STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY

Volume 111 Summer 2014 Number 3

The Politics of King David in Early Modern English Verse

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This article examines the political implications of early modern English verse dealing with the Hebrew king David and of English translations of the Psalms. The article first considers John Milton's minimization of David in Paradise Lost, *before turning to 1) a survey of how and why David was praised or blamed by various poets, and 2) a case study of translations of the penitential Psalm 6 by Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, King James VI/I, and Milton. The article concludes by returning to Milton and argues that insofar as the Stuarts and their supporters associated themselves with the poetry, penance, and royal power of David, Milton views them as retrograde to the progress of human and sacred history, and thus attempts to consign David's royal example to oblivion. Therefore, a significant but understudied amount of English verse, dealing with David and his sin, is shown to be an early modern mode of poetical and political analysis.*

MILTON'S chief reference to King David in *Paradise Lost* is a relatively brief one, and that in itself is telling. The angel Michael is showing Adam what will happen to his progeny:

> Meanwhile they in thir earthly *Canaan* plac't
> Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins
> National interrupt thir public peace,
> Provoking God to raise them enemies:
> From whom as oft he saves them penitent
> By Judges first, then under Kings; of whom
> The second, both for pietie renownd

> And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive
> Irrevocable, that his Regal Throne
> For ever shall endure; the like shall sing
> All Prophecie, That of the Royal Stock
> Of *David* (so I name this King) shall rise
> A Son, the Womans Seed to thee foretold,
> Foretold to *Abraham*, as in whom shall trust
> All Nations, and to Kings foretold, of Kings
> The last, for of his Reign shall be no end.
> But first a long succession must ensue[.]
> (12.315–31)[1]

David is not praised here by Milton's Michael. Rather, his fame is acknowledged. David is "renownd" for his deeds of power and for his piety, but his true worth is as the ancestor of Jesus and as a ruler (judge or king, it's not important which), who "saves them penitent" from "enemies." David presides over a care-taking government of penance, a "shadowie Type" (303) that will hold them over until the day Jesus "shall quell / The adversarie Serpent" (311–12). In other words, David is merely instrumental, a placeholder, one man within the long genealogy of Christ.

It's not that Milton doesn't particularly care about David one way or the other: what he does to David in *Paradise Lost* is to commit an act of oblivion, as it were. He had considered various episodes from David's story for poetic adaptation, and he had made many allusions to David throughout his political writings of the 1640–50s. The story of the Hebrew people's deciding to have a king (1 Samuel 8), and David's refusal to kill King Saul (1 Samuel 24 and 26) were commonplaces in early modern debates about monarchy, and Milton was obliged to treat them. He had also translated at least nineteen psalms, and his epics are infused with them.[2] Although many writers realized that David didn't

[1] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Roy Flannagan, *The Riverside Milton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998). For all poetic texts, I give line numbers in the text. I standardize i/j and u/v in quotations to modern usage. I also use Protestant Psalm numbering. This essay draws upon, yet substantially revises, arguments I have made elsewhere: "The Redemption of Poesy: Philip Sidney's *Defence* and Metrical Psalms," in *The Sacred and Profane in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Mary A. Papazian (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 108–31; "Fit for a King: The Manuscript Psalms of King James VI/I," *Renaissance Papers 2007*, ed. Christopher Cobb and M. Thomas Hester (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 97–110; and "Mixing Genres in George Peele's *David and Bethsabe*," *Renaissance Papers 2010*, ed. Andrew Shifflett and Edward Gieskes (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 11–22.

[2] See Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *"Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Milton's Epics and the*

write all the psalms, he is associated with them all through tradition, and through strong associations throughout the Hebrew text, as John Donne points out in his dedicatory poem to the psalter of Mary and Philip Sidney: "those Psalms we call / (Though some have other authors) David's all."[3] No, Milton deals with David harshly because he has grown weary of the politicization of David by the Stuart regime.

But how did we get here? This essay will argue that ideas about monarchy and poetry in Tudor and Stuart England need to be understood in the context of the story and Psalms of the Hebrew King David. David is especially fit for this purpose because he features in a significant yet understudied amount of early modern verse that emphasizes his dual roles as poet and king. This verse demonstrates that "David" was a useful example in arguments about monarchy and poetry. The first part of the essay will argue that, while writers often used David as a model for comfort, delight, and praise, the very details of David's story (chiefly, 1 and 2 Samuel) introduced complications. Writers were especially attracted to the interpretive possibilities offered by David's great sin—the taking of Bathsheba and the arranged murder of her husband Uriah—seeing in it a means to assess the effectiveness of both poetry and the sitting monarch. The second part of the essay looks at how several poets (Wyatt, Sternhold, Philip Sidney, King James VI/I, and Milton) translated Psalm 6, one of the penitential Psalms traditionally associated with David's great sin. I argue that in it we can read the poetics and politics of royal guilt, blame, and restoration, which is especially helpful in understanding how both poetry and monarchy were constructed in the period. This is to say, dealing with David and his sin is an early modern mode of poetical and political analysis. I close the essay by returning to Milton and to Michael's brief treatment of David in *Paradise Lost*.

This essay doesn't claim to be comprehensive, but I do present a wide sample of Davidic verse from throughout the period. Scholarship about

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Book of Psalms (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); "'In Those Days There Was No King in Israel': Milton's Politics and Biblical Narrative," *Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991): 242–52; "Forced Allusions: Avatars of King David in the Seventeenth Century," in *Literary Milton: Text, Pretext, Context*, ed. Diana Treviño Benet and Michael Lieb (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1994), 45–66; Michael Bryson, *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton's Rejection of God as King* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), esp. 72–73; and David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 325–40.

[3] John Donne, "Upon the Translation of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney, and the Countess of Pembroke His Sister," in *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney*, ed. Hannibal Hamlin et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–4, ll. 47–48.

David and the Psalms in English poetry and culture is abundant,[4] but there is a need to assess David's impact throughout the early modern period and to give equal weight to David's story and his psalms. By providing analysis of Psalm 6, a psalm traditionally linked to a specific set of events in David's story, this essay seeks to close the divide between David's psalms and his story, and to show how they both are important for our understanding of poetry and politics in early modern England.

I. DAVIDS OF PRAISE AND BLAME

What makes David's great sin so fascinating is the profundity and improbability of his early success. Before he becomes king (1 Samuel 16–31), he is a shepherd boy, secretly anointed as king by the prophet Samuel, and plays the harp to calm the regnant King Saul's nerves. He slays the Philistine giant Goliath, marries Saul's daughter Michal, and becomes friends with Saul's son Jonathan. When Saul gets jealous of David and tries to kill him, David flees, amasses a defense force, strikes deals with surrounding kingdoms, refuses on two opportunities to assassinate Saul, and bides his time until Saul kills himself and Jonathan is killed in battle. English writers turned to this David as an inspiring, larger-than-life figure, a hero, who endures harassment by the forces of Saul, and yet is renowned for both "sword and harpe"—Marvell's wording in his brief reference to David in his poem on the death of Cromwell—that is, David's military might and the power of his music and poetry.[5]

The therapeutic power of David's music for Saul is a Renaissance commonplace. John Hollander, in his work on early modern music,

[4] Key works include Edward A Gosselin, *The King's Progress to Jerusalem: Some Interpretations of David during the Reformation Period and their Patristic and Medieval Background* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1976); Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik, eds., *The David Myth in Western Literature* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1980); Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer, 1535–1601* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[5] Andrew Marvell, "A poem upon the Death of O. C.," in *Miscellaneous Poems* (London, 1681). Note also that Niccolo Machiavelli praises David for refusing to use Saul's armor to fight Goliath and for his strategies when he was a "new prince" of Israel. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, ed. Allen Gilbert, vol. 1 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), 53; and *Discourses on Livy*, in Gilbert, 253. See also Marie L. Ahearn, "David, the Military Exemplum," in Frontain and Wojcik, *The David Myth in Western Literature*, 106–18.

calls it "the *locus classicus* for much discussion of the healing powers of music in the Christian era."[6] Sir Thomas Elyot made use of it in his educational treatise dedicated to Henry VIII, *The Boke named the Governour*, to recommend that music be used to make learning pleasant:

> For the noble kynge and prophete David, kyng of Israell (whom almighty god said that he had chosen as a man accordinge to his harte or desire) duringe his lyfe, delited in musike: and with the swete harmony that he made on his harpe, he constrayned the ivell spirite that vexed kynge Saul to forsake hym, continuynge the tyme that he harped.[7]

Michael Drayton invokes this model to begin his heroic poem *David and Goliath*:

> Our sacred Muse, of *Israel's* Singer sings,
> That heavenly Harper, whose harmonious Strings
> Expeld that evill Spirit which *Saul* possest,
> And of his torments often him releast;
> That Princely Prophet *David*, whose high Layes,
> Immortall God, are Trumpets of thy praise,
> Thou Lord of hosts be helping then to me,
> To sing of him who hath so sung of thee.[8]

Abraham Cowley makes a similar invocation at the beginning of his fragmentary epic, *Davideis: A Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David*: "Even *Thou* my breast with such blest rage inspire, / As mov'ed the tuneful strings of *Davids Lyre*, / Guid my bold steps with thine old *trav'elling Flame*" (1.25–27).[9] Cowley calls for inspiration, calling it "blest rage." This contrasts with the "wild rage" that David's music can heal: "*David's lyre* did *Sauls* wild rage controul, / And tun'd the harsh disorders of his *Soul*" (1.481–82). Cowley imagines this healing accomplished by David's singing Cowley's own rendering of Psalm 114, a psalm that brings the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land, through troubles to victory and rest. Cowley's Psalm 114 begins,

[6] Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500–1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 239. See also Anne Lake Prescott, "'Formes of joy and art': Donne, David, and the Power of Music," *John Donne Journal* 25 (2006): 3–36.

[7] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, (1531), ed. S. E. Lehmberg (New York: Dutton, 1962), bk. 1, chap. 7. Elyot tells this story again in his chapter on dancing: bk. 1, chap. 17. See also Matthew Parker, *The whole Psalter translated into English metre*, STC 2729 (London, 1567), b1v.

[8] Drayton, *The Muses Elizium lately discouered, by a new way ouer Parnassus*, STC 7210 (London, 1630), 185.

[9] Cowley, *Poems* (London, 1656).

> When *Isra'el* was from bondage led,
> Led by th'*Almighties* hand
> From out a foreign land,
> The great *Sea* beheld, and fled.
> (1.483–86)

Cowley's *Davideis* shows us that the Davidic poet gains a touch of magic from heaven, a "blest rage" that changes the natural world, overcomes the "wild rage" of enemies, and re-tunes "disorder" into harmony. It's an attractive model for Cowley in his wilderness of 1656, who then published the only four books he wrote of *Davideis*. But even if Cowley had completed his design, it would have remained only a fragment of David's story. According to the preface to the 1656 *Poems*, Cowley says he never intended "to come to the full end of the *Story*," but meant to end the poem with "that most Poetical and excellent *Elegie of Davids* upon the death of *Saul* and *Jonathan*" (b1v). His poem is to be about the troubles of David, not his reign. Cowley attributes this design to the "custom of *Heroick Poets*" and mentions Homer and Virgil, but it is also likely that Cowley sees himself as a poet of troubles. Like the early David, he is facing tall odds; like the Israelites in the psalm, he prays to overcome.

In sum, when writers want the power of David's music and an inspirational model of one who overcomes tribulation, they latch on to the story of David before he becomes king. The David who is king is more complicated because, then, all his rhetorical and musical gifts are instantiated in real, regnant political power. Such a ruler can be deluded. Both Drayton and Cowley are drawn to the David who is not king, the outsider who slays a Goliath, the musician who plays before a Saul. Despite all that is said in support of Cowley's royalism, the regnant king of his poem is a wild, raging tyrant, and the de facto king of 1656 is Cromwell. In his preface, Cowley famously rejects a lifetime of royalist writing: "we have submitted to the conditions of the *Conqueror*, we must lay down our *Pens* as well as *Arms*, we must *march* out of our *Cause* it self, and *dismantle* that, as well as our *Towns* and *Castles*, of all the *Works* and *Fortifications* of *Wit* and *Reason* by which we defended it" (a4). Such politics makes it troublesome for Cowley to deal with David in 1656—is Cromwell Saul? Or is Charles I Saul and Cromwell David (as Marvell seems to suggest)?[10] This complexity of dealing with David is no small

[10] See "Cromwell as Davidic King," in Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 183–208.

factor in leading Cowley to desire "to make my self absolutely dead in a *Poetical* capacity" (a2) and to "retire my self to some of our *American Plantations*" in order to "forsake this world for ever, with all the *vanities* and *Vexations* of it, and to bury my self in some obscure retreat there" (a3v). Like the prophet Samuel (who reluctantly anoints Saul in the first place) and the poet Horace, Cowley is driven toward retirement.

If an English poet were to be so bold as to praise an English monarch in terms of David, she would need to try to manage what precisely was meant by "David." Thus Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke turns to a David with many worries, who suffers under trial and oppression through no fault of his own. In 1599, she intended to present to the traveling Queen Elizabeth an entire psalter that she had finished translating into English verse, using the translations of Psalms 1–42 completed by her brother, Philip Sidney. Elizabeth never made the visit and the Sidnean psalter was never presented, but we still have Pembroke's dedicatory poem to Elizabeth, which begins,

> Even now that care which on thy crown attends
> And with thy happy greatness daily grows
> Tells me, thrice sacred Queen, my muse offends,
> And of respect to thee the line outgoes.
> One instant will, or willing can, she lose,
> I say not reading, but receiving rhymes,
> On whom in chief dependeth to dispose
> What Europe acts in these most active times?[11]
> (1–8)

By talking about "care" (worry, troubles), Pembroke can express sensitivity for Elizabeth's responsibilities, but to the extent that Pembroke is the one providing rhymes to a monarch, she then fulfills the role of the harping David (it is the Psalms that his poem prefaces) and Elizabeth becomes the wild, raging Saul.

Perhaps Pembroke desires this association, this hint to Elizabeth, but she leaves it subtly said. When she makes the connection between Elizabeth and David clear, it is more flattering:

> For ev'n thy rule is painted in his reign:
> Both clear in right, both nigh by wrong oppressed;
> And each at length (man crossing God in vain)
> Possessed of place, and each in peace possessed.
> Proud Philistines did interrupt his rest,

[11] Mary Sidney Herbert, "Even now that care," in Hamlin et al., *The Sidney Psalter*, 5–7.

> The foes of heav'n no less have been thy foes:
> He with great conquest, thou with greater blest;
> Thou sure to win, and he secure to lose.
> (65–72)

According to Pembroke, both Elizabeth and David were in the right. Both were oppressed wrongly in the days before they became monarchs. Both were opposed by the "enemies of my God, my kingdoms, and my people," to quote Elizabeth's speech to the troops during the attack of Spanish Armada, an event Pembroke alludes to in the next stanza: "The very winds did on thy party blow, / And rocks in arms thy foe men eft defy" (77–78).[12] And yet, still, Elizabeth excels David, who did "lose" his kingdom briefly to Absalom.

By the time Pembroke reaches the last stanza, she manages to minimize David as a king and yet use his lesser success as a prod for Elizabeth to excel him further. Pembroke's "wish" is that Elizabeth may

> (far past her living peers
> And rival still to Judah's faithful King,
> In more than he and more triumphant years)
> Sing what God doth and do what men may sing.
> (93–96)

Margaret P. Hannay has seen this as an admonition to Elizabeth to further carry out and "do" the Reformation in England and to prosecute it with military force abroad, a battle that Philip Sidney had given his life for. Hannay is right.[13] My point is that the model of David that Pembroke applies explicitly is the David under persecution, the David who had not yet achieved his full kingdom. When Pembroke writes that Elizabeth is "rival still to Judah's faithful King," she means "Judah." Judah refers to only one tribe: after the death of Saul, David was the king of Judah for seven and half years, but he still needed to conquer the northern territory (called Israel) held by Saul's son Ishbaal. He had done nothing actively to become king of Judah but to outlive Saul and Jonathan. Elizabeth is his "rival still": *still* in the sense that in her "tri-

[12] Speech quoted in *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, ed. Donald Stump and Susan M. Felch (New York: Norton, 2009), 392. See also two Armada-year sermons: Edmund Bunny, *The Coronation of David*, STC 4090 (London, 1588); and John Prime, *The Consolations of David, breefly applied to Queene Elizabeth*, STC 20368 (Oxford, 1588).

[13] Hannay grounds this in the pro-Protestant family tradition of the Sidney/Dudley alliance and in Huguenot and Genevan resistance theory. See Hannay, "'Doo What Men May Sing': Mary Sidney and the Tradition of Admonitory Dedication," in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), 149–65.

umphant years" she can still manage to prosecute the battle abroad and in so doing out-conquer David but also *still* in the sense of motionless. She's not doing anything about it, like the merely "faithful," singing, and persecuted David that she no longer needs to be.

Pembroke only hints about David's losses in the apt phrase, "he secure to lose," but other poets—George Peele, Sir John Harington, and Philip Sidney—deal with the tragic events flowing from David's great sin that occur once David has secured the United Kingdom of Israel. The story in 2 Samuel is this: David mourns the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, then goes to Hebron to take power as king of the tribe of Judah. After seven and a half years, he and his general Joab conquer the northern territory and bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Now settled, David sends Joab to take the city of Rabbah, while he remains at home. He views and takes Bathsheba, who conceives a child. He arranges the murder of her husband Uriah and marries her, but is brought to repentance by the prophet Nathan. David confesses and, according to tradition and the biblical text, prays Psalm 51 (one of the seven Christian Penitential Psalms). The rest of the narrative tells of the fallout: the death of the child Bathsheba was carrying, the birth of Solomon by Bathsheba, his son Amnon's rape of his half-sister (and David's daughter) Tamar, Absalom's rebellion and death, and eventually David's restoration. English writers turned to this David to talk either of the tyranny of kings or of how even a man such as David can sin, and yet through poetry and penance, be restored.

A good place to begin considering this David is George Peele's largely neglected play, *The Love of David and Fair Bethsabe, with the Tragedie of Absolon*, published in 1599. Peele's play begins with David's viewing of Bathsheba and ends shortly after the death of Absalom. Peele incorporates both the heroic legacy of the early David and the failures of the later David, ultimately resulting in a mixed view of David, and a play that mixes genres, which has driven many critics to distraction. Peele's prologue draws upon that earlier, heroic David:

> Of Israels sweetest singer now I sing,
> His holy stile and happie victories,
> Whose Muse was dipt in that inspiring dew,
> Arch-angles stilled from the breath of Jove.
> (1–4)[14]

[14] Peele, "David and Bethsabe," in *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. Elmer Blistein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970). Peele also praises Elizabeth in Davidic terms elsewhere: "Saving her, as by miracle, in the fall / From Pharoahs rod and from the

This "sweet singer"—an allusion to 2 Samuel 23:1—also has a conquering force when he plays: "He gave alarum to the host of heaven, / That wing'd with lightning, brake the clouds and cast / Their christall armor, at his conquering feet" (11–13). But as the play proceeds, David's music and his reign lose their potency. When Bathsheba is distressed over her sick child, she complains,

> No comfort from the ten string'd instrument,
> The tinckling Cymball, or the Yvorie Lute,
> Nor doth the sound of Davids kingly Harpe,
> Make glad the broken heart of Bersabe.
> (580–83)

What becomes painfully clear throughout Peele's play is that David has lost control personally, domestically, and politically in the manner that kings often lose control in tragic-historical plays.[15] When Tamar is raped by Amnon (he's only following the example of his dear old dad), and Absalom cannot get David to pursue justice, Absalom becomes an Elizabethan revenger: "My selfe as swift as thunder, or his spouse, / Will hunt occasion with a secret hate, / To work false Amnon an ungracious end" (359–61). When near the end of the play, David—who has fled the city—learns of the death of Absalom at the hands of Joab and his men, he loses all kingly self-possession:

> Against the body of that blasted plant
> In thousand shivers breake thy yvorie Lute,
> Hanging thy stringless harpe upon his boughs,
> And through the hollow saplesse sounding truncke,
> Bellow the torments that perplexe thy soule.
> (1813–17)

And again:

> Then let them tosse my broken Lute to heaven,
> Even to his hands that beats me with the strings,
> To shew how sadly his poore sheepeheard sings.
> (1824–26)

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sword of Saul" ("Anglorum Feriae, England's Holidays" [1595], in Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 465).

[15] Annaliese Connolly, "Peele's David and Bethsabe: Reconsidering Biblical Drama of the Long 1590s," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16 (2007), connects Peele's David with Marlowe's Tamburlaine. For general connections between Shakespeare's histories and the House of David, see David Evett, "Types of King David in Shakespeare's Lancastrian Tetralogy," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981): 139–61; and Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40–58.

The music, then, is broken, and if it were not for the quick thinking of Bathsheba, Joab would have marched David's armies to serve another king. And were it not for Solomon's ability to secure his own succession (which Peele inserts here, rearranging the biblical narrative), the losses and sufferings of David may have been total. David does wax rhapsodic near the very end of the play, but it's only after everyone else (Joab, Bathsheba, and Solomon) has gotten what they need out of him. The general props up the government, gets the last couplet, and gives the order for harmony and rejoicing: "Bravely resolvd and spoken like a King, / Now may old Israel, and his daughters sing" (1919–20).

Audiences may have pitied this broken David, but Peele makes it clear that David's suffering was largely caused by David himself—his taking of Bathsheba, his arranged murder of Uriah, his disordered house that permits the rape of Tamar, and his lack of justice for her, the latter which causes Absalom to vow revenge and mount a rebellion. That is, his suffering is largely deserved because of his sin, unlike his earlier suffering at the hands of Saul. But other writers saw how a monarch could excuse such sin and yet reap the political benefits of being an example of suffering. In his epigram "Of King David. Written to the Queene," the godson of Elizabeth, Sir John Harington begins with the heroic part of David's story, perhaps to flatter her:

> Thou Princes Prophet, and of Prophets King,
> Growne from poore Pastoralls, and Shepheards fold,
> To change the sheephooke to a Mace of gold,
> Subduing sword and speare, with staffe and sling:
> Thou that didst quell the Beare and dreadful Lyon,
> With courage unappald, and active lymmes;
> Thou that didst praise in yet induring Himmes
> With Poetry divine the God of Syon;
> Thou sonne in Law to King & Prince appointed:
> Yet, when that king by wrong did seek thy harme,
> Didst helpe him with thy Harp, and sacred charme:
> And taught not once to touch the Lords Anointed.
> (1–12)[16]

Harington then elides time in the David story, skipping King Saul's suicide and David's ascension, and takes his story to the sticking point—David's taking of Bathsheba:

[16] Harington, "92 Of King David. Written to the Queene," in *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington, Together with The Prayse of Private Life*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), 223–24.

> Thou, thou great Prince, with so rare gifts replenished
> Could'st not eschew blind Buzzard *Cupids* hookes,
> Lapt in the bayt of *Bersabees* sweet lookes:
> With which one fault, thy faultless life was blemished.
> (13–16)

Cupid is rendered as a bird, or as a fisher; Bathsheba, not so charitably as bait; and David, then, as a fish for the taking. Harington's repetition of "thou" seems to register shock, disappointment, and as it is an address to David, lecturing. As it is "Written to the Queene," it is perhaps an insinuation about his godmother's virginal fidelity to her people.[17]

Harington is fishing, too:

> Yet hence we learne a document most ample,
> That faln by fraillty we may rise by fayth,
> And that the sinne forgiven, the penance staieth;
> Of Grace and Justice both a sweet example.
> Let no man then himselfe in sinne imbolden
> By thee, but thy sharpe penance, bitter teares,
> May strike into our harts such godly feares,
> As we may be thereby from sin with-holden.
> (17–24)

The lesson is most conventional; Harington's reading in these lines reflects the traditional Protestant explanation of David's sin with Bathsheba.[18] He argues that David is our "sweet example"; his "fall" by "fraillty" was in some sense fortunate, in that we learn "sharp penance." We are not to let David's sin "imbolden" us with excuses. But Harington, it turns out, is not that conventional; citing convention was just the bait. He ends the epigram with this: "Sith we, for ours, no just excuse

[17] Jason Scott-Warren's *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 135–40, situates Harington's epigrams in the context of presentation copies and suggests that in "Of King David," Harington may comment "on a sexual relationship which he believed Elizabeth to be involved in . . . Harington's epigrams on Heywood and King David strive simultaneously to court and offend Elizabeth, complicating her response in order to increase his impact on her" (140).

[18] For example, William Tyndale writes, "The adultery of David with Barsabe is an ensample / not to move us to evell: but yf (whyle we folow the waye of ryghteousnes) any chaunce dryve us a syde / that we despere not. For yf we saw not soch infyrmytes in Gods electe / we which are so weke and fall so ofte shulde utterly despeare and thinke that God had cleane forsaken us. It ys therfore a sure and an undowted conclusion / whether we be holy or onholy / we are all synners. But the difference is / that Gods synners consente not to their synne. They consente unto the law that it ys both holy and ryghteous and morne to have their synne taken awaye. But the devels synners consente unto their synne and wolde have the law and hell taken awaye and are enemies unto the righteousnes of God" (*The obedience of a Christen man*, STC 24446 [Antwerp, 1528], R7v–8).

can bring, / Thou hadst one great excuse, thou wert a King" (25–26). Harington ends the poem by taking us from the devotional to the political; the conventional to the subversive. The poem begins as an encomium, moves to teach, and then ends with epigrammatic, inescapable wit: "we" have "no just excuse" for our frailty; the king always has an excuse. Harington makes his point through an inventive reading of a key moment in David's story. He puts further pressure, contemporary political pressure, on David's story by adding "Written to the Queene" to his epigram's title. How Elizabeth—or anyone—reacted to this text, we do not know. We do not know if she saw it.

When Philip Sidney takes up David's sin in the *Defence of Poesy*, it comes from a man who we know was heard by Queen Elizabeth in his letter criticizing her for considering marriage to the Duke of Anjou, and it earned her anger. So while Elizabeth is not named in the *Defence*, she is implied as a factor in Sidney's several disappointments that led him to the "unelected vocation" of poetry (212).[19] She is also implied in the *Defence*'s discourse about David, especially when this discourse concerns how monarchs ought to read and apply the texts that poets give them. The *Defence* has a well-earned reputation for arguing both sides of most questions, and it's no different with its treatment of David. Sidney praises and blames him. Early in the *Defence*, he gives fulsome praise to David and the Psalms: "his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical: for what else is the awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable *prosopopoeias*, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty . . . but a heavenly poesy" (215). In some ways, Sidney makes David the central poet of his *Defence*. Anne Lake Prescott has perceptively argued that Sidney makes David a "right poet" so that he can coast on David's poetical power, but that he is envious enough of David to want to "wrest the looking glass away from the king" and turn the mirror of poetry back on to David's own face.[20]

How Sidney does this is worth explaining. The relevant passage comes in the midst of his argument that poetry is more effective than history and philosophy in moving people to virtuous action. He provides two examples of the "strange effects of this poetical invention." The first is Menenius Agrippa's tale of the belly. The other is

[19] Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212–50.

[20] Prescott, "King David as a 'Right Poet': Sidney and the Psalmist," *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989): 151.

of Nathan the prophet, who, when the holy David had so far forsaken God as to confirm adultery with murder, when he was to do the tenderest office of a friend in laying his own shame before his eyes, sent by God to call again so chosen a servant, how doth he it but by telling of a man whose beloved lamb was ungratefully taken from his bosom? The application most divinely true, but the discourse itself feigned; which made David (I speak of the second and instrumental cause) as in a glass see his own filthiness, as that heavenly psalm of mercy well testifieth. (228)

Sidney refers to the story that Nathan tells to confront David: a rich man who owns many sheep takes a poor man's beloved, only sheep (2 Sam. 12:1–4). The application seems clear: David is the rich man, Uriah is the poor man, and Bathsheba is the lamb. In the *Defence*, Sidney makes it seem that David understands and applies this story to his own behavior immediately, with weeping penance and Psalm 51 to follow. But the biblical narrative doesn't do that: there, David passes judgment on the rich man, and Nathan must tell him "Thou art the man" and explain precisely how he erred. In the biblical narrative, David needs a prophet to make things clear, to apply the precept (don't take what is not yours) to his own life (don't take Bathsheba). In the *Defence*, David only needs a poet because the last thing Sidney wants is a prophet to come along and make learning how to read "poetic inventions" unnecessary.[21]

This belief in the power of poetry is one of Sidney's chief claims. The superiority of poetry over philosophy and history, according to Sidney, is that poetry can deliver both philosophy's precept and history's example—the universal and the particular. Further, because the end is moving readers to virtuous action, poetry may "steal" upon a reader when he or she least expects it, or in Sidney's words, make readers take "a medicine of cherries" (227).[22] Sidney modifies David to maximum effect: David sees "his own filthiness" by means of poetry, which propels him to write poetry (and propels Sidney to write poetry). In this sense David is Sidney's feigned example of a perfect reader, a "right" reader who reads, understands, and applies, an example that he wishes his queen would follow. That is, he wants her to be like David in that

[21] The 1560 Geneva Bible commentators make the same move that Sidney does here: "Because David lay now drowned in sinne, the loving mercie of God, which suffereth not his to perish, waketh his conscience by this similitude and bringeth him to repentance." See *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament*, STC 2093 (Geneva, 1560).

[22] See John M. Wallace, "'Examples Are Best Precepts': Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (1974): 273–90, generally on this point. Thanks to Andrew Shifflett for helping me make these connections.

she would be a self-interested reader (of Sidney's texts) with a guilty conscience.

In Peele, Harington, and Sidney, David's sin is deployed to elevate the cause of poetry as means of exposing the failures of monarchs. David's power as a poet is surpassed by Sidney with a poetical Nathan, implicated by Harington in the pursuit of hypocrisy, and staged by Peele paradoxically as both persuasive propaganda and yet ultimately irrelevant to political power. At the same time, poets are the ones who, in their view, see through the Davidic rhetorics of power and attempt to appropriate that power for their own uses. Queen Elizabeth is an explicit target for Pembroke and Harington, and she is implied in Sidney's *Defence* and Peele's play—the same Elizabeth who had reveled in the victory over the Spanish Armada, and who, as a teenager, had herself translated Psalm 13 along with Marguerite of Navarre's *Le Miroir de L'Âme Péchesse.* Elizabeth's psalm chastens "Fools" who "saith in their hearts, 'There is no God,'" and ends,

> At all times God is with the just
> Because they put in Him their trust.
> Who shall, therefore, from Zion give
> That health which hangeth in our believe?
> When God shall take from His the smart,
> Then will Jacob rejoice in heart.
> Praise to God.[23]

II. POWER, PENANCE, AND PSALM 6

The first part of this essay considered texts written *about* David and argued that writers both praise and blame David for variously interested purposes. This part of the essay looks at a text writers generally believed was written *by* David—Psalm 6—and argues that, by attending to how English poets dealt with the psalm, we can better understand the period's thoughts about monarchy and poetry.[24] I choose Psalm 6

[23] Quoted in Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 23–24. See discussion, 15–17.

[24] The connection of Psalm 6 with David's sin is also made by Donne and John Fisher. See Donne, *Sermons*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–62), 5:318; and Fisher, *Treatise concernynge the seven penytencyall psalmes* (1509), in *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. John E. B. Mayor (London, 1876), 1–8. See also Charles A. Huttar, "Frail Grass and Firm Tree," in Frontain and Wojcik, *The David Myth in Western Literature*, 38–54; J. Evetts-Secker, "An Elizabethan Experiment in Psalmody: Ralph Buckland's *Seaven Sparkes of the Enkindled Soule*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 311–26; and Elisabeth R. Jones, "Penitential Bookends: John Fisher and Thomas Sternhold Interpret Psalm 6," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6 (2004): 56–81.

instead of Psalm 51—both penitential psalms—for three chief reasons. First, Hannibal Hamlin has already written an excellent case study of Psalm 51 that describes the penitential tradition and explores its importance in English literature. Second, notable poets (Philip Sidney, King James VI/I, and John Milton) translated Psalm 6 and *not* 51. Third, a study of translations of Psalm 6 reveals how poets could variously construe the penitential tradition.

The penitential Psalms are so-called because they were often said by those who believed they had sinned (penitents) in order to be restored into the church. The origins of the idea are difficult to pin down: Augustine is reported to have said psalms for this purpose, though it is uncertain which psalms he said. In the Hebrew text, Psalm 51 explicitly presents itself as David's prayer for forgiveness after being confronted by Nathan, and Pope Innocent III was apparently responsible for selecting the rest—6, 32, 38, 102, 130, and 143—and for writing the rubrics to have them said during Lent.[25] The subject matter of the penitential Psalms was seen as the things one might say in a penitential situation: an expression of guilt, responsibility for sin, self-accusing; an expression of suffering inflicted by God because of the sin, often inflicted through "enemies" to the speaker; and a request to God that the suffering would be relieved and that the speaker would be restored to God.[26]

Hamlin is certainly right to call Psalm 51 "the most familiar penitential text in the Bible" and David "the most famous penitent." (216). To err is human, and many found in David a praiseworthy model of how one constructively deals with sin. In the penitential Psalms, they found models for their prayers.[27] Psalm 6 also firmly rests within that peniten-

[25] John Alexander Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship* (London: Faith, 1962), 106.

[26] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 57–63; and Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 45–46.

[27] In the medieval church, the aim of restoring penitents was in part accomplished by these psalms in "Books of Hours," also known as *Horae*, or simply "primers." Clare Costley, "David, Bathsheba, and the Penitential Psalms," *Reniassance Quarterly* 57 (2004): 1235–77, examines illustrations from a number of medieval primers and later works, which depict a nearly nude or nude Bathsheba bathing, often with the opening words of Psalm 6, *Domine ne in furore*, inscribed upon the image. Those who could not read or understand the words of the Latin psalms they were speaking could certainly relate them back to David and his prayer for forgiveness. See also Charles C. Butterworth, *The English Primers, 1529–1545: Their Publication and Connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953); and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 209–32.

tial tradition and its associations with David, but the interpretations of that psalm could differ in a significant way that was warranted by the text. As a benchmark, consider Coverdale's 1539 Great Bible translation:

> Oh Lorde, rebuke me not in thy indignacyon: neither chasten me in thy dyspleasure. Have mercy upo[n] me (O Lorde) for I am weake: O Lorde heale me for my bones are vexed. My soule also is sore troubled: but Lorde how longe wylt thou punyshe me? Turne the (O Lorde) & delyuer my soule: Oh saue me, for thy mercyes sake. For in death no man remembreth the: and who wyll geve the thankes in the pit? I am weery of my gronyng: every nyght wash I my bedde, and water my couche with my teares. My bewtie is gone for very trouble, & worne awaye, because off all myne enemyes. Awaye fro me all ye that worke vanyte: for the Lorde hath herde the voyce of my weping. The Lord hath hearde my peticion, the Lorde wyll receave my prayer. All myne enemyes shalbe confounded & soore vexed: they shalbe turned backe and put to shame, sodenly.[28]

The psalm has two basic movements: the first is the speaker's suffering and his suit; the second is the resolution beginning "Away fro[m] me"—the speaker's suit is heard, the "enemyes" that torment the speaker are driven away. The crux is that there is no direct admission of guilt or sin, and this holds true for the Vulgate as well.[29] The guilt and need for penance, rather, are assumed by most readers because of the psalm's penitential tradition: "Rebuke me not" and "neither chasten me" are pleas for God not to find fault and punish. That's not a *mea culpa*, and the difference can seen in Thomas Sternhold's little addition to the same phrase in his version of Psalm 6: "Lord in thy wrath reprove me not / though I *deserve* thyne Ire" (emphasis mine).[30] The poetic translations that follow all differ in how they deal with the guilt of the speaker.

But who is the speaker? Is it the reader? The traditional practice of reading psalms personally is as least as old as Athanasius (whose short treatise on applying the psalms was frequently reprinted in Bibles and psalters, including Archbishop Parker's). John Calvin articulates this influentially in his preface to his commentary on the Psalms.[31] There, he

[28] *The Byble in Englyshe*, trans. Miles Coverdale, STC 2068 (London, 1539), XX2.

[29] "Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me: neq[ue] in ira tua corripias me." The Vulgate text is taken from the British Library's scan of the Gutenberg Bible (Mainz: Johann Gutenberg, 1455; digital facsimile available at British Library, http://www.bl.uk/treasures/gutenberg/homepage.html). Thanks to Dudley Stutz for helping me with this.

[30] Sternhold and John Hopkins, *Al Such Psalmes of David as Thomas Sternehold Late Grome of [the] Kinges Maiesties Robes, Didde in His Life Time Draw into English Metre*, STC 2420 (London, 1549), A8v.

[31] Calvin's influence on early modern interpretation is widely accepted and perhaps overstated. For a good discussion, see Wesley A. Kort, *"Take, Read": Scripture, Textuality, and Cultural Practice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

likens the Psalms to a "glasse" that gives insight to what ails "mennes mindes" and draws "every one of us to the peculiar examination of himself," to search out the "infirmities," "vices," and "all the lurking holes" so that the "hart is clenzed from the most noysome infection of hypocrisie and laid open to the light."[32] So for Calvin, psalms are most of all about "us," the readers. This occurs through an intense identification with a suffering David:

> if I should tel with how sundry encounters he exercised mee, and with what tryalls hee prooved me, the story would bee long. . . . when David shewed me the way by his own footsteps, I found no small comforte therby. For like as that holy King was sore bayted with continewall warres by the *Philistines* and other foreine foes, but more sorer wounded by the inward malice and wickednesse of faithlesse persons at home: so I also being assaulted on all sides have scarcely had one Minutes rest, eyther from outwarde or inward fightings.[33]

This perhaps sounds audacious and self-aggrandizing, yet Calvin's identification with David reveals a commonplace practice, where the "I" is understood as both the reader and David at the same time.

Thomas Wyatt seems to relish this complexity in perhaps the most ambitious attempt in English to render the penitential Psalms.[34] Wyatt renders the seven penitential Psalms in *terza rima*. These psalms are linked by prologues in *ottava rima*, which are voiced by a narrator and which situate David within the events of the Bathsheba episode of 2 Samuel 11–12, beginning with David's initial viewing of her. It's a long work of 775 lines. (Psalm 6 is 111 lines long.) In it, Wyatt defies penitential con-

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Kort sagely points out that Calvin's theories of reading are not "idiosyncratic" but rather "drawn from sources readily available to him and generally known to his readers" (19). See also Barbara Pitkin, "Imitation of David: David as a Paradigm for Faith in Calvin's Exegesis of the Psalms," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993): 843–63; Charles Garside, Jr., "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536–1543," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69, no. 4 (1979): 1–36; and Gosselin, *The King's Progress to Jerusalem*, 69–70.

[32] John Calvin, *The Psalmes of David and others. With M. John Calvins commentaries*, trans. Arthur Golding, STC 4395 (London, 1571), *6v. Signatures noted here reflect the book's use of asterisks as signatures for the prefatory material: thus, *1–*8, **1–**2.

[33] Ibid., **1.

[34] R. A. Rebholz, ed., *Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Complete Poems* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 455, estimates the date of composition as either 1536 or 1541. The *Paraphrase* was first printed in 1549: Wyatt, *Certayne psalmes chosen out of the psalter of David, commonly called the.vii. penytentiall psalmes*, STC 2726 (London, 1549). Wyatt draws his narrative structure from Pietro Aretino's 1534 prose work, *I Sette Salmi de la Penitentia di David*, available in English prose as Aretino, *Paraphrase vpon the seaven penitentiall psalmes of the kingly prophet translated out of Italian by I.H.*, trans. John Hawkins, STC 19910.5 (1635). See also Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds., *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969), xviii–xix.

vention, for while David admits guilt, it is all a "crafty" performance, which is stage-managed by Wyatt's narrator. David doesn't turn the mirror on himself, and instead emphasizes his public and political importance to God.[35]

This reading is invited by the embeddedness of David's psalm. Wyatt uses a narrator who presents the psalm as a piece of music and words composed by David extemporaneously. In Wyatt's stanza immediately preceding Psalm 6, we see a David aware of his audience:

> But he, without prolonging or delay,
> Rof that that might his Lord, his God appease,
> Fall'th on his knees, and with his harp, I say,
> Afore his breast, fraughted with disease
> Of stormy sighs, his cheer coloured like clay,
> Dressed upright, seeking to counterpoise
> His song with sighs, and touching of the strings
> With tender heart, lo, thus to God he sings.
> (64–72)[36]

It is not to face himself (as Calvin would suggest) that David prays but to "his God appease." David carefully positions himself on his knees, raises his harp to his breast, and sits upright. He makes his face clay-colored, "seeking to counterpoise / His song with sighs." "Counterpoise" suggests careful balancing: David's actions are, literally, rhetorical positioning.[37] Throughout Wyatt's text, both David and the narrator are conscious of both their efforts as performances for audiences and the political ramifications of sin: the narrator tendentiously ("lo" [72]) introduces David's psalm to the reader; David is then rendered as ten-

[35] My position is a corrective for readings that imagine Wyatt's Psalms are set blissfully apart from his other concerns. See H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1959), 202–48; Robert G. Twombly, "Thomas Wyatt's Paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms of David," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12 (1970): 345–80; Zim, *English Metrical Psalms*, 47; and Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 251–52. I am closer to the positions of Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 115–56, and Alexandra Halasz, "Wyatt's David," in *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 193–218.

[36] I quote from Rebholz's edition.

[37] *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, s.v., "counterpoise, *v.*," 1: "To balance by a weight on the opposite side or acting in opposition; to counterbalance," and 5b, "To weigh mentally; to balance opposite considerations in one's mind; to consider or ponder carefully." Rebholz sees Wyatt's emphasis of "sighs" at the expense of "song" (458), as if sighs represent authentic contrition and the song is an outward deed. But sighs can be every bit as rhetorical as song.

dentiously addressing his plaint to the Lord ("O Lord, since in my mouth thy mighty name / Suffer'th itself 'my Lord' to name and call" [73–74]). This is seen most keenly when David marshals an argument for why he should continue to live (verse 5 in later editions). Coverdale expresses the thought, thus: "For in death no man reme[m]breth the: Oh who wil geve the thankes in the hell?" Compare that to this:

> For that in death there is no memory
> Among the damned, nor yet no mention
> Of thy great name, ground of all glory,
> Then if I die and go whereas I fear
> To think thereon, how shall thy great mercy
> Sound in my mouth unto the world's ear?
> For there is none that can thee laud and love
> For that thou nilt no love among them there.
> (131–38)

Coverdale's David speaks generally of any person's potential death and subsequent silence, but Wyatt's David stresses his public, royal role: "how shall thy great mercy / sound in my mouth unto the world's ear?"—which is precisely the royal *and* priestly role David took in the biblical narrative, leading the Ark into Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 6). But with his sin, that concentration of power is in jeopardy.

The enemies in the psalm, then, are David's critics, who mock his celebratory role: "And some shew me the power of my armour, / Triumph and conquest, and to my head assigned / Double diadem" (ll. 161–63). And it's to silence these critics that David wants to evade the consequences of sin:

> Shamed be they all, that so lie in wait
> To compass me, by missing of their prey!
> Shame and rebuke redound to such deceit!
> Sudden confusion's stroke without delay
> Shall so deface their crafty suggestion
> That they to hurt my health no more assay,
> Since I, O Lord, remain in thy protection.
> (178–84)

He asserts that the enemies lie in wait and attack with "crafty suggestion," which he said before was being deployed to "trouble my penance" (155). Now he prays that this suggestion be "deface[d]," that is, depersonalized and deconstructed. In Coverdale's text ("All myne enemies shalbe co[n]founded & sore vexed: yee they shalbe turned backe and

put to shame and that right soone"), there is no talk of an enemy's suggestion and none of its being "crafty." David's last refrain in this crafty psalm is to push the blame away, so that the enemies will know the Lord is in charge in heaven, and David on earth. The narrator—Wyatt's figure of the poet—is also implicated in craftiness. After Psalm 6 ends, the narrator continues:

> Whoso hath seen the sick in his fever,
> After truce taken with the heat or cold
> And that the fit is passed of his fervour,
> Draw fainting sighs, let him, I say, behold
> Sorrowful David after his languor,
> That with the tears that from his eyes down rolled
> Paused his plaint and laid adown his harp,
> Faithful record of all his sorrows sharp.
>
> (185–92)

The contrast between what David sings in the psalm (his emphasis on his royal role, his final shifting of the blame) and how Wyatt's courtly narrator reports the prayer is stark. The narrator calls upon the reader to "behold" David's sorrow, to which the "tears" serve as "faithful record." The *outward* signs of David's languor and sickness are given the stamp of authenticity by the narrator, while for a conventional interpreter, such as Fisher, David's sickness is *inward* sin. In his *Treatise Concernynge the Seven Penytencyall Psalmes* Fisher notes,

> Let us take hede and use the same whan we be seke in lyke maner as [David] was by our synnes shortely to be cured, for he was a sinner as we be, but he dyde holsome penaunce makynge this holy psalme wherby he gate forgyvenes & was restored to his soules helth.[38]

In Wyatt's poem, the narrator shows David as penitent and sorry, but David's words aren't that convincing. Instead, Wyatt hints at the power narrators (commentators, myth makers) have in shaping a story. If Stephen Greenblatt is right that Wyatt's "invocation of David may glance, slyly and indirectly, at Henry VIII himself,"[39] then Wyatt's target isn't just the king who had imprisoned him and who wrote approving notes in his personal psalter, wherein he gazed at himself looking like David with a harp, but also the enablers—those like Jean Mallard

[38] Fisher, *The English Works*, ed. Mayor, 7.

[39] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 121. See also Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 223–31.

who made Henry's psalter, or like Hans Holbein who painted a Star of David in *The Ambassadors*.[40]

This kind of enabling and false-dealing by poets is something Sidney considers at length in his *Defence of Poesy*. I've argued elsewhere that Sidney concedes the worst that can be said about poets and turns to the Psalms to redeem the poet, thus affirming Calvin's approach of reading one's self into the Psalms and affirming the penitential tradition of guilt in the psalm.[41] I'll add here that this is where the envy that Prescott notices in Sidney helps us understand why he would translate a complaining psalm that ends with a cursing of enemies. For if a poet could admit his envy, call it sin, and have it purged by putting himself through the paces of a penitential psalm, who would have the standing to oppose him? The audacity of assuming this position—this intense identification with a penitent and victorious David—is thoroughly traditional.

While Wyatt distances himself from the David who harps, in Psalm 6, Sidney collapses all possible voices into one: that of the poet he strove to defend in his *Defence of Poesy*. The poet is moth-eaten and wearied by his sins, yet we get a sense that the poet, if he cannot be defended, can be saved:

> Mercy, oh, mercy, Lord, for mercy's sake,
> For death doth kill the witness of thy glory.
> Can of thy praise the tongues entombèd make
> A heav'nly story?
>
> (13–16)[42]

Sidney's "heav'nly story" recalls his description of the psalms in the *Defence*: "for what else is the awaking his musical instruments . . . but a heavenly poesy."[43] Sidney provides God (and perhaps critics) a reason why he should be saved: dead poets cannot produce the kind of "heavenly poesy" that Sidney urges in his *Defence* and that God ordains.[44]

[40] Pamela Tudor-Craig, "Henry VIII and King David," in *Early Tudor England: Proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Wolfeboro, NH: Boydell, 1989). See also John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1989), 81; and Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar, 1996). Tudor-Craig provides all of Henry's annotations.

[41] See my "The Redemption of Poesy," in Papazian, *The Sacred and Profane*.

[42] Sidney, "Psalm 6," in Hamlin et al., *The Sidney Psalter*, 17.

[43] Sidney, *Defence of Poesy*, in Duncan-Jones, *Major Works*, 215.

[44] The idea that Sidney is thinking about the poet in his psalm, especially in this quatrain, is strengthened by his delicate pun upon *wit*, "For death doth kill the witness of thy

If Sidney does become David the redeemed king and poet, it is through his own considerable ingenuity. It takes less imagination to see King James do it. In the *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, King James describes the source of his authority:

> Kings are called Gods by the propheticall King David, because they sit upon GOD his Throne in the earth, and have the count of their administration to give unto him. Their office is, To minister Justice and Judgement to the people, as the same David saith: To advance the good, and punish the evill.[45]

If Wyatt points out the danger of a monarch who fancies himself a Davidic king and poet, then it is James (more than Henry VIII) that instantiates his fears. James's relationship with David and the Psalms grows out of the kingship the two men share. James was not the first, or the last, Christian king to draw upon the tropes of the house of David, but James is distinguished from these other monarchs in that he translated thirty of David's psalms, a project that actively connects him to David's kingship *and* David's poetry.[46] James follows Calvin's advice—that one ought to follow in David's footsteps—more closely than Calvin would have preferred.

In his *Basilikon Doron*, James tells his son Henry to follow David's precepts for picking courtiers: "King *David* sets downe the best precepts, that any wise and Christian King can practise in that point."[47] Further, he argues that "the Psalmes of *David* are the meetest schoole-master that ye can be acquainted with": in them,

> you may learne all forme of prayer necessarie for your comfort at all occasions: And so much the fitter are they for you, then for the common sort, in respect

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glory" (14), compared with Sternhold's "For why, No man among the dead, / rememberth thee one whytte." Perhaps one of the poet's sins is the pride of being wittier than Sternhold.

[45] James VI and I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain, *The Political Works of James I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918; repr., New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 54–55. He repeats this claim in his March 1609/10 speech to Parliament and his June 1616 speech in the Star Chamber. James only partially quotes his text from the Psalms. The context is Psalm 82, a psalm that asks, "How long will yee judge unjustly: and accept the persons of the wicked?" James takes his text, "Ye are gods," from near the end of the psalm, but fails here to complete the thought: "But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the Princes" (1611 King James Version).

[46] James's psalms are found in British Library Royal Manuscript 18.B.xvi in his own hand. He rendered thirty of them (Psalms 1–7, 9–21, 29, 47, 100, 104, 125, 128, 131, 133, 148, and 150), but they went unpublished until James Craigie edited and printed the manuscript: *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1958).

[47] James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron*, in McIlwain, *Political Works*, 30.

the composer thereof was a King: and therefore best behoved to know a Kings wants, and what things were meetest to be required by a King at Gods hand for remedie thereof.[48]

The one thing that James often needed was deliverance from his enemies; he and David had that in common.[49] When James turns to Psalm 6—the only penitential Psalm he attempts—it's the prayer of the innocent, persecuted David. The same David, who James notes in his *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, "was cruelly persecuted, for no offence."[50] When James begins Psalm 6, "Ô lorde into thy wraithfull yre / reprove me not I humblie pray / nor chasten me in thy furiouse fyre" (1–3), it is not an admission of guilt, as is Sternhold's "Lord in thy wrath reprove me not, / though I deserve thine ire." It is Sternhold's rendering that deviates from the letter of scripture, not James's. Sternhold and Calvin's commentary on Psalm 6 agree on this point. Calvin writes,

For [David] quarelleth not with God, as thowghe he playd the cruell enemie without just cause: but yeelding to hym the ryght of rebuking & chastyzing, he wisheth no more but that there may bee measurablenesse used in punishing hym: by which woordes he declareth, that God is just punisher of sinn.[51]

James "humblie pray[s]," in suit-like fashion, that there be no punishment at all because no punishment is deserved. James's emphasis, rather, is on his suffering. The problem is personal as well as political and strategic. While he endures suffering, his enemies stay strong:

> wraith dois my eye demaine
> quhich waxeth olde for paine
> that all my foes retaine
> thaire woonted micht.
> (21–24)

James's investment in the persecuted but innocent David affects the production of the book said to be by his son King Charles I, the *Eikon Basilike*, which in turn provokes Milton's *Eikonoklastes* and his translation of Psalm 6 in August 1653.

Most critics see *Eikon Basilike* as making Charles a Christ-like martyr,

[48] Ibid., 15.

[49] James also translates Psalm 18, presented by 2 Samuel 22 as David's prayer of thanksgiving for deliverance from Saul. The 1560 Geneva Bible note for 2 Samuel 22:5 further demonstrates the idea of deliverance: "As David (who was the figure of Christ) was by Gods power delivered from all dangers: so Christ and his Church shal overcome most grievous dangers tryannie and death."

[50] James VI and I, *Trew Law*, in McIlwain, *Political Works*, 60.

[51] Calvin, *The Psalmes of David and others*, B8.

and this understanding is not without cause: we have been largely influenced by William Marshall's frontispiece and Charles's scaffold proclamation: "I am the Martyr of the People."[52] Yet the book's arguments and prayers represent the thoughts of a king who feels persecuted, and the overwhelming model that the *Eikon Basilike* uses is not Christ but David, running from Saul and fleeing Jerusalem during Absalom's insurrection; the book's prayers are lifted phrase by phrase from various scriptural texts, mostly the Psalms.[53] When Charles appears penitent for "an act of sinful compliance" (his order to put the Earl of Strafford to death), he does it in a prayer that copies Psalm 51, a penitential psalm.[54] When Charles uses the psalm text, he is expressing guilt: "Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (51:4). But then he adds, "for thou sawest the contradiction between my heart and my hand," and omits the biblical text, "that thou mightest bee justified when thou speakest, and be cleare when thou judgest" (51:4, KJV). The effect is to avoid God's justified speech and clear judgment, replacing that with an equivocation: the sin was not in my "heart," but done by my "hand." Lost is the psalm's traditional context of David's adultery and murder—both crimes of the heart. Psalm 51:10 reads, "Create in mee a cleane heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within mee" (KJV), but Charles jumps straight from the first part of verse 4 to verse 11, which reads "Cast mee not away from thy presence," purposely omitting the psalm's reference to a heart that needs to be made clean. The sin, Charles maintains, was not one of the heart.

And this galls Milton. He is growing weary of the politicization of David by the Stuart regime, and as a result, will put David back in his proper place during Michael's narrative of human history in *Paradise Lost*. In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton attacks Charles's appropriation of David's voice, the penitential tradition, and the selective use of them for aesthetic and rhetorical purposes. In chapter 3, Milton notes that Charles

> appeal'd to Gods Tribunal, and behold God hath judg'd and don to him in the sight of all men according to the verdict of his own mouth. To be a warning to all Kings hereafter how they use presumptuously the words and protestations of *David*, without the spirit and conscience of *David*.[55]

[52] Qtd. in John Gauden, *Eikon Basilike*, in *Eikon Basilike with Selections from Eikonoklastes*, ed. Jim Daems and Holly Faith Nelson (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2006), 322.

[53] See the discussions in Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 190–95; Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156–65; and Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 325–40.

[54] *Eikon Basilike*, ed. Daems and Nelson, 56.

[55] Milton, *Eikonoklastes* (1649), in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Merritt Y.

In chapter 23 of *Eikonoklastes*, Milton observes that Charles "borrows *David*'s Psalmes" to attack the Assembly of Divines, and quips, "Had he borrowed *Davids* heart, it had bin much the holier theft."[56] In Milton's view, Charles has reduced David to a rhetorical figure: David's "heart," which Charles omitted in his rendition of Psalm 51, is missing. This accords with an important reading of *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes* by Steven N. Zwicker that Milton's overriding concern in *Eikonoklastes* is the royalist tendency to privilege "Wit" and aesthetics over inspiration. Insofar as the *Eikon Basilike* was effective, it was because of its heart-wrenching beauty. Zwicker argues, "Milton understood that to combat the book and its legacy he would need to deny its capacity as literature and its imaginative authority. . . . He aimed altogether to deny the authority of the aesthetic with in political discourse."[57]

For Milton, then, translating the Psalms was an opportunity to do double duty: positively, to reclaim David's "heart" and his psalms for his own poetry and the Commonwealth, and negatively, to deny the Stuart regime the political authority and aesthetics of the penitential tradition. Of the many artistic responses to Charles's death, most relevant here is a substantial attempt by Thomas Stanley, who set to rhyme the prayers in the *Eikon Basilike*, perhaps as early as 1649.[58] This royalist making of a Caroline psalter is just one point on a long chain of psalmody that Milton was heir to when he rendered seventeen psalms between 1648 and 1653. Because Milton wrote so much else, it is not surprising that his psalm translations have gathered little attention from critics. Those who have commented upon them stress either the connections Milton shares with the Genevan tradition of metrical psalmody, or Milton's prodigious understanding of Hebrew.[59] Publishing the translations in

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Hughes (gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe), vol 3. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 381–82.

[56] Ibid., 547.

[57] Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 39.

[58] Susan Treacy, "*Psalterium Carolinum*: Music as Propaganda in Seventeenth-Century England," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 19 (1993): 49. Stanley's verses were set to music by John Wilson, previously court musician to Charles and music professor at Oxford, and published in 1657 and 1660 with the title of *Psalterium Carolinum*. See John Wilson, *Psalterium Carolinum. The devotions of His sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings, rendred in verse. Set to musick for 3 voices and an organ, or theorbo*, Wing S5243A (London, 1657).

[59] For Milton's Psalms, see Edward Chauncey Baldwin, "Milton and the Psalms," *Modern Philology* 17 (1919): 457–63; Charles Dahlberg, "Paradise Lost v, 603, and Milton's Psalm II," *Modern Language Notes* 67 (1952): 23–24; Carolyn P. Collette, "Milton's Psalm Translations: Petition and Praise," *English Literary Renaissance* 2 (1972): 243–59; Leo Miller,

his 1673 *Works*, Milton rendered Psalms 1–8 and 80–88. Translated in 1648, Psalms 80–88 are literal renderings from the Hebrew; Milton even shows in italics words that he inferred as he put the Hebrew into English. These earlier psalms are in the rhyming fourteeners that marks Sternhold and Hopkins's Psalter, leading Hannay to affirm connections among Milton and the translators of the Puritan Bay Psalm Book.[60]

Milton's Psalms 1–8 are much different. Dated by Milton from August 8–14, 1653, they were written during Milton's tenure as Latin Secretary for the Commonwealth during the Anglo-Dutch trade war.[61] Milton had by this time gone blind.[62] Because of the remarkable nature of these circumstances, the striking thing about Milton's Psalm 6 is how unremarkable it seems, especially compared with the metrical experiments present in Psalms 1–5 and 7–8. This blandness has more to do with a reaction against the aesthetic tendencies of the royalists—and perhaps his own personal sufferings—than his enduring thoughts about psalmody.[63] In the context of the debate over David with Charles, Milton pares down, makes simple. Reduction is a political statement. He is certainly aware of more expansive poetic renderings of the Psalms (including Wyatt's and Sidney's work), but for Psalm 6, Milton writes a brief twenty-four-line poem in mostly iambic pentameter. It is almost a return to the brevity of Coverdale's 1539 Great Bible translation. Milton enlivens the regularity with enjambment, relieving us of the possible sing-song of the couplets in the midst of the *abba* rhyme scheme. Milton wants to elevate David's psalms as poetry, but is leery of relying on David's story or his kingship to give that poetry authority. So Milton's

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"Some Inferences from Milton's Hebrew," *Milton Quarterly* 18 (1984): 414–46; Lee A. Jacobus, "Milton Metaphrast: Logic and Rhetoric in Psalm I," *Milton Studies* 23 (1987): 119–32; John K. Hale, "Why Did Milton Translate Psalms 80–88 in April 1648?" *Literature and History* 3, no. 2 (1994): 55–62; Hale, "England *as* Israel in Milton's Writings," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.2 (1996): 3.1–54; J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103–10; and Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 139–44.

60 Hannay, "'Psalms done into metre': The Common Psalms of John Milton and of the Bay Colony," *Christianity and Literature* 32, no. 3 (1983): 19–29. See also William Bridges Hunter, Jr., "The Sources of Milton's Prosody," *Philological Quarterly* 29 (1949): 125–44; and "The Bay Psalm Book: Reflection of Puritan Textual Tradition," *The News Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain MLA* 13, no. 4 (1960): 5–8.

61 For Milton's official correspondence, see Leo Miller, *John Milton's Writings in the Anglo-Dutch Negotiations, 1651–1654* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1992). I see nothing here that suggests a direct occasion for Milton's 1653 Psalms.

62 William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 429–31.

63 Later, in *Paradise Regained* (4.334–50) for example, Jesus contrasts the art of Hebrew poetry with what he sees as the harlot-artfulness of the Greeks.

Psalm 6 does not express guilt, denying the long penitential tradition of the psalm, as he begins: "Lord in thine anger do not reprehend me / Nor in thy hot displeasure me correct" (1–2).[64]

When Milton's speaker wonders what will happen to his praise if he were to die, he writes, "For in death no remembrance is of thee; / Who in the grave can celebrate thy praise?" (9–10). The word "praise" is utterly conventional: the innovation is in the word "celebrate," which has no precedent but for Archbishop Parker's 1567 psalter: "In death no man: remember can / thy name to celebrate."[65] The word "celebrate" denotes a public activity, which is fitting for an archbishop: one does celebrate the Eucharist.[66] Milton shows us the dangers of such celebration by putting the word in the mouth of Mammon in *Paradise Lost*, book 2, where it is connected to public liturgy for repentant rebels, who

> Stand in his presence humble, and receive
> Strict Laws impos'd, to celebrate his Throne
> With warbl'd Hymns, and to his Godhead sing
> Forc't Halleluiah's.
>
> (2.240–43)

So it is strange to see Milton use such a word in his Psalm 6. Is Milton thinking about a public, liturgical celebration, or a Genevan psalm-singing? Is he simply being ironic? Or is he redefining celebration as something textual?[67]

A clue can be found in the place in Milton's Psalm 6 that has garnered the most attention: Milton's apparent reference to his blindness: "My Bed I water with my tears; mine Eie / Through grief consumes, is waxen old and dark / Ith' mid'st of all mine enemies that mark" (13–15). Milton gives us a good look at his "Eie," leaving it at the end of the line. William Riley Parker connects this verse with the blindness of *Samson Agonistes* (ll. 77–82) and "When I consider how my light is spent,"[68] but no one else has had anything new to say about it. Some source study could be help-

[64] Milton, "Psal. VI. Aug. 13. 1653.," in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Flannagan; and *Poems, &c. upon several occasions*, Wing M2161, from Robert J. Wickenheiser Collection of John Milton, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina (London, 1673). Milton wants to move the psalm away from David's story, whereas for James, David's story is attractive insofar as David is persecuted and then exalted.

[65] Matthew Parker, *The whole Psalter translated into English metre, which contayneth an hundreth and fifty Psalmes*, STC 2729 (London, 1567).

[66] *OED*, s.v., "celebrate, *v.*," definition 3.

[67] *OED*, s.v., "celebrate, *v.*," definition 4: "To make publicly known, proclaim, publish abroad."

[68] Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 429–31 and 470.

ful. Coverdale translates the line, "My bewtie is gone for very trouble, & worne awaye, because off all myne enemyes," but the Vulgate gives us the eyes: "Turbatus est a furore oculus meus: inveteravi inter omnes inimicus meos." "Turbatus" denotes "troubled, stirred, mooved, ruffled, disordered," but not "blind."[69] We start seeing the blindness, if not already in the Vulgate then in George Joye's Lutheran translation of 1530: "My syght ys loste with hevye moorninge: I am witherd up amonge so many myne enymes."[70] Most popularly, it is Thomas Sternhold that shows us, "My sight is dimme and waxeth olde / with anguishe of mine heart: / For feare of those that be my foes, / and woulde my soule subverte," and the King James Version follows suit: the eye is "consumed because of griefe; it waxeth old." So Milton's allusion to his own blindness in this psalm is certainly appropriate, but it is not original.

The decision to retain blindness in the psalm and to allude to his own blindness begins to make sense when we think of Milton's attack on *Eikon Basilike*, the "Image of the King," which in 1653 he could no longer literally see. Consumed as he was in 1653 with his response to the personal attacks of *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum*, both celebration and defense for him becomes internal and textual—his enemies are those who "mark," both seeing him and marking their papers.[71] The psalm concludes,

> Depart from me, for the voice of my weeping
> The Lord hath heard, the Lord hath heard my prai'r
> My supplication with acceptance fair
> The Lord will own, and have me in his keeping.
> Mine enemies shall all be blank and dash't
> With much confusion; then grow red with shame,
> They shall return in hast the way they came
> And in a moment shall be quite abash't.
>
> (ll. 17–24)

The enemies are "blank," "dash't," and confused: their pages will be empty, or filled with dashes, or be simply confused. If Zwicker is right that Milton in *Eikonoklastes* tries to deny his royalist enemies access to

[69] Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae*, STC 24008 (Cambridge, 1587), s.v. "turbatus."

[70] George Joye, *The Psalter of David in Englishe Purely and Faithfully Translated Aftir the Texte of Feline*, STC 2370, (Antwerp, 1530).

[71] *OED*, s.v. "mark, *v.*" definition 25: "To take notice of mentally; to consider; to give one's attention to"; definition 26: "To notice or perceive physically; to observe; to look at or watch"; definition 2: "To make a mark or marks on (something) by drawing, stamping, branding, cutting, staining, etc."; and definition 9: "To annotate," a. "To write a glossarial note or commentary against a word or passage."

aesthetics as politics, he may in Psalm 6 be hitting them where it hurts: their pages turn blank.

This literary oblivion is precisely how Milton deals with David in *Paradise Lost*, after Charles I has faded from the scene. I began this essay by quoting the angel Michael's brief reference to David near the end of the poem, and I now return to this mountaintop prospect to conclude. This essay has shown that David's story and his psalms are important for our understanding of the poetry and politics of early modern England, and that writers made choices in how they wanted to interpret and apply David to their own political and poetical situations. One could praise David, blame him, apply him to one's own story, or use his story to read someone else. Milton, faced with these options and this varied tradition, goes his solitary way to claim David is no longer relevant.

It is true, in Michael's speech, that David is "both for pietie renownd / And puissant deeds" (12.321–22), and yes, David received a promise that "his Regal Throne / For ever shall endure" (323–24), but that throne only endures because Christ is in David's filial line: "of the Royal Stock / Of David . . . shall rise / A Son, the Woman's Seed to thee foretold" (325–37). David's piety, his deeds, and especially his throne are surpassed by the victory of Christ, who is "of Kings / The last, for of his Reign shall be no end" (329–30). David only played his bit part in a dark time in Michael's narrative of human history when the problem was one of national sin:

> Meanwhile they in thir earthly *Canaan* plac't
> Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins
> National interrupt thir public peace,
> Provoking God to raise them enemies:
> From whom as oft he saves them penitent
> By Judges first, then under Kings.
>
> (12.315–20)

God encouraged penance for this sin by giving the people enemies. The people were saved from these enemies by a variety of judges and kings. As a result of the ordeal, the people became "penitent." Milton regards this process as a temporary arrangement. David's government is a caretaking government of penance, similar to the purpose of God's law in general, which was "giv'n / With purpose to resign them in full time / Up to a better Cov'nant" (12.300–02). Insofar as the Stuarts and their supporters associated themselves with the poetry, penance, and royal power of David, Milton views them as retrograde to the progress of human and sacred history. Christ has written a new covenant, as *Para-*

dise Regained will show more clearly. Thus, Milton's chief reference to David in the whole of *Paradise Lost* is brief and barely memorable.

It is an irony of history that Milton needs a king's forgiveness and a parliament's Act of Oblivion to allow him to forget David so prominently, or to allow him to write and publish *Paradise Lost* at all. It is likely that the idea of oblivion and the real possibility of it for himself were keenly on Milton's mind after the Restoration—"oblivious" is the word Milton gives Satan to describe the pool in which the rebels fell in book 1 of *Paradise Lost* (1.266)—so a little forgetful dealing with David, near the end of his epic seems fitting. Yet others do not forget:

> In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,
> Before *Polygamy* was made a sin;
> When man, on many, multiply'd his kind,
> E'r one to one was cursedly, confind:
> When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd
> Promiscuous use of Concubine and Bride;
> Then, *Israel's* Monarch, after Heaven's own heart,
> His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart
> To Wives and Slaves: And wide as his Command,
> Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land.
> (1–10)[72]

The beginning of John Dryden's defense of Charles II, *Absalom and Achitophel*, is evidence that despite Milton's efforts, David cannot be passed over, contained, "blank[ed]," "dash't," or forgotten, but like Charles II, has real, generative power. David is a poet, but he's also a king—and in early modern England, he publishes widely.

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[72] Dryden, "Absalom and Achitophel. A Poem," in *The Works of John Dryden*, vol. 2., ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 5.