

Giles Fletcher, the elder (1546-1611)
and the writing of Russia

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**Chapter 4 - A Commonwealth counselled: Russia's Resonances in late
Elizabethan England**

Where *will* in common weale,
doth beare the onley sway:
And lust is law, the prince and realme
must needs in time decay.

George Turberville, 'The Author being in Moscovia Wrytes to
Certaine his Frenedes in Englande', *Tragicall Tales* (1587)

That king that is not tied to the laws is a king of slaves. I have
been in employments abroad. For the propriety of goods and of
liberty, see the mischief of the contrary in other nations. In
Muscovy one English mariner with a sword will beat five
Muscovites that are likely to eat him.¹

Sir Dudley Digges

The betrayal of God's providence in Russia was presented as a result of tyranny and false religion, rendering the Russians worse than Tartars and vulnerable to the blandishments of Rome. These arguments had some valence in discussion of English politics in the 1580s and 1590s, not least the key themes of counsel, virtuous nobility and reformation. The resonances of these arguments help to explain something of the history of the text *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, and reflect Fletcher's own position in Elizabethan politics. This chapter considers Fletcher's arguments in relation to discussions of Elizabethan politics, suggesting that Fletcher was engaged in writing England even as he described Russia, and that this was a politically-charged text.² The early modern English audience was

¹ Sir Dudley Digges in Commons Debates 1628, vol. 2: 17 March-19 April 1628, ed. Robert C. Johnson and Maija Jansson Cole (New Haven, Conn., 1977), p. 66.

² Patrick Collinson comments on the use of the word 'commonwealth' in Fletcher's text: "Commonwealth" may be a neutral term, as in Giles Fletcher's description of Muscovy, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591). I hope, however, to show that the term may have been used or read with a sense of irony, or political intent, considering the resonances that the tyrannical government of Russia held in relation to late Elizabethan politics, see Patrick Collinson, 'The State as

familiar with the reading of England into images of other lands, be they fictional or real. William Thomas's *The historie of Italie* explicitly stated how important it was to read the state, potential or real, of England into the accounts of other lands.³ Similarly Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* had encouraged humanist readers to view critically the commonwealth of Henry VIII's England and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* was no less critical of Tudor monarchy for all its veiled complaint dressed up in a poetic and allegoric invention of Elizabeth's England.⁴

The Epistle Dedicatorie to *Of the Russe Commonwealth* states that the author's intentions in writing this work were 'to note thinges for mine owne experience, of more importaunce then delight, and rather true then strange'.⁵ The author proceeded to explain, however, that the state of Russia presented 'A true *and* strange face of a Tyrannical state, (most vnlike to your own) without true knowledge of GOD, without written Lawe, without common iustice'.⁶ Fletcher's rhetorical device of denial – 'most unlike to your own' – served to both flatter the Queen and flag up, by inversion, the allusions to England in a depiction of Russia which turned out to be very much alike to Elizabeth's state, or what Elizabeth's might become, if she did not heed the warning of her willing counsellor-subject. Although Fletcher emphasised his desire to present the truth (rather than strange fables or fantastic travellers' tales) of Russia, he also revealed that the very way in which Russia was governed could not be described as anything other than being both true *and* strange.

Monarchical Commonwealth: Tudor England', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (March 2002), p. 93.

³ William Thomas, *The historie of Italie a boke excedyng profitable to be redde: because it intreateth of the astate of many and diuers common weales, how thei haue ben, [and] now be gouerned* (London, 1549).

⁴ Thomas More, *A fruteful, and pleasaunt worke of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle called Vtopia* (London, 1551); Edmund Spenser, *The faerie queene Disposed into twelue books, fashioning XII. morall vertues* (London, 1590).

⁵ Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591), Epistle Dedicatorie.

⁶ *ibid.*, my own italicised emphasis.

The three fundamental factors that made the Russian government, and therefore land, strange and savage were its corrupt knowledge of God, its lack of a written law and the absence of justice. These three factors rendered the country of Russia barbaric (as opposed to civilised) without Fletcher even having to mention the word. Thus in his preface, Fletcher had set the stage for his fundamental argument regarding the destructive and corrupting effects of tyrannical government. This chapter discusses the resonances between the content of Fletcher's text and the political context into which it was launched with its publication in 1591. It points to how Fletcher's text could have been read and interpreted and why this might have made such a text subversive enough to require its suppression on publication. These resonances can be seen in particular in Fletcher's discussions of Parliament, nobility, counsel, religion, fiscal policy and colonisation.

i.) 'The manner of holding their Parliaments': English resonances regarding Parliament and Monarchy

Rarely in his text did Fletcher *favourably* compare England over Russia. His discussion of Parliament is one of the few and most direct exceptions. In his discussion of Parliament, Fletcher drew a stark and direct comparison between the Russian and English style of Parliament: that whereas in England the common practice was 'to propound bills what euery man thinketh good for the publike benefite....the Russe Parliament alloweth no such custome, nor libertie to subiects'.⁷ The only other directly stated comparison between the two countries in Fletcher's text centred on a positive view of the cosmography of Russia,

⁷ Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 23r.

presenting the land as equally, if not more, fertile and productive than England. Fletcher's favourable depiction of the English Parliament, in direct comparison to its negative Russian counterpart, and its crucial role in the workings of government were revealed in the briefest of comments. And yet his pithy précis of English Parliament situated Fletcher quite distinctly within an ideological understanding of government, which emphasised the 'mixed estate' of the English commonwealth, identified in the trinity of monarch, Privy Council and Parliament. Fletcher's support for the crucial role of Parliament (and an idealised English Parliament at that) in his discussion of Russian tyranny was particularly revelatory of his political stance, especially in the context of late 1580s and early 1590s English politics.

Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* appears to engage directly with Sir Thomas Smith's *De republica Anglorum*, a treatise composed by Smith in 1565, whilst he served as Elizabeth's ambassador in the French Court.⁸ Although written in 1565, significantly Smith's work was not published until 1583, with another edition in 1584, the very period of time when Fletcher was becoming more involved in politics and government service, being elected to the Parliament of 1584 as the representative of Winchelsea.⁹ A brief look at the contents of both Smith's and Fletcher's works reveals the similarity in topics covered and

⁸ Ian W. Archer, 'Smith, Sir Thomas (1513–1577)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25906> (accessed 3 March 2008). Sir Thomas More, Sir Thomas Smith and Giles Fletcher all conceived of their works of political critique, debate and counsel whilst serving as royal ambassadors in foreign lands. More was serving as Henry VIII's ambassador in Bruges in 1515 when he began to work on *Utopia*, see Seymour Baker House, 'More, Sir Thomas (1478–1535)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19191> (accessed 21 April 2008). And Fletcher, of course, was in Russia when he put together the notes that later became *Of the Russe Commonwealth*.

⁹ Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum The maner of gouernement or policie of the realme of England* (London, 1583). See also Richard Pipes, 'Introduction' in Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth, facsimile edition with variants*, eds. Richard Pipes and John V.A. Fine Jr. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), p. 27-28.

Fletcher's discussion of the roles of the monarch, nobility, Parliament and the commons connect to Smith's explication of the state of the English commonwealth at the time of writing. The similarity in the titles of both works¹⁰ also suggests Fletcher's intent to connect with Smith's work through a discussion of Russia, which when reflected back onto Elizabethan politics, implied the threat of tyranny was to be found very close at hand.¹¹

As mentioned earlier, Smith's treatise clearly set out an English form of Parliament that in theory justly represented all elements of the commonwealth with equity, 'the Parliament of Englande, which representeth and hath the power of the whole realme both the head and the bodie. For everie Englishman is entended to bee there present, either in person or by procuracion and attornies, of what preheminance, state, dignitie, or qualitie soever he be, from the Prince (be he King or Queene) to the lowest person of Englande. And the consent of the Parliament is taken to be everie mans consent'.¹² For Fletcher, the Russian Parliament was a profound expression of the Emperor's tyranny over his subjects because it did *not* represent the voice of all of the subjects of the land, nor did it allow members to propose bills either for the good of the commonwealth or private bills. More fundamentally it was in reality a mere performance of Parliament, as all the bills were proposed and agreed upon by the Emperor and his close counsellors prior to the Parliament being assembled. Fletcher's presentation of the Russian Parliament - a mockery of what 'Parliament' was supposed to look

¹⁰ Smith's *De republica anglorum* was later printed as The common-vvealth of England and maner of gouernment thereof (London, 1589).

¹¹ Cf. Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 28. One significant difference between Smith's treatise and Fletcher's is that, as Smith's title page proclaims, his treatise was 'Seene and allowed', whereas Fletcher's was banned and recalled on its publication in 1591, see Berry, English Works, pp. 150-154.

¹² Smith, De Republica Anglorum, p. 35.

like - was in clear contrast to the ostensibly representative Parliament of England, or the ideal that Smith had presented at least.

It has been argued by revisionist historians such as G. R. Elton and Michael Graves that Tudor Parliament was bicameral and a mixed entity, constituting three parts: the monarch, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. This was the political embodiment of the realm and had sovereign authority to legislate for the commonwealth as a whole.¹³ Indeed, it was only Parliament - the three in one - which had the authority vested in it to make laws. And it was only within the framework of Parliament that bills were proposed, debated and agreed upon. It was 'politically genuine' in its representation and activities, as opposed to 'prejudged, constrained, or merely formal'.¹⁴ Smith's treatise on Parliament was, then, according to the revisionists, an accurate and good guide to the concept and practice of Parliament in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁵

More recent study on Smith's treatise points to a more nuanced understanding of Parliament projected in *De republica anglorum*. Anne McClaren presents Smith's treatise as Protestant polemic, and more specifically a theorizing of 'mixed monarchy' and the problems raised by female rule and its potential for ungodly kingship in the reign of Elizabeth.¹⁶ McClaren's gendered critique of the revisionist view of *De republica anglorum* and reinterpretation of Smith's text in the light of continental and English Protestant apologetic is countered by Hoak's

¹³ Michael Graves, *The Tudor Parliaments: Crown, Lords and Commons, 1485-1603* (London and New York, 1985) p. 1 and G. R. Elton, 'Tudor government: The points of contact: Parliament' in *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. John Guy (London and New York, 1997), p. 342. See also G. R. Elton, *The Parliament of England, 1559-1581* (Cambridge, 1986), esp. pp. 16-20.

¹⁴ Elton, *Parliament of England*, pp. 22-23 and Elton, 'Tudor government', p. 342.

¹⁵ Elton, *Parliament of England*, p. 18.

¹⁶ Anne McClaren, 'Reading Sir Thomas Smith's *De republica anglorum* as Protestant Apologetic', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 42, no. 4 (1999), pp. 911-939.

discussion of Smith's treatise as an attempt to engage in the debate surrounding the all-important issues of England's succession and the religious settlement.¹⁷ Both discussions flag up the seemingly ambiguous description of government found in Smith's 'English Commonwealth' that was both an absolute monarchy and 'a society or common doing of a multitude of freemen collected together and united by common accord and covenantes among themselves, for the conservation of themselves in peace as in warre' in which 'the most high and absolute power of the realme of England consisteth in the Parliament' and yet 'the prince is the life, the head and the authoritie of all things that be doone in the realme of England'.¹⁸ Commonwealths, according to Smith, were of course 'not most commonly simple, but mixt', which perhaps accounts for the ambiguity.¹⁹

Throughout Elizabeth's reign, the uncertainty surrounding the succession of the throne and Elizabeth's reluctance to settle this issue, as well as her unmarried status as a female ruler, acted as a catalyst for creative ideas of monarchy and government as well as an acute concern for the future of the English commonwealth.²⁰ It was a concern that was taken to heart by Cecil in particular, but others shared his anxiety over what Patrick Collinson has so insightfully described as the Elizabethan exclusion crisis.²¹ In the 1580s and early 1590s, however, the context of contemporary events altered the political climate of Elizabethan politics and what ideas of monarchical rule and government were both acceptable and necessary.

¹⁷ Dale Hoak, 'Sir William Cecil, Sir Thomas Smith, and the Monarchical Republic of Tudor England' in The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in response to Patrick Collinson, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2007), pp. 37-54.

¹⁸ Smith, De republica anglorum, pp. 10, 34 and 47 respectively.

¹⁹ ibid., p. 5.

²⁰ Stephen Alford, The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 9-42.

²¹ Alford, Early Elizabethan Polity, *passim*. Patrick Collinson, 'The Elizabethan exclusion crisis and the Elizabethan polity', Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 84 (1994), pp. 51-92.

During the 1580s, a toxic combination of external factors threatened the safety of the Queen and commonwealth, putting greater pressure on the security of Protestant England. Spain's increasing presence in France, the death of the Duke of Anjou, the assassination of William of Orange and Elizabeth's eventual intervention into the Netherlands precipitated full-scale war with Spain.²² The internal security issues raised by the Throckmorton and Babington plots of 1582-3 and 1586 also served to escalate the fear of Catholic conquest in England, helping to change what view of monarchy and government was increasingly favourable and required in the context of the 1580s and 90s.²³ Additionally, the ageing of the Queen, the deaths of several key and very experienced counsellors – Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Christopher Hatton, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Sir Walter Mildmay and Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, the appointment of new, more conservative members of the Privy Council, such as Lord Cobham and Buckhurst and the increasingly favourable voice of John Whitgift and his anti-puritan campaign altered the balance of opinion and power within the Elizabethan government.²⁴

²² Simon Adams, 'Britain, Europe and the World' in The Sixteenth Century, 1485-1603, ed. Patrick Collinson (Oxford, 2002), pp. 213-215.

²³ A. G. R. Smith, The Emergence of a Nation State: the commonwealth of England, 1529-1660 (Essex, 1984), p. 152 and A. G. R. Smith, The Babington Plot (London, 1936).

²⁴ Paul E. J. Hammer, The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics The political career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 76 and 80-82. On Lord Cobham, see Julian Lock, 'Brooke, William, tenth Baron Cobham (1527-1597)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61735> (accessed 10 April 2008). On Lord Buckhurst, see Rivkah Zim, 'Sackville, Thomas, first Baron Buckhurst and first earl of Dorset (c. 1536-1608)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24450> (accessed 10 April 2008). On Whitgift, see William Joseph Sheils, 'Whitgift, John (1530/31?-1604)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29311> (accessed 3 March 2008). See also Patrick Collinson, 'William Shakespeare's religious inheritance and environment' in Elizabethan Essays, Patrick Collinson (London and Rio Grande, 1994), p. 242, Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, 1967) and P. Lake, Anglicans and puritans? : Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker (London, 1988).

John Guy has argued for a marked shift in the style of monarchical government in the 1590s, going so far as to identify two distinct reigns of Elizabeth, benchmarked by the late 1580s.²⁵ Guy asserts that the concept of the Elizabethan Commonwealth as a 'mixed polity', where the assent of Parliament was required to make any significant political changes and where Parliament - the Queen, Lords and Commons conjoined - was the only authoritative legislative body, diminished during this period. Those propounding such ideas about Parliament being a mixed estate of Crown, Lords and Commons and the Queen sharing legislative authority with Parliament were persecuted. The *imperium* of the Queen became paramount as opposed to the political theory of a 'mixed polity' and careerists were arguing that it was the Queen rather than Parliament who enacted laws.²⁶

Peter Lake, however, presents an insightful challenge to Guy's 'second reign' theory by suggesting an earlier Elizabethan aversion, expressed by Elizabeth herself and by anti-popish and anti-puritan forces, especially Whitgift, to the idea of 'mixed estate' government. He also contests the concept of the 'monarchical republic' as an unproblematic definition of what Elizabeth's rule looked like. Lake contends that from the 1560s onwards, there was a 'structural logic' to the outcome that Guy has observed in the 1590s, in which the 'monarchical republic' or, at least, a wide-spread affinity to and practice of 'mixed-estate' government had been put to rest. He argues rather that the

²⁵ John Guy 'Introduction: The 1590s: the second reign of Elizabeth I?' in The reign of Elizabeth I: court and culture in the last decade, ed. John Guy (Cambridge and Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 1-19.

²⁶ John Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel: models of the state' in The Sixteenth Century, 1485-1603, ed. Patrick Collinson (Oxford, 2002), pp. 132-137, particularly p. 136.

'monarchical republic' if there was one, was 'under seige' rather than ascendant from an early stage in Elizabeth's reign.²⁷

On Guy's reading, up until the mid 1580s, the ideology of 'mixed estate' seemed to sit well with the tenor of Privy Council politics at least. However, during the 1590s the political rule of Elizabeth and the support and counsel of the counsellors she surrounded herself with appeared to take on more of an absolutist character, with increased focus on the sacral monarchy of Elizabeth and the ascendancy of the *arcana imperii*. Lake, however, connects this later absolutism with earlier tendencies in the Elizabethan polity, particularly concerning the debates over religion, the threat of Catholicism and further reformation of the Church and specifically in the example of Whitgift's attacks on Archbishop Grindal and Grindal's own assertion of his 'mixed-estate' view of government, in which it was his duty to proffer his counsel to the Queen.²⁸

Smith's treatise on the English commonwealth could perhaps have been a response to undercurrents favouring un-mixed monarchy, both on the continent and at home, and an attempt to promote the superior worth of a mixed model of monarchy. In the context of the publication of Smith's work, Fletcher's treatise could be seen as an insightful, timely and very pertinent analysis of the key

²⁷ Peter Lake, ' "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" (and the Fall of Archbishop Grindal) Revisited' in The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England; Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2007), pp. 129-147. There will be further discussion on pp. 189-191 of the model of 'the monarchical republic' in Elizabethan Government, which I have conflated here with ideas of 'mixed estate' government.

²⁸ Peter Lake, 'The "Anglican Moment"? Richard Hooker and the Ideological Watershed of the 1590s' in Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity, Change and the Search for Communion, ed. Stephen Platten (Norwich, 2003), pp. 90-121 and Lake, 'Monarchical Republic...and Archbishop Grindal', esp. pp. 139-147. A reading of both reveals Lake's change in emphasis towards a more nuanced and long-term view of the emergence of the 'absolutism' of the 1590s, and problematising both the 'second reign' model of Guy and the assumptions bound up in much of the recent work using and expanding on Patrick Collinson's model of 'the monarchical republic'. For discussion of both Lake's theses and the historiography surrounding the use of the concept of 'monarchical republic', see John F. McDiarmid, 'Introduction' in The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England; Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2007), pp. 1-17, esp. p. 13.

aspects of government, highlighting what was needed to keep a commonwealth from tyranny and the dangers of disregarding the roles of nobility and counsel, at the behest of *imperium*, fully dressed up as a travel account of the unfamiliar land of Russia.

In 1591, Thomas Cartwright and other Presbyterian leaders were put on trial in Star Chamber for sedition and the supposed attempt to put the Book of Discipline into practice. As well as proclaiming the cause of Presbyterianism, Cartwright had been a notorious advocate of the theory of 'mixed estate' – the sharing of sovereignty between monarch, Privy Council and Parliament, as opposed to the Queen wielding imperial sovereignty.²⁹ His trial revealed not simply the intense political hostility towards Presbyterianism and theories of popular sovereignty but also presented the growing ascendancy of ecclesiastical and monarchical authority in the commonwealth.³⁰ Although the case against Cartwright remained unproven, he was still under house arrest in the summer of 1592.³¹

Thus in 1591 a discussion of 'mixed estate' government in a text such as Fletcher's was not politically neutral, despite Smith's ambiguity over what the English Commonwealth actually constituted – both absolute monarchy and mixed estate, both every man's voice and the absolute authority vested in the prince as head of the body politic. Although many saw a mixed estate view of government as particularly pertinent to the context of Elizabeth's succession, in that it both

²⁹ Patrick Collinson, 'Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820> (accessed 3 March 2008). See also Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* and Ethan H. Shagan, 'The English Inquisition: constitutional conflict and ecclesiastical law in the 1590s', *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2004), pp. 541-65.

³⁰ For this argument, see Hammer, *Polarisation*, p. 81 and John Guy 'The Elizabethan establishment and the ecclesiastical polity' in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 129-49.

³¹ Collinson, 'Cartwright, Thomas', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820> (accessed 21 April 2008).

allowed for the female monarch to be counselled by men and for the dignified subjection of noblemen to a woman in authority, married as it were to her council and Parliament,³² it was not necessarily favourable to Elizabeth and by the 1570s at least, it was being contested and rejected from the top down. By the 1590s, as Guy has so cogently argued, the theory of mixed estate government was most definitely unwelcome to the Queen and her *imperium* was being asserted, particularly in religious affairs.³³

It was a controversial time to be writing and (printing) material that advocated the vital role of representative Parliament in law-making and governance and that criticised the *imperium* of a monarch, over and against the needs of the Commonwealth. Fletcher's understated support of the English form of Parliament being a place where the concerns and rights of 'euery man' were represented 'for the publike benefite' and where counsel could be given to a monarch, provides more indication of where he placed himself politically and constitutes new evidence for a different understanding of why Fletcher's text was suppressed soon after its publication.³⁴

Fletcher's criticism of the absolute hegemony of the Russian Emperor over the Russian performance of Parliament also reflected a deep-held belief in the vein of Smith and Christopher St German that Parliament was supposed to be the place where the laws of England were debated and made, as opposed to being dictated by an absolute monarch, and that the commonwealth's sovereignty was

³² McLaren, 'Reading Sir Thomas Smith', pp. 913-14, 21 and Hoak, 'Sir William Cecil', pp. 38-41.

³³ Guy 'Introduction', pp. 1-19 and Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', pp. 132-137, particularly p. 136.

³⁴ For further discussion of the suppression of Fletcher's text see Chapter 5 of this thesis.

embodied in the king-in-Parliament.³⁵ Parliament represented the limit on a monarch's prerogative to make legislation in his or her own right.³⁶ Perhaps, then, Fletcher's purpose in describing this Russian brand of Parliament was not simply to highlight the extent of the Russian Emperor's tyranny over the façade of representative government but also to point more subversively to the threat of the increasingly un-mixed tenor of Elizabeth's government in the last decade of her life, relying on her god-given *imperium* to legitimate the mounting claustrophobia of her reign.³⁷ Fletcher's text, which set up the tyranny of Ivan against the failure and suppression of Parliament, counsel and nobility in Russia, had the potential to be read as an underhand critique of the direction of Elizabeth's government in the 1590s. Through his text, Fletcher was positively analysing the question of how important the role of a representative assembly was in the government of a civil, Christian commonwealth, the crucial importance of a strong, aristocratic nobility to counsel and provide security for a godly government and the legality and questionable benefit of the *arcana imperii* to the well-being of the Commonwealth. This was a warning as well as a handbook in how to keep tyranny at bay.

³⁵ Smith, De republica Anglorum, pp. 34-35 and Christopher St German, Here after foloweth a lytell treatise called the newe addicions (London, 1531).

³⁶ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', p. 125 and Elton, Parliament of England, p. 23. For discussion of differing views in the early 1590s on the extent and limits of a monarch's prerogative, and competing views on the nature of kingship itself, see Johann Sommerville, 'Richard Hooker, Hadrian Saravia and the Advent of the Divine Right of Kings', History of Political Thought, vol. 4 (1983), pp. 229-245.

³⁷ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', pp. 136-7.

ii.) 'To cut of, or keepe downe all of the best and auncientest Nobilitie': The fate of the Nobility

Fletcher's political posture and conception of the commonwealth was further revealed in his discussion of the role of nobility in Russian tyrannical government, and by allusion to the role of nobility in the civil English form of government and commonwealth. Fletcher's analysis of the Russian nobility centred around the Emperor's attempts to keep his nobility servile and in 'an vnder proportion agreeable to that State' of tyranny.³⁸ Fletcher's detailing of the 'meanes to cut of, or keepe downe all of the best and auncientest Nobilitie' could be read as both a protest and a warning against the suppressing and failing of the ancient noble families of England during the second half of Elizabeth's reign. Elizabeth, in her conservatism, perhaps, rather than any premeditated policy, ceased to replace her trusted, and now dead, Privy Councillors during the 1590s, leaving the Privy Counsel bereft of the counsel of virtuous nobility. The position of Principal Secretary of state, held by Francis Walsingham up until his death in 1590, for instance, was left vacant until 1596.³⁹

This act of not elevating certain members of the nobility to the status of official counsellors, whilst leaving applicable offices vacant, caused unrest among aspiring nobles, as their service and potential status had not been recognised.⁴⁰ Elizabeth's parsimonious tendencies particularly towards the end of her reign meant that although she demanded constant service from the peers in terms of leadership at the level of local government and defence, there was no reward for such dutiful service. The depletion of the Queen's rewards for service, through

³⁸ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 24v.

³⁹ Simon Adams, 'Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics' in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Basingstoke, 1984), p. 61.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, pp. 60-63.

both patronage and office-holding, caused hostility from a nobility that felt keenly their frustration of always serving, but not being rewarded with financial remuneration or the status of office.⁴¹ This anxiety and frustration could have resonated with Fletcher's telling description of the state of affairs for the Russian nobility as 'having no farther rewarde nor preferment, whereunto they may bend their endeouours, and imploy themselues to aduance their estate'.⁴² An English nobility, going unrewarded, may have picked up on the veiled critique. Although the allusion to the state of England's ancient nobility cannot be made so directly, Fletcher's discussion of this concern speaks more of a worldview that incorporated a general model of tyranny in contrast to godly government, and his attempts to detail, warn and counsel against the catastrophic consequences of a tyrannical rule, highlighting the enormous threat to the good of the commonwealth (read: England) that the reign of a potential tyrant (read: Elizabeth) posed, especially through the frustrating and reducing of the ancient and virtuous nobility.

Within the model of tyranny that Fletcher was expounding, his discussion of the Russian Emperor's establishment of the Oprichnina in 1565 presented a particularly potent example of the detrimental effects of tyranny on the nobility and a depiction of what seemed to be the archetypal manifestation of tyrannical government. In Fletcher's discussion of the Oprichnina, Ivan 'deuided his subiectes into two partes or factions by a general schisme', one part selected in order 'to protect and mainteyne them as his faithful subiects', the other part

⁴¹ Linda Levy Peck, 'Peers, patronage and the politics of history', in The Reign of Elizabeth I: court and culture in the last decade, ed. John Guy (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 87-108, especially pp. 88-91.

⁴² Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 49r.

including 'such Noblemen and Gentlemen as he meant to cut off'.⁴³ As well as highlighting the awful fate of the ancient nobility under tyranny, Fletcher's thoughts on this policy of the Russian Emperor may well have triggered reflections on the state of the English Court in the late 1580s and 90s, which was often complained of as backbiting and competitive.⁴⁴ Fletcher's use of the word 'faction' may also have been a reflection of the humanist use of the term 'faction', relating to civic and political disorder and its detrimental effects on the pursuit of the common good and, ultimately, the peace of the commonwealth.⁴⁵ In both cases, it suggests an uneasy connection to the state of the English Court and Privy Council, especially in the light of Elizabeth's shifting style of rule over this period.

His discussion of the Oprichnina served Fletcher's purpose of highlighting the vital role of a strong nobility, who were not only truly noble in descent but truly virtuous in their behaviour. The discourse (or cult) of 'virtue' - 'a mixture of the traditional aristocratic values - concerning justice, generosity and, above all, war - with more modern cultural and intellectual qualities' - was increasingly

⁴³ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 25v.

⁴⁴ The traditional view of an Elizabethan court and Privy Council permeated with rival factions was produced by William Camden's and Robert Naunton's Jacobean accounts of Elizabeth's reign. These accounts have heavily (and unhelpfully) influenced subsequent historical treatment of the nature of the Elizabethan Court and Council. This ascendant, and only more recently challenged, view of an intensely factional politics and rivalry between figures, such as Leicester and Burghley, supported by their own circles or 'factions', has been presented by J. E. Neale, *Essays in Elizabethan History* (London, 1958) and Conyers Read, 'Factions in the English privy council under Elizabeth' in *American Historical Association Annual Report*, vol. 1 (1913 for 1911), pp. 111-19 and Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1955). Simon Adams has more recently presented a revisionist repudiation of this thesis of factions, see Simon Adams, 'Faction, clientage & party: English politics, 1550-1603', *History Today*, vol. 32, no. 12 (1982), pp. 33-9 and Adams, 'Eliza enthroned?', pp. 64-77, esp. p. 76.

⁴⁵ See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, volume one: the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 56-64.

popular and wide-spread in the late sixteenth century and a fundamental component of the Earl of Essex's identity and self-presentation.⁴⁶

Read in this light, it is no surprise that Fletcher gained Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex's patronage during the 1590s as a proponent of the indispensable role of a strong, virtuous and ancient nobility⁴⁷ and was 'interelye devoted' to the earl.⁴⁸ Fletcher's alignment in the mid-1590s with Essex, points to a more radical view of the political situation of late Elizabethan England and within that a strong commitment to mixed estate government and the essential role of counsel in checking the authority and extent of the monarch's prerogative. Essex's political stance centred around the role of the true and ancient nobility to counsel the king and safeguard the commonwealth with their virtuous conduct. He also represented the embodiment of reforming Protestant zeal and believed in the power of the people to support the nobility in keeping in check tyrannical government.⁴⁹ Essex's later actions demonstrated such a viewpoint taken to the extreme extent of revolt and attempted coup, based on what he saw as Elizabeth's tyranny, and as a consequence of his own overweening ambition and his desire to protect the Commonwealth of England.⁵⁰

The virtuous nobility were vital to the good working of a civil government, the very life-blood of the godly commonwealth. This life-blood also had to be supported by 'the fauour of the people' in order to ensure the health and

⁴⁶ Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 19-20. For a discussion of the humanist discourse of virtue, see Skinner, *Foundations*, pp. 172-180.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of Essex's views on the role of nobility and an analysis of the state of the English nobility in the later years of Elizabeth's reign, see Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, especially pp. 18-22.

⁴⁸ Lambeth Palace Library, MS 658, fol.202, quoted in Lucy Munro, 'Fletcher, Giles, the elder (*bap.* 1546, *d.* 1611)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9726> (accessed 12 October, 2006).

⁴⁹ Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 17-21, 43. See also Alexandra Gajda, 'Robert Devereux, 2nd earl of Essex and political culture, c. 1595-c. 1601', unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1-10 and 82-133.

⁵⁰ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', p. 139.

growth of the commonwealth, and indeed according to Fletcher, the people had a role to play not only in supporting nobility in the ideal or working commonwealth, but in restoring the virtuous nobility in the event of their decline under a tyrannical ruler.⁵¹ Fletcher asserted the vital role of the people in bringing about restoration and balance to a servile state in the throws of a tyrannical monarch and the absolute necessity of having a virtuous nobility to provide counsel to the king. Fletcher's emphasis on the balancing and supporting role of the people perhaps suggests his interaction with, or at least awareness of, the emerging discourse of popular sovereignty and with the ideas of commentators such as George Buchanan.⁵²

Fletcher's focus on the essential role of a strong and virtuous nobility, supported by a willing and obedient commonalty, held resonance for the prevalent contemporary, although controversial, discussion of the legitimacy of resisting a tyrannical ruler. This discussion was particularly pertinent and widespread for Protestants in the continental context of the religious persecution and wars, Catholic ascendancy and the trauma, experienced or remembered, of the St Bartholomew's day massacre. It was also relevant in the Scottish context of the arbitrary government and Catholic connections of Mary, Queen of Scots. However, the discussion took on a much more subversive tone in the context of the peaceful, yet fragile and threatened Protestant realm of Elizabeth's England.⁵³ Nevertheless, Fletcher's observations that 'they have none of the Nobilitie able to make head' and 'that there is no meanes either for Nobilitie or people to attempt

⁵¹ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 27v.

⁵² George Buchanan, *De Iure Regni apud Scotos* (Edinburgh, 1579) and *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (Edinburgh, 1582).

⁵³ Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London, 1996), p. 284.

any innovation',⁵⁴ chimed with discussions such as Buchanan's *Baptistes* and *De Iure Regni apud Scotus* and Languet and Duplessis-Mornay's *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, theorizing on the legitimacy of resisting a tyrant and whose role it was to lead such resistance.⁵⁵

Earlier in the sixteenth century, works such as Christopher Goodman's *How Superior Powers O[u]ght to be Obey[e]d of their Subjects* (1558) and John Knox's *First blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) heralded resistance theories against the absolute *imperium* of the monarch. George Buchanan's *De iure regni apud Scotos* (1579) and the following *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* printed in the early 1580s defended the idea that the king was chosen, or consented to by the people and that kings could be legitimately deposed if they failed to carry out the obligations and contract of their coronation.⁵⁶ Fletcher's patron Thomas Randolph had originally encouraged Buchanan to write *De iure regni apud Scotos* and arranged the printing of his play *Baptistes*, focusing on the tyranny of Herod.⁵⁷ Fletcher had accompanied and served Randolph on his ambassadorial mission to Scotland in 1586. Randolph also had contacts with Christopher Goodman, who had similarly argued that a ruler could be deposed by their subjects 'if they violated divine or human law, in which

⁵⁴ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 33v, 34r.

⁵⁵ George Buchanan, *Baptistes, siue calumnia tragoedia, auctore Georgio Buchanano Scoto* (London, 1577). Significantly a timely new edition of Buchanan's play in English was published on the orders of the House of Commons in 1642 and 1643 as *Tyrannicall-government anatomized, or, A discovrse concerning evil-councillors being the life and death of John the Baptist* (London, 1642). George Buchanan, *De iure regni apud Scotos dialogus* (Edinburgh, 1579). It was printed in Antwerp in 1580 and London in 1581. Hubert Languet, *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos: siue, de principis in populum, populique in principem, legitima potestate* (Basel, 1579). This text was also reprinted in the particularly pertinent, crisis-ridden English context of 1648. For further discussion of Elizabethan conceptions of the legitimacy of resisting tyrannical government, particularly Sir Philip Sidney's, see Worden, *Sound of Virtue*, pp. 280-291.

⁵⁶ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', pp. 129-130.

⁵⁷ Julian Lock, 'Randolph, Thomas (1525/6–1590)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004, online edn, Oct 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23122> (accessed 9 March 2007).

case she was a tyrant'.⁵⁸ Although Fletcher probably never met any of these theorists, the network of connections and communication of ideas through these networks may have meant that at some point Fletcher was influenced politically through the ideas presented to him by Randolph, his patron until 1590.

Fletcher's suggestion of resistance, albeit through a demonstration of the impossibility of such resistance in Russia's case, their servitude under tyranny having progressed so far, could be seen as particularly controversial when printed in the public sphere.⁵⁹ Fletcher was quick to cover any suggestion of resistance, and its legitimacy in certain circumstances, with the protective and distracting caveat that 'this desperate state of things at home, maketh the people for the most part to wishe for some forreine invasion, which they suppose to bee the onely meanes, to rid them of the heavy yoke of this tyrannous government'.⁶⁰ Fletcher's comments though remain ambiguous with the use of the words 'suppose' and 'onely meanes'.

Fletcher's ominous conclusion was that the policy of the Oprichnina and decimation of the ancient nobility had filled the land of Russia 'so full of grudge and mortall hatred euer since, that it wil not be quenched (as it seemeth now) till it burne againe into a ciuill flame'.⁶¹ Richard Pipes suggests that within fifteen years

⁵⁸ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', p. 127.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the use of a modified version of Habermas' model of the 'public sphere' in Elizabethan and Stuart England, see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72, no. 3 (September 2000), pp. 587-627 and Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 45 (April 2006), pp. 270-292. For wider discussion on the use of the 'public sphere' model in the early modern context, see Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in early modern England* (Manchester and New York, 2007), especially Peter Lake, 'The politics of "popularity" and the public sphere: the "monarchical republic" of Elizabeth I defends itself', pp. 59-94.

⁶⁰ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 34v.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 26r.

Russia was experiencing the civil war which Fletcher had expected.⁶² But perhaps the more salient point is the nature of the model of tyranny that Fletcher was employing and its consequences for the commonwealth. Such tyrannical behaviour from the Russian Emperor in destroying his nobility - his source of good 'counsel' and friendship and the backbone and strength of his commonwealth - had not only riven his country with hatred and dissension, but would eventually lead to civil war as the only recourse to purge the land of its distress. Fletcher's alarm bell was loud and clear.

iii.) **'Rather for honors sake, then for any vse they make of them': the role of 'Counsel' in tyrannical government⁶³**

With the experience of Catholic persecution under Mary and the acephalous conditions of Edward VI's minority rule still fresh in the minds of the counsellors of the young, unmarried woman on the English throne in the early 1560s, the role of counsel in government took on new magnitude. It was of utmost importance that the as yet unmarried Queen Elizabeth was counselled well by virtuous, noble men and more importantly that she took their counsel on board.⁶⁴ Thomas Blundeville dedicated his translation of Fadrique Furio Ceriol's

⁶² Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 37. This 'civil war' was more a series of attempts by vying political factions and several pretenders to the throne, trying to usurp imperial power in Russia, with varying degrees of success. It was referred to as 'the time of troubles' lasting from the death of Emperor Feodor I in 1598 until the accession of the successful Romanovs, with Mikhail, in 1613. It was Mikhail's son, Alexis, who in 1649 cut off diplomatic and trading relations with an English Commonwealth who had killed their own anointed king. The dynastic line of the Romanovs eventually became the last tsars of Russia, continuing until the beginning of the twentieth century with Tsar Nicholas II's abdication in 1917, see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, fifth edition (Oxford and New York, 1993), pp. 157-175, 177, 456.

⁶³ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 34v.

⁶⁴ Alford, *Early Elizabethan Polity*, pp. 7, 33, 100-103; Hoak, 'Sir William Cecil', *passim*, but especially pp. 38-41; Anne McLaren, *Political culture in the reign of Elizabeth I: queen and commonwealth, 1558-1585* (Cambridge, 1999), *passim* and McLaren, 'Reading Sir Thomas Smith', pp. 912-914; Natalie Mears, 'Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*, 1579', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2001), pp. 641-642;

treatise on the role of counsel in government to 'the ryght Noble Erle of Leycester, one of hir highnesse most Honorable, wise, and grave Counselers'.⁶⁵ Blundeville explained to Leicester that the purpose of the work was to represent 'unto you as it were in a glasse, manye of those good vertues and qualities that do raigne in you, and ought to raigne in every other good counselor'.⁶⁶ In stark contrast to the hallowed role of counsel in the (ideal) Elizabethan Commonwealth, Fletcher had depicted in Russia an image of a commonwealth where the humanist virtue of good and godly counsel was not valued or practiced. The Russian Emperor's counsellors were there merely to flatter and to legitimate arbitrary government, rather than to steer its course towards benevolent ruling of a civil and Christian commonwealth. The results were decay and corruption.

The 'inspirational myth' or ideal of 'counsel' crucially underpinned the political structures of Tudor monarchy and government. It focused on the Aristotelian 'assumption that the vice and passion of rulers could be mitigated by the advice of good counsellors' and that this assumption was 'refashioned and reinterpreted for rhetorical and political ends'.⁶⁷ If a king were left uncounselled, he became a tyrant, therefore counsel was vital to the well-being of the monarch and commonwealth. It was the ruler's duty to choose good counsellors and to listen to them, although the ruler was not bound by the advice of his or her counsellors. The spirit of good counselling was 'friendship', thus a ruler had to listen amicably and a good counsellor had a duty, as opposed to a right, to counsel

Natalie Mears, Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms (Cambridge, 2005), *passim*.

⁶⁵ Thomas Blundeville, 'Epistle Dedicatorie' in Fadrique Furio Ceriol, A very briefe and profitable treatise declaring hovve many counsellors, and vvhhat maner of counselors a prince that will gouerne well ought to haue (London, 1570), sig. A₂.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ John Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England' in Politics, Law and Counsel in Tudor and Early Stuart England (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2000), pp. 292-293.

the ruler in the best possible way as a manifestation of his active citizenship and as a godly member of the commonwealth.

In this sense, the language of Tudor and early Stuart 'counsel' was very much based on a humanist understanding of the work of Aristotle and Cicero. As Fitzmaurice elucidates in his discussion of the role of Humanism in the (English) colonisation of America, the counsel or 'deliberative oratory' was 'represented as the central act in the foundation and conservation of a commonwealth'.⁶⁸ The ongoing debate in Tudor England pivoted around the extent of a ruler's *imperium*, the efficacy and necessity of the 'king-in-counsel' and the theory of a 'mixed estate' type of government. It was manifest that a ruler and commonwealth should be protected as far as possible from falling into tyranny. Such a discourse called for the vital role of counsel in monarchy, but this, as Guy argues, was an ideal which carried with it an inherent vulnerability. There was constant debate and ambiguity over the extent to which a ruler had *imperium* or authority to do as he/she pleased in the role of monarch, and how far this monarchical prerogative could be limited by the counsel of surrounding governmental structures.⁶⁹

Of course, the debate changed and mutated depending on the specific situations and circumstances of the time. In the 1580s and 1590s, Elizabethan government was dealing with such stressful issues as Protestant non-conformism, Catholic recusancy, the war with Spain, the on-going threat of invasion and being taken over once again by Catholicism with much anxiety over who would succeed Elizabeth and how the fragile Protestant commonwealth would protect its

⁶⁸ Andrew Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America: an intellectual history of English Colonisation, 1500-1625 (Cambridge, 2003), p. 108.

⁶⁹ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', *passim*.

fledgling existence.⁷⁰ The stresses and strains on such a government, particularly under what has been described as Elizabeth's sometimes erratic and procrastinatory rule, prompted attempts by the Privy Council to theorize on the powers of monarchical rule. In the years 1563 and 1584-85, contingency plans from members of the Privy Council, most notably Burghley, suggested that the Privy Council and Parliament should take pro-active measures in the interests of protecting the Protestant commonwealth in the event of the Queen's death in order to exclude Mary Queen of Scots from succession to the throne.⁷¹ This revealed what Collinson referred to as 'the monarchical republic' in the form of creating a provisional kind of government in the absence of a ruler and thus invoking the inherent authority of the Parliament, or 'Grand Council' as Burghley envisaged it, in its own right to weigh up potential claimants for succession.⁷²

Guy has described this as an 'act of republicanism' by the Privy Council, and not its only one. In February 1587 the 'republicanism' became more blatant.⁷³ After Elizabeth had signed the warrant for Mary's execution and given her

⁷⁰ R. B. Outhwaite, 'Dearth, the English Crown and the 'Crisis of the 1590s' in The European Crisis of the 1590s; essays in Comparative History, ed. Peter Clark (London, 1985), pp. 23-43, esp. pp. 23-24.

⁷¹ Alford, Early Elizabethan Polity, pp. 109-119, 225-228; Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' in Elizabethan Essays, Patrick Collinson (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. 31-57.

⁷² Collinson, 'Monarchical Republic', *passim*. There has been much recent debate over the concept of the 'monarchical republic', for a full discussion see McDiarmid, Monarchical Republic, *passim*. Some scholars, for instance Markku Peltonen, Andrew Hadfield and John Guy, have taken Collinson's 'monarchical republic' model to the more extreme 'republican' end of the spectrum, in what Lake has insightfully recognised as 'minimum' and 'maximum' understandings of what the term can mean, see Markku Peltonen, Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought 1570-1640 (Cambridge, 1995), Andrew Hadfield, Shakespeare and Republicanism (Cambridge, 2005) and Guy's 'Monarchy and Counsel', p. 135. For Lake's criticism of the extreme end of the 'republicanism' of the 'monarchical republic' model and his discussion of 'minimum' and 'maximum' understandings of the term, see Lake, 'Monarchical Republic...and Archbishop Grindal', pp. 129-139. I take a 'minimum' understanding of the term 'monarchical republic' to be the most useful in the context of 1590s Elizabethan politics, particularly as the term 'republicanism', and even 'monarchical republicanism' or 'quasi-republicanism' seems somewhat anachronistic in this context. It was, of course, not a term or concept overtly acknowledged by those at the time who were concerned to protect the English Protestant Commonwealth from tyranny rather than seek to identify republicanism in the workings of their own government.

⁷³ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', p. 135.

secretary William Davison instructions that it should only be shown to Walsingham and Hatton, Burghley convened a meeting of Privy Councillors who then agreed to despatch the warrant immediately without the Queen's consent. The justification for such clandestine and rebellious behaviour on the part of the Privy Council was the security of the Queen and commonwealth. Guy argues for an uneasy but workable ambiguity over the extent of monarchical prerogative, suggesting Elizabeth's rule was an indefinite mixture of conciliarism and sacral monarchy, the extent of the monarch's prerogative being questioned and stretched by monarch, privy councillor and commentator alike, particularly towards the end of her rule.⁷⁴

Within this ambiguous mixture of 'king-in-counsel' and sacral monarchy, the matter of how far the monarch had *imperium* over and above common and ecclesiastical law, and the potential authority for law-making vested in Parliament, was one of recurring significance.⁷⁵ This issue was borne out in a context very immediate to the publication of Fletcher's text. The case of the clergyman Robert Cawdrey, which came to the fore in the summer of 1591, brought into the public arena the issue of whether the Queen wielded *imperium* as the ruler of the English commonwealth or whether her power was, as many of her privy councillors believed, limited by counsel (both Privy and Parliamentarian) and the good of the commonwealth.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel', pp. 132-137.

⁷⁵ Guy, 'Rhetoric of Counsel', p. 301.

⁷⁶ Cawdrey had been deprived of his benefice for allegedly speaking against the Book of Common Prayer and then refusing the oath *ex officio* when being interrogated by the Court of High Commission. The case ended up in Queen's Bench, Robert Cawdrey being defended by James Morice, who had been asked by Burghley to take up the defence. Although ministers could legally be deprived of their benefices both by canon law and common law as punishment for crimes and statutory causes, refusing the oath of *ex officio* was not one of these legitimate causes for the deprivation of a benefice. The case of Cawdrey raised some very controversial and uncomfortable questions for the Queen and commonwealth about the extent of royal prerogative and the legality of the Queen's and High Commission's authority over cases such as this. The nub of the case was

In confronting the issue of counsel in government, Fletcher was not simply giving a nod to one of the key subjects in Elizabethan political and cultural thought, but was actually engaging with these discussions, if indirectly, through the representation of Russia; thinking out loud about the state of English government, and civil government on a more universal scale through the medium of an unfamiliar land. In writing *Of the Russe Commonwealth* Fletcher was, in effect, in the process of doing his duty as an active citizen and virtuous member of the commonwealth, providing good and timely 'counsel' on the state of the monarchy, the threat of tyranny and the well-being of the commonwealth.⁷⁷ In printing *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, Fletcher was widening his remit of counsel from Queen and Court to Commonwealth and thus engaging the 'public sphere' of Elizabethan England in the all-important discussion of how to safeguard the fledgling Protestant realm.

The indirect nature of Fletcher's discussion of *English* government in his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* only serves to indicate the particularly controversial nature of the debate over legitimate 'counsel' and the nature of monarchy in England in the early 1590s; a precursor to the later debates over Parliament and

whether High Commission had ever possessed the appropriate authority to deprive Cawdrey in the first place. It called into question whether the Queen could in fact empower High Commission to act on her behalf over and above statute and common law. More fundamentally it brought to the fore the tricky question of the extent of the Queen's 'imperial' prerogative and whether it could supersede the common law of England. The Queen's Bench upheld Cawdrey's deprivation, which meant that the 'imperial' conception of Elizabeth's rule was affirmed. The Judges confirmed that Parliament acted as a purely legislative body and agreed that the Queen could thus empower High Commission, as not bound by statutory legislation. The royal supremacy of the Queen was vindicated, seeing an end to the fluid ambivalence over 'mixed-polity' monarchy and reducing the significance of the 'king-in-counsel' theory of rule, which had theoretically allowed for some negotiating power in Parliament and counsel, see Guy, 'Elizabethan establishment', pp. 131-134. Given the themes found in Fletcher's text and the fact that he had studied civil law at Cambridge, Fletcher may have had some substantial interest in the case of Cawdrey. It is not possible to tell when exactly *Of the Russe Commonwealth* was published during the year of 1591, as it is not entered into the stationer's register and was banned in response to complaints from the Muscovy Company, but it is possible that Cawdrey's case may well have provided a controversial and resonant context for those who read Fletcher's text.

⁷⁷ For an insightful discussion of the role of classical thought in the mindset and activities of renaissance humanists, see Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, esp. p. 39.

monarchical prerogative that underlay the political culture of the 1630s and 1640s. Although the censorship of Fletcher's treatise was a response to the complaints from the Muscovy Company on the grounds that his depiction of Russia was highly offensive to the Russians, Fletcher's over-riding themes and presumption in making public his 'counsel' seem also to suggest the dangerous nature of his comments and ideas, which a 'proto-absolutist' monarch would not have found particularly favourable, and which a forward Protestant and humanist audience would have read as critique.⁷⁸

Fletcher's failure to gain patronage, particularly from Burghley, for several years after the deaths of his previous patrons, Sir Francis Walsingham and Thomas Randolph in 1590, is perhaps an indication of the controversial and unpopular reception of Fletcher's text. If the Queen had been offended by Fletcher's presumption to counsel Elizabeth against tyranny, this may have discouraged Burghley from supporting such a figure as Fletcher. This, in turn, perhaps suggests further reasons why Fletcher was later shown patronage in 1596 by the Earl of Essex. Fletcher's concerns about tyranny in the government of England and his zealous Protestantism would, no doubt, have appealed to the sentiments of the champion of European Protestantism and self-styled protector of the English Commonwealth, who later floundered in attempting a coup against what he perceived as the tyranny of Elizabeth.

⁷⁸ Peter Lake uses this term 'proto-absolutist' to describe certain depictions and interpretations, particularly conformist, and Catholic, of Elizabeth's rule by the late 1580s, see Peter Lake, ' "The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I" Revisited (by its Victims) as a Conspiracy', in Conspiracies and conspiracy theory in early modern Europe: from the Waldensians to the French Revolution, eds. Barry Coward and Julian Swann (Aldershot, 2004), p. 107. Blair Worden uses the term 'forward Protestant' to describe those who were zealous in the quest for further reformation of the true Church and had a particularly pan-European gaze in his discussion of Sir Philip Sidney's politics, see Worden, Sound of Virtue, p. xxii.

vi.) 'After the popish fashion': Russian popery, English anti-popery⁷⁹

The extensive use in Fletcher's text of the language of anti-popery to describe the Russian Church points to resonances with the anxieties and concerns that riddled the political and religious consciences and contexts of late Elizabethan England. Fletcher's text displays (as commonplace) these deep-seated anxieties about the perceived threat of popery, the very force of Anti-Christ in their midst. It was a far more insidious and destructive force than their more tangible adversaries in religion, the Turks, Jews or Pagans, for 'Anti-Christ was an agent of Satan', *the* agent of Satan, embodied in the Pope and residing in the Catholic Church 'pretending piety and reverence while in fact inverting and perverting the values of true religion'.⁸⁰

In Fletcher's text, the use of this language of anti-popery may have drawn the reader's attention firstly and superficially to the threat of Anti-Christ embodied in the Russian Orthodox Church and the tyrannical government of Russia. Secondly, and indirectly, it pointed to the sinister threat of Anti-Christ much closer to home in the workings of (potentially tyrannical) Elizabethan religion, politics and government. Through this, Fletcher revealed his underlying commitment to protecting the fragile Protestantism of the real English civil commonwealth and added religious reformation to his ideal of what the English civil commonwealth should look like.

The nature of Fletcher's comments on religion, and popery in particular, were ambiguous and fluid and this is a particular virtue of Fletcher's text, as opposed to a problem. In his use of the language of anti-popery, Fletcher's purposes seem to have been multifaceted. At a fundamental level, Fletcher's text

⁷⁹ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 84r.

⁸⁰ Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*, eds. R. Cust and A. Hughes (Harlow, 1989), p. 73.

was a profound analysis of the concept of tyranny, in the abstract as well as the concrete, practical sense. Corrupt religion played an integral role in the sustaining of a barbaric commonwealth and tyrannical government, just as right religion preserved a civil commonwealth and benevolent government. As Fletcher demonstrated in his analysis of the Russian state, their Orthodox religion was exploited by the Emperor to uphold his tyrannical government. Fletcher's language of anti-popery, then, encapsulated his condemnation of both tyrannical political government and tyrannical religious government, epitomised in the position of the Pope.

Russian Orthodoxy's likeness to the Popish religion made the analogy between the two very easy to draw, especially given the increasingly acute political threat of Catholic power overtaking the whole of Europe in the 1580s and the standard opinion of Russia as tyrannous and barbaric. It can also be argued that the language of anti-popery was the only one available to Fletcher to describe and dissect, as well as interpret for an English audience, the character and condition of religious practice in Russia. In this sense, then, anti-popery was a linguistic trope used to aid the conceptualisation and interpretation of a land and religion beyond the scope of ordinary Elizabethan linguistic and imaginative boundaries.

Nearer to the surface of the text, Fletcher may well have been making allusions to the threat of Catholicism and popery in England and on the surface itself, Fletcher was simply observing and recording the practices and doctrines of the Russian Church. It is dangerous to read the whole of Fletcher's text as an allusion to the situation in England. The fluid use of the linguistic trope of anti-popery is a reminder of the fact that texts were being written with multiple and

layered agendas and discourses, depending on the specific content and context of publications.⁸¹ Fletcher's text is not simply an exercise in writing Russia; writing England. Rather it is a text which reflects analytically and deeply on the concepts of tyranny, barbarity and commonwealth, as well as employing the language of anti-popery to describe the unfamiliar, and drawing allusions with the present state of the English commonwealth. In this sense, then, the text is political science, as well as both warning and counsel; it hints at the contemporary religio-political state of England as well as providing important mercantile and cosmographical information on Russia.

This complicates Peter Lake's view of the representation and language of anti-popery. Lake has described this wide-spread 'anti-religion' of popery as 'a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity', with Anti-Christ as its scheming architect and perpetrator.⁸² Anti-popery was a certain and definable language or tool to be employed within a complicated context, 'a way of dividing up the world between positive and negative characteristics, a symbolic means of labelling and expelling trends and tendencies which seemed to those doing the labelling, at least, to threaten the integrity of a Protestant England'.⁸³ Although Lake notes the politically ambiguous nature of the discourse of anti-popery, there is, perhaps, not enough recognition in his arguments of the fluidity inherent in this discourse.⁸⁴ The historiographies of such topics as 'counsel', 'Parliament',

⁸¹ For example Richard Beacon, Solon his follie, or a politique discourse, touching the reformation of common-weales conquered, declined or corrupted (Oxford, 1594). For a discussion of the multiple linguistic and thematic agendas in *Solon his follie*, see Peltonen, Classical Humanism, pp. 75-76, Nicholas Canny, 'Spenser's Irish Crisis: Humanism and Experience in the 1590s', Past and Present, no. 120 (August, 1988), esp. pp. 207-209 and Andrew Hadfield, 'Censoring Ireland in Elizabethan England, 1580-1600' in Literature and Censorship in Renaissance England, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 149-64.

⁸² Lake, 'Anti-popery', p. 73.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 79. Lake recognises that anti-popery was 'politically....decidedly ambiguous'. Yet he explains this ambiguity as merely relating to the reactions of clearly defined groups with differing

'monarchical prerogative', 'nobility' and most definitely 'anti-popery' and 'puritanism' have not made much of the contemporary ambiguity surrounding all such issues, but rather have attempted to categorise, define and pin down the meanings of these terms. Lake's theses on anti-popery and its counter-part 'anti-puritanism' are very persuasive and eloquent but they appear to be too definitive and prescriptive, not taking enough account of the contemporary ambiguity that surrounded the experiences, writing and uses of such language and terms.⁸⁵ Fletcher's text shows a distinct flexibility in the use of the language of anti-popery, employing it both to make the unfamiliar Russian religion familiar by using a language full of imagery that an English audience would understand, as well as hinting at the threat inherent in his description of the Russian church as 'popish'.

Works such as Fletcher's demonstrate the personalised, indefinite, non-partisan and pragmatic use of the language of anti-popery. It was a fluid discourse

political stances to the threat of popery: 'Concern with the popish threat could prompt the development of authoritarian as well as of populist readings of the powers of the English Crown and of the nature of authority in the English Church', p. 79. Lake categorises the ambiguity of anti-popery into neat political distinctions, whereas I would argue that the fluid discourse of anti-popery was more pervasive and politically indefinable, heterogenous, non-partisan even. Each individual's use and interaction with the discourse of anti-popery reflected their own personal agendas and ideas. When the language of anti-popery is used in a text it represents part of the agenda of the author and is thus part of the strategy being used by an author to represent his voice and the message of his text. Fletcher employs his own, personalised language of popery, tempered and affected by his interior context and history, the purposes and themes of his text and the external, popular use of the language of anti-popery. Thus Fletcher's use of the language of anti-popery is an example of a representational strategy used to communicate the message and flag up the rhetoric of his text, as it engages with the popular discourse of anti-popery.

⁸⁵ In a more recent article, Lake makes a more nuanced argument for the structure of anti-puritanism, and through this opens up and problematises the ambiguity surrounding the language of anti-popery in a way that his first article did not, due perhaps to the fact that the sources used by Lake tend to be those designed as polemical tracts, persuading against or for one religio-political stance or another. See Peter Lake, 'Anti-Puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice' in Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke (Studies in Modern British Religious History, 13), eds. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 80-97. Paul Hammer also makes a particularly astute comment on the difficulties of using the term puritan, 'Like that other troublesome Elizabethan word, 'puritan', 'faction' has been used somewhat promiscuously by historians, both because it is a contemporary term and because its meaning seems inherently obvious', Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Patronage at Court, faction and the earl of Essex' in Guy, Reign of Elizabeth I, p. 67.

that could be used, for instance, to describe the corrupt nature of the Russian Orthodox church and the potential threat of Anti-Christ at work in it, as well as alluding indirectly to the situation of England. At the same time, it could be used simply to reveal the current concerns of the author's mind and additionally his attempts to translate something unfamiliar to an audience in England that would respond to the familiar language of anti-popery. When considering texts such as Fletcher's, it is possible to suggest that Lake presents too tight a framework of anti-popery (and anti-puritanism), bound up in an intricate and yet overly-determined thesis of conspiracy theory, being launched into 'the public sphere'.⁸⁶

Lake's categorical and specific definition of what anti-popery was brings us back round to the opening argument of this thesis, regarding the Saidian essentialization of the West, the essentialization of what an Elizabethan worldview was, and, as a specific example, perhaps the essentialization of what anti-popery was.

The concepts of both anti-popery and its workable counter-part in Elizabethan and early Stuart society, anti-puritanism, are complex for there existed a multiplicity of languages and uses for the terms 'popery' and 'puritanism'.⁸⁸ In terms of Fletcher's own language of anti-popery, his views and use of such a language in 1591 may have been a reaction to immediate circumstances as well as a product of his background and up-bringing, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Fletcher's work and its various revisions between 1589 and 1591 would no doubt have been influenced as much by English events, as by those on the

⁸⁶ Lake, ' "The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I", especially pp. 105-108. For more discussion of Lake's thoughts on 'the public sphere' see Lake and Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' and Lake, 'Politics of "popularity"', *passim*.

⁸⁸ See Lake, 'Anti-Popery', *passim* and Lake, 'Anti-Puritanism', *passim*.

continent, such as the Protestant succession to the French throne of Henri IV's in August 1589. This exacerbated the religious divisions in France and opened up possibilities of full-on civil war and Spanish invasion, making the position of Protestantism, and Henri IV, in France very precarious. Closer to home was the potential danger of Ireland as a back-door into England for Spanish invasion.⁸⁹

The context of England's own colonial situation also needs to be considered. Spenser's description of the Irish clergy bears much resemblance to Fletcher's comments on the Russian clergy, suggesting perhaps some kind of politically expedient shared language and framework used by Elizabethan commentators to represent the degradations of 'barbaric' lands such as Ireland and Russia, 'They neither read scriptures, nor preach to the people, nor administer the communion, but baptisme they doe, for they christen yet after the popish fashion'.⁹⁰

It must be noted that Fletcher's suggestion of the redemption of Russia from corrupt religion, tyrannical government and ultimately their own barbarity is a far cry from the more common dismissal of Russia, as far off and far from civility and redemption, displayed in popular perceptions of Russia, such as Turberville's, 'No civil customs to be learn'd where God bestows no grace. / And truly ill they do deserve to be belov'd of God / that neither love nor stand in awe of his assured rod'.⁹¹ But perhaps the political conscience, humanist education and leanings and aspiring ambitions of this civil lawyer of the late Elizabethan period explains his distinctive and yet familiar view of an unfamiliar land. Fletcher's Russia may have been somewhat novel and not a little controversial, but his

⁸⁹ Hammer, Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics, pp. 92, 39.

⁹⁰ Spenser, Present State of Ireland, p. 86.

⁹¹ George Turberville, 'To Parker', Tragicall Tales (London, 1587), reprinted in Rude and Barbarous Kingdom; Russian in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers, ed. Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1968), p. 84.

engagement with domestic politics and with other humanist accounts of foreign lands produced a narrative that was both recognizable and contentious.

iv.) ‘a *Scythian*, that is, grosse and barbarous pollicie’: tyrannical fiscal policies

The theme of tyrannical rule through the fiscal policies of the Russian Emperor runs throughout Fletcher’s treatise. Although there is a specific chapter set aside to discuss in detail the revenues and finances of the Emperor, Fletcher also suffused his text with references to the detrimental effects of tyrannical government in the form of harsh impositions and taxes on the people with the result that ‘both Nobilitie and Commons are but stoarers for the Prince, all running in the ende into the Emperours coffers’.⁹² The situation of English finances and politics during the 1580s and 1590s provides a clear backdrop to Fletcher’s concerns with oppressive fiscal policies and their effects on the commonwealth.

The 1580s in particular were punctuated with thoughts, negotiations and discussions of war and the ongoing security of the young Protestant commonwealth of England. England’s position was being threatened by the revival of Habsburg and Catholic forces in Europe. Philip II’s power was growing, having taken control of Portugal in 1580 and increasingly drawing France into his sphere of dominance, through the Guises and the Catholic League. In the Netherlands, the position of the Estates General was being undermined by the Spanish from the late 1570s onwards, through Don John of Austria and later Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, leaving the northern provinces of the

⁹² Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 20v.

Netherlands desperate for assistance, eventually provided by the Duke of Anjou and after his death, by English intervention.⁹³ The threat of Catholicism and being conquered by the Spanish was quite clearly encroaching from every side upon English liberty.

This constant threat, and eventual conflict, put huge strain on the political and financial well-being of the commonwealth. With the assassination of William of Orange and death of the Duke of Anjou in 1584, the question of English intervention into the Netherlands became more pressing, and eventually committed Elizabeth to war with Spain. Resisting the Spanish Armada in 1588 and a very costly war that dragged on until the end of her reign was a heavy financial burden on the English commonwealth. Elizabeth financially supported the cause of the northern provinces throughout the 1580s which clearly put pressure on English resources but with England's intervention into the Netherlands, the cost of full-scale war became an enormous weight on English finances and essentially on the English people.⁹⁴

Closer to home, the situation of Ireland was becoming more and more dangerous with Irish rebellion attracting foreign support from the Spanish in particular and taking further expenses from the Crown.⁹⁵ In Scotland, it was rather the political threat of James VI escaping from the English 'influence' of Ruthven that served to apply more pressure to an already claustrophobic English context in the 1580s. However, his 'pension' also took its toll on the Crown's purse. This decade also saw the Throckmorton plot (1582-3) and the Babington plot (1586)

⁹³ Penry Williams, The Later Tudors, England 1547-1603 (Oxford, 1995), pp. 283, 278, 299, 305-6.

⁹⁴ Williams, Later Tudors, pp. 307-24. On the cost of war, see Michael J. Braddick, The Nerves of State: Taxation and the financing of the English State, 1558-1714 (Manchester and New York, 1996), pp. 28-29.

⁹⁵ A. G. R. Smith, The Government of Elizabethan England (London, 1967), pp. 8, 30 and 49.

exposed, and as a consequence the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots (1587), exacerbating the already strained relations with Scotland.⁹⁶ As a result, the internal security of England and the Queen in particular became even more of a pressing concern. In terms of the economic situation of England during the 1580s, Crown and commonwealth revenues were being poured into the war and particularly preparations for the Armada.⁹⁷ There were also poor harvests in 1585 and 1586, pushing up grain prices to record levels in 1586, which made increases in the taxation and impositions politically dangerous. Poor harvests combined with the crisis in the export market for English cloth, due to the political and military disruption of Antwerp, meant that this was a particularly difficult period of time for merchants, wool-growers and cloth-workers.⁹⁸

The risk of social discontent and resistance to the government's fiscal policies was surely only exacerbated by the fact that the external pressures and threat to English security were greater in the 1580s than they had ever been in Elizabeth's reign. Under all of these pressures, royal finances during this decade were tight and sparse, with the crucial necessity of raising revenues for war. The extraordinary expenditures incurred by the war with Spain, the cost of suppressing rebellion in Ireland and reinforcing colonisers, supporting anti-Spanish factions in France and the Netherlands, controlling the Channel and Atlantic ports, raids in Portugal and the Azores, and the pension given to James VI to ensure the security of England's northern border were far too great to be covered by the

⁹⁶ Williams, *Later Tudors*, pp. 299-301, 313-314.

⁹⁷ Robert Ashton, 'Deficit Finance in the Reign of James I', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 10, no. 1 (1957), p. 18.

⁹⁸ Williams, *Later Tudors*, p. 317.

Parliamentary taxes granted in the years 1585, 1587, 1589, as well as in 1593, 1597 and 1601.⁹⁹

Elizabethan sources of revenue had to be found elsewhere. Local levies to provide for wartime exigencies fell heavily and unevenly on the people. Coat-and-conduct money, militia rates, paying the salaries of muster-masters and the ever-hated ship money put tremendous strain on local resources to the point where the collection of such levies was contested, for instance in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and forbidden outright in the case of ship-money collection in Suffolk.¹⁰⁰ The added expense of war only served to aggravate opposition to peace-time revenue-raising methods that were already unpopular. Because English monarchs were land-poor and demesne revenue, in its most literal sense, did not provide enough income for the Crown, it was necessary to find other means to produce such income in order for the Crown and commonwealth to function. Thus, much of the Crown's revenue was gained through fiscal practices that can be defined in some sense as taxation, but were in fact based on the prerogative rights of the Crown to produce income from sources ranging from monopolies to customs duties, impositions to forced loans, wardships to purveyance.¹⁰¹

Such taxes, or taxation practices at least, were often viewed with hostility and their legality questioned. As Hurstfield so cogently argues

[ship money, monopolies, exploitation of the forest laws, distraint of knighthood and other revenues] were the bastard revenues, neither medieval nor modern, neither legal nor illegal, unjustifiable in theory and indispensable in practice.

⁹⁹ Outhwaite, 'Dearth and the English Crown', pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁰ Penry Williams, 'The Crown and the Counties' in The Reign of Elizabeth I, ed. Christopher Haigh, pp. 129-131.

¹⁰¹ Braddick, Nerves of State, pp. 8-11. For a brief discussion of early modern methods of raising revenue and the use of the term 'tax' to explain pre-1640 revenue, see pp. 12-16.

Whatever might be said in their defence, they constituted an affront to the commonsense and the interests of the propertied classes. But the Crown had no choice...it was driven to search for an income by applying and distorting its constitutional rights, where opportunity served.¹⁰²

The potential illegality and indefensibility of such policies for increasing the Crown's revenue opened the door to political resistance and conflict between Parliament and Crown, especially if the 'bastard revenues' could be contested on their legality. Fletcher's detailing of what he referred to as 'strange cavillations' and unusual means of gaining revenue by the Russian Emperor could have been read as Elizabethan critique of the illegality and dubious nature of these 'demesne' revenues, made on the monarch's prerogative, such as the monopolies, individual and corporate, farming of customs, impositions, wardship, forced loans and purveyance.¹⁰³

The practice of purveyance was of particularly contentious debate in the very immediate context of *The Russe Commonwealth's* production and publication. The controversy over revenue-raising by means of purveyance had a long history of resistance and complaint. The practice was based on the ancient right of the Crown to appropriate goods for the royal household and to purchase goods at the 'king's price'. Unsurprisingly, this right has been described as 'potentially arbitrary and tyrannical' and there is a long history of demands for curbs and limitations on the practice of purveyance to safeguard the commonwealth from arbitrary seizure by monarchs.

¹⁰² J. Hurstfield, 'The Profits of fiscal feudalism, 1541-1602', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, vol. VIII (1955), p. 53, quoted in Braddick, *Nerves of State*, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 44v.

Complaints were repeatedly made about this practice throughout Elizabeth's reign, especially in the Parliaments of 1571, 1581 and 1587.¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth and her councillors managed to counter and assuage Parliament's complaints against the corrupt and oppressive nature of purveyance with sharp reproof against Parliament's presumptuous meddling in the household affairs of the Queen and calling into question 'her Majesty's grant and prerogative' in these years.¹⁰⁵ However, by 1589 the Commons were more prepared to contest Elizabeth's prerogative rights as Queen and forced her, eventually, to concede to revising the administration of her household in consultation with Parliament and appointing a royal commission to deal with the abuses of purveyance. The result was a system of 'compounding' which allowed for a group, usually the JPs, of each county to levy a composition tax, buy supplies at a normal rate and sell them on to the Crown at the lower 'king's price', recouping their loss out of the composition levy. This would potentially remove the worst abuses and spread the cost of the practice of purveyance more evenly.¹⁰⁶

As Woodworth so insightfully points out, Elizabeth had managed to sidestep Parliament's demand for new legislation that could have limited the monarchical prerogative by asking members of Parliament to cooperate in planning and instituting reform of the abuses. Thus she had prevented Parliament from enacting unacceptable statutes and had diverted attention away from the legally dubious policy of purveyance.¹⁰⁷ Although not definitively taxation, purveyance, as well as monopolies, wardships, forced loans and the farming of

¹⁰⁴ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, p. 80. See also Allegra Woodworth, 'Purveyance for the Royal Household in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, vol. 35, no. 1 (December, 1945), pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁵ Woodworth, 'Purveyance', pp. 21-22.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, 'Crown and the Counties', p. 132.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 122-26, esp. p. 125.

customs, were the Crown's means for gaining income. They were, however, legally suspect, employed as low-cost, high-yield rewards for favourites and had a propensity to put more money in the pockets of individuals and middlemen, at the expense of the commonwealth.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps these were just the kind of fiscal policies Fletcher wanted to hold a mirror up to in the 'strange cavillations' and 'Scythian...grosse and barbarous policie' of the Russian Emperor and his minions, fleecing and spoiling the commonwealth to the point of utter decay.¹⁰⁹ The practice of selling royal wardships off as low-cost, high-yield rewards, often to courtiers and members of the royal household, certainly appeared to be a 'strange cavillation' which involved subjecting minors 'to the dictates of the marketplace' - to be treated as an investment that could be exploited - and sometimes into neglectful households and forced marriages.¹¹⁰

In detailing the Russian Emperor's 'extraordinary impositions, and exactions done upon their officers, Monasteries, &c. not for any apparent necessity or use of the Prince, or common wealth, but of will and custome', Fletcher may well have been pointing, through language that held symbolic capital, to the dangers of the English Crown manifesting tyrannical tendencies in its practices of revenue-raising.¹¹¹ Not only was tyranny identifiable in the rejection of 'good counsel', the decrease of the ancient and virtuous nobility, and the corrupt or ill-reformed Church, but also, and fundamentally, in the health of the commonwealth, the duty of its monarch to protect her subjects economically as well as politically, spiritually and physically, and to be just and benevolent, as opposed to greedy and exacting, in the sphere of revenues and royal economy.

¹⁰⁸ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, pp. 72-79.

¹⁰⁹ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 44v, 41r.

¹¹⁰ Williams, 'Crown and the counties', p. 133.

¹¹¹ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 41r.

We see in the language used by Fletcher in his discussion of the Emperor's means for raising revenue that just as Fletcher was writing England through Russia, he was equally writing Russia through his prevailing concerns about the economy and fiscal circumstances of England. His concerns regarding English revenue-raising policy were perhaps the familiar frame through which he was thinking, his first point of reference through which he comprehended and analysed Russia himself. He also used this familiar frame or gaze to communicate the discussion of the strange nature of Russia and Russian policies to an audience that would understand the language of 'monopolies', 'customs' and 'rents'. In his discussion of the Emperor's finances, Fletcher provided ten examples, or 'means' by which he raised his revenue and in describing these means he used language that would have been very familiar to any educated and interested Elizabethan reader.

Fletcher's use of the word 'monopoly' (in the context of the Emperor's personal monopoly over the fur trade) would have had certain resonances for a late Elizabethan audience.¹¹² The use of monopolies for rewards of service was increased particularly in the late Elizabethan government. The monopolies bestowed by the Crown as rewards for deserving courtiers were not only cheap for the government but very lucrative for the recipient.¹¹³ However, the policy of monopolies as reward was highly unpopular as well as being fundamentally inefficient for the commonwealth. The Queen's policy of rewarding her courtiers and favourites with monopolies on goods such as glass, salt and sea-coal,

¹¹² For a discussion of monopolies in Elizabeth's reign, see G. D. Duncan, 'Monopolies under Elizabeth I, 1558-1585', unpublished Ph.D thesis (Cambridge, 1976). For comment on monopolies as a contentious issue by the 1590s, see p. 116.

¹¹³ Joan Thirsk, Economic Policy and Projects: the development of a consumer society in early modern England (Oxford, 1978), p. 59, David Harris Sacks, 'The countervailing of benefits: monopoly, liberty, and benevolence in Elizabethan England' in Tudor Political Culture, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge, 1995), p. 273.

compromised her duty to provide benevolently for her subjects and realm as a whole, as the private patentee prospered at the expense of the rest of the Queen's subjects. The Crown also began to take a percentage of patentees' profits to offset the customs revenues lost through the decrease in foreign imports of goods that were now being produced at home.¹¹⁴

Not only was this policy of granting monopolies a danger to the realm, it was a danger to the Queen herself. By putting the Crown's revenues and the rewarding of her courtiers before the well-being of the commonwealth, the Queen was effectively not fulfilling her duty as a benevolent and godly monarch to protect her people and thus risking the discontent as well as the decay of her subjects. Francis Moore went so far as to protest that 'There is no Act of Hers that hath been, or is more Derogatory to her *Majesty*, or more Odious to the Subject, or more Dangerous to the Common-Wealth, than the Granting of these *Monopolies*'.¹¹⁵ The situation came to breaking point in the later 1590s and was an issue of major concern and discontent in Elizabeth's penultimate and final Parliaments of 1597-98 and 1601, but had been a growing issue since the 1580s.¹¹⁶ The basic argument against patents of monopoly, which was presented in the 1601 Parliament was that the monopolies distributed by the Queen deprived her subjects as free men of their livelihoods and thus went against their liberties as the Queen's subjects, as described in chapter 29 of the Magna Carta.¹¹⁷ The political cost of the use of monopolies to reward service and bolster the Queen's revenues was hostility towards patentees and the Crown. This hostility manifested itself in increasing protests against and questioning of the legality of the extent of

¹¹⁴ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, pp. 53-58 and Sacks, 'Countervailing of Benefits', pp. 273-276.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Sacks, 'Countervailing of benefits', p. 276. See also Braddick, *Nerves of State*, pp. 77-79.

¹¹⁶ J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London, 1957), pp. 352-362, 376-393.

¹¹⁷ Sacks, 'Countervailing of benefits', p. 274-5.

the Crown's prerogative in granting such monopolies to the benefit of the individual, and 'worthy', courtier at the expense of the commonwealth.

Similarly, the intimate ties between the Crown and trading companies who were granted monopolies and encouraged to seek privileges resulted in hostility from merchants who were excluded or not part of the privileged and incorporated trading companies, as we have seen in Chapter One. Monopolies were granted to trading companies on the basis that to discover and establish a new trade a large amount of capital was initially required to cover the costs and risks of losses of goods and ships in preliminary expeditions to explore such new trades. The complaints came, though, when after a reasonable amount of time the founders had not recovered their losses, and yet the monopoly still prohibited independent English traders or rival illegal companies from trading with foreign lands.¹¹⁸ The privileges and monopolies granted to such enterprises as the Muscovy Company also brought with them economic inefficiency and detrimental effects to the merchants and servants themselves, as Fletcher had highlighted in his diplomatic reports to Elizabeth and Burghley regarding the state of the Muscovy Company's trade in Russia.¹¹⁹

Simon Adams draws attention not only to the prominence of concessions and monopolies in Elizabethan Crown finances and patronage, but also to the exploitation of customs revenues through farming. Leicester, Hatton, Walsingham and later Essex were all recipients of licenses to farm customs as rewards for service. Again, the problem with these new forms of patronage and reward was that the cost fell on the commonwealth rather than on the Crown, which led to

¹¹⁸ William Robert Scott, The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720, Volume II: Companies for foreign trade, colonization, fishing and mining (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 50-51, 37-38.

¹¹⁹ BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59 and Lansdowne 52, no. 37.

criticism and hostility to such policies and the beneficiaries of these policies.¹²⁰ The beneficiaries could be seen as corrupt citizens working for private profit alone and encouraged by a covetous and inequitable monarch who did not have the good of the commonwealth at heart.¹²¹ Through the practice of farming and monopolies certain members of the body politic were favoured over others; those not favoured were oppressed by those that were in favour and the consequences would eventually fall on the Head, as the oppressed body rose up against the monarch who had raised certain members of the body politic above the rest.¹²²

The suffusion of criticism in Fletcher's text relating to a tyrannical emperor who was greedy, exploitative, extorting and viewed his people 'like to his beard. The oftner shaven, the thicker it would grow. Or like sheepe, that must be shorne once a yeere at the least: to keep them from being ouer laden with their wooll' points to an acute concern with how easily the finances of a commonwealth could be exploited not for the good of the people, but solely for the good of the ruler and his favoured few.¹²³ Read in this light, Fletcher's text may well have held resonance for a pervasive and critical voice against royal financial policy - monopolies and purveyance in particular - heard towards the end of Elizabeth's reign. It must be noted, however, that the politics of monopolies and concessions were far more complex affairs than simply 'beneficiaries versus excluded'.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Simon Adams, 'The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: the 1590s in perspective', in Guy, Reign of Elizabeth I, pp. 39-40.

¹²¹ Natalie Mears, '*Regnum Cecilianum?* A Cecilian Perspective of the Court' in Guy, Reign of Elizabeth I, p. 60.

¹²² Sacks, 'Countervailing of benefits', p. 277.

¹²³ Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 41r.

¹²⁴ Michael J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 402.

v.) **'Wild Irish are as civil as the Russies in their kinde, hard choice which is the best of both, ech bloody, rude and blinde': Irish Comparisons**¹²⁵

Fletcher portrayed Russia as a vicious cycle of tyranny and oppression that ultimately served only to favour the Emperor's treasury and to damage the poor, leaving the commons suffering under multiple layers of injustice. This may have struck chords in knowledgeable audiences' minds with the condition of the commons in Ireland. Edmund Tremayne detailed the oppression they suffered under from their Lords, who 'useth the inferior people at his will and pleasure he eateth and spendeth upon them with man horse and dog he useth man wife and children according to his own life...not only as an absolute king but as a tyrant or a lord over bondmen'.¹²⁶ Just as Fletcher complained of the hegemony of the spoken law in Russia which favoured the lord over the common people, so Tremayne had similarly asserted that in Ireland 'shall you not find any other law betwixt the lord and tenant but the very will and pleasure of the lord'.¹²⁷

Ireland had historically been seen as savage and barbaric. Giraldus Cambrensis' twelfth century depiction of the Irish described them as

a people living off beasts and like beasts; a people that still adheres to the most primitive way of pastoral living. For as humanity progresses from the forests to arable fields, and towards village life and civil society, this people is too lazy for agriculture and is heedless of material comfort; and they

¹²⁵ George Turberville, Tragicall tales translated by Turberuile in time of his troubles out of sundrie Italians (London, 1587), p. 193. Turberville had accompanied Thomas Randolph, as his secretary, on his embassy to Russia in 1568-9 and wrote verses to his friends in England on the corrupt state of Russia, see Raphael Lyne, 'Turberville, George (b. 1543/4, d. in or after 1597)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27825> (accessed 11 April 2008).

¹²⁶ Edmund Tremayne's Description of Irish Governance, December 1573, Huntington Library, HEH, EL 1701, ff. 1r-4v (transcript provided by Mike Braddick).

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

positively dislike the rules and legalities of civil
intercourse.¹²⁸

As Elizabethan colonial policy looked to reform the state of what was nominally their land, even if barbaric and degenerate, the representation of Ireland's barbarism and desperate need of reformation became a focus for Elizabethan Protestant humanist reforming zeal.

In the early 1570s, Sir Thomas Smith's plans and petition to set up a colony in Ireland was based on the idea that the Irish were backward, barbaric and not making proper use of the land that had been given to them.¹²⁹ The indenture between the Queen and Smith and his colleagues reveals a shared image of the Irish as 'a wicked, barbarous and uncivil people'. Thus it could only be a benefit to the English commonwealth, bringing 'honour and commodity to her majesty', to 'bring the ruse and barbarous nation of the wild Irish to more civility of manner'.¹³⁰ In Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland*, Irenius, the rhetorician of the two interlocutors, explained to Eudoxus that the Irish were 'a people very stubborne and untamed' and that 'the evils, which seeme to me, most hurtfull to the common-weale of that land....are of three sorts: The first in the Lawes, the second in the Customes, and the last in Religion'.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica*, book III, chapter 10, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, ed. and trans. J. J. O'Meara (Harmondsworth, 1982), quoted by Joep Leerssen, 'Wildness, Wilderness and Ireland: Medieval and Early Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1995), p. 30.

¹²⁹ Smith was not the only one in Elizabethan government considering the potential possibilities and problems of colonization in Ireland. Cecil, Leicester, Sussex, Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Henry Sidney and Sir William Fitzwilliam, along with private subjects such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Richard Grenville and Walter Devereux were all involved in such considerations at one time or another, see David Beers Quinn, 'Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577) and the beginnings of English Colonial Theory', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 89, no. 4 (December, 1945), pp. 543-560.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 551.

¹³¹ Spenser, 'A view of the state of Ireland' in Campion, *The historie of Ireland*, pp. 3 and 2, respectively.

The work of Spenser, Sir Thomas Smith, Tremayne, the thoughts of the Leicester and Sidney circles, all point to an Elizabethan understanding of the Gaelic Irish as profoundly backward and barbaric almost beyond civilizing (or in need of the intervention of the English sword to bring about civility). By their very nature, the Irish (and later the New World Indians) were not only socially inferior, but more fundamentally culturally inferior, at a much lesser stage of development than the English and this became the justification for colonising and using any means necessary to civilise them. However, if this could not be achieved, the absolute barbarism of the people was used as justification to slaughter them in order to plant civility in these fertile lands.¹³² Nicholas Canny argues that in Elizabethan colonial ideology the same condemnation that had been brought against the Irish was made against the Amerindians and enslaved, imported Africans later on in the New World arena - that they were idle, lazy, licentious and barbaric and not making proper use of the land they inhabited.¹³³

Echoes of Fletcher's depiction of the barbarism of Russia and sympathy with the Russian commons can be seen in the ideological literature surrounding Elizabethan activities in Ireland. Canny notes as a commonplace in English colonial ideology the role of English 'compassion' for the fate of the poor in 'barbaric' societies such as Ireland. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, contemporary English commentators often divided up Ireland into two categories 'the barbarous tyrants or "cruell cannibales" and the meek laborers whom they held in utter bondage' as a justification for their own, at times cruel and barbaric, interventions and colonisation attempts in Ireland.¹³⁴

¹³² Nicholas P. Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America', William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., vol. 30, no. 4 (1973), pp. 575-598.

¹³³ *ibid.*, especially p. 596.

¹³⁴ Canny, 'Ideology of English Colonization', p. 597.

Perhaps Spenser displayed this attitude most explicitly with his dichotomous description of the Irish kerne and the Irish churl, 'there are two sortes of people in Ireland to be considered of...the one called the kerne the other the chorle. The kerne bredd up in idleness and naturally inclined to mischiefs and wickednesse, the chorle willing to labour and take pains if he might peaceably enjoy the fruites thereof'.¹³⁵ Such idealized depictions of the poor Gaelic Irish tenants were used as validation for the ideology of cultural development that the English colonizers had constructed, with themselves at the top and the Irish as degenerate barbarics, needing redemption. The practical outworkings of such ideology resulted in horrific, extreme and inhumane treatment of the Irish. Canny plausibly argues that if the insecure colonising Englishman were 'to admit that the oppressed did not exist or were not anxious to avail themselves of English justice, then the colonist's *raison d'être* was called in question'.¹³⁶ Despite the similarity of the descriptions and the reasoning behind these representations of both Russians and Irish, Fletcher's argument was slightly different. Fletcher, of course, was not attempting to justify any kind of inhumane means to civilise an apparently barbaric country. Rather he was pointing to the degrading effects of what tyrannical government could do to a land and people. The similarities, however, were not without a certain political resonance.

Fitzmaurice argues that the humanist discourse was harnessed as justification and framework for colonisation in the New World, and by default, as Canny argues, that many of the New World colonisers had their baptism of fire in Ireland, where they forged their strategies and ideas about New World colonisation. Yet what Fletcher presents to us is the use of the humanist discourse,

¹³⁵ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), ed. W. L. Renwick (Oxford, 1970), p. 179, quoted in Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonization', p. 598.

¹³⁶ Canny, 'Ideology of English Colonization', p. 598.

as seen through the prism of representing another land, in order to indirectly critique and draw attention to the potential pitfalls of government in the author's own commonwealth and colonial policy. This is an expansion of what Fitzmaurice's argument presents as a projection of acquired renaissance humanist values onto the novel sites of unfamiliar New World subjects, as well as the individual's identity construction and the constructing of the 'commonwealth individual' in the context of a dramatically changing cosmos. Perhaps this is along the lines of what Archer refers to as the 'latent unease about the subject's status within a suddenly expanding world that might require extreme methods of control and domination'.¹³⁷

Fletcher's discussion of Russia's 'colonies and pollicie in mainteyning their purchases by conquest' is not incidental in the text and although no explicit comment is made on English colonial activity in Ireland, anxiety over this area of English policy may have resonated with Fletcher's discussion of the policies of the Russian Emperor in his colonial conquests and the similarities with the Irish situation, borne out in descriptions of the Russian people, as well as their colonial counterparts. Fletcher may well have been adopting a similar tactic to that employed by Beacon in his critical discussion of Ireland, represented through the veil of the Athenian attempt by Solon to capture and colonise the island of Salamina.¹³⁸ In Fletcher's case, he was appropriating the example of Russia as an opportunity to raise awareness in the public sphere of Elizabethan England of the politics of tyranny, and reading between the lines, Elizabethan tyranny at home as well as in her colonies, legitimated through both the vehicle of travel information and the generic mode of politico-historical philosophy.

¹³⁷ John Michael Archer, Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India and Russia in Early Modern English Writing (Stanford, California, 2001), p. 119.

¹³⁸ See Hadfield, 'Censoring Ireland', pp. 156-157.

Is it also possible, that in another indirect way, Fletcher was making a point about the follies of greedy colonising? Fletcher noted it was not long since the Russian Emperors acquired their great colonial conquests. It was also not long since the government and thus the land and institutions of Russia became increasingly corrupt. Fletcher observed that 'If the whole dominion of the Russe Emperour were all habitable, and peopled in all places, as it is in some, hee would either hardly hold it all within one regiment, or be ouer mightie for all his neighbour Princes'.¹³⁹ Was this a humanist warning to England, in the vein of Cicero's concerns regarding the ethics of empire and the dangers of conquest as a pitfall of the greedy? Was this counsel about the threat of extensive power corrupting, the sin of greed (as apparent in the corruption and oppressive practices of the Spanish Conquistadors) and the dangerous overstretching of legitimate power?¹⁴⁰

Although these questions are plausible reactions to Fletcher's text, his arguments remain enigmatic, uncertain and fluid. For despite the underlying criticism of England's potential for tyrannical government both in her colonies and at home, Fletcher also suggested that in the case of Russia, foreign intervention was perhaps the only solution, 'This desperate state of things at home, maketh the people for the most part to wishe for some forreine inuasion, which they suppose to be the only meanes, to rid them of the heauy yoke of this tyrannous government'.¹⁴¹ Fletcher seemed to be toying with both the idea of what was the best course of action for a civil land to take against the potential oppressions and threats of tyranny *and* how a land could rid itself of barbaric,

¹³⁹ Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 3r.

¹⁴⁰ Cicero, On Duties, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge, 1991), Book II. 27-28, pp. 72-73. See also Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 34v.

arbitrary government and build a civil commonwealth. Fletcher's suggestion that the Russian people wanted some form of foreign invasion in order to rid themselves of the tyranny they suffered under is contentious if not a little perplexing within the context of the whole work and Elizabethan politics at the time. Foreign intervention into the oppressive Russian situation in the form of invasion was not explicitly suggested in any of the other Elizabethan accounts of Russia. Twenty years later, in a very different political climate, both domestic and foreign, English 'intervention' in the form of establishing an English protectorate in Russia was proposed to James VI and I.¹⁴²

As opposed to suggesting specific and practical courses of action for specific or 'real' circumstances, Fletcher was rather in the act of theorizing over wider political and hypothetical, although pertinent, questions such as how a tyranny could be challenged and how to safeguard against such tyranny, as well as Protestant responsibility towards God's elect people throughout Christendom. Fletcher's messages were veiled and uncertain; the theorizing of government through the image of Russia allowed for multiple interpretations. The specific context of the late 1580s and early 1590s provided an environment ripe for a sensitized reaction against a text, which could have been read as encouraging both criticism of sacral monarchy and engaging with the particularly prickly issue of resisting tyrannical government, issues contentious enough to get his text suppressed. The following chapter traces the immediate and controversial printing

¹⁴² Dunning suggests that James VI and I had been presented and even considered the idea of a Protectorate in Russia well before 1612. The 'Time of Troubles' (1598-1613) in Russia was threatening English trading interests in the North of Russia, as Poland had taken over Moscow and it was thought the Swedes were planning to take control of the port at St Nicholas where the Muscovy Company had enjoyed the privileges of the Russian Emperor since 1553. It was in this context towards the end of the 'time of troubles' that the English Protectorate of Northern Russia was proposed. For more detail see Chester Dunning, 'James I, the Russia Company and the Plan to establish a Protectorate Over North Russia', *Albion*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1989), pp. 206-26.

history of *The Russe Commonwealth*, alongside Fletcher's love poetry of the 1590s, detailing a capricious, cruel and tyrannical lover in the image of his beloved *Licia*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Fletcher's forward Protestant and humanist zeal may have affected his career as an aspiring citizen-subject of the Elizabethan Crown.

**Chapter 5 - A Controversial Commonwealth: Fletcher censored, his poetry
and later career**

[H]e that can feign a commonwealth (which is the poet) can govern it with counsels, strengthen it with laws, correct it with judgements, inform it with religion, and morals...the exact knowledge of all virtues and their contraries; with ability to render the one loved the other hated, by his proper embattling them.

Ben Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries* (1640)

i) 'Offensive to the Russe that anie man should looke into': Fletcher censored¹

Fletcher's work, *Of the Russe Commowealth* was published in 1591 by Thomas Charde. Only four years earlier Fletcher had helped to assist Charde, on behalf of the Privy Council, by ordering his creditors to give him time to pay off his debts, perhaps initiating the relationship between the two.² Charde was a prominent and successful London publisher in the 1580s and 1590s who also had business connections with Thomas Thomas, the University Printer at Cambridge.³ It was Thomas' successor, John Legate, who published Fletcher's poetry *Licia, or poemes of Loue....whereunto is added the Rising to the Crowne of Richard the third* anonymously in 1593.⁴

In response to the publication of Fletcher's work *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, an outraged and anxious petition from the members of the Muscovy Company was sent to Lord Burghley. The petition requested Burghley

¹ 'Petition from the merchants of the Russia Company to Lord Burghley', BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 39 (n.d.). Also reprinted in Lloyd E. Berry, *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the elder* (Madison, 1964), p. 150.

² Berry, *English Works*, p. 21.

³ Donald Paige, 'An Additional Letter and Booklist of Thomas Chard, Stationer of London', *The Library*, series 4, XXI, no. 1 (1940), pp. 26-43, esp. pp. 32-36.

⁴ Berry, *English Works*, p. 70.

to recall the publication immediately on the grounds that Fletcher's work was so offensive and potentially provocative that it would 'turne the Companie to some greate displeasure with the Emperour and endaunger boeth their people and goodes nowe remayninge there.....the Companie doubt the revenge thereof will light on their people, and goodes remayninge in Russia and utterlie overthrowe the trade forever'.⁵ The Muscovy Company's petition was successful and Fletcher's publication was suppressed.

There is no doubt that *Of the Russe Commonwealth* could have justifiably been banned on the grounds of what it said directly about Russia, and the Muscovy Company's anxiety over their commercial and political position at the time. But there is also something to be said for understanding the wider-ranging arguments and themes in Fletcher's treatise within the context of Elizabethan England in the 1590s. For Fletcher's was a potentially very controversial text that commented not just on the lamentable state of Russia but presented critical contentions against the state of Elizabethan government, in an atmosphere of increasing suppression and censorship of texts that questioned Elizabeth's commonwealth. The petition of the Muscovy Company could simply have provided another reason why Fletcher's text was unwelcome to the regime.

Fletcher's treatise was eventually printed and allowed in Hakluyt's later 1598-1600 edition of *The Principal Navigations*, but the text had been severely edited by Hakluyt, with the 'offensive' sections taken out, no doubt in response to the previous suppression of the work in 1591.⁶ Interestingly, Hakluyt deleted all the passages that had been identified by the Muscovy Company as 'offensive', but proceeded to substantially censor the text even further. The expurgated version of

⁵ BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 39.

⁶ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600), pp. 473-497.

Fletcher's text found in the 1598-1600 edition of the *Principal Navigations* was missing fourteen chapters from the original version, as well as the preface and parts of chapters 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 28.⁷ Fletcher's account was also included in Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625), but again it was a severely edited version of the text, not recording the full description of Russia originally published in 1591. Unlike Hakluyt, Purchas explained and excused his dramatic editorial intervention: 'I haue in some places contracted, in others mollified the biting or more bitter stile, which the Author vseth of the *Russian* Gouernment; that I might doe good at home, without harme abroad'.⁸

The fact that Hakluyt included in both his 1589 and 1598 editions equally offensive material by various authors and from more recent accounts of Russia, condemning the government and people of Russia in similar language to Fletcher's account, seems to suggest that the expurgation was on account of Fletcher's reputation and the underlying message in his work, rather than a concern for the 'offensive' material relating superficially to Russia that it contained. Perhaps there was pressure from the Muscovy Company to prevent the publication of a text, which had already been suppressed by their petitioning, and which might undermine their authority. The inclusion of works equally, if not more, offensive than Fletcher's, such as material written by Chancellor, Randolph, Jenkinson and Turberville, both in the 1589 edition, before the Muscovy Company's petition against *Of the Russe Common Wealth* and in the 1598 edition,

⁷ Berry, *English Works*, p. 166. According to Robert Lindsay's calculations, Hakluyt cut out the entire Epistle Dedicatorie, fifteen chapters and various sentences and phrases with the end result that 'Of the twenty-eight chapters originally printed in *Of the Russe Common Wealth*, only five appeared in their original state in the *Principall Navigations*', see Robert O. Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt and *Of the Russe Common Wealth*', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 57, no. 3 (1963), p. 323. As Lindsay demonstrates, at least half of the excisions were based on the list of offensive material contained in the Muscovy Company's petition to Lord Burghley. Cf. BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 39.

⁸ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625), vol. III, sigs. 2N3r-2R2r, quoted in Berry, *English Works*, p. 166.

raises the questions of editorial prerogative, the political sway of the Muscovy Company, and also the perceived and potential influence of Hakluyt's work. Surely, it was impossible that members of the Muscovy Company did not have access or inclination to read the 1589 edition.⁹ And in that case, one would expect them to respond similarly to the controversial material contained in the earlier edition, if it was the comments on *Russia* that they found so threatening and offensive.

The deletions from Fletcher's text featured in the 1598 edition included a description of the present Emperor Feodor, 'for his person of a meane stature, somewhat lowe and grosse, of a sallowe complexion, and inclining to the dropsie, hawke nosed, unsteady in his pase by reason of some weaknes of his lims, heauie and vnactive, yet commonly smiling almost to a laughter. For qualitie otherwise, simple and slowe witted',¹⁰ as well as comments on the effects of his government on the people, who were 'very much discouraged by many heavy and intollerable exactions', which 'sheweth the decrease of the Russe people, under his government'.¹¹ Hakluyt expurgated such offensive chapters as the one concerning the account of the Russian royalty, which charged Ivan the Terrible with the murder of his eldest son and the chapters on law-making procedures and organization of the provinces. He also deleted the section on marriage ceremonies, the sobriety of the Russian people and their general state of affairs, whilst including in the same edition of *The Principall Navigations*, accounts by Chancellor, Jenkinson and Randolph, which commented in similar language on

⁹ In this edition, they would have been able to consult the accounts of Willoughby, Chancellor, Turberville, Jenkinson, Bowes and Horsey, but would only have been able to view the contents page and privileges of Fletcher's embassy, as opposed to the full text of his treatise on Russia, see Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 250-504, 819-25.

¹⁰ Fletcher, *Of the Russe Common Wealth*, p. 110r.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 9v and 14r. See also Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt', p. 317.

these very instances. For example Thomas Randolph's comment on the sobriety of the priests, 'they are much given to drunkenesse'¹² is similarly echoed by Jenkinson and Chancellor respectively, 'there are few Russe sober, but they are drunke day by day and it is accompted for no reproach or shame among them'¹³ and 'there bee in no other country the like people for drunkenesse'¹⁴, whereas Fletcher's comment 'To drinke drunke, is an ordinary matter with them euey day in the weeke' was deemed to be too inflammatory to leave in the text.¹⁵

This all seems to support the idea that it was not so much a case against the content regarding Russia of Fletcher's text, but rather against the notoriety of the text, which had been previously suppressed, and its indirect political critique of Elizabethan politics. This also hints at the extent of influence of the original work before it was suppressed, or at least the extent of publicity surrounding the suppression of the text, and the significance of the event within the Muscovy Company, and no doubt further afield. Fletcher's insightful comments on the nature and extent of power and government would have been highly controversial. For as we have seen, the debate during this period over the extent of monarchical prerogative was very much alive. Fletcher's warnings on the nature of bad government corrupting the land and the people could have been seen as a step too far in terms of what was acceptable questioning and discussion of government and what was not. There were political consequences for such audacity.

¹² Thomas Randolph in Richard Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1598), vol. I, p. 376, quoted in Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt', p. 324.

¹³ Anthony Jenkinson, in Hakluyt, Principal Navigations, p. 317, quoted in Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt', p. 325.

¹⁴ Richard Chancellor in Hakluyt, Principal Navigations, p. 242, quoted in Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt', p. 325.

¹⁵ Fletcher, Of the Russe Common Wealth, p. 112v.

ii) 'For this kinde of poetrie wherein I wrote, I did it onlie to trie my humour'¹⁶: The politics of Fletcher's love poetry

No payne like this, to love and not enjoye,

No grieffe like this, to mourne, and not be heard.

No time so long, as that which breed's annoy,

No hell like this, to love and be deferd.¹⁷

After the suppression of his text, Fletcher turned to other literary pursuits, still in search of a patron, returning to his first love, verse, although this was an equally controversial pursuit in the 1590s. In 1593 Fletcher's *Licia or Poemes of Loue* was published along with his *The Rising to the Crown of Richard III*. The publication was anonymous. Perhaps this was testimony, again, to the political sensitivities surrounding publication in the 1590s, as well as a response to the contemporary stigma surrounding the printing of poetry.¹⁸

As evidence from other authors reveals, the threat of censorship was very real and the position of the late Elizabethan poet precarious. Books I-III of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* had been published in 1590 and the following books IV-VI were eventually published in 1596, although possibly composed and

¹⁶ Fletcher, Giles, *Licia, or poemes of Love* (London, 1593), sig. A₃. 'This kinde of poetrie' refers, presumably, to the vogue of sonnet-writing that Fletcher was actively involved in and that was so prevalent in the 1590s, more of which will be discussed below.

¹⁷ Fletcher, *Licia*, Elegie III, p. 68. The simple repetition of the word 'No' in Fletcher's longing love poetry is a fine example of anaphora. Anaphora was an effective and simple stylistic technique much-loved by Elizabethan poets to emphasise their literary tropes. Puttenham explained the technique as 'Anaphora, or the Figure of Report..as thus: To thinke on death it is a miserie, To think on life it is a vanitie: To thinke on the world verily it is, To thinke that heare man hath no perfit blisse', in his *The arte of English poesie* (London, 1589), referenced in *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edn., http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50007946?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=anaphora&first=1&max_to_show=10 (accessed March 5 2008). See also the discussion of anaphora in George William Smith, Jr., 'Iterative Rhetoric in *Paradise Lost*', *Modern Philology*, vol. 74, no. 1 (August 1976), pp. 1-19, especially p. 4.

¹⁸ J. W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry', *Essays in Criticism*, vol. 1 (1951), pp. 139-64.

circulated in manuscript form in the late 1580s and early 1590s. In *The Faerie Queene* Spenser had presented the poet as subversive and as a potential threat to the politico-social order. In Book 5 of the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser's poet Bonfont is punished by having his tongue nailed to a post because 'he falsely did reuyle and foule blaspheme that Queene....with bold speaches...And with lewd poems'.¹⁹ On the post, to which the poet's tongue is nailed, is written 'BON FONNS: but *bon* that once had written bin, / Was raced out, and *Mal* was now put in. / So now *Malfont* was plainely to be red'.²⁰ Once a fountain of goodness, Bonfont has now become a fountain of badness, Malfont.²¹ Not only is the poet cruelly and painfully punished for using his tongue for subversive criticisms or blaspheming of the Queen but also has a liminal, and thus insecure, identity thrust on him, and is held up as a deterrent against critique of the regime.²²

This depiction of the hazardous position of the poet expresses the acute concern of Spenser and others, especially in the Leicester and Essex circles, about the dangers of being a humanist poet and the censorship and (tyrannical?) control Elizabeth wielded over her subjects and their literary outputs. Considering the amount of antipoetic publications and opinions circulating in the 1570s and 1580s, as well as increasing censorship and a decrease in literary patronage, this is hardly surprising.²³ Spenser was, of course, a defender of poetry, along with Sidney,

¹⁹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr with the assistance of C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr (London, 1978), Book 5, Canto IX, 25-26, p. 830.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Colin Burrow, *Edmund Spenser*, (Plymouth, 1996), p. 9.

²² Elizabeth J. Bellamy, 'The Vocative and the Vocational: the unreadability of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*', *English Literary History*, vol. 54, no. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 1-30.

²³ Peter C. Herman, 'Tudor and Stuart Defenses of Poetry' in *Early Modern English Poetry; a critical companion*, eds. Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (New York and Oxford, 2007), pp. 27-37. On censorship see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, MA, 1997). On literary patronage see Alastair Fox, 'The Complaint of poetry for the death of liberality: the decline of literary patronage in the 1590s' in Guy, *Reign of Elizabeth I*, pp. 229-257.

Richard Willes, Thomas Lodge and George Puttenham to name but a few.²⁴ It is perhaps, then, no surprise that Fletcher printed his poetry anonymously²⁵ - an indication of the increasingly dangerous position of the poet in Elizabethan society, especially if poets believed, with Sidney, that 'Of all sciences [...] is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it'.²⁶ For an author whose previous work, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, had been suppressed by the Privy Council in 1591, it was an understandably natural course of action to publish his poetry anonymously.

In her brief analysis of Fletcher's poetry in relation to *Of the Russe Commonwealth* Elena Shvarts suggests that 'The sonnet sequence of unrequited love becomes another metaphor to express the servitude and tyranny [Fletcher] experienced in Russia as well as the favor he didn't receive from England'.²⁷ She reads Fletcher's poetry as an image of his reaction to Russia, in the sense that she sees his reaction to Russia as a picture of tyranny and ideal commonwealth. This, according to Shvarts, is played out in his later poetry. Shvarts recognises that the tone of Fletcher's love poetry is a critique of Elizabeth I for not showing him favour and patronage, but her Russian emphasis is misleading. As in her discussion of Fletcher's prose work, so in her discussion of his later poetry, she neglects to reflect fully on Fletcher's other engagements with reality and the fluid nature of representing other lands and the self. Shvarts sees Fletcher's work as

²⁴ Herman, 'Tudor and Stuart Defenses', pp. 27-28.

²⁵ Giles' son, Phineas Fletcher, first attributed *The Rising to the Crown of Richard III* and consequently *Licia* to Giles Fletcher, the elder, in his *Piscatorie Eclogs* (1633). See Lucy Munro, 'Fletcher, Giles, the elder (bap. 1546, d. 1611)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9726> (accessed 23 April 2008).

²⁶ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, quoted by Herman, 'Tudor and Stuart Defenses', p. 31.

²⁷ Elena Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe: the matter of Muscovy in Early Modern English Travel Writing and Literature', unpublished PhD thesis (Stanford, May 2004), p. 102.

orientalising discourse and does not adequately consider the flexible character of his writing and attitudes, his fluid humanism and his pragmatic engagement with reality as juxtaposed with his ideals and principles of good government and the health and wealth of the commons and the country as a whole.

In Fletcher's poetry, Shvarts sees pictures of Russia that are not necessarily there. Her reading of Fletcher's is an understandable one and on the surface a plausible one. Russia, as Shvarts points out, is a key influence and fits neatly into the Petrarchan model because of its climactic extremes. However, her reading seems somewhat skewed, for instance her assertion that 'the powerful Monarch and "cruell tyrant" love "wherewith Venus sonne hath injuriouslie made spoile of thousands"' is very much a metaphorical mirror of the Russian tsars, especially Ivan' seems to miss the point that Fletcher was trying to make about the tyranny of court patronage in England and the rule of Elizabeth herself, especially in the final decade of the sixteenth century, as discussed above. Fletcher's poems can be just as plausibly read as a critique of Elizabeth, as opposed to 'a metaphorical mirror of the Russian tsars'.²⁸ Shvarts also discusses Fletcher's use of cold, icy imagery in direct connection with Fletcher's Russian adventure. She argues that 'the landscape of Russia becomes the linguistic landscape of his sonnets: "the frost too hard, not melted with my flame, / I Cynders am, and yet you feele no heate"'.²⁹

Fletcher did, of course, have the advantageous experience (and perhaps more developed linguistic tools) at his disposal because he had been to an icy-fiery land where 'The north parts of the Countrey are reported to be so cold, that the very ice or water which distilleth out of the moist wood which they lay upon

²⁸ Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe', p. 102.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 103.

the fire is presently congealed and frozen....that in one and the selfe same firebrand, a man shall see both fire and ice'.³⁰ Shvarts seems to be arguing that it is Fletcher's experiences in Russia that make his poetry geopolitical, 'A new world enters his literary landscape and makes his lyric poetry geopolitical rather than insular'.³¹ The other way to read this, of course, is within the popular Petrarchan literary mode of the time, seeing Fletcher's icy-fiery imagery as an act of engaging in the discourse of Petrarchan poetry. Since Fletcher had always been an aspiring poet, engaging in the new Petrarchan vogue in the 1590s was just as much about his poetry and his poetical aspirations as about his knowledge of Russia. It was rather Fletcher's current circumstances and his critical view of the world in general and the *English* Elizabethan commonwealth in particular that give the political edge to his poetry.

Fletcher's work in comparison to other love poetry of the time, does not appear to use more overtly Russian-inspired imagery than others. Spenser's sonnets provide a good example of the use of the imagery of cold and ice in love poetry of the day,

My love is lyke to yse, and I to fyre

[...]

What more miraculous thing may be told

that fire which all thing melts, should harden yse:

and yse which is congeald with senselesse cold,

should kindle fyre by wonderfull devyse?³²

³⁰ Richard Chancellor in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 285.

³¹ Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe', p. 103.

³² Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti* (London, 1595), printed in Jack D'Amico, ed., *Petrarch in England: An Anthology of Parallel Texts from Wyatt to Milton* (Ravenna, 1979), pp. 63-64.

The fact that Fletcher had been to Russia, which he alludes to through the voice of his daughter in Sonnet XXII, no doubt influenced and in some ways framed his writing of love poetry.³³ However, there are so many other streams of thought, so many other meanings implicit in his poetry, which point more to Fletcher's dissatisfaction with the current political situation in England, and with Elizabeth in particular, than to the idea of Russia being in the forefront of his mind during the composition of his love poetry.

In the epistle dedicatorie, Fletcher justified his writing of love poetry as a coping mechanism for the calamitous times he was living in, 'yet the present jarre of this disagreeing age drive me into a fitte so melancholie, as I onely had leasure to growe passionate. And I see not why upon our dissentions I may not sit downe idle, forsake my study, and goe sing of love, as well as our *Brownistes* forsake the Church, and write of malice'.³⁴ The political undertones of his poetry require further discussion, but his preface in itself speaks of his engagement with the changes in political and literary culture occurring in the 1580s and 1590s. An examination of Fletcher's love poetry reveals that the imagery of tyranny ran throughout his works and that his poetry can be read as a critique of Elizabeth and her capricious system of favour, just as his writing on Russia was a critique of tyrannical government, Elizabeth's in particular.

Considering the way that Fletcher described the times in 1593 - jarring and full of dissentions, so much so that it had dissuaded him from writing of weightier things - was it any surprise that he was being critical of the system of government if not directly of Elizabeth through the vehicle of love poetry? Fletcher's strong humanist views, his education, his travels and his diplomatic experiences and

³³ Berry, *English works*, p. 56, Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe', p. 102.

³⁴ Fletcher, *Licia*, Epistle dedicatorie.

training would have encouraged him to analyse and write about the state of governments and lands, especially if they appeared to be in error.³⁵ And on the basis that he was not being recognised or rewarded or patronised, his love poetry can be seen as an attempt to engage in the risky political game of trying to raise awareness of his service to Elizabeth that had gone unrewarded, but also the veiled critique of her form of government.³⁶ It is no coincidence that Fletcher's love poetry is followed by an appendix on tyranny - the tyranny of Richard III, based on Sir Thomas More's account in Holinshed's *Chronicles*.³⁷

a. Defending Poetic Counsel: Fletcher's prefatory material

In *Licia* Fletcher set up both his dedication and his preface to the reader as an apology for poetry. He was not alone in doing this. There are various examples, Sir Philip Sidney's most notably, of poets feeling the need to defend themselves and the writing of poetry, 'which from almost the highest estimation of learning, is fallen to be the laughingstocke of children'.³⁸ The pursuit of poetry had become an idle, light or even disreputable occupation, especially for the humanist, so concerned with the *vita activa*, and at such a tumultuous time as the late 1580s

³⁵ Bacon's or Essex's (depending on whether one finds Vickers' or Hammer's argument more plausible) advice to Roger Manners, the Earl of Rutland, that 'Above all things I would have you understand the manner of government of the place where you are' was a product of this renaissance humanist worldview that Fletcher very much participated in, observing, critiquing and counselling the government of the land one was in, be it Russia or England, see 'Advice to the Earl of Rutland on his travels' in Francis Bacon: a critical edition of the major works, Brian Vickers, ed. (Oxford, 1996), p. 79.

³⁶ Norbrook argues a similar case for the poetry of Fulke Greville, see David Norbrook, Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance, revised edition (Oxford, 2002), pp. 140-154. In 1590, Fletcher appealed to the Privy Council against the Muscovy Company for expenses that he had not been paid by the Muscovy Company in recompence for his embassy to Russia in 1588-89. See Berry, English Works, pp. 30-31.

³⁷ Raphael Holinshed, The Third volume of Chronicles (London, 1586), pp. 711-761. Berry asserts that the date of composition for Fletcher's account of Richard III is between 1577 and 1586, arguing this on the basis that Fletcher's source for the account is the version of Thomas More's account, found in Holinshed's first edition of the *Chronicles*, published in 1577. However, Thomas More's account does not appear in Holinshed's 1577 edition; rather it appears in his third volume, published in 1586. This suggests a later, post-1586 composition date for Fletcher's *The Rising to the Crowne of Richard the Third*.

³⁸ Sir Philip Sidney, The Defence of Poesie (London, 1595), sig. B₂.

and 1590s presented to the Elizabethan gentleman. In the context of war in the Netherlands against Spain, threats on the Queen's life, the tricky issue of succession, the execution of Mary Stuart, and the arduous, expensive and unsavoury process of civilising of Ireland, there were many more important things for a humanist gentleman, particularly a zealously Protestant one, to be doing than writing poetry. Nevertheless, it was within this context that Sidney wrote his *Defence of Poesie* (possibly composed 1582-83, printed 1595),³⁹ that John Harrington prefaced his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* with his own 'A preface, or rather a briefe apologie of poetrie' (1591), that William Webbe wrote his *A Discourse of English Poetrie* and that Fletcher protested in the prefatory material of his *Licia or Poemes of Loue* that 'whereas my thoughtes and some reasons drew me rather to have dealt in causes of greater weight, yet the present jarre of this disagreeing age drive me into a fitte so melancholie, as I onely had leasure to growe passionate'.⁴⁰

Sidney had defended the cause of poetry as being full of wisdom and more useful than all others because of its divine quality, 'For that some exquisite obseruing of number and measure in words, and that high flying liberty of conceit proper to the Poet, did seeme to haue some dyuine force in it'.⁴¹ Poetry was also able to create and feign, 'Onely the Poet, disdainig to be tied to any such subiection, lifted vp with the vigor of his owne inuention, dooth growe in effect, another nature, in making things either better then Nature bringeth forth, or quite a newe formes such as never were in Nature'.⁴² This was in opposition to law,

³⁹ H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Sidney, Sir Philip (1554-1586)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25522> (accessed 9 October 2007).

⁴⁰ Fletcher, *Licia*, sig. A₂.

⁴¹ Sidney, *Defence*, sig. B₃.

⁴² *ibid.*, sig. C.

which prescribed behaviour, and history, which was based on perceptions and the recording of reality, 'the lawyer sayth what men haue determined. The historian what men haue done'.⁴³

Sidney presented many examples of the way in which poetry had been elevated by other cultures for instance 'Among the Romans a Poet was called *Vates* which is as much as a Diuiner, For-seer, or Prophet...so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow vpo[n] this hart-rauishing knowledge'.⁴⁴ According to Sidney, poetry could be didactic as well as beautiful and inventive, poetry was 'a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight'.⁴⁵ Not only was the poet best suited to advise, 'But euen in the most excellent determination of goodness, what Philosophers counsel can so readily direct a Prince, as the fayned *Cyrus* in *Xenophon?* or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as *Aeneas* in *Virgill?* Or a whole Com[m]on-wealth, as the way of Sir *Thomas Mores Eutopia?*'⁴⁶ Poetry was the most palatable and accessible form of counsel and communication, for 'the Poesie is the foode for the tenderest stomacks, the Poet is indeed the right Popular Philosopher'.⁴⁷

Poetry possessed the ability to transcend the limitations of history set by reality, 'for whatsoever action, or faction, whatsoever counsell, pollicy, or warre stratagem, the Historian is bound to recite, that may the Poet (if he list) with his imitation make his own; beautifying it both for further teaching, and more delighting, as it pleaseth him'.⁴⁸ Perhaps behind Sidney's arguments for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural uses and superiority of poetry was the sense

⁴³ Sidney, *Defence*, sig. B₃.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, sig. C₂.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, sig. D_{3v}.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, sig. D_{3v}.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, sig. E_{2r}.

that even more so in a time of dissension and tumult, poetry had far more to say than history or any of the other disciplines he lists, precisely because of the inventive and counsel-like nature of it.

Fletcher pictured the 'jarring' times that caused his 'melancholie' as an excuse 'to growe passionate'.⁴⁹ However, he did not veil so completely his political concerns and critique and chose, yet again, not to hide his engagement with contemporary politics. In fact it was the contemporary situation that apparently provided Fletcher with the excuse he needed to forsake his study, neglect his duties and write love poetry, as the Brownists had forsaken the church.⁵⁰ When Fletcher mentioned the Brownists, it was not purely to situate himself. Their forsaking of the Church had some allegorical and political significance for Fletcher and for the writing of his poetry. An event that would have led to Fletcher including such a comment in his preface was most likely the notorious examinations of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow, Separatists who were tried and executed (after two pardons on the scaffold) for writing and printing seditious material.⁵¹

A connected event occurred on Wednesday 4 April 1593 when the bill 'An act to retain the Queens Majesties subjects in their due obedience' was read in Parliament for a second time. The bill was 'for reducing disloyal Subjects to their

⁴⁹ Fletcher, *Licia*, sig. A₂r.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, sig. A₂v.

⁵¹ Greenwood and Barrow were imprisoned during the autumn of 1587. They were arrested initially for refusing to attend church, a statute intended against recusants. Barrow was examined four times and both spent several years in the Fleet prison. In 1593 the bishops tried to pass a bill in Parliament that would include puritans in new anti-recusant legislation. The House of Commons rejected this and Whitgift reacted by condemning Greenwood and Barrow to death for the printing of seditious literature. On 24 March they were taken to the scaffold, but were pardoned. They were taken again to be executed a week later and were again pardoned. They were finally executed on 6 April 1593, see Patrick Collinson, 'Barrow, Henry, (c. 1550-1593)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540> (accessed 9 October 2007).

Obedience', with a particular focus on religious dissenters and Separatists.⁵² Sir Walter Raleigh's comments in this context were very telling of the climate of anxiety and concern over what to do about religious dissent and how Parliament should deal with such a situation, 'If two or three thousand Brownists meet at the Sea-side, at whose charge shall they be transported? or whither will you send them? I am sorry for it; I am afraid there is neer twenty thousand of them in England; and when they are gone, who shall maintain their Wives and Children?'⁵³ Just as the Brownists were forsaking the church, Fletcher argued he could forsake his duties and idly while away his time writing love poetry. There was, however, an element of double-speak to Fletcher's excuse: the Brownists were not just forsaking the established church, they were criticising it, 'writ[ing] of malice' and thus undermining the established order. The trope of idling away one's time in writing mere love poetry was, then, a disingenuous and politically useful one. Fletcher's justification for his poetry, that in a similar vein he would 'goe sing of love', was not an innocent retreat from the tumultuous times. Rather it was a cover for political critique.

b. Fletcher's Message to the Reader

An important theme in Fletcher's preface to the reader (and in the poetry that follows it) is his definition of love. Fletcher described love firstly from the point of view of the lover or suitor and his feelings and actions towards the beloved. This kind of love was 'fedde with admiration: respecting nothing but his

⁵² Wednesday April 4, 1593, 'Proceedings in the Commons, 1593: February 19th - April 9th', Historical Collections: or, An exact Account of the Proceedings of the Four last Parliaments of Q. Elizabeth (1680), pp. 51-78, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43547> (accessed 16 August 2007).

⁵³ Sir Walter Raleigh, Wednesday April 4, 1593, 'Proceedings in the Commons, 1593: February 19th - April 9th', Historical Collections: or, An exact Account of the Proceedings of the Four last Parliaments of Q. Elizabeth (1680), pp. 51-78, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43547> (accessed on 16 August 2007).

Ladies woorthinesse: made as happie by loue as by all faouours chaste by honour, farre from violence: respecting but one, and that one in such kindnesse, honestie, trueth, constancie and honour'.⁵⁴ What he compared this with, however, was the love with which Cupid ensnared him and the responses of his beloved. The 'love' that he received from his beloved (and that 'wherewith Venus sonne hath iniuriouslie made spoile of thousandes') was 'a cruell tyrant: occasion of sighes: oracle of lies: enemie of pittie: way of errour: shape of inconstancie: temple of treason: faith without assurance: monarch of tears: murtherer of ease: prison of heartes: monster of nature: poisoned honney'.⁵⁵ Fletcher's use of the word 'monarch' here is not incidental, for as his poetry unfolds it becomes clear that he is using the familiar trait of associating Elizabeth with Petrarch's Laura.⁵⁶ This is the image of love that he attaches to his beloved.

The comparison between true love – what the poet attempts – and the tyranny of love – what Cupid attempts and the poet receives from the beloved – is significant, politically charged and becomes far more apparent throughout the sonnets, as themes of imprisonment, cruelty and inconstancy come to the fore. Fletcher was far from alone in picturing 'love' in such a way. Other examples of picturing love as cruel and hard can be found in the poetry of Essex, Raleigh, Sir Philip Sidney and his brother, Robert.⁵⁷ The poetry of Sir Robert Sidney, who was constantly shunned in his attempts to gain advancement and attention at Court, resonates with that of Fletcher's, as we shall see,

While she her faith a prize sets to new loves,

In me faith reigns on wrongs, love on despair.

⁵⁴ Fletcher, *Licia*, sig. B.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the Petrarchan vogue in the poetry of Elizabethan courtiers see Leonard Foster, *The Icy Fire: five studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 125-146.

⁵⁷ Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, pp. 40-41 and 137-138.

Day, air, sea, brook, trees, fields, her falsehood know;

Frosts, storms, floods, fire, plague, dearth, my merits show.⁵⁸

Norbrook describes Robert Sidney's love poems as 'wintry and melancholy in their atmosphere, and full of images of violence and imprisonment', highlighting the frustration of the courtier who was constantly deferred and not given preference or attention in the court of the Virgin Queen.⁵⁹ The comparison in Fletcher's preface of a true and virtuous love that is met with a cruel and tyrannous response sets the tone for his sonnets.

Writing poetry was a distinct political act in the later sixteenth century and the writing of love poetry in particular took on added significance in the culture of patronage that Elizabeth had orchestrated based on courtliness and the suitors' duty to court the Queen. Norbrook argues this case with the example of Fulke Greville, observing that 'the idea of poetry was highly politicized in Renaissance poetry and the relationship between love and mistress serves Greville as a political metaphor....The conventions of love poetry enabled him to explore, and denounce, the psychological mechanisms by which a ruler can exploit the weaknesses of her subjects'.⁶⁰ Norbrook also demonstrates how in the poetry of Greville, this censure of Elizabeth is taken even further, criticising her arbitrary favouritism as tyrannous, and that she instils fear rather than love in her subjects, a theme that is echoed in Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* as well as in his love poetry.⁶¹

The criticism levelled at Elizabeth by these poets focused around the fickleness of Elizabeth's affection and favour, the corrupt nature of the patronage

⁵⁸ Robert Sidney, 'Pastoral 9' in *The Poems of Robert Sidney*, ed. P. J. Croft (Oxford, 1984), p. 228-9.

⁵⁹ Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 141.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp. 140-154.

system and the mockery of that system, now that Elizabeth was in her final years and not an appropriate figure for the affections and courting of young men. The issue of reward and patronage was one at the forefront of late Elizabethan love poetry and the model of Petrarch's Laura fitted the figure that Elizabeth cut of an icy cold and distant Queen, veiled in majesty, but also vain, capricious and partial to her favourites. Fletcher was not alone in complaining of the arbitrary and tyrannical nature of the courtly relationship that was created to allow men to subject themselves to a woman as Queen. It drew criticism from the increasingly unrewarded and unrequited service and devotion of her attentive suitors, particularly in the later period of her reign, when Elizabeth appeared to become more and more reluctant to reward service done in good faith and more autocratic in her rule.⁶²

c. Fletcher's Sonnets

During the 1570s and 1580s, there was a noticeable move towards the standardisation of the sonnet form in English poetry. George Gascoigne, in *The Poesies*, argued that sonnets were those poems 'of fourtene lynes, every line conteyning tenne syllables. The first twelve do ryme in staves of four lines by cross meetre, and the last two ryming together do conclude the whole'.⁶³ Shrank suggests that Gascoigne's prescriptions were 'reactive, working against a tradition in which the term sonnet was being freely applied to poems of varied rhyme scheme, length and meter'.⁶⁴ It was only from the 1580s that English sonnetteering became standardised and Fletcher was part of this movement, along

⁶² Fox, 'Complaint of poetry', pp. 229-257.

⁶³ George Gascoigne, 'Certayne notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati' in Gascoigne, *The Poesies of George Gascoigne Esquire* (London, 1575), sig. U1^v, quoted in Cathy Shrank, ' "Matters of love as of discourse": The English Sonnet, 1560-1580', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 105 (2007), p. 30.

⁶⁴ Shrank, ' "Matters of love as of discourse" ', p. 30.

with Sidney and Spenser to civilise, through standardisation, the English literary culture.⁶⁵

In writing his love poetry in the standardised sonnet form of fourteen lines, Fletcher was making a cultural statement, consistent with his previous literary aspirations. An ever-present feature of his poetry and prose works seems to be his desire to be part of a vanguard, on the cutting edge, or making a statement, which engaged with the politico-cultural climate of the time as well as exercising his own principles. Fletcher's early poetry focused around further reformation of the Church in his Latin eclogues and his later contribution to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1576). As we have seen, his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* was so politically controversial it was suppressed. By referring to the sorry state that poetry was held in, by making the Brownists' forsaking of the Church his excuse or his alibi for writing, by alluding to Beza,⁶⁶ by situating himself alongside Sidney and Harrington, by raising the issue of favour, patronage and service and by appending his love poetry with the account of the tyranny of Richard III, Fletcher was making a political statement, if veiled by his feigned 'retreat' into love poetry.

⁶⁵ George Gascoigne is an unusually early example of the standardising of the sonnet form in fourteen lines and oddities of form remain in the context of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century poetry, see Shrank, ' "Matters of love as of discourse" ', p. 30.

⁶⁶ Fletcher included a poem of Beza's at the very start of *Licia* in between the title page and the epistle dedicatorie, see Fletcher, *Licia*, title pages. See also Berry, *English Works*, p. 417. Beza, before he moved to Geneva and converted to the reformed faith, eventually becoming Calvin's biographer and successor, had been a minor poet, his *Juvenilia* being noted by Du Bellay. See Anne Lake Prescott, 'English Writers and Beza's Latin Epigrams: The uses and abuses of poetry', *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 21 (1974), pp. 84-87, 94. Fletcher introduced his love poetry through Beza's *Ad Lectorem* taken from his *Juvenilia*. Additionally in his preface he argued – in poetry's defence - that 'our English *Genevian* puritie hath quite debarred us of honest recreation; and yet the great pillar [Beza] (as they make him of that cause) hath shewed us as much witte and learning in this kinde, as any other before or since', Fletcher, *Licia*, sig. A₂v. In a similar vein, George Gascoigne explained in his epistle 'To the Divines' that 'I delight to thinke that the reverend father Theodore Beza, whose life is worthily become a lanterne to the whole worlde, did not yet disdain to suffer the continued publication of such Poemes as he wrote in youth', George Gascoigne, 'To the Reverende Divines' in *The Poesies*, ed. John W. Cunliffe (Cambridge, 1907), p. 6. Fletcher's use of Beza's poem and his reference to Beza in the preface to *Licia* was certainly not neutral, but used as further justification and defence of his love poetry.

The themes found in Fletcher's poetry imitate those found in the new outpouring of love sonnets in the 1580s-1590s and his work creatively contributed to this vogue.⁶⁷ A continental influence that was particularly notable in the love poetry of the late Elizabethan period was that of Petrarch. Petrarch had ostensibly been in love with a married woman and his poems discussed the torture and suffering of unrequited love, the poet-lover's sexual and spiritual frustrations in relation to his unattainable beloved, and his moral responsibilities to God.⁶⁸ Petrarch's poetry was full of oxymoronic language and paradoxical extremes, describing the torture of loving an unapproachable woman, being at once enchained and free. Much poetry of the time focused on the Petrarchan conceits of antithesis. Petrarch's poet-lover could 'find no peace and have no strength to make war, and I fear and hope, I burn and I am ice, and I fly above the heavens and lie upon the ground, and I grasp nothing and all the world I embrace'.⁶⁹ Themes found in Petrarch's poetry and made popular in England by the likes of Wyatt, Surrey, Gascoigne, Drayton and Sidney to name but a few, centred around the captivity and tyranny of love – 'One imprisons, who nor opens nor locks / Neither makes me hers nor unties the noose / And love does not kill and does not unchain'.⁷⁰ The unhappiness and suffering of the lover, finding himself constantly at extremes, 'In these two extremes, contrary and mixed, / Now with desire frozen

⁶⁷ Steven May argues that courtly love motifs and amorous verse, especially sonnets, disappeared from English poetry between 1547 and 1570, and re-emerged during the 1570s and 1580s, culminating in the outpouring of sonnet compositions in the 1590s, see Steven W. May, The Elizabethan Courtier Poets; the poems and their contexts (Columbia, 1991), pp. 41-68. For examples of this vogue of love poetry, see Barnabe Barnes, Parthenophil and Parthenophe (London, 1593), Henry Constable, Diana (London, 1592), Samuel Daniel, Delia (London, 1592), Thomas Lodge, Phylis (1593), Sir Philip Sidney, Astrophil and Stella (London, 1591) and Edmund Spenser, Amoretti (London, 1595) and Epithalamion (London, 1595).

⁶⁸ Thomas P. Roche, Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences (New York, 1989), pp. 1-70. See also William J. Kennedy, 'Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Petrarchism' in Early Modern English Poetry; a critical companion, eds. Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (New York and Oxford, 2007), pp. 70-71.

⁶⁹ Translation of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* 134, quoted from Stephen Minta, Petrarch and Petrarchism; the English and French Traditions (Manchester, 1980), p. 12.

⁷⁰ Translation of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* 134, quoted from D'Amico, Petrarch in England, p. 134.

now fired, it / Stands thus between misery and happiness', was also an oft-repeated theme in Petrarch's poetry and Petrarchism in England.⁷¹

In *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* Barnes provides a clear example of the oxymoronic extremes that love brought to the soul and self, further emphasised by the chiasmic structure of his verse, 'I burne yet am I cold, I am a could yet burne / In pleasing discontent, in discontentment pleased / Diseases'd I am in health, and health-full am diseased'.⁷² Similar themes were clearly played out by Fletcher in his poetry but for more politically resonant causes, as opposed to poetry written for a literal 'beloved' of his. Fletcher raised this very point in his preface by suggesting that readers would think him in love, 'Nowe in that I have written Love sonnets, if any man measure my affection by my style, let him say, I am in Love; no greate matter....a man may write of love, and not bee in love, as well as of husbandrie, and not goe to plough'.⁷³ The ambiguity surrounding this comment points again to the political undertones of the poetry and its multiple meanings. In a similar vein to Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, Fletcher employed the Petrarchan tradition to engage in the discourse of the courtly suitor, as well as criticising the focus of the Court, the Queen herself and the culture of courting her with the language of love for the purposes of gaining patronage and political status.⁷⁴

The culture of courting the Queen for political aggrandizement or patronage was an insecure business. Having to submit to a woman in the first place was difficult in early modern culture, so this was made palatable by the culture of courting the Queen as if being in love and submitting out of love, as a suitor would. However, such courting of the Queen did not guarantee preferment

⁷¹ Translation of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* 173, *ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷² Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, Sonnet 13, printed in D'Amico, *Petrarch in England*, pp. 93-94.

⁷³ Fletcher, *Licia*, Epistle Dedicatorie, sig. A₃.

⁷⁴ Kennedy, 'Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*', pp. 74-76.

or success, politically and economically. The Queen had favourites at court and the game of feigning love of the Queen to gain patronage bound courtiers to a sometimes ridiculous performance of service and courtly flattery in the vain hope of preferment and reward. It is no surprise that the poetry of Petrarch - that of unrequited love - was appropriated for the English Courtly context of unrequited service and favour. Courtiers' attempts to gain favour and reward were often fruitless.

Sir Walter Raleigh in his 'The Ocean to Cynthia' complained of the Queen's arbitrary practice of giving out reward on a whim.⁷⁵ Fletcher depicted Licia as disregarding and indifferent to his labours of love: 'Too Tyger-like you swear, you cannot love: / But teares, and sighes, you fruitlesse backe have sent'.⁷⁶ Fletcher wrote of the problems of gaining Elizabeth's favour and patronage more transparently in Sonnet XL,

Whose sweet commandes, did keepe a world in awe:

And caus'd them serve, your favour to obtaine

[...]

Where each with sighes, paid tribute to that crowne:

And thought them graced, by your dumme replyes.

But I, ambitious, could not be content:

Till that my service, more than sighes made knowne.⁷⁷

Fletcher's verse alluded to his faithful service to the Queen as her ambassador in Stade and Russia and his desire for preference and reward, but the bitterness of his depiction of 'your dumme replyes' points to the increasing frustration of those,

⁷⁵ Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 136.

⁷⁶ Fletcher, *Licia*, Sonnet VIII, p. 9.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, Sonnet XL, p. 41.

like Fletcher, whose service was not rewarded and whose requests fell on deaf ears.

It thus left the courtier or poet trapped in a relationship where he was bound to be in love with the Queen, to be captive and imprisoned and in thrall to her, but with no promise of being liberated, 'Thus smiles, and wordes, so cruell and so bold: / So blushing wise, my thoughtes in prison hold'.⁷⁸ The courtier's role was merely to be devoted to the beloved, to be enchained in love and to submit to being held captive by the Queen, and obey her commands. Fletcher depicted this through the cruel power of Licia, 'Love with her haire, my love, by force hath ty'd / To serve her lippes, her eies, her voice, her hand....to lie inchain'd, and live at her commaund'.⁷⁹ This echoes with the situation of Elizabethan courtiers and subjects in thrall to Elizabeth, who were bound to approach her in the language of love, but never to have her as she was married to the land, the eternal Virgin Queen.

In Fletcher's sonnets, even Cupid, the god of love, becomes enthralled to Licia, to the rage of Venus his mother, and in this way the natural order is turned upside down as the son of the gods is imprisoned by a mere mortal, and a woman at that. In Sonnet XIII Fletcher described the image of Jove, the mightiest of the gods, being enamoured and yet sleighted in his affection for Licia. Intreating Cupid to wound Licia with love for Jove, Cupid 'swore he could not, for she wanted heate, / And would not love. As he full oft had try'd'.⁸⁰ In response Jove became enraged and threatened Cupid, who retreated to Licia's eyes and safety

For now more safe than in the heavens he dwell'd,

Nor could Loves wrath, doe wrong to such a place,

⁷⁸ Fletcher, *Licia*, 'A lover's maze', p. 62.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, Sonnet V, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, Sonnet XIII, p. 14.

Where grace and honour, have their kingdome helde.

Thus in the pride, and beautie of her eyes:

The seelie boye, the greatest god defies.⁸¹

Licia is of such a hard heart that Cupid cannot wound her with love, but paradoxically Cupid also finds refuge from the angry gods in Licia's safety, implying that Licia, with her beauty, virtue and honour was more powerful than the gods of old and that in Licia's realm nothing could touch him. Licia then, by her very existence, inverted the natural balance of power, as a mortal providing refuge for the son of Venus, from the anger of Jove. Licia in her majesty, thrall, virtue and hardness, had upturned the natural order, made the poet, and even Cupid, so in love as to be her prisoners, and had somehow achieved immortality and the guise of constancy (as opposed to mutability⁸²) despite her cruelty, caprice and inconstancy,

The heauens did graunt: a goddesse she was made,

Immortall, faire, unfit to suffer chaung,

So now she lives, and never more shall fade,

In earth a goddesse, what can be more strange?⁸³

Fletcher's sonnets are frequently punctuated with Petrarchan images of Licia as cruel, hard and cold,

Harde are the rockes, the marble, and the steele

⁸¹ Fletcher, *Licia*, Sonnet XIII, p. 14.

⁸² Fletcher's discussion of Licia's (read: Queen Elizabeth's) inconstancy centres around the symbol of kisses. The poet-lover asks his beloved for a kiss, she kisses him, but then stops and retreats, as if merely playing with him, either through inconstancy or indecision. He responds 'Thus whilest I live, for kisses I must call, / Still kisse me, (sweete) or kisse me not at all', see Fletcher, *Licia*, Sonnet XVI, p. 17. Fletcher's discussion of inconstancy through kisses is suggestively symbolic of the Queen's inconsistency and fickleness in regard to reward, patronage and favourites at Court, perhaps implying that the Queen had raised his expectations about receiving favour and reward from her, but was in reality inconstant in the act of bestowing such favour.

⁸³ *ibid.*, Sonnet XXIII, p. 25.

The auncient oake, with wind, and weather tost

But you my love, farre harder doe I feele

Then flinte, or these, or is the winters frost.⁸⁴

The use of paradoxical and oxymoronic imagery, so reminiscent of Petrarch's depiction of love's icy fire in his emotions for his beloved Laura, also finds its way into Fletcher's depiction of Licia,

Colde are her lippes, because they breath no heate.

Not colde her lippes: because my heart they burne.

Ise are her handes, because the snow's so great.

Not Ise her handes, that all to ashes turne.

Thus lippes and handes, cold Ise my sorrowe bred

Hands warm-white-snow, and lippes, cold cherrie red.⁸⁵

However, Licia strikes a much more dynamic figure than that of the passive Petrarchan Laura. In Fletcher's sonnets, the cruelty and tyranny of unrequited love is very much bound up in the cruel actions of Licia herself, whereas the trope of tyranny surrounding Laura only exists in the circumstances of her marriage to someone else. Fletcher, the poet, is a critic of Licia's behaviour, rather than a mere devoted, marvelling and despairing victim of the tyrannous circumstances of love. A particularly horrifying image of Licia is depicted by Fletcher in her sadistic reaction to Cupid when he attempts to steal a kiss from her whilst she is sleeping. In response,

Seeing t'was love which she did thinke was death:

She cut his winges, and caused him to stay

[...]

⁸⁴ Fletcher, *Licia*, Sonnet VIII, p. 9.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 'A lover's maze', p. 62.

His feathers still, she used for a fanne:

Till by exchange, my heart his feathers wan.⁸⁶

In another act of cruelty, Licia steals Cupid's armour and weapons when he is asleep,

Licia the faire, this harme to thee hath done

I sawe her here, and presentlie was gone

She will restore them, for she hath no need

To take thy weapons, where thy valour lies

For men to wound, the Fates have her decreed.⁸⁷

Licia's cruel and capricious behaviour could be read as a disparaging depiction of the way in which Elizabeth ruled over her male courtiers and is suggestive of Fletcher taking a critical stance on Elizabeth and her manner of government. Essex had similarly complained, through the medium of poetry, that the Queen treated him in an arbitrary and cruel fashion,

She useth the aduantage tyme and fortune gave,

Of worth and power to gett the libertie;

Earth, Sea, Heaven, Hell, are subject unto lawes,

But I, poore I, must suffer and knowe noe cause.⁸⁸

d. Concluding Thoughts

Fletcher's poetry, then, not only encapsulated the particularly *en vogue* influence of Petrarch, but also contributed to the standardisation of the English sonnet, in a time of political and cultural instability. In publishing his poetry, Fletcher also contributed, through his prefatory material, to the important debate

⁸⁶ Fletcher, *Licia*, Sonnet XIII, p. 15.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, Sonnet IX, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 137.

regarding the defence of poetry as a valid and valuable part of the commonwealth, emerging in the 1570s and coming to the fore in the 1590s. This debate was politically charged, in terms of its connection to both religion and culture, and the role of the poet and poetry in providing stability, counsel and identity to the land. This issue was especially pertinent towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, at a time when anxiety over the succession became acute, due to the aging of the Queen, the economic, political and social stress and strain of the ongoing war with Spain and the distinctly un-mixed tenor of Elizabeth's monarchy, revealed in increased censorship and a reduction in literary patronage.

Fletcher's literary aspirations and risk-taking did not find the favour in Court and with Elizabeth that he had been looking for. However, the nature of his literary projects seems to suggest that Fletcher was more concerned with his own personal values, political engagement and challenging the establishment, as opposed to flattery and dissimulation. The prefatory matter of his poetry showed his alignment with such worthy and zealously Protestant poets as Spenser, Sidney and Harington. His appendix relating the fate of Richard III suggests an alignment to Sir Thomas More, which his writing on Russia also seemed to connect with. The erotic nature of his love poetry made a clear break with the more conservative and puritan branches of Protestantism, and yet did not alienate him from the radical and zealous Protestantism of Leicester and Essex. The politically-charged and theoretical dissection of the tyrannous and barbaric state of Russia in his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* and the tyranny of love in his poetry again points to an authorial perspective that was more concerned with expressing humanist ideals as opposed to toeing the line, or conservative service giving and flattery.

iii) 'My syncere love and incorrupt hart towards hir Maiestie my most deer
Soveraign': Fletcher's later career⁸⁹

Over the next few years Fletcher petitioned Lord Burghley several times for patronage, and made a further attempt in 1596, despite Burghley's earlier suppression of his work. In the face of Burghley's continual refusal to support him, Fletcher turned to the Earl of Essex in the hope that his reputation as a man of letters, the Remembrancer of London, and his Protestant commitment would stand him in good stead to gain Essex's patronage. Fletcher was successful in gaining the Earl's support, but as correspondence between the Earl and his secretary Reynoldes seems to suggest, Essex's motives for supporting Fletcher were perhaps more calculating than honourable, hoping to exploit Fletcher's influence in London, 'And yf it could be let falle to the Cittizens by Mr Dr. Fletcher howe fit this opportunitie werre for the makinge of Callais Englishe and that they would make some offer to the Queen to that ende it would mucche advance the busines. But he must doo as onlie sollicitated by the occasion itself...'⁹⁰

At the sudden death of Giles' brother, Richard Fletcher, Bishop of London, in June 1596, Fletcher was put under great financial strain as executor of Richard's debts, estate and with the charge to look after Richard's eight children. Richard Fletcher had many debts to the Queen that needed to be paid. Fletcher was assisted by Essex in his petitions to Elizabeth to relieve him of the debts of his brother, in which he was successful.⁹¹ Essex was most likely an influential party in Fletcher's advantageous appointment as Treasurer of St Paul's in 1597. However, Essex's continued patronage proved to have a detrimental effect on

⁸⁹ Letter from Fletcher to Sir Robert Cecil, 28 February 1601, Hatfield, Cecil Papers 77.4, reprinted in Berry, *English Works*, p. 404.

⁹⁰ Letter from the Earl of Essex to Reynoldes, July 1596, Lambeth MS 658, f. 93, reprinted and discussed in Berry, *English Works*, pp. 36, 37.

⁹¹ Berry, *English Works*, pp. 35-36, 38-39, 392-396.

Fletcher's career within a few years.

Essex's revolt in 1601 implicated Fletcher, who was arrested for examination on the 14 February 1601 and was kept in custody until mid-March. He strongly protested his innocence and finally sent a confession to the Privy Council at the beginning of March claiming that he had been taken in by Essex, believing his deceptions about threats on the Earl's life, and had no part in the organization of Essex's rebellion. Fletcher also suggested that William Temple, who was a suspected accomplice, had been equally deceived.⁹² Though his positions as Remembrancer and Treasurer to St Paul's were not taken away from him, despite petitions for this course of action, and though his innocence was implicitly upheld by the retaining of these offices, Berry suggests that Fletcher suffered from the association for the rest of his life.⁹³

The final literary work that Fletcher produced was a treatise on the fate and current location of the lost tribes of Israel. Fletcher wrote *The Tartars or Ten Tribes* sometime between 1609 and 1611, when Fletcher died. The treatise was eventually published in 1677 by Samuel Lee in his *Israel Redux*.⁹⁴ Fletcher's text on the Tartars was significant in being the first work written in English to argue that the lost tribes of Israel were in fact the Tartars. This treatise was also one of the first to be written in England, in any language, to suggest that not only were the Tartars the lost tribes, but that they would also convert to Christianity, return to Palestine and initiate the millenium in Jerusalem with repatriated, converted Jews.⁹⁵ Even in his dying years, Fletcher's religious radicalism remained at the forefront of his mind and his experiences of Russia continued to inform his

⁹² Berry, *English Works*, pp. 44-46 and 'Fletcher's Confession', Fletcher to the Privy Council, 3 March 1601, SP 12/279, no. 23, reprinted in Berry, *English Works*, pp. 405-408.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 309.

⁹⁵ Cogley, ' "The most vile and barbarous nation" ', pp. 781-782.

worldview twenty years after his impressive, if arduous, embassy.

As a successful diplomat, civil lawyer and humanist poet of advanced protestant views, who supported a virtuous nobility offering good counsel, Fletcher's career prospects in the 1590s could have gone either way. Had Fletcher been successful in attaining Burghley's approval and patronage, his career may well have looked very different, untainted by censorship and with the possibility of patronage for his later poetry. Fletcher chose to publish his poetry anonymously, he petitioned Burghley for patronage several times without success, he does not seem to have gained substantial patronage from anyone until Essex took him under his wing in 1596 and he subsequently came under suspicion of complicity in Essex's plot. All of this evidence seems to suggest that although he managed to keep afloat and received several appointments in the service of the Queen and commonwealth, his promising literary career was, if not blighted, then at least stifled, due to his unacceptable political stance and his attempts to counsel Queen and Commonwealth, as a mere private subject.

The assertion that Fletcher's writing and subsequent censorship of his work on Russia proved damaging to his future career path must, however, be set in the balance of the climate of the 1590s. Fletcher's promising literary career would have been complicated, just as much as anything else and anyone else's, by the significant depletion in literary patronage during the 1590s, particularly from the Crown. Fox makes the pertinent point that the diminution of literary patronage was a clear 'sign of a regime in trouble'.⁹⁶ It is not without consequence that it was Essex - the zealous defender of European Protestantism, self-fashioned virtuous protector of godly English civility and commonwealth and noble patron

⁹⁶ Fox, 'Complaint of poetry', pp. 229-257, especially p. 241.

of the arts who took on the financial burden of Fletcher.⁹⁷ Significantly, and perhaps inevitably given the censorship of his work and the anonymous publication of his poetry, Fletcher was not favoured in the outpouring of James I's patronage in the early seventeenth century and seems to have spent the rest of his days petitioning for patronage without success.⁹⁸ Fletcher's last words, as reported by his son Phineas, perhaps point to the principles and underlying ideology that drove Fletcher's desire and purposes in writing of things that were 'rather true then strange' and had a didactic and moral purpose as opposed to ambition for political and economic gain: 'had I followed the course of this World, and would either have given, or taken bribes, I might (happily) have made you rich, but now must leave you nothing but your education'.⁹⁹

It is not clear exactly what impact writing England, through his description of Russia and through his poetry, had on Fletcher's career. But this analysis of his writing, the contrast with his more practical concerns in government service, and the ambiguous place he and his texts held in Elizabethan politics demonstrate that, in this case at least, 'travel writing' had significances and political consequences closer to home. This was not just orientalisising discourse, applying humanist models to a reified Other, but an example of how new lands and exotic encounters were 'good to think with', if controversial and dangerous for the individual who thought with them.

⁹⁷ Essex was a patron of accomplished scholars and academics such as Henry Savile, Henry Wotton, Henry Cuffe and William Whitaker. See Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 300-307. He was a possible supporter of the aspiring poet, Edmund Spenser. See Hadfield, 'Spenser', <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26145> (accessed 17 April 2007). Essex was also a poet himself, see Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 136-7 and p. 86.

⁹⁸ Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 175.

⁹⁹ Phineas Fletcher, *A Fathers Testament* (1670), sig. B1v, quoted in Munro, 'Fletcher', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9726> (accessed 23 March 2007).

Although it is difficult to be precise, it seems clear that Fletcher's invented commonwealth of Russia did him few favours in securing financial or professional security or literary acclaim at the time. However, his text, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, had a fascinating afterlife. This will be discussed in the following chapter, which examines why Fletcher's text on the Russian Commonwealth became a text of Russian history and was thought to be significant enough to reprint in 1643 and 1657 as *The History of Russia or the Government of the Emperour of Muscovia with the manners and fashions of the people of that countrey*. Perhaps by then the term 'commonwealth' had become too loaded and politically charged and was replaced with the concept of 'history' as opposed to the threatening nature of the poet's feigned commonwealth.

Chapter 6 - A Commonwealth's Tyranny: the afterlife of Giles Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth*

There was a blessed Vnion betwixt God and man, till mans sin broke the Peace, since which time wee are all up in Armes against his Majesty, and having mustered up all our forces, our rebellious and corrupt affections, we still march on in a course of sinning.

G.S. A Briefe Declaration of the Barbarous And Inhumane dealings of the Northerne Irish Rebels (London, 1641)

Fletcher's work of counsel on how to govern a commonwealth through the image of Russian tyranny has had a persistent claim to relevance and appeal, proving useful in varying political contexts. The afterlife of Fletcher's work opens up a discussion of why texts reappear at times of crisis and consideration of government and liberty. The publishing decisions to reprint this comprehensive sixteenth century account of the land of Russia throughout the following centuries are testament to how Fletcher's Russian tyranny remained good to think with. This chapter examines in detail the first reprinting of Fletcher's text in the tumultuous context of English civil war and the following experiments in government in the 1650s. It also discusses the fascinating legacy of Fletcher's text in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, examining in what contexts it became appealing and politically useful to resurrect Fletcher's analysis of tyranny through the image of Russia.

In late December 1641, the newsbooks and popular print of England were full of tales of treachery, barbarity, tyranny and popish plots against England's true religion, Protestantism, and the ancient liberties of the commonwealth. The catalyst for this particular outburst of anti-popish polemic was the Irish rebellion,

which had begun in Ulster in October 1641.¹ An anti-popish, as well as seemingly pro-royalist, pamphlet asked aghast ‘what shall we say of the ravishing of women before their owne Husbands faces, yea some greene women lying in child-bed, burning Churches....making other Churches slaughter-houses and other Masse Houses, pulling downe the Kings Armes and defacing them? Time would faile me to reckon up all their outrages in this kind’.² Other pamphlets declared the ‘bloody newes from Ireland’, the ‘barbarous crueltie by the Papists’ and the ‘traiterous conspiracy of the rebellious papists’.³ The discourse of barbarity was not just applied to the Irish and their rebellious uprising, resulting supposedly in great massacres of English settlers. It was also being used in reference to the huge constitutional conflicts, the resulting social and political disorder and the eventual open warfare, increasingly apparent day by day in the English commonwealth during the early 1640s.

The violent polemic applied to the case of the Irish uprising in the autumn and winter of 1641 was indicative of a deeper-seated fear within England of social and political disorder spiraling into confusion, conflict and barbarity. The language and polemic employed in the pamphlet response to the Irish rebellion was one of familiar religious martyrdom, normalized and embedded by a Foxean tradition of seeing England as God’s chosen and beleaguered Protestant vanguard

¹ Nicholas P. Canny, ‘Religion, politics and the Irish rising of 1641’ in Religion and rebellion: papers read before the 22nd Irish Conference of Historians, held at University College Dublin, 18-22 May 1995, ed. Judith Devlin and Ronan Fanning, Historical Studies, vol. 20 (Dublin, 1997), pp. 40-70. See also Nicholas Canny, ‘What really happened in Ireland in 1641?’ in Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641-1660, ed. Jane H. Ohlmeyer (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 24-42 and David A. O’Hara, ‘English newsbooks and the outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1641’, Media History, vol. 9, no. 3 (2003), pp. 180-193.

² G. S., A Briefe Declaration of the Barbarous And Inhumane dealings of the Northerne Irish Rebels (London, 1641), p. 6.

³ James Salmon, Bloody Newes from Ireland, or the barbarous crueltie by the Papists used in that Kingdome (London, 1641), A copy of a letter concerning the traiterovs conspiracy of the rebellious papists in Ireland being a true relation (London, 1641) and A Great conspiracy by the papists in the Kingdome of Ireland discovered by the lords, justices and counsell at Dublin (London, 1641).

pitted against the Antichrist.⁴ Bound up in both the collective martyrologist rhetoric of these pamphlets and the Erastian, loyalist presentation of the Irish events, was a fear of infectious atrocity and barbarity akin to that witnessed on the Continent in the Thirty Years War. This was a theme that was played out more fully in the pamphlet literature of the following years, when the plundering of towns by Prince Rupert seemed to provide proof that not only was England turning Irish, England had turned Germany.⁵

There are also strands in the pamphlet literature of a non-partisan response to the worrying crisis of how to resolve the impasse between Crown and Parliament and the acute anxiety that the only recently established reformed Protestant (and thus true and blessed) commonwealth would be brought to its knees by popish conspiracy. A pamphlet such as *Englands Division and Irelands Distraction* reveals quite clearly how the Irish rebellion was used not as propaganda for either Parliament or the Crown, but to reflect on the disorders, confusion and political conflict at large in England in 1642, to connect the fates of both kingdoms around the fear of barbarity and to express the increasingly popular (in 1642) desire for peace in the face of conflict. The subtitle of *Englands Division and Ireland's Distraction* reflects such anxieties: 'The fears and disasters of one, the teares and distresses of the other; Being the just cause and sad occasion of both Kingdomes Deploration. Containing a Declaration, or Remonstrance of the present state and condition of this Realme of England, and that of Ireland.'

⁴ See Ethan Shagan's enlightening study on the pamphlet literature surrounding the Irish rebellion of 1641, Ethan Howard Shagan, 'Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and English Responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1 (January, 1997), pp. 11-12.

⁵ Ian Roy, 'England turned Germany? The Aftermath of the Civil War in its European Context' in *The English Civil War: the essential readings*, ed. Peter Gaunt (Oxford, 2000), pp. 249-267.

Written by one, who in unfained love to his Native Countrey, and entire affection to the Neighbour Nation, would sacrifice his life for the peace of either'.⁶

By the end of 1642, the vagaries and toll of civil war could clearly be seen across the land and were publicized daily in the popular press. The attempted neutralism of some counties during this initial period of civil war and great efforts at petitioning to bring about peace negotiations in late 1642 were testament to a general disillusionment with war and the political situation, especially as there had been no decisive victories either way.⁷ In this context, civil war itself was the epitome of barbarity, according to one commentator's understanding of both Cicero and the current political situation: 'any peace is better than civill war. In civill wars (indeed the most uncvill and barbarous of all other) the Father fights against the Sonne, and the Sonne against the Father, Brother against Brother, Kinsman against Kinsman; These massacres are most inhumane and unnaturall, wherein all bonds of affinity, consanguinity and humanity are violently broken and dissolved'.⁸ This anonymous author's opinion may well have been representative of those presenting peace petitions in the summer and autumn of 1642, but he was not representative of a more hardline parliamentarian position, which would not negotiate terms that would diminish any of the previous constitutional struggles they had won, nor the King himself who would not countenance peace negotiations that would significantly diminish his royal authority.

⁶ Englands Division and Ireland's Distraction (London, 1642), Title page.

⁷ Michael Braddick, God's Fury, England's Fire: A new History of the English Civil Wars (London, 2008), pp. 218-221. See also Barry Coward, The Stuart Age: A history of England 1603-1714 (London and New York, 1980), pp. 174-177.

⁸ Englands Division, p. 4.

With the failure of the peace treaty negotiations in Oxford at the beginning of 1643, the first of the civil wars solidified.⁹ This was despite the parity of the ideological positions of Crown and Parliament and despite the damage being caused to the body politic itself, 'if ever it was bad, it is most malignant at this time; for it is a fatall war in the very bowels of the Nation, with our owne Brethren and Countrey-men in the flesh, and will be most destructive to the whole Kingdome'.¹⁰ Later on during the English civil wars, the discourse of barbarity would be invoked and applied to Englishmen by both parliamentarian and royalist propaganda, religious pamphlet literature and even a tract from the Emperor of Russia, condemning the sorry and barbaric state that England, from its civil heights, had fallen to. The realities of civil warfare included periods of intense fighting, the imposition of soldiers on civilian households and the trauma of plunder and loss of men, goods and security. On top of this, there were extraordinary taxes to pay for the conflict, vicious pamphlet wars, the ever-present and particularly potent fear of a popish plot to subvert the true Church and the Commonwealth championing it. This social, economic and political tumult was overarched by confusion in government and the most fundamental crisis of a monarch taking up arms against his people and the people taking up arms against the threat of tyranny posed by a king, poisoned by evil counselors.

The year of 1643 was punctuated by battles and negotiation, government-organised iconoclasm in the name of reformation and increasing political radicalism.¹¹ Open war between Parliament and monarch brought extraordinary costs to both, and to the country itself. The unusual and remarkable financial measures that Parliament took in order to raise funds for war against Charles

⁹ Coward, *Stuart Age*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁰ *Englands Division*, p. 4.

¹¹ Braddick, *God's Fury*, p. 275.

began with the Act of £400,000 in March 1642. This was followed by more radical measures in 1643 such as the weekly assessments, sequestrations and compulsory loans, as well as the suggestion of an excise.¹² Thus by 1643, Parliament was imposing 'taxes far heavier than Charles had imposed, with little better legal justification; and financial penalties with much wider impact than the notorious fines of the Personal Rule'.¹³

It was not only in fiscal policy, but also in the Parliamentary administration in general, that Parliament had to make radical and novel innovations, which eventually led people to view Parliament as an equally tyrannous power. Although this sentiment may have only been in its inception in 1643, it was being openly expressed by 1647, especially against the numerous committees set up by Parliament in the earlier 1640s to deal with the realities of warfare and rivaling the established administration of the Crown, 'these exorbitant and oppressing committees go further in abusing the subjects with arbitrary power in some things than ever king, royalist or any illegal court did'.¹⁴

In 1643, although Parliament may not have been accused of arbitrary government and tyrannous behaviour by the majority of people, in the royalist camp the barbarity (and hypocrisy) of Parliamentary actions was publicly recorded with great relish as propaganda for the royalist cause, detailing 'their acts of Cruelty & Rapine', their torture, 'In this torment they continued the poore soule, until both his hands were shamefully burnt, not being able to relieve himself by that discovery for which they Tortured him', their injustice, 'after

¹² In March 1643, John Pym proposed an excise. This was a 'scandalous' tax to propose in Stuart England, especially by one who ostensibly stood for the 'liberty of the subject', see Braddick, *God's Fury*, pp. 268-270.

¹³ Braddick, *God's Fury*, p. 270.

¹⁴ *England's Remembrancer of London's Integrity of Newes from London* (1647), p. 17, quoted in Ann Hughes, 'Parliamentary Tyranny? Indemnity proceedings and the impact of the civil war: a case study from Warwickshire', *Midland History*, vol. 11 (1986), p. 52.

seven weekes close Imprisonment, no Impeachment in all that time brought against him', and their 'barbarous cruelty...[and] inhumanity'.¹⁵

This was a time when the most bewildering constitutional events were taking place, challenging people to think through what was politically, socially and personally of utmost importance to them and necessitating difficult decisions that could alienate them from family and friends. Yet this was also a time when allegiances were loose, flexible and constantly changing, depending on the fall-out of events and the need to keep a hold on ancient rights and fundamental principles of government, as well as the livelihood and identity that were under threat as never before. As the underlying political and traditional blocks around which people built their security were pulled out from under them, as the legitimacy of the king, state and church were questioned, novel ideas and cultural creativity abounded, thinking through fundamental political issues and the elements that held Commonwealths together.

Into this context, a pocket-book ostensibly about the government and people of Russia was cast. This was the new edition of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* now renamed *The History of Russia or the Government of the Emperour of Muscovia with the manners and fashions of the people of that country*. A closer read of the text has already revealed that it was concerned with the nature of tyranny, what tyrannical government looked like and how such a government corrupted and ruined a potentially civil people and land. The personal 'tyrannous' rule of Charles during the 1630s and the dizzying political changes and events in the following years and months involving political wrangling between monarch and counsellors, as well as those representing Scottish and Irish

¹⁵ Mercurivvs Rusticvs, or The Countries Complaint of the Murthers, Robberies, Plundrings, and other Outrages, Committed, By the Rebels, on his Majesties faithfull Subjects (May 20, 1643), sig. A4v and pp. 7, 5, 7 respectively.

interests and grievances, provided the backcloth to the reprinting of Fletcher's text. This backcloth was embroidered with the slide into open war, the unsuccessful attempts at negotiation and reconciliation between crown and parliament, monarch and subjects, as well as the continuing climate of warfare and confusion over the future of English government and commonwealth. In this context, Fletcher's reprinted *History of Russia* was a text that spoke right to the heart of the educated person's anxieties and worldview. But what was it, exactly, about Fletcher's text on Russia that made it worth the effort of reprinting, in a context where thoughts of war, the security of the commonwealth, the stress of ever-increasing taxation and mere survival were at the forefront of most people's minds? Survival, or at least how to economically cope with the drastic events unfolding in England would have been at the forefront of the minds of numerous printers and booksellers.¹⁶ In a time like this, how was one to accurately read the market and make a living? What kind of book would sell in such a climate of fear and insecurity? And what external threats and influences played a part in the choice to print?

i.) Reprinting *The Russe Commonwealth*: a new edition

The new edition of Giles Fletcher's account of Russia was printed by Roger Daniel, the Cambridge University Printer, in 1643.¹⁷ Daniel had been appointed the University Printer in July 1632, although he had been actively

¹⁶ Shagan, 'Constructing Discord', p. 9.

¹⁷ Berry has plausibly argued for the case of Roger Daniel as printer for the 1643 edition. See Lloyd E. Berry, ed., *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder* (Madison, 1964), pp. 159-160. Thomas Buck may well have also been involved in the reprinting of Fletcher's text as Buck and Daniel worked together on the University Press. However, Buck was more inclined to print study texts and school books, whereas Daniel sought to print works that promoted the honour and prestige of the University. See below for further discussion of the politics and history of the university printing press.

involved as the London Bookseller of the Cambridge University Press, run by Thomas Buck, since the late 1620s.¹⁸ During these years, there emerged a series of intricate agreements between the Bucks – Thomas, John and Francis - and Roger Daniel, which allowed Daniel executive authority and responsibility over the practical workings of the press in return for him providing the Bucks with a regular income. By July 1632, when Daniel formally received the position of University Printer, Thomas Buck had managed to muscle out his two brothers from a share in the Cambridge printing press and took full advantage of exploiting the skills of Daniel for his own income.

Daniel was in a situation where he was dependent on Buck for the printing equipment, property and use of his printing house and apprentices, in return for an annual rent paid to Buck of £190.¹⁹ Daniel was often in a position of subdued compliance to Buck's whims and ideas, as Buck owned the printing house and equipment, and Daniel worked the press to bring him profit. Or at least, this is how Buck saw the situation. Daniel, on the other hand, and despite being in a position of reliance on the favour of Buck, was at pains to use the Cambridge University Press for higher ends than merely the financial gains of the Bucks. Daniel believed that the University press should bring honour and renown to the University rather than financial gain, and he worked diligently, often to the chagrin and antagonism of Buck, to this end.²⁰

Daniel's disappointment at Buck's controversial agreements with the Stationer's Company during the 1630s revealed his idealism for the role of the University Press: the 'University Presse is servant to the said Stationer's and the

¹⁸ David McKitterick, A History of Cambridge University Press, volume 1: Printing and the Book Trade in Cambridge, 1534-1698 (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 171, 168-170.

¹⁹ McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, pp. 170-171.

²⁰ ibid., p. 174.

University and commonwealth deprived of that benefit which is intended by our Privelege', perhaps also a reflection of Daniel's position as practically servant to Buck.²¹ Buck and Daniel's differing views and stormy relationship in the end led to Buck bringing charges against Daniel's 'malpractice' and disobedience against all authorities over him, and Daniel's eventual dismissal in 1650. Daniel's gloss on their professional relationship was critical, to say the least, and explained their differing attitudes to the University press:

Perceiving that I was able to goe on wth y^e printing business wth out his helpe and that I was Forward and willing to print other books w^{ch}: would more honour the Universite presse then those schoole books w^{ch} he had agreed to print for y^e Londoners. He many ways as well by letters as complaints sought to disgrace yo^r petitioner to the Universitie & at London and hath done his best to thrust yo^r petitioner out of his printership.²²

If the relationship between Buck and Daniel was anything to go by, Daniel's position at Cambridge was reliant on the (continuing) good favour of the University authorities, his willingness to compromise with Buck and his compliance in the face of a working environment, which by agreement, kept him in a position of subservience and submission to the financial prospects of Buck's ambitions.²³

Daniel was also under external pressure to print whatever was congenial to the political order of the day (in the locality of Cambridge at least). During the

²¹ McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, pp. 171-172.

²² Taken from Cambridge University Archives, CUR 33.1(22), quoted by McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 174.

²³ McKitterick succinctly sums up the printing relationship Daniel found himself in: 'For Daniel it was a livelihood; for the Bucks it was an office that could be made to produce a modest profit', McKitterick, Cambridge Univeristy Press, p. 300.

early 1640s, this was changing rapidly. In November 1641, Buck and Daniel put their names, as printers, to the publication of a book of verses published by Cambridge University Press to celebrate the King's return from Scotland, *Irenodia Cantabrigiensis ob Paciferum Serenissimi Regis Caroli à Scotia Reditum*.²⁴ Noticeably Richard Holdsworth, the University's Vice-Chancellor, also added his name as editor to the title page, suggesting he may have been the force behind the publication. In the following year, Daniel was responsible for printing a number of declarations for the King, in an atmosphere of insecurity and turmoil. During the summer of 1642, Charles had asked for money and plate from the University colleges and their attempts to provide the King with this financial support led to the Heads of several colleges being imprisoned, other fellows expelled and new ones imposed on the University.²⁵ In early August, Oliver Cromwell left London to organise local resistance against those who supported the King in Cambridge, before the raising of the King's standard at Nottingham on 22 August. Cromwell was also charged with intercepting the royalist forces transferring plate and money from the university to the King at York.²⁶

In this context Daniel was continuing to print the King's declarations, for instance *His Majesties Declaration to all his loving subjects of August 12, 1642*. According to McKitterick, 'Daniel printed more than a dozen quarto and broadside communications from York [the King], between May and August 1642'.²⁷ For his role in the royalist propaganda drive, particularly his printing of

²⁴ McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 296.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 296-297.

²⁶ Barry Coward, *Oliver Cromwell* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 20-21 and Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 52-55. See also John Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver (1599-1658)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6765> (accessed 29 January 2008).

²⁷ McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 297.

the King's declaration regarding the Commission of Array, Daniel was hauled before the Commons on 23 August 1642. There he was enjoined not to print anything that was concerned with either House without their consent and then sent back to Cambridge, where he continued to print information against the injunction of Parliament.²⁸

Daniel printed a text which further inflamed Parliament in late 1642. It was Henry Ferne's *The resolving of conscience upon this question: Whether upon such a supposition or case, as is now usually made, [that] the king will not discharge his trust but is bent or seduced to subvert religion, lawes and liberties, subjects may take up arms and resist? And whether that case be now?* This treatise became a popular and controversial work, receiving much criticism as well as approbation. The many texts that refer to Dr Ferne and his treatise bear witness to the work's impact and proliferation. The work was famously criticized in 1644 by the Parliamentarians Charles Herle and Philip Hunton, in *A fuller ansvvwer to a treatise vvritten by Doctor Ferne, entituled The resolving of conscience upon this question* and *A vindication of the Treatise of monarchy, containing an answer to Dr Fernes reply*, respectively.²⁹ There were also texts such as Jeremiah Burrowes' *A briefe answer to Doctor Fernes booke tending to resolve conscience about the subjects taking up of arms* (1643) and Herbert Palmer's *Scripture and reason pleaded for defensive armes: or The whole controversie about subjects taking up armes. Wherein besides other pamphlets, an answer is punctually directed to Dr. Fernes booke, entituled, Resolving of*

²⁸ McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 297.

²⁹ Charles Herle, *A fuller ansvvwer to a treatise vvritten by Doctor Ferne, entituled The resolving of conscience upon this question* (London, 1644) and Philip Hunton, *A vindication of the Treatise of monarchy containing an answer to Dr Fernes reply* (London, 1644). See also Brian Quintrell, 'Ferne, Henry (1602–1662)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9349> (accessed 28 Jan 2008).

conscience, &c. (1643), as well as copious references and counter-arguments to Ferne in the public output of William Prynne.³⁰

Both Ferne and Daniel were taken into custody over Christmas of 1642 for the publication of Ferne's work which argued that resistance to royal authority was reprehensible, illegal and had been condemned by St Paul.³¹ Daniel, however, was able to prove his innocence as merely an agent, by revealing the signature of Richard Holdsworth, the Vice-Chancellor on the warrant for the publication. Holdsworth was later imprisoned in Ely House and then the Tower ostensibly for licensing the reprinting of Charles I's declarations during the summer of 1642, but also, presumably, for warranting the publication of Ferne's work.³² In the case of the Cambridge University Press printing the King's declarations, it was argued in *Querela Cantabrigiensis* that, again, Daniel was merely the agent and, even more tellingly, he was an agent at the command of the Vice-Chancellor who 'yet still enjoying the Printer (as he would answer the contrary at his peril) that the thing might be performed according to His Majesties Command'.³³ Holdsworth had, apparently, been commanded by Charles I to license the re-printing of the King's declarations at Cambridge. As a result 'his person was seized upon and imprisoned...onely for his loyalty in seeing his Maiesties Commands executed for the printing of such declarations at Cambridge, as were formerly printed at York'.³⁴

³⁰ William Prynne, The soveraigne povver of parliaments and kingdomes divided into foure parts (London, 1643), pp. 5, 40, 41, 105, 106 etc.

³¹ Quintrell, 'Ferne, Henry', ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9349> (accessed 28 Jan 2008). See also McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 297.

³² McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, pp. 297-299.

³³ Querela Cantabrigiensis or A Remonstrance by way of Apologie, for the banished Members of the late flourishing University of Cambridge (1647), p. 7.

³⁴ ibid.

By categorising Roger Daniel as an 'official publisher' with 'official duties', Jason Peacey rather naively implies that Daniel willingly printed for the King, and leads us to the unhelpful conclusion that Daniel, and the authors he published, were 'royalist'.³⁵ Daniel's printing role in civil war politics, however, seems to exemplify how, for many people, the necessities of daily life dictated the choices and actions of individuals. Daniel was in no position to resist either the financial sway Buck held over him, the senior authorities of the University or the commands of the King. Nor was he in any position to resist the demands of Oliver Cromwell and the Earl of Manchester from 1643 onwards, being the only printing house in Cambridge.³⁶ As a result, from 1644 Daniel was publishing what could only be seen as 'Parliamentarian' literature, firstly for the Earl of Manchester during his control of that area and later on printing the official papers of Thomas Fairfax.³⁷

Daniel's printing decisions in the microcosm resonated with the range of equally difficult decisions that faced county authorities and those in positions of influence, as well as the individual, when presented with Parliament's Militia Ordinance and the King's competing Commissions of Array, for instance. In Daniel's case he may not have had much of a choice, economically and possibly socially. In terms of the Militia ordinance and Commissions of Array, the ideological claims that both competing orders put forward seemed to present a choice, but the rhetoric was so similar, the issues affecting decision-making and action so circumstantial and conditional and requiring a consultation of not simply the inner convictions but the security of the self, that decisions were difficult to

³⁵ Jason Peacey, Politicians and Pamphleteers; Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 122 and 124.

³⁶ Coward, Stuart Age, p. 182.

³⁷ McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 300.

make. These circumstances presented the individual with such questions as what would be the best course of action? What would best safeguard the self, the family, the business or the property, as well as the local community and county? And finally what was best for the health and future of the commonwealth?

The competing claims of the Militia Ordinance and Commissions of Array in 1642 presented one of the most difficult and all-embracing questions about the preceding events, about political allegiance and personal security as well as individual convictions and principles, not to mention local concerns and protection. Daniel, in his microcosmic decisions about his printing business, may have chosen to act purely pragmatically. Others, no doubt, responded similarly to the greater decisions presented to them in the form of Militia Ordinance or Commission of Array, Prayer Book or Protestation. The early 1640s, then, were times of competing allegiance, loose affiliation and people trying to make sense of the situation on an individual basis as well as being restricted in their decision-making and actions, by the practical realities of life.³⁸

The circumstances Daniel found himself in during the early 1640s did not, of course, mean that he could not negotiate some security for himself. In the case of the printing of Henry Ferne's text and the publication of Charles I's declarations during the summer of 1642, Daniel was quick to point the finger at the Vice-Chancellor, Richard Holdsworth, who, once arrested, remained in prison until 1645 and never returned to the University. Daniel survived this crisis at Holdsworth's expense.³⁹ He was not so successful later in the day. By 1649, the charges being drawn up against Daniel by Thomas Buck declared that he had

³⁸ For discussion of the Militia Ordinance and the Commission of Array and the local difficulties these competing orders posed, see Braddick, *God's Fury*, Chapter 7, pp. 209-238, especially p. 226.

³⁹ McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 300.

subverted not only the authority of Buck himself and the University, but also that of King *and* Parliament and finally that of the Stationer's Company. Like so many political victims of this constitutional crisis, Daniel was very much left standing between Scylla and Charybdis, with nowhere to go. Daniel was thrown out of Cambridge in June 1650 for '*supina, negligencia and infamia*', for having betrayed the University's honour.⁴⁰ Ironically, this was something Daniel had always strived for in terms of the works that he published for the University, against Buck's drive purely for financial gain.

Peacey argues that Daniel's official duties for the King and the royalist propaganda machine, especially in the second half of 1642, lead us to a 'recontextualisation' of other works that Daniel printed in this period, such as those by Henry Spelman, Thomas Fuller and Richard Watson, 'all of whom were well connected in royalist circles'.⁴¹ Peacey's argument appears to simplify the situation somewhat by suggesting that 'official publishers produced works by identifiable authors who can, moreover, be contextualised in ways which suggest the possibility of official involvement'.⁴² There were, however, competing influences on the University Printer which may have resulted in the publishing of such works.

It is notable, although perhaps inevitable, that the majority of the authors published by Daniel had been members of the University of Cambridge at some point in the recent past. Indeed all those mentioned by Peacey – Henry Ferne, Lionel Gatford, Sir Henry Spelman, Thomas Fuller and Richard Watson – had all been educated at Cambridge and it was the established tradition of the University to be the printers of the works of those who were affiliated with the University.

⁴⁰ McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 302-303.

⁴¹ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 123.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 122.

Further influences on Daniel's choice to print particular works rested in the hands of individual patrons, for instance Edward Benlowes, a prolific patron of literature, was the encouraging force behind the printing of Phineas Fletcher's *The Purple Island, or, the Isle of Man* (1633) and Francis Quarles *Emblemes* (1635).⁴³ According to Daniel, and as the warrant for publishing the work bore witness, it was the Vice-Chancellor, Richard Holdsworth, who was responsible for the publication of Henry Ferne's *The Resolving of Conscience*, a text which was condemned as seditious by Parliament.⁴⁴

The printing of Giles Fletcher, the elder's account of Russia, thus, remains enigmatic in the context of 1643. What might Daniel's intentions have been in printing an expensive text at this point in time, when he could have been making more money in printing almanacs, pamphlets and newsbooks – items that would sell a lot of copies? The publishing of Fletcher's text also raises the question of why Daniel would put so much money and effort into a text about Russian government - a unique work that had been suppressed on its first printing and which might not sell very well. Daniel had only recently been called to face the Commons to explain his printing of the King's declarations and had, at the beginning of 1643, only just been released from prison for publishing the first edition of Ferne's *The resolving of conscience*. Additionally Holdsworth, the senior University influence on Daniel's printing choices, was now in prison as well, making the impetus behind the publication more inscrutable.

⁴³ P. G. Stanwood, 'Fletcher, Phineas (1582–1650)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9738> (accessed 24 Jan 2008). See also P. G. Stanwood, 'Benlowes, Edward (1602–1676)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2097> (accessed 24 Jan 2008).

⁴⁴ Brian Quintrell, 'Ferne, Henry (1602–1662)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9349> (accessed 28 Jan 2008).

On the one hand, Daniel had to make a living from the University Press. On the other hand, however, he was bound by external influences, in some cases his hands may even have been tied. Peacey, perhaps, may want to 'decode' the contextual evidence surrounding the printing of Fletcher's text and suggest that it was a royalist-inspired publication. However, Daniel printed Fletcher's text in Cambridge at a time when Cromwell's and Parliament's presence were being noticeably felt in the region and the more efficient formation of the Eastern Association had solidified Parliament's strength in general.⁴⁵ Although in October of this year, Cromwell took his troop up to the Battle of Edgehill, he was back in Cambridge and enforcing Parliamentary control by January, when he apprehended Lionel Gatford, whilst sleeping in his chamber at Jesus College, and took him up to London, along with the unfinished printed sheets of his work, which had been in Daniel's press at the time.⁴⁶

Cromwell was known to be in Cambridgeshire until March 1643, and the Parliamentary presence in Cambridge continued during 1643.⁴⁷ In this case, then, Daniel was printing Giles Fletcher's text in an atmosphere where Parliamentary forces held the upper hand in the surrounding area. It is this context which makes the printing of Fletcher's text even more interesting. After the Restoration, Daniel would use as his excuse for his unpopularity as University Printer during the 1640s the fact that he had printed for the Royalist cause, but by

⁴⁵ Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6765> (accessed 29 Jan 2008). See also Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 55, 62-75 and Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁶ Gatford had been ejected from his parish in Suffolk at the beginning of the civil war and went to Cambridge to oversee the printing of a pro-royalist pamphlet. Gatford was seized from his bed on the night of 26 January 1643 by Cromwell and his men. He was then taken to London and imprisoned in Ely House for seventeen months. See Jason McElligott, 'Gatford, Lionel (d. 1665)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10450> (accessed 29 Jan 2008). See also McKitterick, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 299.

⁴⁷ Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6765> (accessed 29 Jan 2008).

1643, the King was not demanding the use of the Cambridge printing press and the more obvious presence in the region was Parliamentarian. The works, other than those commanded by Crown or Parliament, that Daniel put his name to as printer during this early civil war period included: Thomas Fuller's, *The Holy State* (1642), Du Praissac's *The arte of warre or Militarie discourses* (1642), Giovanni Torriano's *Select Italian Proverbs* (1642), Richard Watson's *A sermon touching schism* (1642), Richard Holdsworth's *The Peoples Happinesse* (1642) and Richard Love's *The watchman's watchword* (1642).

In 1643 Daniel was printing John Swan's *Speculum Mundi*, William Fenner's *The souls looking-glasse*, a reply to William Prynne entitled *A revindication of Psalme 105. 15.* as well as *A catalogue of remarkable mercies conferred upon the seven associated counties, viz. Cambridge, Essex, Hartford, Huntingdon, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Lincoln. Printed by the command of the Right Honourable Edward, Earl of Manchester, the Major Generall thereof, and the committee now residing in Cambridge.* Daniel's output was an indication of mixed allegiances and vying, political influences on the printer and his press. Later works printed by Daniel included Francis Quarles *Judgement and Mercy* (1646), Henry More's *Democritus Platonissans* (1646) as well as *A declaration from his excellencie, Sir Thomas Fairfax and his councill of warre* (1647) and other statements from Fairfax. In 1649, preceding his dismissal in 1650, Daniel printed William Harvey's *Exercitation anatomica de circulation sanguinis*, Joseph Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica* and *Eikon Basilike*.⁴⁸

Significantly, the key themes in Fletcher's text – the maintaining of a virtuous nobility, the importance of counsel for the King, a free parliament and a

⁴⁸ McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 300.

populace following right religion, sustained by a godly monarch, resulting in a civil commonwealth - could quite easily have been appropriated by the rhetoric of either side in 1643. Fletcher's text represented a non-partisan analysis of what made a commonwealth barbaric and what safeguarded a commonwealth from such tyranny. It would be possible to argue, from the evidence of the publications that Daniel actually put his name to, that perhaps Daniel was still under pressure from University royalist influence or that he himself wished to promote a royalist cause.⁴⁹ It could equally be argued, of course, that he simply and pragmatically printed what he thought would sell and tried to keep with the traditions of honouring the University by the books that he produced, hence publications of former Cambridge fellows and students.⁵⁰ However, such arguments side-line the crucial role of reading practices in infusing texts with meaning. With such non-partisan texts as Fletcher's, it was rather down to the audience whether they took any partisan inference from Fletcher's looking glass for England in the image of Russia.

⁴⁹ Thomas Buck does not appear to have put his name to any published titles between 1640 and 1651, after Daniel's dismissal.

⁵⁰ For instance Thomas Fuller was a graduate of Cambridge, see W. B. Patterson, 'Fuller, Thomas (1607/8–1661)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10236> (accessed 11 March 2008), as was Francis Quarles, see Karl Josef Hölting, 'Quarles, Francis (1592–1644)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22945> (accessed 11 March 2008), Richard Watson, see J. T. Peacey, 'Watson, Richard (1611/12–1685)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28856> (accessed 11 March 2008) and John Swan, see Bernard Capp, 'Swan, John (*bap.* 1605, *d.* 1671)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38039> (accessed 11 March 2008). It is noticeable that Daniel was in the habit of printing works by the Fletchers. In 1633 Daniel and Buck published Giles Fletcher, the elder's *De Literis antiquæ Britanniaë*, ed. P. Fletcherus (Cambridge, 1633) and Phineas Fletcher, *The Purple Island, or the Isle of Man together with Piscatorie eclogs and other poetical miscellanies* (Cambridge, 1633). In 1640 Daniel printed two issues of Giles Fletcher, the younger's *Christs victorie and triumph in heaven and earth, over and after death* for different book sellers. Perhaps this was part of the reason for the printing of Giles Fletcher, the elder's work on Russia in 1643. For reference to all these works, see *A Short-title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of the English books printed abroad, 1475-1640*, first compiled by A.W. Pollard & G. R. Redgrave, Second Edition, revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson & F. S. Ferguson, completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, Volume 1, A-H (London, 1986), pp. 490-491.

ii.) Reinventing *The Russe Commonwealth*: new context, new text

This new context of 1643 created a new text. England in 1643 was a very different social and political environment to that in which the text had originally been written, and published. The few, but notable alterations imposed on the new edition of Fletcher's text transformed it into a different animal altogether. Although the text was printed in 1643, given the length of the text and its new decorative and elaborate frontispiece, it could easily be argued that the text had been in the mind and the planning stages of the University printer for a significant amount of time.⁵¹ It is unknown when exactly the text was printed during 1643, but it is possible that the idea to re-print this text on Russian tyranny and commonwealth, and perhaps the printing preparations themselves, had been in the printer's plans during 1642. This was a time when calls for peace were common, and reconciliation a possibility, if England remembered her ancient constitution, the elements that held a commonwealth together and how a monarch should work, together with Parliament and his or her counsellors, to safeguard the health of the realm and protect the rights and livelihood of its subjects.

Except for several compositorial variants, the main body of the text itself was exactly the same as the 1591 edition of Fletcher's text entitled *Of the Russe Commonwealth*.⁵² However, there were significant differences between the original edition authorised (presumably) by Fletcher himself in 1591 and the new edition printed in 1643 at Cambridge. The title, quite obviously, is one significant difference, perhaps to protect the contents of a text which analysed particularly

⁵¹ David McKitterick, 'University Printing at Oxford and Cambridge' in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, volume IV, 1557-1695*, eds. John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell (Cambridge, 2002), p. 193.

⁵² Berry claims there are seventeen compositorial changes of little significance and thus does not note them, see Berry, *The English Works*, p. 160.

controversial and pertinent issues of the day, but also perhaps indicative of a cunning and informed choice by the printer to present information in an appropriate and appealing genre, indicated by its title.

Skerpan argues that the choice of genre was key to the published rhetoric of seventeenth-century authors and the messages that authors and publishers were attempting to convey.⁵³ The changing of the title from *Of the Russe Commonwealth* to *The History of Russia* could reflect a desire to present legitimate, didactic and reliable knowledge through the genre of history. The *History of Russia* could be perceived, then, as a detailed account of what Russian government actually looked like and what events had occurred under the *Government of the Emperour of Muscovia*, as well as how the people had fared – *With the manners and fashions of the people of that countrey*. According to Thucydides, the genre of History was for ‘those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it’.⁵⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, although praising poetry over history, still described the genre of history as a record of ‘what men have done’.⁵⁵ Milton, in his composition of the *History of Britain* explained that ‘I intend not with controversie and quotations to delay or interrupt the smooth course of History...[but] to relate well and orderly things worth the noting, so as may best instruct and benefit them that read’.⁵⁶ A history, then, was a dependable and exact knowledge, and a didactic guide to possible consequences and futures depending on events and behaviour. This was certainly

⁵³ Elizabeth Skerpan, *The Rhetoric of Politics in the English Revolution, 1642-1660* (Columbia and London, 1992), pp. 1-31, esp. p. 19.

⁵⁴ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, I, 22, translated by R. Crawley (New York, 1951), p. 14.

⁵⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595), sig. B₃.

⁵⁶ From *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don. M. Wolfe, et al, (New Haven, Conn., 1953-82), vol. 1, p. 4, quoted in Barbara K. Lewalski, *The life of John Milton; a critical biography* (Oxford, 2000), p. 217.

the case in Fletcher's text, highlighting the detrimental effects on a fruitful land of tyrannical and arbitrary government and religious decay over reformation.

The second significant difference between the 1591 edition and the 1643 edition was the presentation of the text, and most apparent of all, the elaborate frontispiece of the new edition (see fig. 2). This spectacular frontispiece was engraved by William Marshall, the foremost English engraver of this period.⁵⁷ Marshall was the most prolific engraver of his time, engraving both title pages and portraits. His portraiture ranges from engraved representations of Michael Drayton, John Donne and a rare portrait of Shakespeare to John Milton and the famous likeness of Bathsua Makin, as well as many royalty, particularly portraits of Charles I. Marshall had worked with Daniel before, engraving the renowned frontispieces of Francis Quarles' *Emblemes* (1635), as well as the emblematic plates within Quarles' work, Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1640), Thomas Fuller's *The Holy State* (1642) and Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642).⁵⁸ Marshall was also responsible for the iconic, Christ-like, representation of Charles I that adorned the front page of *Eikon Basilike* (1649), kneeling with a crown of thorns in his right hand and his own crown cast down to the ground.⁵⁹

The frontispiece to this new edition of Fletcher's work would, no doubt, have grabbed the attention of the reader and provides some visual clues as to both

⁵⁷ Antony Griffiths, 'Marshall, William (fl. 1617-1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18154> (accessed 22 January 2008). See also Sidney Colvin, *Early Engravers in England, 1645-1695* (London, 1905), pp. 121-123.

⁵⁸ All these references to William Marshall's engravings can be found in *A Catalogue of Engraved and Etched English Title Pages, down to the death of William Faithorne, 1691*, compiled by Alfred Forbes Johnson (Printed for the Bibliographical Society at the Oxford University Press, 1934 [for 1933]), pp. 37-47.

⁵⁹ Griffiths, 'Marshall, William (fl. 1617-1649)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18154> (accessed 23 Jan 2008). See Colvin, *Early Engravers*, p. 123, where he notes that at the bottom of one copy of the engraved title page of *Eikon Basilike* can be found the words 'delinea: et sculpsit', suggesting that Marshall was the author of the design as well as the engraver.



Figure 2: Frontispiece of Giles Fletcher's *The History of Russia of the Government of the Emperovr of Muscovia* (London, 1643).

the explicit and implicit content of the text. The frontispiece is made up of an image of a regal Russian-looking man, presumably the Russian Emperor, in the foreground, with a fox on his left hand side and placed behind him, eyeing threateningly the ram on his right who also stands behind the Russian figure. The ram appears coy, submissive and innocent in the gaze of the cunning and evil-looking fox. The fox's head is almost extended towards the ram in a menacing way, ears pricked, on his haunches, as if he could pounce at any second. The ram's body, although behind the Emperor in the picture, faces towards him as the central feature of the image. However, the ram's head looks down and away from the Emperor, towards the bottom corner of the image, representing perhaps humility, submission and defeat in the eyes of the fox, who looks directly and powerfully at the ram as if to dominate, all behind the Emperor's back. The ram's right front leg is also raised ever so slightly off the ground, giving a further sense of deference to both Emperor and fox. The Emperor holds up a long, straight sceptre in his right hand and his left hand rests on the hilt of his Turkish-looking scimitar, a curved (as opposed to straight) sword in its sheath.

Significantly, the Emperor's head faces to his left, his eyes looking out into the distance, not towards the reader, nor behind to the fox. It is telling that his gaze is not directly to the audience in a show of strength, nor to his subjects - the ram and the fox below him - but out towards the distance, beyond the scope of the picture, as if his mind were elsewhere. This was not a strong gaze, for an Emperor with such a striking sceptre in his hand and such a terrifying, Turkish-looking scimitar. His shadow is cast behind him in the direction of the fox. However, it is noticeable that the fox is not quite in the shadow of the Emperor, his tail and back leg lies in it, but nothing else. The fox is not supine or submissive, he sits on his

skinny haunches, with his backbone visible through his fur, ominously behind the Emperor's back.

In the engraved frontispiece, the land in the foreground of the image is flat and shaded; in the background it consists of rolling hills, a few bushes, and a lone tree under which a distant soldier stands, with a rifle or a spear over his shoulder. His long caftan-like coat suggests Russian origin, but he does not have the exotic or barbaric appearance of images of Turk soldiers or depictions of the Irish or Picts. This soldier could almost be English. The portents of the heavens look grim. Black clouds frame the majestic-cum-barbaric figure that the Russian Emperor presents. These black clouds combined with the cunning and wily fox and the coy and submissive ram, as well as the distant soldier in the background present a picture of uneasy domination, exploitation, conspiracy and, of course, impending doom, represented by the soldier and the clouds.

The fox in medieval folkloric tradition was, of course, the epitome of cunning, craftiness and deceit.⁶⁰ He was also used to represent the devil, servant of Antichrist or evil preachers, in a schema in which God (or the King) was a Lion and Christ (or the people) was a lamb.⁶¹ This tradition continued into the Tudor and Stuart period, many texts referring to the Pope or papists through the symbolism of the fox.⁶² Thus the image of the acquiescent, submissive and

⁶⁰ Sahar Amer, 'A fox is not always a fox! Or how not to be a Renart in Marie de France's "Fables"', Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature, vol. 51, no. 1 (1997), pp. 10-11.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶² For examples of the use of the symbolism of the fox in depicting popery or the work of the devil, see Thomas Lever, A sermon preached the thyrd Sondaye in Lente before the kynges Maiestie, and his honorable counsel (London, 1550), John Bale, The pageant of popes contayninge the lyues of all the bishops of Rome, from the beginninge of them to the yeare of Grace 1555 (London, 1574), esp. p. 126, John Foxe, Actes and Monuments (London, 1583), Robert Holland, The holie historie of our Lord and Sauour Iesus Christs natiuitie, life, actes, miracles, doctrine, death, passion, resurrection and ascension (London, 1594), Robert Burton, The anatomy of melancholy vvhat it is (Oxford, 1621), Thomas Scott, Sir VValter Ravvleights ghost, or Englands forewarner Discovering a secret consultation, newly holden in the Court of Spaine (London, 1626), Henry Burton, For God, and the King. The summe of two sermons preached on the fifth of

vulnerable (sacrificial even, in its biblical meaning) ram being dominated by the cunning fox who sits behind a vacant-eyed although regally-clad and powerful-in-appearance Emperor, could be read quite easily into the rhetoric and popular imagery around in the 1640s.⁶³ It was common to see Charles as under the sway of cunning and evil counsellors and the corruption of popery, 'his Majesties own Reign and Government, occasioned by his evill Councillers'.⁶⁴ Additionally, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud had been widely depicted as the fox, particularly in May 1640, when Laud became the target for popular political and religious anger, frustration and scape-goating after the dissolution of the Short Parliament on 5 May.

Laud was believed to be the influence in the King's ear behind the dissolution of Parliament and the architect of the religious policies that caused the Scottish troubles.⁶⁵ Rumours were circulated that in the event of dissolution, Lambeth Palace, the residence of the sly and corrupting Archbishop Laud, would be burned and 'William the fox' himself was to be hunted down. Crowds, in several hundreds, did indeed gather to hunt down the fox on 11 May.⁶⁶ John Castle recorded that 'They give out that they will not give over until they have caught the fox'.⁶⁷ Laud, however, had been forewarned and was not there when the crowds arrived. They vented their anger, instead, on the garden and orchard.⁶⁸ The aim of the crowds was to 'destroy this subtle fox...[which] seeks to bring this

November last in St. Matthewes Friday-streete (Amsterdam, 1636) and Francis Quarles, Emblemes (Cambridge, 1643).

⁶³ For an example of the contemporary use of the symbol of the fox, see The Foxes Craft Discovered; in destorying the Peoples best Friends who stand in their Prerogative way (London, 1649).

⁶⁴ Prynne, Soveraigne povver, p. 87.

⁶⁵ David Cressy, England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640-1642 (Oxford, 2006), p. 115.

⁶⁶ Braddick, God's Fury, p. 93.

⁶⁷ Huntington Library Manuscript, El. 7834, 15 May 1640, quoted in Cressy, England on Edge, p. 119.

⁶⁸ Braddick, God's Fury, p. 93.

whole land to destruction by his popish plots. Canterbury we mean who savours of nothing but superstition and idolatry and daily more and more infecteth the flock of Christ'.⁶⁹ The crowds attacking Lambeth Palace in 1640 produced anxiety as to the future of the commonwealth, as William Hawkins described to the Earl of Leicester, 'I never knew the subjects of England so much out of order, what with the disorders of some and the fears of the rest'.⁷⁰

If this text had been in the making for a certain amount of time, such visions of cunning and wily foxes behind the anointed monarch and the fear of impending military conflict in the background were all very pertinent to the political, social and cultural climate of the early 1640s. Yet by 1643 all these fears had been realised. Dark clouds and none-too-distant soldiers were already a reality in England in 1643. By then, military clashes were in full swing. And the central figure of the barbaric, Russian Emperor wielding, if somewhat absentmindedly, the power could be interpreted in several ways. For if power was held in the hands of barbarians, and/ or manipulated by cunning foxes, who was to say what would become of the commonwealth? Who could predict the consequences?

It was not only the *context* of 1643 that created a new text. The choices of the printer also played a part. The distinctive contents page of the 1591 edition of Fletcher's text was omitted and a contents page structured in a more familiar, conventional fashion was printed for the 1643 edition. Instead of the reference-book style of Fletcher's original contents page of 1591, the 1643 contents page was set out with each chapter title following consecutively and no grand schema that characterised and gave the sense of a reference book on Russia to Fletcher's sixteenth century edition. This again points to the creation of a different and novel

⁶⁹ Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. Misc. 943,717, quoted in Cressy, *England on Edge*, p. 115.

⁷⁰ HMC, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Right Honourable Viscount De L'Isle*, p. 267, quoted in Cressy, *England on Edge*, p. 119.

text in the reprinting of Fletcher's work on Russia. The 1643 edition emphasized the mono-generic nature of its content as a study in tyranny and political science, as opposed to a text that encapsulated the genres of a reference work on Russia, a travel and trade account and counsel literature aimed originally at the monarch.

A further change to the 1643 edition was the removal of the preface to Elizabeth I. This was, perhaps, a logical step given the fact that Elizabeth was no longer around, but it also represents a substantial change in the intended audience of the text. This was no longer a text of counsel for monarch and court. It was most definitely a text for the educated public and its lack of a preface implied that it was for anyone to read. Thus it was available to be read by what we might call the 'civil war reader' and interpreted and stretched towards the political leanings of whoever bought it.⁷¹

The physical size and shape of the 1643 edition was also altered from that 1591 edition, which had been published in Octavo. The 1643 edition was published in duodecimo – a size of book which would easily fit in the pocket or 'the clutch of a hand'.⁷² This meant that the text could be carried around and dipped into at an opportune moment. Thus a treatise on tyrannical government, dressed up as a history of Russia, became an accessible political read on the streets. The size of the work also meant that the text was cheaper and thus

⁷¹ Sharon Achinstein argues for a 'revolutionary reader', created by the unique conditions of civil war and regicide politics and the active contribution of authors such as Milton in shaping and challenging the reading public to engage politically with the pamphlet wars and to act in response. Although the term 'revolutionary reader' is perhaps a little anachronistic for pre-1650 politics, as well as being an overly homogenizing model to impose on a very diverse audience, the concept of particular events and context creating a certain kind of reader is a helpful point to jump off from in seeking to understand the literary output and fashions of the civil war period, which was saturated by overtly politicizing literature, as never before. For a discussion of 'the revolutionary reader', see Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1994). Cf. Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: the politics of reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London, 2000).

⁷² Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 3.

available to a wider audience, with its attractive frontispiece appealing to both the thinking man and those more visually stimulated. In this sense, then, even more so than the 1591 edition of Fletcher's text, it persisted, and more effectively, as counsel for Commonwealth. By 1643, it could be argued, however, that it was too late for reconciliation by counsel and maybe it became more of a plea to remember and to challenge minds as to what was and was not worth fighting for and how a commonwealth could be (re)built or salvaged on the basis of a strong, virtuous and ancient nobility, a parliament that represented the peoples' needs and grievances and a monarch that worked in tandem with both.

iii.) England turned Russia? The civil war threat of tyranny and barbarity

In the context of 1643, the new edition of Fletcher's work became a consideration of the *concept* of tyranny, what signified a tyrannical government, how arbitrary government affected the people of the commonwealth and possible musings on how to protect and save a commonwealth from tyrannical forces. It was a 'thinking through' of what tyranny looked like and the consequences for the commonwealth. Rather than specifically labelling king or parliament as tyrannous, Fletcher's text was much more concerned with, and indicative of, the contemporary fascination and importance of the concept of tyranny at a time when what should have been good government had been so clearly under threat for the last decade. This government was now coming under threat from the confusion of events and the possible rise of equally arbitrary government in the form of the Parliamentary demands on the King which potentially stripped him of his ancient regal powers.

What we see in Fletcher's text, and with much more resonance in the 1640s than in the 1590s, is the picturing of various types of tyrannical conduct and government. Firstly, the tyranny of Ivan the Terrible is represented by bloodthirsty and barbaric behavior, revealed in the relation of him murdering his own son, his lack of counsel in government and his harsh and strange taxations and monopolies, as well as his odd schemes and ideas about power and abdication.⁷³ Secondly, the tyrannical government of weakness is expressed in the depiction the rule of Feodor, the delicate heir of Ivan the Terrible. Feodor became Emperor of Russia in 1584, following his father's death and very soon found himself under the control and machinations of Boris Godunov, brother-in-law to Feodor. This was a tyranny of effeminate feebleness, of being unmanned and submissive to the control of evil counselors.⁷⁴ Fletcher had described Feodor as 'somewhat lowe and grosse...unsteady in his pase by reason of some weakenes of the lims...simple and slowe witted...of no martiall disposition, nor greatly apt for matter of pollicie, very superstitious that way'.⁷⁵ He was also clearly being controlled by Boris Godunov, who 'rule[d] both the Emperour and his Realme', perhaps resonant with perceptions of Charles under the sway of his evil popish counselors and friends (Laud, Strafford and Henrietta Maria).⁷⁶

Furthermore, the threat felt in England from Popish tyranny was aptly represented in Fletcher's text, with constant references to the corruption of popery in the Russian Orthodox church, the lack of religious reformation and the sordid

⁷³ Giles Fletcher, The History of Russia or the Government of the Emperour of Muscovia with the manners and fashions of the people of that Countrey (Cambridge, 1643), pp. 37, 82-86, 86-107, esp. pp. 101-102.

⁷⁴ See Zaller's discussion of tyranny in the seventeenth century, Robert Zaller, 'The Figure of the Tyrant in English Revolutionary Thought', Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 54, no. 4 (1993), pp. 591-592.

⁷⁵ Fletcher, History of Russia, p. 264.

⁷⁶ ibid., p. 63. For a brief discussion of the influence of Laud and Laudianism, see Braddick, God's Fury, pp. 73-80.

and disreputable lives of the Russian clergy, and consequently the commons.⁷⁷ In Fletcher's description of the Russian church, the corrupt and popish religious state supported and corrupted the political state and government of the land. The resonances with England in 1643 were obvious. And finally Fletcher's text represented the tyrannical behaviour of those who were themselves ruled over by a tyrant, 'the basest and wretchedest *Christianoe* (as they call him) that stoupeth and croucheth like a dogge to the Gentleman, and licketh up the dust that lieth at his feete, is an intolerable tyrant, where he hath the advantage'.⁷⁸ *The History of Russia* encapsulated the current fear of tyranny and its consequent barbarity being contagious and infecting the whole land, decaying and corrupting the commonwealth, leaving it barbaric and in bondage, as opposed to at liberty to be civil, England's true identity.⁷⁹

The context of 1643 rendered some themes found in the work more potent and pertinent than they had been in the political climate of its original 1591 publication. The politics of tyranny was of particularly acute concern to any politically aware person in 1643 and it was possible to read revolutionary fervour into non-partisan texts, such as Fletcher's. The title of a treatise published in September 1642 clearly illustrates the contemporary anxiety over tyrannical government and what a commonwealth should do about it: *The Definition of a*

⁷⁷ The anxiety over popish influence on religion is seen throughout Fletcher's text, but chapters 21, 22, 23 and 25 in particular detail the corrupt religion of Russia and its likeness to Popish Catholicism. This topic takes up the most space in Fletcher's text, see Fletcher, *History of Russia*, pp. 166-256.

⁷⁸ 'Christianoe' refers to the Russian word for peasant or commoner. Fletcher, *History of Russia*, p. 278.

⁷⁹ Roy, 'England turned Germany?', pp. 127-44. For fears of England turning as barbaric as the Irish see also T. B. et al., *Marlborowes Miseries, Or, England turned Ireland* (London, 1643), referenced in Roy, 'England Turned Germany', p. 250.

*King with the Cure of a king willfully Mad and the Way to Prevent Tyranny.*⁸⁰

William Prynne's justification for taking up arms against Charles and his popish counselors was based on the subject's right to resist tyranny, 'I should now here proceed, to manifest the Parliaments taking up of defensive Armes against his Majesties Malignant Army of professed Papists, Delinquents, and pillaging murdering Cavaleers, (whose grand designe is onely to set up *Popery* and an absolute tyrannical Government over our consciences, bodies, estates)'.⁸¹

The theme of popery also took on more heated and radical resonance in the 1640s when it was believed that Charles was under the sway of popish councillors and that his actions were in fact part of the universal Popish plot to destroy Protestantism, devised by Antichrist. In Elizabeth's reign, of course, there had been the overt and obvious threat of conspiracies against the life of Elizabeth in attempts to bring Mary, Queen of Scots to the throne, but the paranoia and prejudice of popery had been taken to new extremes by the 'paper war' of the early 1640s. In this climate of political anxiety and constitutional instability, the supposed 'popish plot' was responsible for radicalized understandings of political events, leading to fear, insecurity and, eventually, armed opposition to the anointed king as well as the sense of a very acute threat to the ancient liberties and rights of Englishmen.⁸² A pamphlet relating to the Irish rebellion warned in 1641 that 'As Popery and Treachery goe hand in hand, while Popery is kept under; so Popery and Tyranny are inseparable Companions, when Popery gets the upper

⁸⁰ BL Thomason Tract E118 (18), quoted in John Morrill, 'Charles I, Tyranny and the English Civil War' in John Morrill, ed., The Nature of the English Revolution: Essays by John Morrill, (London and New York, 1993), p. 293.

⁸¹ Prynne, Soveraigne povver, p. 87

⁸² William Prynne, The Popish royall favourite: or, a full discovery of His Majesties extraordinary favours to, and protections of notorious papists, priestes, Jesuites (London, 1643).

hand'.⁸³ No doubt, the gunpowder plot in 1605 had added to increasing fear of popery and encouraged conspiracy theories that had easily been attached later to Charles's marriage to Henrietta Maria in 1625 and the personal rule of the 1630s. Prynne, again, argued that previous experience with papists had proved their dangerous, rebellious and treasonous activities, 'What faire quarter and brotherly assistance the Parliament, Protestants, Protestant Religion, Lawes and Liberties of the Subject are like to receive from this popish Army, the late *Gunpowder Treason*, the *Spanish Armado*, the *English and French booke of Martyrs*, the present proceedings in *Ireland*, *Yorkshire*, and elsewhere, will resolve without dispute: And what peace and safety the Kingdome may expect in Church of State, whiles Popery and Papists have any armed power or being among us'.⁸⁴

Throughout the 1640s the accusation of tyranny and arbitrary government was hurled not just at Charles but at Parliament, as well as at Presbyterianism and Episcopacy alike.⁸⁵ Already by June 1641, Parliament was demanding, in the Ten Propositions, proposals that encroached on Royal prerogative in a way that it had never done before.⁸⁶ Indeed, Hughes argues that 'by 1643 Parliament itself was ignoring all the provisions of the Petition of Right, passed by the Parliament of 1628, to prevent a recurrence of the abuses which accompanied the foreign wars of the 1620s'.⁸⁷ Can Fletcher's text perhaps be seen as a very subtle indictment of Parliamentary tyranny?

⁸³ G.S., *Briefe Declaration*, sig. A¹.

⁸⁴ Prynne, *Soveraigne Power*, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Henry Burton protested in 1644 that 'an Episcopall tyranny [was] to be exchanged for a Presbyteriall slavery', quoted in Zaller, 'Figure of the Tyrant', p. 599.

⁸⁶ Braddick, *God's Fury*, p. 142.

⁸⁷ Hughes, 'Parliamentary Tyranny?', p. 52. For further discussion of Parliamentary tyranny, see Robert Ashton, 'From Cavalier to Roundhead Tyranny, 1642-9' in *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649*, ed. John Morrill (London and Basingstoke, 1982), pp. 185-207.

In the work of Morrill, Ashton and Hughes, it is suggested that popular and direct accusations of parliamentary tyranny were a slightly later phenomenon.⁸⁸ But is it in fact possible that through the image of Russia, through a veiled disguise, there was a suggestion of pointing to the dangers of parliamentary tyranny and its barbaric effects on the civil English commonwealth? In the later 1640s John Lilburne, the infamous Leveller, was accusing Cromwell and Parliament of tyrannical, arbitrary government, 'tyrannie is tyrannie, exercised by whom soever; yea, though it be by members of Parliament, as well as by the King'.⁸⁹ Pamphlets such as *An Impeachment of High Treason Against Oliver Cromwell, Strength out of Weakness* and *Legall Fundamentall Liberties* detailed Lilburne's wholesale condemnation of tyrannical behavior found in both the Lords and the Commons, as well as in the person of Oliver Cromwell and the instruments of state - the Commons Committees, Judges, Court officials and officers of the New Model Army.⁹⁰

Whether it was intended as a thinly disguised accusation of Royal tyranny, Parliamentary tyranny or neither, once Fletcher's text was published and out in the open, it was rather up to the reader to add his or her own gloss on Fletcher's insightful analysis of tyrannical government and the workings of a bad commonwealth. And, thus, in this sense, Fletcher's text takes on its own agency as a text that could be read as an indictment of tyranny, either royal or parliamentary, in a time when the issues of arbitrary government, the encroachment on ancient liberties, the non-reformation of the church, its

⁸⁸ Morrill, 'Charles I, tyranny and the English Civil War', pp. 285-306; Ashton, 'Cavalier to Roundhead Tyranny', *passim*; Hughes, 'Parliamentary Tyranny?', *passim*.

⁸⁹ John Lilburne, *The Oppressed Mans Oppressions Declared* (London, 1647), p. 34, quoted in Zaller, 'Figure of the Tyrant', p. 599-600, n. 60.

⁹⁰ Andrew Sharp, 'Lilburne, John (1615?-1657)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16654> (accessed 25 January 2008).

imposition of innovations and the fear of a popish conspiracy that would eventually topple Protestantism and the English Commonwealth itself, were at the forefront of everyone's minds.⁹¹

iv.) England's Barbarism, Russia's Civility? Responses to Regicide

In 1650 *A Declaration of His Imperiall Majestie, the most High and Mighty Potentate Alexea, Emperor of Russia, and great-Duke of Muscovia, &c* was printed. This treatise ostensibly, as the title page boldly pronounced, contained the Russian Emperor, Alexis Mikhailovich's 'Detestation of the Murther of Charles the First. King of Great-Britain and Ireland; his propensitie to restore King Charles the Second; That hee hath forbidden all Trade with England; and Meanes propounded for the establishing of a generall-Peace throughout Christendome'.⁹² The treatise's opening gambit was that 'The Rebellion of England, as an universall Contagion being become epidemicall, hath poisoned and infected most parts of Christendome'. It argued that the aim of the Parliament of England was 'to crack the bonds of Allegiance and fealty between Subjects and their Soveraignes, by perswading the common People (whose eares are ever greedie of novelties) of the Tirannie of Monarchy, and insinuating delusive fancies of Liberty and Freedome'.⁹³

⁹¹ Although not printed until 1682, John Milton's compilation of accounts of Russia, *A Brief History of Moscovia*, was most likely written during the 1640s, see Gordon Campbell, 'Milton, John (1608–1674)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18800> (accessed 21 April 2008). Perhaps his text was similarly aimed at addressing some of these issues through the use of the image of Russian tyrannical government and barbarity. See John Milton, *A brief history of Moscovia and of other less-known countries lying eastward of Russia as far as Cathay, gather'd from the writings of several eye-witnesses* (London, 1682).

⁹² *A Declaration of His Imperiall Majestie, the most High and Mighty Potentate Alexea, Emperor of Russia, and great-Duke of Muscovia, &c* (1650).

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 1.

The declaration also proposed a continental-wide summit, or 'Diet', to be held at Antwerp on 10 April 1650, where a scheme and 'holy League' could be concluded for the subduing of the tyrannous and rebellious people of England and the restoration of their anointed King.⁹⁴ Perhaps inevitably, the discourse of unnatural barbarity ran throughout this condemnatory text. The Parliamentarians involved in the regicide were 'those sanguinolent *Caitiffes* whose Lupine-fury could bee satisfied with nothing but their Soveraignes blood, [who had] ravish'd his sacred Person from his Court by an unruly crue of their armed *Janizaries*, the off-fall and surfeit of that distempered Kingdome'.⁹⁵ This 'viperous brood' had brought down England 'from a well-composed Monarchy, to a confused Anarchy; and reduced the Subjects thereof from a glorious condition of perfect freedome to a farre worse then *Ægyptiacall* bondage'. Bondage was, certainly in early modern perceptions of Russia, a sign of unholy, unnatural barbarism in a people ruled by tyranny. Furthermore, they had become beasts in their 'ambitious appetites', landing in Ireland 'a Host of ravenous Wolves....who had out-gone the most barbarous Heathens, in bloody Massacres'. Their 'unprecedented outrages' wore 'the faces of *Sodom* and *Gomorah*'; it was difficult to get any more barbaric than this.⁹⁶

Although the text purports to have been written by the Russian Emperor and printed at his Court in Moscow on the 20 September, 1649, the briefest of examinations reveals it as a pro-royalist, polemical counterfeit. A few indications as evidence will suffice: firstly the language and choice of words found in the text. The Russians were not known for their facility in English and even if an English translator in the Russian court had been used, the phrases in the treatise, common

⁹⁴ Declaration of His Imperiall Majestie, p. 5.

⁹⁵ ibid., p. 3.

⁹⁶ ibid., pp. 3, 4, 5.

to much of the pamphlet literature of the time, point to an English author, attuned to the current political climate of England. The literary style of the Russian Emperor's declaration was equally not consistent with the distinctive and traditional forms used in Russian royal correspondence with England. No Russian Emperor would entitle himself, as well as commence an official declaration, simply with the minimalist opening style of 'Alexea Imperator', as found in this text. Neither would they date such a declaration by the dating of Christ, but by their traditional Russian dating system, calculated from the beginning of the world. Perhaps of a more obvious nature, the very detailed knowledge of English political affairs during the civil war period, recorded in the text suggests, again, an English author familiar with the situation in England within the preceding decade. The specific abuses and grievances of both Parliament and Crown would not have been known in such detail to the Russian Emperor, Alexis Mikhailovich Romanov.⁹⁷

Leo Loewenson has suggested that this text was an attempt to raise foreign support for the royalist cause on the Continent, that the text was a royalist propaganda scheme aimed at foreign powers to encourage assistance to the banished royalists and royalty. However, such a supposition is unlikely as any serious attempt to drum up support for the royalists on the continent would, no doubt, have been expressed in Latin, as opposed to English.⁹⁸ It is far more likely

⁹⁷ Cf. Leo Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene after the execution of Charles I? A Seventeenth-century propaganda pamphlet', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. XVIII (1940-41), p. 17.

⁹⁸ Part of Loewenson's argument for the text as a royalist inspired propaganda attempt for a continental audience is based on his assumption that the text was printed abroad, as it bears no place of publication or name of printer, except of course the false 'Court at Mosco', featured at the end of the text. However, Loewenson's argument in this point is short-sighted. If the author wanted his audience to believe that the text had been penned by the Russian Emperor himself, surely he would have refused to have a place of publication or printer advertised on its title-page, so as not to give the game away. Loewenson's suggestion that the text was printed at Antwerp seems tenuous at best. Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene?', pp. 13-20, esp. pp. 18-19.

that the text was produced for an English audience, perhaps in order to scare them into pro-royalist support with the prospect of 'a numerous Army, in which the whole Forces of Christendom shall bee united in prosecution of this second Holy Warre, wherewith wee will Invade that Kingdome both by Sea and Land'.⁹⁹

Despite some obvious give-aways, the treatise in fact reflected a very timely and cunning use of the image of Russia and the current situation in Russia for the purposes of royalist propaganda. On 1 June 1649, the Russian Emperor Alexis banished all English merchants from the interior of Russia, allowing them only to trade at Arkhangel.¹⁰⁰ At some point during the English crisis of civil wars and the following execution of the anointed monarch, the Russian Emperor was said to have called the English merchants 'traitors and the servants of traitors, and unfit to live in any Christian state'.¹⁰¹ There is also evidence that the poor reception by Parliamentay officials of the Russian Ambassador, Gerasime Dokhtourov, in England in 1645-6, detrimentally affected the Russian perception of the English.¹⁰² Furthermore, the concurrent social unrest in Russia would not

⁹⁹ Declaration of His Imperiall Majestie, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Lubimenko relates Alexis' reaction to the news of the regicide: 'As you have dared to behead treacherously your King, an action so vile that it would be impossible to find a viler one in all the world, I do not desire to have any more relations with you'. However she provides no evidence or reference for this statement from the Russian Emperor. See Inna Lubimenko, 'Anglo-Russian Relations During the First English Revolution', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th Ser., Vol. 11. (1928), p. 48. See also Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene?', pp. 15, 17.

¹⁰¹ Statement on behalf of the Muscovy Company, CSP. Dom. 1653-4, p. 340, quoted in Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene?', p. 15.

¹⁰² The Russian ambassador Dokhtourov came to England in the autumn of 1645 and was in London by 27 November. He was told by members of the Muscovy Company, on his journey to London, that the King and Parliament were at war with each other and as a result the King was absent from his throne in London. Dokhtourov insisted on seeing the King or in the event of not gaining access to him, being allowed to return to Russia. The English Parliament and Muscovy Company would not allow him to do either, but reassured him that the King would return to London soon. They wrote a letter addressed to 'The most high mighty and right noble prince, the great Lord Emperor & great Duke Alexea Michaylowich' in February 1646, explaining that due to 'the present greate disturbance & distraccon of this Kingdome by reason of an intestine bitter & bloody warre, & our kinge Ma[ies]ties longe absence & much distance from this Citty', Dokhtourov could not be received by the King at present, but would be, in due course. They hoped that the friendly relationship and trade between the two countries would continue despite the King's absence, see Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 60, ff. 407r-408v. By the spring of 1646, of course, it was becoming apparent that the King would be returning to London only in defeat.

have endeared the young Emperor Alexis Mikhailovich to a land where the Parliament and people had risen up against their divinely-ordained King.¹⁰³ The anti-English sentiment in Russia provided enough substance to fabricate a plausible declaration of aggressive condemnation of the regicide and a promise to execute retribution from the Russian Emperor.¹⁰⁴

This was not the only fictitious treatise designed to raise support for the royalist cause. In the spring of 1649, Sir Ralph Clare fabricated *A Declaration to the English Nation from Don John de Austria, the 8th King of German, Lewis 11th King of France, Philip V. King of Spain, Christiern III. King of Denmark, Lodowick Duke of Lorain and Adolphina Queen of Sweden, in detestation of the present proceedings of the Parliament and Army, and their intentions of comming over into England in behalf of King Charls the second.*¹⁰⁵ The falsity of this

Dokhtourov was informed of his capture in May and he repeated his demand to see the King, which was again refused. Instead, Parliament insisted on receiving the Russian envoy and it was explained to Dokhtourov, as it had been on his arrival, that all the Muscovy Company merchants were under the authority of Parliament and supported Parliament as opposed to the King, thus all matters relating to the Anglo-Russian relationship and the Muscovy Company should be conducted through Parliament. This was a sentiment which had also been conveyed in the letter addressed to the Russian Emperor, written in February. Dokhtourov finally agreed to be received by the Houses of Parliament on 13 June 1646, where he was greeted with much pomp and circumstance. Dokhtourov left England on 23 June 1646 with a letter from Parliament, again explaining that the Muscovy Company were on the side of Parliament and Anglo-Russian relations thus forth should be continued with them, as opposed to the King. Perhaps inevitably, the situation of English merchants in Russia deteriorated from 1646 onwards. See Lubimenko, 'Anglo-Russian Relations', pp. 40-44. See also Geraldine M. Phipps, 'The Russian Embassy to London of 1645-46 and the Abrogation of the Muscovy Company's Charter', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 68 (1990), pp. 257-76.

¹⁰³ During the 1640s, Russian society experienced social disorder provoked by administrative abuses, increased bureaucratization and particularly the altering of the taxation system, which came to the fore in the Moscow uprising of 1648, see Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene?', pp. 15-16. For an English account of the social unrest in Muscovy in 1648, see 'A true historickall relation of the horrible tumult in Moscau (ye chiefe citie in Moscovia) on the 22 of June 1648, caused by the intolerable taxes and contributions layd on the commonaltie', Bodleian Library, Ashmolean MS 826m ff. 17-18v. For a discussion of the causes of this uprising, see Valerie A. Kivelson, 'The Devil Stole his mind: The Tsar and the 1648 Moscow Uprising', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 3 (June 1993), pp. 733-756.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of how the dating of the publication of the treatise ostensibly from Alexis conveniently coincided with the first news in England of the Russian Emperor's expulsion of the English merchants, see Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene?', p. 18.

¹⁰⁵ The same text was reissued in the same year with a slightly altered title, replacing 'Don John de Austria, the 8th King of Germany, &c. Lewis XI, King of France' with 'Fardinando the IVth Emperour of Germany, &c., Lewis the 14th, King of France and Navarre', signed R. Clare and

particular piece of royalist propaganda can be seen in the very title page, purporting to come from the (fictional) Don John de Austria, as well as 'Lewis the Eleventh King of France', but also a further reading of the text reveals, in a similar vein to Alexis' declaration, the common royalist pamphleteer discourse and minute detail of events and political stances recorded that suggest an English author on a propaganda mission.¹⁰⁶

In this 'first year of England's Thraledome', it would seem, again, that foreign lands were good to think with.¹⁰⁷ Russia, the semi-familiar, semi-barbaric, liminal land on the boundary of both Europe and Asia, at once encapsulating both Christendom and the heathen world, provided an even more effective propaganda threat, than the usual suspects of continental Europe, to the newly established Commonwealth in 1650. Russia had proved 'good to think with', yet again, for the English author with a political cause. In the case of 1650, it was used as a tool

dated 28 April, 1649, see A declaration to the English nation, from Fardinando the IVth Emperour of Germany, &c., Lewis the 14th, King of France and Navarre, Philip the 5th King of Spain & Arragon, &c., Christiern the third King of Denmark, Zealand, & Lodowick Duke of Lorain, and Adolphina Queen of Sweden, in detestation of the present proceedings of the Parliament and Army, and of their intentions of coming over into England in behalf of King Charls the second being translated out of the true copy (1649).

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, the fabricated declaration also condemns the act of 'putting the *Turkish* ALKARON to the presse to be your future Common-prayer Book', an insulting reference to the printing of the Koran in the early part of 1649, suggesting that following the act of murdering their own King, the English had become so barbaric that it would not be long before they replaced their prayer-book with the recently published Koran. Thomason dates his copy as May 7 1649, see The alcoran of Mahomet, translated out of Arabique into French; by the sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and resident for the King of France, at Alexandria. And newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities (1649). For the reference to the English taking up the Koran see A Declaration to the English Nation from Don John de Austria, the 8th King of German, Lewis 11th King of France, Philip V. King of Spain, Christiern III. King of Denmark, Lodowick Duke of Lorain and Adolphina Queen of Sweden, in detestation of the present proceedings of the Parliament and Army, and their intentions of comming over into England in behalf of King Charls the second (London, 1649), esp. pp. 5-7.

¹⁰⁷ In January 1649 the current Great Seal was broken and a new Great Seal created substituting the regnal year with: 'In the First Yeare of Freedome by God's Blessing Restored', see David Norbrook, Writing the English Republic; Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 195-196. The royalist-inspired phrase 'the first yeere of England's thraldome' was perhaps another propaganda strategy used against the new commonwealth, see The charge against the King discharged: or, The king cleared by the people of England, from the severall accusations in the charge, delivered in against him at Westminster-Hall Saturday last, Jan. 20. by that high court of justice erected by the Army-Parliament....Printed in the first yeere of Englands thraledome (1649).

of polemic, an instrument of fear-inducing propaganda to turn Englishmen back to their divinely-ordained and anointed monarch, in the face of the feigned threat of the (fictional) Russian Emperor and his 'ten thousand well experienced Souldiers'.¹⁰⁸

v.) Re-using *The History of Russia: A Tyrannical Protectorate*

As far as his career at Cambridge went, Roger Daniel appears to have been a victim of circumstance and the hugely disruptive events of the civil wars. However, Daniel was clearly a master of reinvention and rapidly re-established himself in London. After his dismissal from Cambridge in 1650, Daniel was printing and selling books within the year,¹⁰⁹ despite the harsh measures issued against the press in 1649, attempting to suppress royalist and Presbyterian propaganda.¹¹⁰ He had a successful press and bookselling business until 1666, when all was lost in the Great Fire.¹¹¹ His hopes for restoration of his position as University printer with the Restoration of the Crown unfortunately fell on deaf ears. His claim for restoration was based on the argument that he had been dismissed as a result of printing for the royalist cause in 1642. This, however, was only partly true and his petition was not successful.¹¹² Daniel's choice to print Fletcher's text in 1643 remains veiled in mystery as to whose incentive he published by, but his choice to reissue it in 1657, in a situation where he was much more his own master suggests, perhaps, he himself had some affinity or

¹⁰⁸ Declaration of His Imperiall Majestie, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel shared in the printing of the 1650 edition of Edward Leigh's *Critica Sacra* and in 1651 Daniel published Richard Montagu's *Photiou Patriarchou Konstantinou-poleos Epistolai Photii sanctissimi Patriarchae Constantinopolitanae Epistolae* (London, 1651). See McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 304.

¹¹⁰ Most notably the Treason Act of May 14 1649 that, among other things, made it criminal to criticize government and the Licensing Order of 20 September 1649. See Skerpan, Rhetoric of Politics, pp. 10-11.

¹¹¹ McKitterick, Cambridge University Press, p. 305.

¹¹² ibid.

interest in the themes of the text or that he thought he could make it sell better in the context of 1657 London. Little is known of the success of Daniel's new printing press and book selling business, but in 1657 Daniel was printing, alongside the re-issue of Fletcher's work, an edition of *The Holy Bible*, a new edition of Shelton's *Tachygraphy*, Edward Leigh's *Select and Choyce observations, containing all the Romane emperours* and John Beale's *Herefordshire orchards, a pattern for all England written in an epistolary address to Samuel Hartlib, Esq.*

An examination of the front pages of the 1657 copies of Fletcher's text reveal that, rather than it being a completely new edition, it was simply a re-issue of the 1643 text with a new printed title page attached in front of the original 1643 frontispiece.¹¹³ There were, however, significant changes to this re-issue of Fletcher's text. The additional printed title-page declared Daniel as the printer and the publication place as London. The 1643 edition had been silent on both these details. The other significant change can be found in the original 1643 frontispiece. From an examination of the extant copies of the 1657 text, it seems that Daniel had produced a special edition of the text 'in colour'. Several, but not

¹¹³ I have consulted copies of both the 1643 and 1657 editions of Fletcher's *History of Russia* in King's College, Cambridge Library, the Cambridge University Library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. I have consulted copies of the 1643 edition in St John's College, Cambridge, Balliol College, Oxford, Christ Church College, Oxford and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. I have consulted a copy of the 1657 edition in St Catharine's College, Cambridge, as well as corresponding with the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Campus Library regarding further copies of this text. In examining all these copies of the two editions, it became clear that the 1657 edition was a re-issue of the 1643, rather than a new edition. This can be deduced by the additional stitches and cut leaves preceding the original frontispiece found in the 1643 edition. This frontispiece originally made up the front page of the text, but in the 1657 copies of the text, the engraved frontispiece has been preceded with a printed title-page giving a new date of publication as 1657 and the place of publication as London. This new title-page has been sewn in with noticeably different, additional stitches and the extra leaves of the additional title-page have been cut down to stubs so as not leave extra blank pages in between the printed title-page and the original frontispiece. This seems to suggest that Daniel was re-issuing the text using old 1643 copies which presumably had not sold during the 1643 publication of the text.

all, of the extant copies of this text have a painted frontispiece (see fig. 3).¹¹⁴ Coloured frontispieces were a rare phenomenon in the mid-seventeenth century, suggesting that Daniel had made a particular effort (and at considerable expense) in re-issuing this work. It is possible that in 1657 Daniel simply wanted to get rid of these un-sold copies of the 1643 edition that he had brought with him from his University Printer days at Cambridge and decided to spruce them up with a new title-page and with special 'colour' copies for a higher price. Or perhaps he was at a low ebb in his printing business and looking for inventive means to raise his income and the status of his press.

Daniel, however, appears, in the past, to have been aware of the political wind and circumstances in which he worked. He had also been an idealist in his aims of raising the prestige of the University by printing rare scholarly works. Perhaps, it is more likely, then, that in 1657 Daniel saw a new opportunity to print a text which analysed what exactly a tyrant looked like and theorized over the implications and consequences to the commonwealth of such tyrannical government. Was the time ripe, once again in 1657, for a reconsideration of tyranny presented in the image of Russia? Daniel clearly thought that Fletcher's text was worth re-issuing with a new title page and with a more appealing and expensive frontispiece, and by this time he was not under the jurisdiction of Thomas Buck, or under pressure from the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Crown or Parliament to print particular things. Thus the impetus to re-issue this text seems to have come from Daniel himself and his response to the world

¹¹⁴ The copies of the 1657 text found in St Catharine's College, Cambridge Library, the Cambridge University Library and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Campus Library all have painted frontispieces and all have been painted in exactly the same format as shown in figure 2. The copies of the 1657 text found in Kings College, Cambridge Library and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles are not 'in colour' suggesting, perhaps, that Daniel produced a special edition 'colour' copy to sell at a higher price and the bog-standard black-and-white edition for the less affluent reader.



Figure 3: Painted Frontispiece of Giles Fletcher's *The History of Russia or the Government of the Emperovr of Muscovia* (London, 1657), from St Catharine's College, Cambridge Library.

around him.

Oliver Cromwell the late great tyrant was published in 1660, detailing the connivance of those who had supported Cromwell in his tyrannous usurpation.¹¹⁵ By 1660 the discourse of tyranny was the most appropriate and acceptable way in which to represent Cromwell and his supporters. However, the depiction of Cromwell as tyrant and the suggestion of the tyranny of the Protectorate were visible, if at times subtly veiled, themes in popular thought and literature before 1660 and particularly towards the end of Cromwell's ascendancy. Those with pro-royalist sympathies could not help but depict Cromwell as the tyrant who had eventually usurped the power of the realm. But equally Cromwell's approval and support of the extreme measures of Pride's Purge and the regicide, his blatant act of arbitrary force in marching on and expelling the purged Parliament in April 1653, the consequent Nominated Assembly assuming the power and title of Parliament - effectively the supreme power of the land - and their subsequent abdication of power to Oliver Cromwell, resulting in the Protectorate, his dissolution of the Protectorate's first Parliament in February 1655 and finally Cromwell's imposition of the Rule of the Major-Generals in 1655-1657, could not fail but to elicit the charge of tyranny against him, by Constitutional Republicans, Levellers and those who had supported the regicide and/ or Commonwealth.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ The tract also detailed Cromwell's supporters, who helped perpetrate the 'horrid designs' and 'barbarous actions' that brought 'ruine and confusion' to England. See Oliver Cromwell the late great tirant and his life-guard: or The names of those who compiled and conspired with him all along in his horrid designs to bring this nation to vniversal ruine and confusion. Together with, a proper and peculiar character of every one of the persons, suitable to their barbarous actions, and the several inclinations of their most violent and greedy natures. As also the covenant which they took, and the eminent danger into which they had brought both state and church, and the miraculous mercies of God in delivering us from them by restoring unto us our most gracious King, whom God send long to reign over us (London, 1660).

¹¹⁶ Allan I. Macinnes, The British Revolution, 1629-1660, (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 188-9, 195-213. See also Norbrook, Writing the English Republic, pp. 299-302.

Despite attempts to suppress literary output during the Commonwealth and Protectorate,¹¹⁷ the discourse of tyranny was ever present in the literature of the period.¹¹⁸ Between 1655 and 1657 alone over 200 tracts were published that engaged in this discourse of tyranny. And by 1657 itself, the accusation of Cromwell's tyranny was openly expressed by Edward Sexby and Silius Titus, Cromwell's would-be assassins, in *Killing noe Murder* (London, 1657).¹¹⁹ This tract was unique in its very direct indictment of Cromwell and was in effect 'an apology for tyrannicide', the attempt at which Sexby was eventually imprisoned for.¹²⁰ In this climate, Daniel's re-issue of Fletcher's text looks much less like an attempt to get rid of old stock, and more of an insightful engagement with the politics of Cromwell's 'tyrannical' Protectorate. Again, a new context had provided the opportunity for a new reading of an old text. Perhaps this points to a continuing concern in the personal politics of Roger Daniel regarding the adverse effects of arbitrary and barbaric government on the purportedly blessed, fertile and civil English commonwealth, or at least a recognition that a text discussing tyranny and commonwealth would sell.

vi.) Reviving Fletcher's *History of Russia*: the afterlife of a text

1657 was not the end of the line for Fletcher's account of Russia. Again, new contexts brought new opportunities to put Fletcher's image of Russia to

¹¹⁷ The Printing Act issued on 7 January 1653 and the more efficient Orders of Oliver Cromwell on 28 August 1655, following Penruddock's Rising, resulted in suppressing illegal unlicensed printing. See Skerpan, *Rhetoric of Politics*, pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁸ Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 299-325.

¹¹⁹ Alan Marshall, 'Sexby, Edward (c.1616-1658)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25151> (accessed 30 January 2008). See also Zaller, 'Figure of a Tyrant', pp. 604-606, James Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London, 2000), pp. 305-366 and Charles Harding Firth, *The Last Years of the Protectorate, 1656-1658*, vol. 1, 1656-1657 (London, 1909), pp. 201-236.

¹²⁰ Marshall, 'Sexby, Edward', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25151> (accessed 30 January 2008). See also Zaller 'Figure of a Tyrant', p. 605.

various uses. In 1705 excerpts of Fletcher's text were included in John Harris's *Navigantium atque itinerantium bibliotheca*.¹²¹ Harris's selection of material was by no means comprehensive, but he managed to précis succinctly the main thrust of Fletcher's argument, namely that the 'turkish manner' of tyrannical government wielded by the Russian Emperors over their slave-bound people was indefensible and that as a result Russia remained barbaric, religiously and socially corrupt and economically backward.¹²² Pipes claims that the excerpts found in the *Navigantium* were 'mostly of geographic nature'.¹²³ This is to misrepresent the text, however. Harris did open his excerpts from Fletcher's text with geographical information (as Fletcher did himself), but it is rather the geographical and cosmographical material that Harris cut in order to proceed to Fletcher's description of the tyrannical government, corrupt religion and decayed situation of the commons, followed by a description of the lands that surround Russia. Although Harris changed the order of some of the information from Fletcher's original text, the argument of *The Russe Commonwealth* remained intact.

In the political context of the late 1690s and early 1700s, a treatise on tyrannical government, the corruption and decay of people and land that ensued, and implicit remedies that could be read as an endorsement of the right to resist such government, was still very much a sensitive issue. By no means as controversial as works such as Sexby's *Killing no murder*, Locke's 'Of Government', Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* or Tindal's *The Rights of the Christian Church*, Fletcher's themes and nuances could still perhaps be

¹²¹ Richard Pipes 'Bibliography' in *Of the Russe Commonwealth; facsimile edition with variants*, ed. Richard Pipes and John V. A. Fine (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 66. Berry states that in his edition, Harris omitted all of chapters 5, 10, 11, 16, 18, 26 and 27 from Fletcher's original text, Berry, *English Works*, pp. 166-167.

¹²² 'A Treatise of Russia, by Dr. Giles Fletcher' in *Navigantium atque itinerantium bibliotheca: Or, a compleat collection of Voyages and Travels*, by John Harris (London, 1705), p. 543.

¹²³ Pipes, 'Bibliography', p. 66.

located within this milieu of 'dangerous books', heralding the liberties of subjects, popular sovereignty and revolutionary politics that questioned the prerogative of the monarch.¹²⁴ Post-1689, much time and energy was spent debating 'the constitutional meaning' of the demise, once again, of the Stuart monarchy.¹²⁵ The issues of the limits of civil power, whether James II had been deposed by the people, by parliamentary legitimacy or whether he had deserted, the question of contract between monarchy and people and the fundamental concern over the relationship between church and state and between individual conscience and authority, saturated political, cultural and social discourses.¹²⁶

In this context, a theorizing text on Russia's tyrannical, absolute government and its corrupting effects, may have fitted well with late seventeenth and early eighteenth century critiques of the *de jure divino* and would no doubt have sat rather uncomfortably with those, such as High Churchmen and Non-Jurors, attempting to reassert the legitimacy of divine right government in church and state. John Toland, the copious editor of 'republican' works in the 1690s, provides a good example of the intellectual purchase that 'republican', or at least 'revolutionary' works, still held in the reign of William and Mary.¹²⁷ His work as an editor of such controversial texts demonstrates the still contested nature of the debate over monarchy, especially with the death of James II in 1701, and the politics of the English commonwealth at the dawn of the eighteenth century.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Justin Champion, 'Political Thinking between Restoration and Hanoverian Succession', in A Companion to Stuart Britain, ed. Barry Coward (Oxford, 2003), p. 490.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 485.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 485-490.

¹²⁷ Justin Champion, Republican Learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696-1722 (Manchester and New York, 2003).

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, esp. Part II, pp. 91-165.

The visit of the Russian Emperor, Peter I, to England in 1698 may have also provided a backdrop for renewed interest in all things Russian.¹²⁹ Additionally, the state of the Muscovy Company at this time was a topic of controversial debate in Parliament and Privy Council with its drive to introduce tobacco exportation to Russia, in order to resurrect the dying fortunes of the Company.¹³⁰ All of these circumstances may have re-ignited an interest in Russia, making Harris's accounts of Russia both political and cultural, geographical and commercial.

In 1856, the first entire copy of Fletcher's text, including the 1591 preface, was published (and not censored). No doubt the Crimean War, March 1854 to April 1856, played a crucial role in renewed interest and critique of Russia and Russian government. In April 1854, *Punch* – the resolutely liberal satire, critiquing monarchy, politicians and capitalism, but also a supporter of the war - published, among other caricatures satirizing Russia, a depiction of the Russian Emperor careering towards disaster, on a sledge named 'Despotism' (see fig. 4).¹³¹ The previous year, caricatures in the bestiary tradition, depicting Russia as the enormous and barbaric brown bear threatening a helpless Turkey (the animal of course representing the land), had graced the pages of *Punch* in order to raise awareness of the impending conflict in the Holy Land.¹³² A new and complete edition of Fletcher's representation of the ever-tyrannical, always already barbaric

¹²⁹ Arthur MacGregor, 'The Tsar in England: Peter the Great's Visit to London in 1698', *Seventeenth Century*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2004), pp. 116-47.

¹³⁰ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS North b.1, ff. 331-3. See also Matthew P. Romaniello, 'Through the Filter of Tobacco: The Limits of Global trade in the Early Modern World', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2007), pp. 914-937.

¹³¹ Anthony Cross, 'The Crimean War and the Caricature War', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (2006), pp. 462-471. Although *Punch* initially took a pro-war stance, the ineptitude of commanders and the sorry conditions of the soldiers, especially during the Earl of Cardigan's reckless charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, 25 October 1854, elicited much criticism from the satirical journal, see Cross, 'Crimean War', pp. 467-468.

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 462.



THE "MONTAGNE 'RUSSE.'"—A VERY DANGEROUS GAME.

Figure 4: 'The "Montagne Russe" — A Very Dangerous Game' in *Punch*, April 1854. Taken from Anthony Cross, 'The Crimean War and the Caricature War', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (2006), p. 465.

Russia fell in line with contemporary wartime views of Russia and anxiety over Russian imperial ambitions.

Fletcher's text was put to a different use in nineteenth and twentieth-century Russia, with an attempt to translate and publish the text in Moscow. Work on the translation began in 1845, when a group of archivists in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to take advantage of a regulation that rendered material pre-dating the Romanov period free from censorship. The translation was made by D. I. Gippius and was ready by 1847. The translated text was to be published in the quarterly *Proceedings of the Imperial Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities* and it came out in the issue of September 1848.¹³³ Given the contemporary climate of continental-wide revolutionary uprisings, causing acute anxiety among those in power and a response of extreme reactionary policies, the publication of a text detailing the tyranny of the Russian Emperor and the detrimental effects of such government on the land and people would not have been well received. Pipes argues the timing was more unfortunate, than politically focused, but perhaps a dissident political intention can be seen behind the attempted publication of this text, at a time when revolutionary fervour was overrunning Europe and the bondage of serfdom was coming to be seen as crippling the commons of Russia.¹³⁴ Perhaps inevitably, the work was suppressed and its producers punished.¹³⁵

¹³³ Pipes, 'Introduction', pp. 38-40. See also S. A. Velokurov, 'Delo Fletchera (The Fletcher Affair), 1848-1864' in *Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom Universitete* (Readings in the Imperial Society of History and Russian Antiquities), book 3 (1910), pp. 3-39.

¹³⁴ Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 39.

¹³⁵ This unsuccessful attempt was later followed by an émigré publication of the Russian translation, probably in Basel, in 1867. This may have had political resonances, despite being published outside of Russia, with the final eradication of the tyranny of serfdom in 1861. The emancipation was followed by huge economic and social problems for the commons and government of Russia and resulted in further calls to Alexander II for reform of the state of the commons, see Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 66.

The Russian translation of Fletcher's text was eventually successfully published in St Petersburg early in the twentieth century, amidst the bloody turmoil of the Russian revolution of 1905.¹³⁶ In this case, there can be little doubt that the publication was politically engaged in, if not charged by, the events of 1905, whether by its publishers or by those who would read it.¹³⁷ The 'Bloody Sunday' massacre of 22 January 1905 aptly reflected the tyranny of a Tsar under threat, when a peaceful demonstration to his Winter Palace ended in wide-spread bloodshed, as the Imperial Guard of Nicholas II shot at the mass of peaceful protesters, killing hundreds, if not thousands.¹³⁸ In June 1905, there was further tumult and death in the Potemkin Battleship uprising. This mutiny in the armed forces signaled how far the revolution had spread, despite its ignominious surrender to Romanian forces in Constanta.¹³⁹ Significantly, more editions of Fletcher's text followed, with a second edition in the same year, a third in 1906 and a fourth in 1911, keeping track with the revolutionary developments in Russia and no doubt adding to the revolutionary propaganda of these years (see fig. 5).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 41. For this Russian translation, see O Gosudarstve Russkom Sochinenie Fletchera (St. Petersburg, 1905).

¹³⁷ The publishing house responsible for this publication was that of A. S. Suvorin, see Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 66. Suvorin's publishing house also printed the St Petersburg newspaper, *Novoe vremia*. This newspaper has often been seen as having a conservative or middle-of-the-road stance, but also represented a new form of opposition from the bourgeois and traditional supporters of the establishment. Costello argues that in 1905 the newspaper, and presumably publishing house as a whole, did not know where to stand on the political crisis of the revolution and that from 1911 onwards, it became clear that the political persuasions of the publishing house were complex and varied, as opposed to the revolutionary critics' view of them as patriotic, bourgeois 'bowing before propertied power', venal and opportunistic, see David R. Costello, 'Novoe Vremia and the Conservative Dilemma, 1911-1914', Russian Review, vol. 37, no. 1 (1978), pp. 33-35. Fletcher's text may have been an example of the more complex (and veiled) political stance of Suvorin's publishing house, its liberal, if bourgeois, opposition to the Tsarist regime and its moral and political dilemma in the context of revolution in the early years of the twentieth century.

¹³⁸ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, fifth edition, (Oxford and New York, 1993), pp. 406-408.

¹³⁹ Riasanovsky, History of Russia, p. 407.

¹⁴⁰ Pipes, 'Bibliography', p. 66.



Figure 5: Russian revolutionary propaganda celebrating the Potemkin battleship uprising of June 1905. The caption at the top of the image reads: ‘..Our motto: freedom for all the people’. The slogan at the bottom reads: Glory to the Peoples’ Heroes of the Potemkin!

During the 1960s, Fletcher’s text was again pulled out of the hat and this time by three American editors working independently of each other. One of these competing editions was published in the year 1964 and a further two differing editions were published in 1966.¹⁴¹ All three of these editions were produced by American scholars and perhaps this points to the very prevalent American fear and apprehension about Russia which surrounded them during this period of the Cold War. During the 1950s and 60s, there was a perception, in official arenas at least, that Communism, and the desire for Soviet world domination, was not simply engaged in a military, economic and political conflict, but rather was waging a war for peoples’ minds. There was a very real fear that, as one official report asserted, “With ideas [the Soviets] spread their poisonous germs in every

¹⁴¹ Lloyd E. Berry, ed. *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder* (Madison, 1964), Richard Pipes and John V. A. Fine, eds., *Of the Russe Commonwealth; facsimile edition with variants* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) and Albert J. Schmidt, ed., *Of the Rus Commonwealth* (Ithaca, New York, 1966). In 1968 Fletcher’s text was printed yet again in a compilation of travel narratives of Russia, see *Rude & Barbarous kingdom: Russia in the accounts of sixteenth-century English voyagers*, eds. Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey (Madison, 1968), pp. 85-246.

phase of American life...These ideas seep into American politics, American economics, American educational institutions, American neighborhoods, and American homes".¹⁴² America then, had to wage a counter-offensive of intellectual warfare. 'Doctrinal' or 'ideological warfare' during the Cold War was designed to decimate the fundamental principles of Communism and to elevate the American ideology of freedom and democracy as a viable and necessary alternative to Soviet ideology.¹⁴³

In launching a programme of doctrinal warfare against Communism, the American government engaged, either wittingly or unwittingly, many academics, religious leaders, authors, publishers and reporters in promoting the true American creeds of freedom and democracy in order to counter the abominable slavery and tyranny of the Soviet ideology. The call to academics and writers was to eschew a neutral stance and, on the contrary, to be active in combating the insidious and pervasive doctrines of Communism. Non-participation did not seem to be an option, according to Conyers Read, who, as President of the American Historical Association, declared to his fellow historians that it was necessary to take on a militant stance in order for freedom and democracy to survive, "Total war, whether it be hot or cold, enlists everyone and calls upon everyone to assume his part. The historian is no freer from this obligation than the physicist".¹⁴⁴ Richard Pipes, the editor of one of the 1966 editions of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* was one such infamously active academic in intellectually, and later strategically, opposing the tyranny of Communism.

¹⁴² Kenneth Osgood, Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad (Lawrence, Kansas, 2006), p. 289.

¹⁴³ ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Osgood, Total Cold War, p. 289.

The programme of 'doctrinal warfare', which was organised by the United States Information Agency (USIA), the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) and the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), focused predominantly on encouraging the writing of anti-Communist, anti-Russian and pro-democracy, pro-American works. Its aim was then to distribute these as widely as possible in America, but especially abroad. Precedence and covert funding was given to works and authors who fulfilled these criteria.¹⁴⁵ In some cases, the target was very direct. It has recently been claimed by the historian Ivan Tolstoy that the Russian publication of Dr Zhivago was organized by the CIA in order to put its author, Boris Pasternak, in the running for the Nobel prize in Literature, and in this way shame Russia with political and cultural bad press at their treatment of the acclaimed author.¹⁴⁶

Not all of this 'doctrinal warfare' was, however, actively organised by American Intelligence agencies. Some authors, intellectuals and academics participated in this ideological battle off their own backs, with no prompting from the government. Pipes appears to have been one such example. His work on the formation of the Soviet Union and Communism would have sat comfortably with USIA guidelines for 'doctrinal warfare' resources; such works that demonstrated wide "program value" would "critically and objectively" analyse the Soviet Union, but also promote, through such analysis, pro-American democracy and freedom.¹⁴⁷ Pipes' edition of *The Russe Commonwealth*, could, of course, only

¹⁴⁵ Osgood, *Total Cold War*, pp. 294-5.

¹⁴⁶ Ivan Tolstoy's forthcoming work 'The Laundered Novel' has not, as yet, been published, but for press reports on Tolstoy's claims, see Peter Finn, 'The Plot Thickens', *The Washington Post*, online edition, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/26/AR2007012601758_pf.html (accessed 18 April 2008) and Mark Francetti, 'How the CIA won Zhivago a Nobel', *The Sunday Times*, online edition, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article1292690.ece> (accessed 18 April 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p. 296.

present Russia in a negative light and lead an audience into the dangerous territory of seeing the age-old Tsarist absolutism and arbitrary government reflected in the up-to-date tyranny of Soviet government.¹⁴⁸

Reflecting on this period in the early 1960s, when many intellectuals and government strategists were taking up the idea of détente, Pipes declared that ‘in dealing with the Soviet Union there were only two alternatives to the Cold War – appeasement, which promoted communist objectives, or war, which threatened general destruction. The Cold War steered a sensible middle road between these extremes’.¹⁴⁹ For such views and the non-neutral stance of his opinions and works, he was labeled a ‘Cold Warrior’, which, he claims, kept him out of ‘Dartmouth, Pugwash and similar conclaves devoted to the creation of an atmosphere of global good will, where like spoke to like and dissent would have injected a jarring note’. He claims, however, that he ‘accepted the title [Cold Warrior] proudly’.¹⁵⁰ For Pipes, the Soviet Union represented ‘a regime that violated everything we know of human nature and social relations’.¹⁵¹ The psyche of the Soviet Union was focused on winning ‘the global conflict which served as justification for both their dictatorship and the poverty in which they kept their subjects’.¹⁵² This does not sound too far distant from the initial impression that Fletcher painted of Ivan IV’s tyrannical rule over Muscovy. It does not seem to be coincidental that Pipes chose to edit and publish Fletcher’s text at this time, in the American context of intense anxiety over the poisonous tyranny of Communist

¹⁴⁸ He was later to write Survival is not enough: Soviet Realities and America’s Future (New York, 1984).

¹⁴⁹ Richard Pipes, VIXI: Memoirs of a Non-belonger (New Haven and London, 2003), p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ Pipes, VIXI, p. 129.

¹⁵¹ ibid., p. 209.

¹⁵² ibid., p. 130.

ideology and the threat of the Soviet Union's insidious, malevolent disease infecting the healthy democracy of the West.

For all of his ideological participation in the war on Communism, Pipes was rewarded with a call to Washington in 1976. He spent part of the next two years involved in a secret comparative analysis project which had been set up by George Bush, Senior, the then Director of Central Intelligence, to evaluate the Intelligence Agency's assessment of the Soviet Union's nuclear deployments and developments.¹⁵³ Pipes himself claims that he 'derived satisfaction from the knowledge that I had made some contribution to a foreign policy that helped bring down the Soviet Union, the most dangerous and dehumanizing force in the second half of the twentieth century'.¹⁵⁴ It is difficult to see his edition of Fletcher's text as anything less than ideological warfare. As regards the other contemporaneous editions of *The Russe Commonwealth*, it is perhaps no surprise that in the Cold War climate of doctrinal warfare and intense uncertainty, exacerbated by the Cuban missile crisis, American scholars would return to older western representations of Russia and Russians to try and understand their present altercations with the barbaric Soviet Union and the tyranny of Communism.

¹⁵³ Nuclear capabilities were, in theory, to be built up only as a deterrent to nuclear threat, on the basis of the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine. However, during the 1970s the Soviet Union continued to pursue their nuclear buildup, which could be seen as a very dangerous and provocative policy. Amidst doubts that the CIA had underestimated both the potential power and the ideological framework behind the Soviet Union's nuclear buildup, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board requested an external audit. This was carried out in the form of a comparative analysis exercise in which Team A – made up of CIA experts – and Team B – made up of independent experts, investigated the extent of the Soviet Union's nuclear capacity and the psychological and ideological profile behind it. Team B, chaired by Pipes, found that the CIA had grossly misunderstood and underestimated both the capacities, the psychology and the motivations behind the Soviet Union's increased nuclear deployment. What Team B emphasised most was that the CIA had missed the cultural differences in American and Soviet attitudes towards nuclear power and war, and had naively assumed that the Soviet Union would appreciate, as America did, 'the utility of nuclear weapons exclusively in terms of deterrence', rather than in terms of an offensive and strategic force, and herein lay the problem. Although initially the butt of much criticism and 'war-mongering', within a year it was acknowledged in the Senate Intelligence Committee that Team B's conclusions had gone "from heresy to respectability, if not orthodoxy", see Pipes, *VIXI*, pp. 132-140, quotation on p. 139.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 209.

Fletcher's text has not been reprinted since the 1960s, but in the last decade there has been renewed scholarly interest in the subject of early Anglo-Russian relations and the first encounters between East and West – or rather Europe and the 'North' as it was conceptualized then. This is, perhaps, an indication of the persistent desire to view Russia as barbaric and unknowable, unpredictable and enigmatic despite being 'European', in part at least. Perhaps due to the fall of the Soviet Union in the last few decades and Russian attempts to recover and create new political, economic and social systems, Russia still evokes fear, anxiety and unfamiliarity in western powers. The policies and continuing ascendancy of Vladimir Putin have not encouraged a warmer and more sympathetic view of how Russian power has customarily been wielded. The recent poisoning of the former FSB agent, Alexander Litvinenko on British soil, and the subsequent diplomatic chill between the two countries hints at a continuing anxiety between these two ostensibly 'European', thus 'civil' lands, and, from the English media side at least, a reconfirmation of the enigmatic and even barbaric image of Russia in the eyes of English commentators.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Allegra Stratton, 'The Anglo-Russian Chill', *Guardian Unlimited*, Wednesday January 16, 2008, www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,2241840,00.html (accessed 31 January 2008). See also Luke Harding and Julian Borger, '“Now we really have a crisis” – Russia's Man in London leaving the Foreign Office yesterday', *Guardian Unlimited*, Thursday January 17, 2008, www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,2242045,00.html (accessed 31 January 2008).

Conclusion: Thinking with Russia, Writing English Commonwealth

Fletcher's writings sit comfortably and yet distinctively within the diverse accounts of early English relations with Russia. The fluid representations, themes and meanings found in his texts problematise the later historiographical boundaries that have been imposed on the history of early Anglo-Russian relations, as either mercantile, diplomatic or ethnographic. As we have seen, Fletcher's writings cross all of these boundaries, and more. In terms of historiographical methodology, there seems to have been much concentration on elucidating a certain 'view' of unfamiliar places, such as Russia. However, a closer analysis of Fletcher's responses to Russia – his diplomatic reports, his published work of counsel for commonwealth, and his love poetry - has revealed the importance of the individuality and variety of Elizabethan representations of Russia. Although there were many similarities in the English (and western European) accounts of Russia during this period, there was no one particular Elizabethan 'view' on Russia.

Fletcher's texts provide examples of the multiplicity of diverging representations of Russia employed by and available to Elizabethan authors and audiences. There was not one essentialised Elizabethan 'view' of Russia, but multiple ways of seeing, thinking with and using Russia to reflect on the world in general, the English commonwealth in particular, and the changing nature of English identity and government during this period. It was a work of Aristotelian political science. Inevitably, therefore, in the microcosm of his works, Fletcher was 'thinking with Russia', but also writing Russia, as well as writing England, and as a result revealed critiques of Elizabethan policies. Fletcher attempted to

invoke not simply the humanist model of 'counsel' to the monarch, but more controversially, 'counsel for commonwealth', making 'counsel' public, as advice for the commonwealth and as rhetoric to inspire humanist action in response. In this way Fletcher can be seen as using the stage of Russia to reflect critically on late Elizabethan politics and as contributing to a growing sense of the desire to articulate England's identity as commonwealth, as opposed to that encapsulated in the monarchy of Elizabeth.

Fletcher's diplomatic reports to the Queen and Lord Burghley reflected a particularly astute, if strongly Protestant, view of the situation of Russia and the Muscovy Company working and living within that context. The influence of the humanist *vita activa* is borne out in his willingly-given advice that the Company reject their joint-stock policy for a regulated stock company and his insistent calls for clergymen to be sent out to Russia to keep the Muscovy Company employees civil and orderly. In this respect, his divergence from other diplomatic and mercantile texts revealed Fletcher's acute concern over the barbaric effects of tyrannical government and the constant danger of the English falling from civility into barbarity. Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, which appears to have started life as a manuscript gift to Elizabeth as opposed to originally being intended for a public audience, was an expansion of these same humanist concerns and reflects both Fletcher's ambitions and duty to counsel Queen and commonwealth. *Of the Russe Commonwealth* was intended as a safeguard, a defence against tyranny in the guise of a treatise on Russia. But it was also much more than this.

Fletcher's responses to his experience of Russia, found particularly in *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, demonstrate the use of differing modes of writing to

illustrate his various concerns and agendas. These modes, both implicit and explicit, are 'inescapably mixed'.¹ There is firstly a sense in Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* of an overarching generic mode of political theory, in the vein of Jean Bodin's *Les six Livres de la Republique* (1576) or Justus Lipsius' *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Discourse* (1589, trans. 1594) and even Smith's *De republica anglorum* (1583) although this was less a wide-ranging politically theoretical work and more specifically focused on the English government and monarchy.

More importantly, however, we have seen that there was also an awareness in Fletcher's work, of the discourse (and appeal) of the mode of travel information. It is clear from Fletcher's preface addressed to Elizabeth that he was aware of a discourse of 'travel information' in which, more often than not, 'strange' and 'delightful' things, as opposed to 'true' and weighty things, were discussed. Fletcher wanted 'to note thinges for mine owne experience, of more importaunce then delight, and rather true then strange'; reality as opposed to fantasy, and yet in all of this he acknowledged that the very essence of Russia encapsulated 'both: A true and strange face of a *Tyrannical state*'.² In this sense Fletcher was engaging with the strange and marvellous travel writing that proliferated in the later sixteenth century and that had been encouraged by the popularity of Sir John Mandeville's *Travels*.³ Indeed, not only did Fletcher engage with it, he actively employed this literary mode as a legitimating agent for

¹ Deborah L. Madsen, *Rereading allegory: a narrative approach to Genre*, (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 26, quoted in Andrew Hadfield, 'Censoring Ireland in Elizabethan Ireland, 1580-1600', in *Literature and censorship in Renaissance England* ed. Andrew Hadfield (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 157.

² Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591), Epistle Dedicatorie.

³ Sir John Mandeville, *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse or booke named Johan Mau[n]deuyll knyght born in Englonde in the towne of saynt Albone [and] speketh of the wayes of the holy londe towarde Jherusalem, [and] of marueyles of Ynde [and] of other dyuerse cou[n]trees* (London, 1499).

presenting his potentially controversial analysis of government and providing counsel to the Commonwealth.

Fletcher's humanist mode of counsel-giving, perhaps originally only meant for a select audience as a manuscript, was given a public audience through his choice to print. Fletcher's aim seems to have been to influence and counsel the *Commonwealth*, not just the monarch, consequently presenting counsel as private *and* public. Fletcher was engaging in a political public sphere of sorts and perhaps his work is an indicative example, paralleling the emergence of what Helgerson terms the 'articulation of England itself' in his discussion of English nationhood as visualized through the land, rather than, as previously, through the image of the monarch.⁴

The development and proliferation of English map-making during the second half of the sixteenth century and the idea that the manifestation of England was no longer found solely in the visual image of the monarch, but in the visual representation and reproduction of the *land* of the commonwealth was a departure from previous conceptions of England's identity.⁵ This emerging English civil identity and culture, posited less in representations of the monarch and more in those of the land and English people themselves, was also found in the increasing amount of texts written in English (as opposed to Latin), the standardisation of English poetry, in which Fletcher played a part, and the flourishing of English theatre.⁶ English nationhood, according to Helgerson, was similarly borne out in the writing of English civil identity through adventure and discovery in works such as Eden's *Decades of the Newe Worlde* (1555) and Hakluyt's *Principal*

⁴ Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan writing of England (Chicago and London), p. 152.

⁵ ibid., pp. 105-147.

⁶ ibid., pp. 19-62 and pp. 193-245 respectively.

Navigations (1589, 1598-1600), which heralded the heroic adventures of Englishmen exploring the unknown lands of the world, not the least of which was Russia.⁷

A more subtle but equally important mode of writing that Fletcher employed was that of presenting his material as a reference work. Fletcher's table of contents evoked the sense of promotional literature on Russia, providing useful knowledge of this unfamiliar 'new world', through his description of the cosmography of the land, its commodities and in-depth analysis of the politics, government, religion and behaviour of the Russian people. The very structure of the table of contents directed the reader's experience of reading the treatise. Although the reader was shown how to read the text and follow the overarching themes of the content, the work also allowed for referencing, providing the audience with a guide to the whereabouts of specific information on Russian foreign policy for instance or the Russian judicial system. Thus, not only was Fletcher's text political science, travel information, and 'counsel for commonwealth', it was also a work of reference, a guidebook in effect, implying a potential audience of investors, promoters, diplomats and merchants, as well as educated humanist readers.

In discussing the early modern author's decision of whether to present information in manuscript publication or through the printed press, Hadfield asserts that 'the medium might not *be* the message, but the message cannot be read without a knowledge of the medium'.⁸ It is unclear whether Fletcher's text was widely read in manuscript form before it was published. However, to apply Hadfield's meaning more to the generic status of the work, Fletcher's text of

⁷ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, pp. 149-191, esp. p. 151.

⁸ Hadfield, 'Censoring Ireland', p. 152.

counsel cannot be read without an understanding of the medium of travel writing, nor can Fletcher's 'travel account' be read simply as that, for this was not the main agenda or message of his work. Rather it was the vehicle, which allowed and legitimated an insightful and indirect critique of the Elizabethan commonwealth. To an educated reader, it would have been obvious that the medium was not the message. However, the medium did not hold enough legitimacy to sufficiently mask the text's subversive themes and keep Fletcher's work from being censored.

As we have seen, Fletcher's text on Russia held political purchase for later editors, in a wide range of diverse contexts. In his text, Fletcher was attempting to put under the microscope the *arcana imperii* and question the legitimate extent of a monarch's prerogative, the importance of virtuous nobility and the crucial role of counsel in government in order to keep a commonwealth safe, civil and godly. All of these themes were of utmost importance to the debates and discussions surrounding the politics of the 1640s, especially in the context of the English Civil War, and particularly Fletcher's indirect discussion of what makes a bad commonwealth and, in dichotomy, what kind of rule produces a good commonwealth. Fletcher's allusions to anxiety over tyrannical rule, the question of the extent of a ruler's prerogative and the role of a body of 'counsellors' to ensure the continuing health and civility of a commonwealth would have also held weight in 1657, when Cromwell's dictatorial style of government came to the fore.

In this light, it is not surprising that Fletcher's text was re-printed in the context of the intense altercations found in the outburst of pamphlet literature and revolutionary discussion of what constituted tyrannical, barbaric government, what was legitimate behaviour from ruler and ruled and what constituted good

government of the Commonwealth in the face of Charles I's absolutism. This begs the question of whether Fletcher was perhaps participating in a wider humanist quasi-republican shared language that underpinned later political developments contributing to the events of the Civil War, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate and the appropriation and re-publishing of his work in 1643 and 1657. Blair Worden has astutely suggested that historians have all too often 'reach[ed] for the term "republicanism" too readily'.⁹ Fletcher's interest was with tyrannical government, not the politics of republic or republicanism. He was concerned with how to safeguard a commonwealth ruled by a monarch, and how to deal with a situation in which the monarch does not rule to the safeguarding of the people. Whether or not Fletcher was involved in some kind of quasi-republican discourse or was, in overstepping his role as a private citizen by counselling the Queen unasked, participating in a 'monarchical republic', is, then, somewhat beside the point. What is more important, and what I have attempted to highlight, is how Fletcher's work could have been *read* and reacted to by his audience; what contexts made Fletcher's text pertinent and caused such a censorious reaction; what issues did Fletcher's text resonate with that would produce a sensitized response? This analysis of Fletcher's works was not an attempt to categorise how the government and polity of Rurikid Russia or indeed by comparison late Elizabethan England worked, but rather how individuals, such as Fletcher, wrote and read and thought about how commonwealths functioned.

Ultimately, Fletcher's own conclusions were uncertain, and appear ambiguous. His depiction of the Russian commons and Russia itself, decaying under the tyranny of its ruler, could have been read as a call to resist tyrannical

⁹ Blair Worden, 'Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience' in Republicanism: A shared European Heritage, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 2002), vol. I, p. 313.

government, but equally, alongside this, it could also have been read as a humanist understanding of government, influenced by the New World idea of noble savagism: the nomadic, non-Christian, non-civil government of the Tartars was better than the utterly corrupt government of what should have been a flourishing Christian commonwealth. And if Christian commonwealth government became corrupt, the consequences and options were either bleak: resistance, foreign invasion or civil war, or required action: restoring virtuous nobility, prioritising counsel, honouring Parliament.

Fletcher's text became politically useful in other contexts, but with later re-appropriations, its uncertainty and complexity seems to have been melded into something more definite to serve the time. In the context of the Russian revolution of 1905, the Russian translation of Fletcher's text meant that it could be read directly into the circumstances of the Russian commons, still suffering under the tyranny of the tsarist regime. In the Cold War American context, Communism became the tyrant, as the Russian commons still needed to be liberated, perhaps this time by foreign invasion, or international pressure. In its later re-appropriations, Fletcher's text was employed as a form of political propaganda, 'doctrinal warfare' even. To use the term 'propaganda' would be anachronistic in the context of Fletcher's original intentions and publication, but in appealing to an Elizabethan public audience by choosing to make his text accessible through the revolutionary medium of print, Fletcher was engaged in cajoling the commonwealth to think, through the image of Russia as he himself had done, what godly commonwealth should and should not look like.

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