of the mid-1650s' republican discourse is quite deviant and new in view of many previous critics' dominant interpretation of the poem as heavily charged with

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on the sentence's subjective phrase, "to be Cromwell," and more importantly, on why it should be "to be Cromwell," not simply "Cromwell," that is even above a king. One therefore should pose a question: what is it "to be Cromwell" and what on earth makes it even greater than to be a king? All best definitions come from their counterexamples: in *The First Anniversary*, to be Cromwell is not to be non-Cromwellian—not to be reluctant and slothful; not to be slow and languishing; not to be inactive and private; hence, not to be against change and reform. To put it affirmatively, to be Cromwell is to be Cromwellian—to be progressive and dynamic; to be swift and robust; to be active and public; hence, to be always ready and open to change and reform. In sum, what is essential to the Cromwellian is a great degree of sensitivity to the swift progress of providential time—a vivid sense of urgency that the present moment must be seized at any expense. In this way, *The First Anniversary*'s utmost homage is paid less to Cromwell the individual than to what is Cromwellian—the most outstanding posture that Cromwell of mid-fifties specifically displays in preparation for the Last Day at hand. Thus, Marvell's preoccupation with the unique qualities embodied in the first year Protectorate's Cromwell sets the poem apart from his contemporary republicans' critique of the Protectorate.

The First Anniversary is therefore at war. A line of opposition is drawn which Marvell observes can never be reconciled with one another at the moment of writing—the opposition between "the long, slow cycles of mortality and the dynamism of Cromwell's new order" (Zwicker, *Lines of Authority* 81). To put it another way, antagonism runs between what is Cromwellian and what is not. Most crucial for Marvell, yet, is that the non-Cromwellian outnumber the Cromwellian in the mid-1650s' England. It is from such an astute diagnosis of the present time that *The First Anniversary*'s apocalyptic atmosphere is derived. Thus considered, it is no wonder that Marvell's acknowledgement of "an higher force"

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the motifs of royalist praise: see Mazzeo 193-205 where Marvell's efforts to represent Cromwell as an anointed, Davidic king are discussed, Wallace 132 where Marvell's invocation of "royalist paternalism and the theory of mixed monarchy" is highlighted, and Patterson, Civic Crown 68-90 where Marvell's ample use of the traits of royalist panegyrics is adduced. I rather suggest that *The First Anniversary*'s abiding concern for the imminence of providential time deserve more careful attention.

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(239) at work behind Cromwell's move goes tandem with his acute awareness of the existence of "the tumult blind,/ Who think those high decrees by man designed" (241-42): Cromwell's providential role, as it were, is unacknowledged in 1654. The vast majority of the population in the infant Protectorate, in Marvell's view, obstructs the dynamism of the Lord Protector and his promise of reformation and thereby hinders the millennial hopes of the elect (Zwicker, *Lines of Authority* 82). To put it differently, they are ignorant of, and insensitive to, "That Providence" under whose auspices Cromwell's "active star" (*An Horatian Ode* 12) has ceaselessly progressed since 1649. In fact, the first year Protectorate saw a severe conflict between Cromwell and his parliament, the so-called "representative of the whole realm" (Smith, "the first Protectorate Parliament 45), and from this unbridgeable gap lying across "the single person" and "the people assembled in parliament"[5] sprang all the political difficulties that dogged the late 1650s' Interregnum politics. Presumably, behind *The First Anniversary*'s introductory portrayal of Cromwell as one who runs alone lies Marvell's critical understanding of the mid-fifties' political topography in which Cromwell was at odds with his parliament over numerous issues, both political and religious, at the core of which lay both sides' different approaches and attitudes towards liberty of conscience (Smith, "the Protectorate Parliaments" 18; Adamson 77). When Cromwell dissolved the first Protectorate Parliament in January 1655, Bulstrode Whitelocke wrote in his diary that the Protector did so "because he found them not pliable to his purposes & this caused great discontent in many of the members & others butt he valued it not[,] esteeming himself above those things" (Spalding 400). In his dissolution speech on 22 January 1655, Cromwell launched a bitter diatribe against the first Protectorate Parliament which had been "not pliable to his purposes":

> And therefore how happy would England have been, and you and I, if the Lord had led you on to have settled upon such good accounts as these are, and to have discountenanced such practices as the other,

5. The first clause of the Instrument of Government explicitly states that "the supreme legislative authority of the Commonwealth of England…shall be and reside in *one person*, and *the people assembled in parliament*; the style of which person shall be, 'The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland' (Kenyon 308, italics mine).

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> and left men in disputable things free to their own consciences! Which was well provided for by the 'Instrument of Government; and liberty left to provide against what was apparently evil. Judge you, Whether the contesting for things that were provided for by this Government hath been profitable expense of time, for the good of these Nations! By means whereof you may see you have wholly elapsed your time, and done just nothing! (Carlyle 3: 297)

What is most interesting about Cromwell's rebuke of the members lies in his critical awareness of their waste of time. There intransigence, Cromwell might wish to contend, is to blame precisely because they have been idling away their time and have "done just nothing" during their sittings, and on this very charge of parliament Marvell stands for Cromwell, for time is quintessential to the operation of Providence, and where it is ignored, the divine edict for the last day cannot be materialized. To put it in terms of *The First Anniversary*'s predominant dialectic of antagonism, the first Protectorate Parliament represents in 1654 the most visible and readily identifiable embodiment of what is non-Cromwellian: the majority of members, in short, are reluctant and slothful, slow and languishing, and inactive and private; hence they are against what Cromwell aims to accomplish on behalf of the will of "That Providence" in mid-fifties. For this reason, to the extent that Marvell's invective of "heavy monarchs" no longer serves to mount hackneyed attacks on monarchy as a corruptible polity, the following lines do not aim at a plain, republican critique of incompetent, hereditary princes:

> How might they under such a captain raise
> The great designs kept for the latter days!
> But mad with reason, so miscalled of state,
> They know them not, and what they know not, hate.
> . . . . . .
> Unhappy princes, ignorantly bred,
> By malice some, by error more misled;
> If gracious heaven to my life give length,
> Leisure to time, and to my weakness strength,
> Then shall I once with graver accents shake
> Your regal sloth, and your long slumbers wake[.] (109-22)

Marvell's lamentation here resonates with, and pre-typifies, Cromwell's

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above impeachment of the first Protectorate Parliament's idleness and infertility. To the very extent, these lines particularly serve Cromwell's mid-fifties' political interests. If those slothful princes were under the guidance of "such a great captain" as Cromwell, Marvell laments, what a great work they could have done! Yet, their ignorance of what is approaching hinders them from seizing a unique *occasione* for satisfaction of "That Providence," and this chiliastic sense of the present impasse with which the first year Protectorate is confronted underlies Marvell's following condemnation of "unhappy princes" (17) whose "regal sloth" (22) forms a remarkable continuation of the sluggishness of "heavy monarchs." At this particular moment, it is nothing other than "length" and "leisure," that is, some extra time, that are urgently needed, for the current preponderance of the non-Cromwellian over the Cromwellian brings the nation into the providential disfavour. Hence Marvell the narrator's sudden intervention into the progress of the poem as above. This abrupt introduction of the first person pronoun "I" into the poem denotes the extent to which Marvell's strong feeling of urgency is being amplified at the moment of writing, and further, the extent to which Marvell of 1654 is firmly determined to stand by the Protector lonely in pursuit of "That Providence" as he understands it. Such a defense of Cromwell of mid-fifties, however, remains unaided and unappreciated by "the tumult blind," i.e. the vast majority of the population, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the subsequent lines starting with "Hence oft I think" (131) run in the subjunctive mood, without recourse to which no way out of the current political stalemate can be envisaged.

> If these the times, then this must be the man.
> And well he therefore does, and well has guessed,
> Who in his age has always forward pressed:
> And knowing not where heaven's choice may light,
> Girds yet his sword, and ready stands to fight;
> But men alas, as if they nothing cared,
> Look on, all unconcerned, or unprepared;
> . . . . . .
> For the great justice that did first suspend
> The world by sin, does by the same extend.
> Hence that blest day still counterpoised wastes,
> The ill delaying, what th'elected hastes;
> Hence landing Nature to new seas is tossed,

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And good designs still with their authors lost. (144-58)

This passage is a culmination of the battle-lines drawn at the beginning of the poem. Marvell here elaborates once more on the initial setting of antagonism, juxtaposing Cromwell always in preparation for "that blest day" (155) and people always impeding his forward quest for it. What constantly recurs, again, is the language of reformed theology at the core of which a firm trust in the sovereignty of "That Providence" lies. Marvell perceives that in the mid-1650s' England it is Cromwell alone who pays heed to the guidance of providence, and therefore it is he alone who is ready to meet the ever-flowing time's most seasonable challenge. Thus, in Marvell's view, Cromwell's activism that has long been at work since 1649 still remains active and presumably has reached its apogee during the mid-1650s, not for the warrior's sake as back in 1650, but entirely for the sake of "That Providence," and it is by looking to it for "the great justice" (153) that Marvell sets his own conscience at ease with Cromwell's authority in the infant Protectorate.

III. Conscience Resolved with "The Angel of Our Commonweal"

While Marvell's adoption of the language of reformed religion or providential theology plays a vital role in easing his conscience entrenched in a moral dilemma, this does not necessarily mean that conscience in crisis has been resolved: granted, where "That Providence" prevails, conscience can feel at ease, freed of a stark choice, which, in all probability, may arise when a divine will seems to be unsearchable. In late 1654, Marvell was faced with no choice, fully convinced that God's will was in Cromwell's favour. Yet, there still remained man's part as a reciprocally dutiful response to God's providential nomination, for the accomplishment of divine plan was always in need of a faithful servant of God, that is, God's instrument, and Marvell had to convince his contemporaries that Cromwell of mid-fifties would be the very servant—a peculiarly elected human agent through whom God would be willing to work for his chosen time and plan. For this reason, while seeking for a reconciliation of conscience and authority, Marvell must have felt a strong need to exhibit the most conspicuous manifestations of divine endorsement that was bestowed on

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Cromwell's part in 1654. Thus considered, his overall descriptions of Cromwell in *The First Anniversary* should not be taken merely as evidence of rhetorical devices aiming at a submissive encouragement to obedience to the authority of Lord Protector; rather they are carefully contrived to play a central part in the whole progress of the poem as an essential prerequisite for approval which Marvell believed God had vouchsafed to Cromwell of 1654. In fact, at political level, an appeal to "That Providence" could not be a perfect answer to all the discontents and suspicions arising duly out of the pre-history of the Protectorate, at the core of which lay a grave memory of the military intervention in the conciliar authority (Worden, *The English Civil Wars* 127), as the dissolutions of the two parliaments in 1653 would most graphically illustrate. No doubt, for Marvell's part, a conviction was adamant that divine providence stood by Cromwell in the infant Protectorate, and yet it was also true that the *real politik* would demand a far greater degree of virtual support and centrifugal concurrence from the people's part. To this end, if *The First Anniversary*'s comparative section serves to shed light on the urgency and timeliness of "That Providence" running ahead of "restless Cromwell," the rest of the poem is dedicated to envisaging an elaborate blueprint for the state predicated on what Marvell believes to be a desirable authority.

Without an understanding of Marvell's ambitious vision for a presentation of an ideal state during the earlier period of the Protectorate, it might not be easy to comprehend the peculiarities of his descriptions of the commonwealth's architectural design. Interestingly, what precedes this portrayal of "the commonwealth" is one single line in which Cromwell's arbitrary dissolutions of the two parliaments in 1653 are surreptitiously hinted at: "And once he struck, and twice, the pow'rful strings" (74), which punctuates the poem's most famous Amphion section where Cromwell is being allegorically yoked up with that mythical founder of the seven cities of Thebes. The disruptive friction that breaks up the allegorical bond between Amphion and Cromwell is thus promptly replaced by a fully optimistic expectation of the harmonious commonwealth yet to come. Although there might still remain "the minds of stubborn men" (78), they were "all composed by [Cromwell's] attractive song" (85), the song played by "Our Amphion" (73). Hence "[t]he commonwealth then first together came,/ And each one entered in the willing frame" (75-76).

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> The common-wealth does through their centres all
> Draw the circumf'rence of the public wall;
> The crossest spirits here do take their part,
> Fast'ning the contignation which they thwart;
> And they, whose nature leads them to divide,
> Uphold, this one, and that the other side;
> But the most equal still sustain the height,
> And they as pillars keep the work upright;
> While the resistance of opposèd minds,
> The fabric as with arches stronger binds,
> Which on the basis of a senate free,
> Knit by the roof's protecting weight agree. (87-98)

The previous twelve lines preceding the above twelve also begin with the subject, "the commonwealth"; a crucial if tiny difference between the two sections lies in a different orthography of the very word. In the second section, Marvell splits the word into "common" and "wealth", and combines them again by putting a hyphen in between. The result of this miniscule degree of differentiation is not to be underestimated. The polity called "the Commonwealth" was not a novel creation that came into existence with the proclamation of the Protectorate. In fact, England had been a 'Commonwealth' since 1649, though the term had remained in "its useful ambiguity" (Worden, *Literature and Politics* 143) due to a variety of ramifications it could embrace. It could mean a republic—a kingless regime, that is, a free state, which the Rump adopted but the Protectorate discarded. At the same time, it could also mean a political community in broad terms, or else the common good or 'common weal' of that community (Worden, *Literature and Politics* 143).[6] Thus considered, Marvell's hyphenated variation on "the commonwealth" serves to underscore the last aspect of the word's meanings as a political community in search of the people's 'common' 'wealth', i.e. 'common weal.' In this way, while belittling the previous regime's experimental approaches in pursuit of

6. For a clear-cut elucidation on two different approaches to the notions of 'republican' and 'republicanism, see Worden, "The English Experience" 307-8, where he distinguishes between 'constitutional republicanism' and 'civic republicanism,' the former being in pursuit of kingless government as the most desirable kind of polity and the latter more related to what J. G. A. Pocock calls 'the Atlantic republican tradition' committed to the Machiavellian conception of civic virtue.

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the concept of the republic proper, Marvell goes on to visualize what truly constitutes the conceptual solidness and constitutional superiority of the so-called 'free state,' as aptly re-conceived in "the common-wealth." The most notable feature is its magnanimity capable of embracing even the elements of discord at odds with one another—discords that may deteriorate into potential threats to the desirable management of the commonwealth. In such a new political order, Marvell stresses, even resistance and opposition can find their place, that is, they "do take their part" (89), serving as pillars which buttress and thereby consolidate "the roof's protecting weight" (98). That the roof's weight is characteristic not of suppressing but of "protecting" justifies the nomenclatural grounds upon which the Protectorate's new office of Lord Protector is allegedly contrived. In the new commonwealth, Cromwell serves as the kind of a roof under whose protection even "the crossest spirits" (89) and the "opposèd minds" (95) can agreeably coexist. Of course, this idea is not entirely new: as many critics have concurred, the architectural design thus proposed is predicated on the idea of *concordia discors*, which is central to Machiavelli's conception of the Roman republic where the discord between aristocratic and democratic elements produces greater energy than the infertile concord of monarchical order (Hirst, "'That Sober Liberty'" 28; Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* 134; Raymond, "Framing Liberty" 328-29). Yet, for Marvell, a more contemporary precursor of the belief would be Milton, who argues in *Areopagitica* (1644) for such a startling, oxymoronic idea as 'healthful commotions' (Milton 2: 566) essential to a godly commonwealth:

> Yet these are the men cry'd out against for schismaticks and sectaries; as if, while the Temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. Let us therefore be more considerat builders, more wise in spirituall architecture,

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> when great reformation is expected. (Milton 2: 555)

The belief that a variety of schisms and sectaries cannot be, and should not be, rooted out of the state fundamentally engages with, and derives from, Milton's ongoing pursuit of "true knowledge" which he believes can stand alone and survive even where "sects and schisms do so much abound" (Milton 2: 566). Thus, it is thanks to the tenacious vitality of true knowledge that "many schisms and many dissections" are considered tolerable, and not vice versa. In a similar vein, Marvell's covert appropriation of the Miltonic celebration of "healthful commotions" is predicated on a staunch conviction in the Common-wealth as a whole that is robust enough to endure even its most menacing antagonists. Both Milton's true knowledge and Marvell's Common-wealth rather boldly face challenges, if any, than cowardly escape them. *The First Anniversary*'s social mechanics thus promotes a considerably strengthened view of the state as invulnerable to all different kinds of private opinions, and thereby airs a reinvigorated awareness of the public dimension that is not susceptible to the convulsions of private sectors. In short, Marvell's architectural account of the Common-wealth sheds new light on the grand picture of a state he was envisioning in 1654, concomitantly underscoring Cromwell's essential part in the preservation of the state as its irreplaceable "protecting roof."

Marvell's conception of Cromwell as a core constituent of the imagined construction of the Common-wealth offers an essential ground upon which the latter half of *The First Anniversary* is to unfold. Certainly, Cromwell's elevation to the roof of the common-wealth should not be misunderstood as identical to a hereditary king's arbitrary occupation of the place of the head within the traditional order of *body-politik*. Rather, it brings into light his sturdy commitment to the common weal, i.e., the common wealth of the state. At the nucleus of his proclaimed authority, in short, lies his strenuous pursuit of a *res publica*, which exemplifies the ideal of civic humanism (Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* 157). From this point on, *The First Anniversary* purposefully engages itself upon an exploration of Cromwell's civic virtue, whose preeminent self-devotion to public service serves to endow his political authority with a truly ethical vision of life. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that Marvell begins his chronological account of Cromwell's dominion by introducing a new line of contrast between Cromwell's self-effacement and people's fondness for self-ends.

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> But thee triumphant hence the fiery car,
> And fiery steeds had borne out of the war,
> From the low world, and thankless men above,
> Unto the kingdom blest of peace and love:
> We only mourned ourselves, in thine ascent,
> Whom thou hadst left beneath with mantle rent.
> For all delight of life thou then didst lost,
> When to command, thou didst thyself depose
> Resigning up thy privacy so dear,
> To turn the headstrong people's charioteers;
> . . . . . .
> Therefore thou rather didst thyself depress,
> Yielding to rule, because it made thee less. (215-28)

The imagined death of Cromwell serves as a main criterion according to which one can measure a degree of "We" (18) the people's fondness for self-ends. Even at the ascent of their ruler, it turns out that people only mourn for themselves. By contrast, being figured as Elijah, Cromwell is depicted as a self-less leader willing to sacrifice his dear privacy to the public good. In *Defensio Secunda*, Milton also seems to be unsparing in his celebration of Cromwell's self-sacrifice: "You suffered and allowed yourself, not indeed to be borne aloft, but to come down many degrees from the heights and be forced into a definite rank, so to speak, for the public good" (4.1: 672). For Milton, as well as for Marvell, the incorporation of the idea of condescension into Cromwell's entrance into public service serves to highlight not a size of authority he has assumed as a result of it but a degree of damage he ought to have endured by dethroning himself from his earlier "delicious solitude" (*The Garden* 16). On 12 September 1654, Cromwell told the first Protectorate Parliament that he "hoped to have had leave to retire to a private life,…dismissed of [all the] charges" (Carlyle 3: 243-44) then bestowed upon him, and at the close of the 1658 session of parliament, he expressed his bitter disillusionment with his life-long commitment to *vita activa* or *negotium*: "I would have been glad to have lived under my woodside, to have kept a flock of sheep, rather than to have undertaken such a Government as this" (Carlyle 4: 194). Behind Cromwell's unflagging self-devotion to the national needs lay his love of *otium*—"all delight of life" (221) and his "privacy so dear" (223), as Marvell aptly put in the above passage,

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and this awareness of Cromwell's abandoned privacy serves to shed new light on the characteristics of the public authority he has taken up since December 1653. Marvell's intention is quite straightforward: Cromwell's authority is based not only on that "wondrous order and consent" (*The First Anniversary* 67) of the people but also on his self-effacing decision to put the "common-wealth" first—a decision to lay aside his self-centered pursuit of private retirement. It is thus by looking afresh at Cromwell's civic virtue, that is, a spirit of self-abandonment, that Marvell can pinpoint a sufficient array of ethical moments at which a model case of authority can be spelled out for the nation's sake. Looked at in this regard, Marvell's following comparison of Cromwell to Gideon reinforces the ethical underpinnings of Cromwell's activism:

> When Gideon so did from the war retreat,
> Yet by conquest of two kings grown great,
> He on the peace extends a warlike power,
> And Israel silent saw him raze the tower;
> And how he Succoth's Elders durst suppress,
> With thorns and briars of the wilderness.
> No king might ever such a force have done;
> Yet would not he be Lord, nor yet his son. (249-56)

When asked to take the kingship after his defeat of Zeba and Zalmunna, Gideon declined to accept the offer by averring that only the Lord was the true ruler.[7] In Marvell's view, it is Gideon's self-restraint that can assure the reliability of his warlike power under whose control even the peacetime lies. Likewise, Cromwell's arbitrary dissolution of the Rump is not blamable, because, "with the same strength, and an heart as plain," (257) he "still refuse[s] to reign" (258). And in fact, even up to the brink of the dissolution of the Rump, Cromwell had been doing his best to denounce the army's call for a violent solution and seeking to influence the House from within, not from outside (Worden, *Rump Parliament* 357-58). Moreover, even on the threshold of the Protectorate,

7. See Judg. 8:22-24 (AV): Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

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it was Cromwell the *de facto* head of the state who overruled the initial draft of the Instrument of Government which included a proposal for him to be a king, and as a result of this decline to take the crown came a final, amended version of constitution, minus monarchical elements (Woolrych, *Commonwealth* 353-55). *The First Anniversary*'s Gideon section is a triumphant (re)-confirmation of Cromwell who always liked to conceive of himself as a servant rather than a master (Worden, "Andrew Marvell" 154). And it takes to the full Marvell's 1650 conception of Cromwell who was "still in the Republic's hand" (*An Horatian Ode* 82): whatever the title and whatever the political system, he has been, is, and always will be, in the king-less regime's hand, for only he who "can so well obey" (*An Horatian Ode* 84) is "fit for highest trust" (*An Horatian Ode* 80). Thus Marvell completes his own characterization of Cromwell's authority as he conceives it in 1654.

In *The First Anniversary*'s discursive politics enacted by Marvell, the uncomfortable memory of Cromwell's arbitrary use of authority thus becomes readily counterbalanced by the reappraisal of his self-effacing virtue, which Marvell believes is, and should be, quintessential to the establishment of a desirable state he is envisioning in the name of "the Common-wealth". If it is Cromwell's civic virtue—a self-less devotion to the public good—that is at the heart of his dominion, an encomium of his charismatic and even allegedly coercive authority appears not incommensurate with a possible case of *de jure* claims arising out of the poet's private conscience. Thus, Marvell's text presents what he conceives of as a desirable case of authority in pursuit of the civic ideal of a *res publica*, looking out upon a resolution of the Interregnum politics' moral dilemma—a dilemma which has sprung out of a seemingly irreconcilable coexistence of a private conscience's *de jure* claim and a public authority's *de facto* power. Marvell's Cromwell in *The First Anniversary* is controlled neither by a purely subjective contemplation of morality nor by an utterly objective deliberation upon the affairs of state: instead, he embodies a synthecization of these two different kinds of political commitment, which may at first glance appear fundamentally at odds with one another. For this reason, the latter half of *The First Anniversary* goes on to consolidate an ethical underpinning of Cromwell's authority which has reached its zenith with the first anniversary of the proclamation of the new government. It therefore is unsurprising that Marvell's chronological account of the

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Protectorate's pre-history is followed by his attempts to come to grips with the idea of liberty—one of the fundamental constituents of a political community.

> 'Tis not a freedom, that where all command;
> Nor tyranny, where one does them withstand:
> But who of both the bounders knows to lay
> Him as their father must the state obey. (279-82)

Marvell's ultimate goal here seems to be twofold: firstly, he wishes to set forth a sound meaning of freedom, which he observes has often been misunderstood as nothing other than a sheer absence of any kind of prescriptive authority. Secondly, he also wishes to rectify a distorted view of Cromwell's dominion, which he believes should not be deemed as analogous to a prototype of tyranny. To sum up, what Marvell ultimately tries to do here is to hammer out a theoretical ground on which an exemplary form of political community can be established, looking specifically for a case of conscience which can go commensurate with Cromwell's authority of 1654. Viewed in this regard, the idea of *pater patriae* which subsequently follows (Wilson 265) is not a backward reminder of a patriarchal conception of a political community, nor is it a quasi-regal title assigned to him in 1654 that promotes Cromwell to the status of *pater patriae*. If Cromwell deserves people's obedience, Marvell explicitly states, it is solely thanks to his outstanding capacity to discern where he should set a limitation between license and tyranny. In Marvell's view, such a capacity also constitutes a crucial part of Cromwell's civic virtue above discussed, for as long as statecraft is inextricably yoked up with soulcraft in the republican tradition, only a good manager of his own soul can be a good manager of his own country. By the same token, the following biblical comparison of Cromwell with Noah gives a more concrete, affirmative expression to this ethically re-defined civic commitment going well beyond private interests:

> Thou, and thine house, like Noah's eight did rest,
> Left by the wars' flood on the mountains' crest:
> And the large vale lay subject to thy will,
> Which thou but as an husbandman wouldst till:
> And only didst for others plant the vine

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> Of liberty, not drunken with its wine.
> That sober liberty which men may have,
> That they enjoy, but more they vainly crave:
> And such as to their parent's tents do press,
> May show their own, not see his nakedness. (283-92)

What is most significant is Marvell's attempt to characterize such an amorphous concept as "the vine/ Of liberty" (287-88) as "That sober liberty" (289). The freedom thus envisaged, first of all, inherits the Roman conception of *libertas*, which condones authoritarian discipline for the sake of security and stability (Wilson 265), and such a re-conceptualized, more concretized notion of liberty is specifically germane to Cromwell's self-disciplined authority, at the core of which his self-less devotion to public ends lies. For this reason, his plantation of "the vine of liberty" is said to be done "only…for others" sake, not for the sake of his own sensory satisfaction as in the case of Noah. At this point, Marvell's biblical comparison grows into a curious contrast—an interesting disruption of the parallelism between Noah and Cromwell: from the viewpoint of the Book of Genesis, it is only Ham who brings his drunken father into derision that is cursed, and Noah's licentiousness is not censurable; the patriarch merits unconditional deference simply because he is entrusted by God with a charismatic authority that is undisputable. However, *The First Anniversary* underlines Cromwell's sober spirit, a spirit of self-restraint —hence a distinct marker that differentiates his authority from Noah's, and thereby goes on to pay homage to the serviceman-ship of the quasi-patriarch of England. With such a biblical contrast beguiled as a simple comparison, Marvell makes the most powerful case for submission to Cromwell's authority: if Ham is to curse because he does not endorse Noah's flawed authority, would not they be all the more condemnable who refuse to endorse Cromwell's flawless one? Where the Protector's "sober spirit" (230) in pursuit of "that sober liberty" (289) comes into prominence, conscience can pay its most heartfelt and voluntary respect to authority in power. As Marvell has a foreign prince confess in the ending part of the poem, Cromwell "seems a king by long succession born,/ And yet the same to be a king does scorn" (387-89). Hence one final, correct identification of Cromwell's authority: "Abroad a king he seems, and something more,/ At home a subject on the equal floor" (389-90). To sum up, Cromwell is "the angel of our commonweal (401),

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and it is accordingly upon his self-less virtue that the solid edifice of the Common-wealth is established. *The First Anniversary* thus puts an end to Marvell's long-held quest for the resolution of the dialectics of conscience and authority in the Interregnum politics.

IV. Conclusion: "A Short but Scandalous Night of Interruption"?

Despite Marvell's resolution thus made in the mid-1650s, the latter half of the Interregnum period did not put forth a completely rosy picture. If its subsequent courses were successful, the whole scenario would have been far much easier to complete: the poet's conscience and the statesman's authority met in 1654-55 and their happy convergence resulted in the prosperous Common-wealth, as was initially mapped out in the poet's work of 1655. However, as it turned out, no such thing happened. At the very moment when Marvell was cautiously proposing a resolution of conscience and authority through *The First Anniversary*, the regime to which the poet's homage was paid began to crumble. The administrative initiative of Cromwell's government was losing control over the legislative power enacted by the people assembled in parliament, the vast majority of whose members consisted of conservative Presbyterians, and consequently a significant degree of regression was made on religious toleration, upon whose successful accomplishment Cromwell firmly believed the fate of God's cause hinged.[8] Most of millenarian extremists turned their backs against Cromwell and became a vociferous opposition after the Protectorate was officially declared in late 1653 and this notable breach with his former allies convinced the Protector that conservatives were not alone in endangering liberty (Hirst, "The Lord Protector" 123-24). Even Milton, who, breaking his former alliance with such republicans as Sir Henry Vane and John Bradshaw, was adamantly determined to speak for Cromwell and his semi-monarchical Protectorate in 1654, stopped honouring the faltering statesman after *Defensio Secunda* and remained in what Blair Worden famously called "loud silence" ("John Milton and Oliver Cromwell" 243), until he burst onto the public discourse again in August 1659 with the most piercing condemnation of the Cromwellian regime as "a

8. For a more detailed account of Cromwellian England's abortive projects on religious toleration, see Hill 188.

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short but scandalous night of interruption"—interruption, that is, of the Long Parliament, which Cromwell had dissolved by force in April 1653 (Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell" 243; Woolrych, "Milton and Cromwell" 201).[9] Thus the Protectorate came to an end, with its most undaunted and boldest proponent lost at its fall, and therewith Milton's clock went back towards the old, defeated rulers of the former Commonwealth period—the Rumpers.

Whereas Milton's conscience thus broke up with Cromwell's authority at the closing years of the Interregnum, Marvell's path of late-fifties was completely different from the older poet's: on the supreme statesman's death in September 1658, when Milton still remained in his "loud silence," the younger poet's pen moved as busily as in 1654-55 to pay tribute to the exploits of that public man of the bygone era. Was Marvell, unlike Milton, still possessed by a dream-like intoxication of that "short but scandalous night of interruption"? Or were Marvell's hopes of Cromwell still under way even when the regime came closest to its bitter experience of defeat at hand? Whatever the case, unlike Milton who hailed the Rumpers again as "the authors, and best patrons of religious and civil libertie, that ever these Ilands brought forth" (Milton 7: 274), Marvell did not look again to those "tedious statesmen" (*The First Anniversary* 69) of the Commonwealth for an antidote to the defeated Protectorate: his clock did not go backward, as it were. Marvell's conscience never struck any note to break up with Cromwell's authority, and remained in the same posture as it had earlier been made to reach a resolution in the infant Protectorate. In all probability, Marvell was not ignorant of what went wrong during the days of Cromwell's dominion, nor was he unaware

9. Of course, a range of convincing reasons may be suggested as to why Milton came to denounce in 1659 so harshly and so abruptly the regime he had served throughout and once defended with enthusiasm, albeit yet with some degree of admonition. First of all, *Defensio Secunda* urged Cromwell to put an end to the censorship of the press, but in 1655 he reinforced it. *Defensio Secunda* warned the Protector against "the pomp of wealth and power", but manifest signs of monarchical trappings of the regime were observed up and down the country, and all the more so especially after Cromwell's reinstallation as protector under the Humble Petition and Advice in 1657. Yet, most unacceptable on Milton's part was Cromwell's acceptance of the principle of hereditary rule which was intrinsic to that second constitution of his government (Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell" 261).

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of how far this prime statesman fell short of all the expectations he had vividly expressed at the time of *The First Anniversary*. Still nonetheless, Marvell presented Cromwell in *The First Anniversary* as an architect, a man of wisdom and moderation concerned less with consolidating his own hold on power than with providing a permanent constitutional settlement then in urgent need (Chernaik 202). This was not merely a fictional construct aiming at nothing but flattering—the message was far much heavier and graver than could easily be fathomed.

It might be true that, as Milton lamented at the decline of the Protectorate, the reign of Cromwell might have been "a short but scandalous night of interruption," and nothing else. However, even then, Marvell kept on his way in accordance with the progress of providential time that was unstoppable and irreversible. If Cromwell was meant to be in 1654, then he would be; if he was meant to fall in 1658, then he would fall. Instead of hastily belittling his former allegiance to the regime whose closure was at hand, Marvell would have made up his mind by demonstrating that all this was somehow meant to take place within the grand scheme of "That Providence," which was often misunderstood as "by man designed" (*The First Anniversary* 242). Clearly, through the experience of mid-fifties, Marvell perceived that heaven's favour was inclining towards Cromwell's part and, if so, conscience should be in service of the divine mission that was bestowed upon him. *The First Anniversary* made it clear through the Cromwell of mid-fifties that the mission was decreed not for his sake but for the people's sake, and his life was therefore entirely dedicated to the public good at the cost of his "privacy so dear" (*The First Anniversary* 223). Yet, if his time was drawing to a close and "heaven's choice [would] light" (*The First Anniversary* 147) upon someone else, then he should "make room/ Where greater spirits [would] come" *(An Horatian Ode* 42-43), just as "the royal actor" (*An Horatian Ode* 26) had in 1649 stood back when the "angry heaven's flame" (*An Horatian Ode* 26) was drawing near. Marvell thus gained a crucial lesson that empowered his public mind in embryo to get through all the diversity of prospective political events over which a private man could not dare to control. What lay at heart in Marvell's mind, though yet to be named or recognized during the 1650s, was a growing awareness of, and intensifying trust in, the sovereignty of providential history, which would allow of nothing like an unplanned, unnecessary night of interruption, just as "Nature

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that hates emptiness,/ Allows of penetration less" (*An Horatian Ode* 41-42). The resolution Marvel reached by the time of *The First Anniversary* was therefore not a plain, submissive espousal of the regime as it was established at the moment of composition. Rather, Marvell's brilliant incorporation of the languages of reformed religion and civic republicanism in *The First Anniversary* played a pivotal part to generate and reinforce the argument that an individual subject's time-bound subordination of his own conscience to the sword-bearing authority could be justified as long as the authority in question was determined to embody virtues *pro bono publico*, not *pro bono suo*. What was essential to Marvell of mid-fifties, in short, was to seek the way out of a moral crisis in which his conscience had been faced with the triumph of the authority with nothing but the effective power of the sword—the way towards an ideal convergence and reconciliation of conscience and authority under the sovereignty of 'That Providence.'

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Abstract

In this essay I aim to offer a close reading of Andrew Marvell's *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector* (Hereafter *The First Anniversary*) as a work that addresses the poet's moral dilemma arising out of his conscience in crisis. To this end, I begin by placing *The First Anniversary* within the internal progress of Marvell's Interregnum poetry, thus tracing the poet's development as a protestant casuist compelled to tackle a crisis of conscience in times of great transition. I then move onto an analysis of the language of *The First Anniversary*, while situating the text within an historical setting. In doing so, I specifically look at how Marvell's private conscience reconciles with Cromwell's public authority. My central claim is that Marvell develops his arguments along two different yet intricately related lines: first, the language of reformed religion or providential theology helps the poet grasp the divine purpose at work behind the statesman's hold on power; a chiliastic sense of the present moment serves to endorse Cromwell's reign as he is granted with a providential mandate. Second, the language of civic republicanism helps the poet reassess an ethical aspect of the statesman's allegedly coercive rule; Cromwell thus stands out as one who superbly fulfills *via media* between license and tyranny—one who represents in person the most desirable type of authority. To sum up, Marvell's Cromwell in *The First Anniversary* is depicted as a self-effacing ruler who is specifically called to draft a new constitution for a godly commonwealth yet to come.

Keywords: conscience, authority, the Protectorate, providence, civic republicanism

Seok Min YUN holds a master's degree in English Literature from Yonsei University, Seoul, the Republic of Korea, and is currently at work on enriching his own programme of research before proceeding to doctoral work. He has long-standing scholarly interests in political, ecclesiastical and intellectual history of post-Reformation Europe. His current work centres on the reciprocal dialectics of political debates and religious ideas in the early modern British Isles. He has presented several papers on Defoe, Marvell, and Wordsworth at a number of conferences both at home and abroad.

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