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Brendan W. Clark
brendan.clark@trincoll.edu

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*“There Is No Corruption in the World So Bad”:
Archbishop William Laud, William Prynne, and
Secret Histories of Caroline England, 1633-1646*

Advisors:

Associate Professor of History Jonathan M. Elukin

Associate Professor of History Jennifer M. Regan-Lefebvre

*Submitted for Consideration of Partial Completion of the Bachelor of Arts, With Honors, in the
Department of History at Trinity College*

Brendan W. Clark '21

Trinity College History Department: Senior History Thesis

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WILLIAM LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY :
his grace primate of all England and Metropolitan
and Chancellor of the Vniuersity of Oxford. &c.

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One, of course, finds at the end of any great triumph and travail that a steady coterie of friends, associates, and family have stood by one's side ably, willing to offer their steadfast assistance and guidance, in joint pursuit of that noble object which is now complete.

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To those not mentioned, and for any grammatical errors throughout, the fault and responsibility is entirely mine, and I can only beg now for forgiveness.

With gratitude and honor this sixth day of May, two thousand and twenty-one:

Brendan W. Clark ’21
At Hartford, Connecticut

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Introduction. The Conference with Fisher the Jesuit: Laud's Theology and the Makings of Puritan "Secret Histories"

The Church of Christ upon earth may be compared to a hive of bees, and that can be nowhere so steadily placed in this world but it will be in some danger; and men that care neither for the hive nor the bees have yet a great mind to the honey; and having once tasted the sweet of the Church's maintenance, swallow that for honey which one day will be more bitter than gall in their bowels.¹

So begins William Laud—later the Archbishop of Canterbury's—monumental theological contribution *The Conference with Fisher the Jesuit*. It was first published in 1622, a decade or so before the commencement of the historical proceedings to which we shall soon turn our attention. Laud was, at the time of *Fisher the Jesuit*, a prelate rising in the ranks of the Anglican establishment, a man committed to, as William Haller posits, “outward order in the service of religion”² and uniquely concerned with the governmental affairs he could come to direct. To our minds and with the full benefit of the historical chronicles today, Laud might be termed a fastidious tyrant, focused on the minutiae of religion at the expense of the theological value. In *Fisher the Jesuit*, however, we see a different side. As head of the Anglican Church, the established church of England, Laud held considerable political sway and significant authority over the direction of religious belief. There is an intimate relation here between his religious thinking and his developing views on the necessity of Church practice and structure: without it, the enterprise of the faithful fails in its entirety. Without order, the Church becomes merely open to that hive of bees, festering and slowly consuming its foundation with their fascination and quest not for genuine religious belief but for selfish indulgence.

¹ William Laud, “Archbishop Laud's Epistle Dedicatory to the King” in *A Relation of the Conference Between William Laud and Mr. Fisher the Jesuit, with an Answer to such exceptions as A.C. takes against it*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901): xvi.

² William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938): 222.

Interestingly, *Fisher the Jesuit* offers another theological position that would likely surprise and upends in one fell swoop our sense of the truth of Puritan fears about attempts to reunite the Anglican Church with the Roman Catholic Church, a key point of division. In one passage late in the text, he relates that the Church is definitively not “Catholic” in any sense of the imagination and derides those who sought for some theological sense of a union:

Catholic she is not, in any sense of the word, for she is not universal, and so not catholic in extent. Nor is she sound in doctrine, and in things which come near upon the foundation too; so not catholic in belief. Nor is she the “prime mother Church” of Christianity; Jerusalem was that: and so not catholic as a fountain or original, or as the head or root of the catholic.³

Laud never retracted this sentiment, nor did he really make direct assertions that would necessarily come to contradict it. Rather, in the divergent views and fragmented theological positions that constitute Anglicanism, religious order, reverence for practice, and other theological trappings manifested themselves in charges of “Romish plots” and “Popish” fixations. But to understand the divide between the supporters of Laud (“Laudians”) and the supporters of a “pure” Anglicanism (“Puritans”), the belief—surreptitious though it may be—that Laud and others plotted with the King of England—Charles I—to reunite the Anglicans with Catholics must be recognized as an almost ever-present trope. It will be, for the focus of our study, among the most constant of arguments against Laud and, ultimately, among those factors cited in support of his execution on January 10, 1645.⁴ Our focus here will begin with Anglican religious thought of the 1620s and conclude with Restoration England commentaries on the Civil War in the 1660s, considering especially the extent of the

³ Laud, *Conference with Fisher the Jesuit*, 424.

⁴ For reference to Laud’s execution, see Chapter IV, *infra*. For reference to Laud’s religious practices and beliefs, as well as a treatment of Laudianism, see Chapter II, *infra*.

Among the chief purveyors of this particular line of anti-Laudian belief was an “Anglican” prelate in name only—William Prynne, who in reality has his beliefs cast in the mould of Puritanism and Presbyterianism. Prynne presents himself as a committed Puritan, although as we shall see, he selectively embraces aspects of Puritanism for political reasons. Prynne, who by my estimation and that of many others must have been quite the firebrand at the Puritan pulpit, was strongly allied against the Laudian regime and was not shy in the allegations he came to levy against Laud. He was imprisoned by the Star Chamber, a contentious court in Stuart England (though Prynne might contend that he was imprisoned “by Laud” and Laud alone).⁵ Before Laud’s execution and after his imprisonment, Prynne would come to write three polemical tracts, among others, titled *A Breviate of the life of William Laud* (1644), *Hidden workes of darkenes brought to publike light* (1645), and *Canterburies doome* (1646). Those three together form the focus of this thesis, for along with their protestations against Laud, they also share a common rhetorical form: that of the “secret history.” The three tracts rely extensively on incendiary language, wide-ranging accusations, libels, and criticism of Laud’s religious beliefs were often based on realities that simply did not exist. They purport to present true stories of covert meetings, link travels overseas with ambiguous associations with the Pope and Rome, and often attribute a variety of Laud’s religious associations and supporters to a vast network of corruption and contravention that was alleged to be rampant under the reign of Charles. These texts will become familiar to us here as “secret histories,” narratives which purport to present the truth, but which in reality offer alternative narratives that have their foundation in political and

⁵ Prynne was imprisoned and received a rather moribund punishment by the Star Chamber for a publication of a particular tract in the mid-1630s. Laud was a member of the Star Chamber panel, though he was by no means the most vocal in his support for the sentence. For full treatment of this affair, see Chapter III, *infra*, at 53-55, 57-60.

religious motivations. In laymen's terms, they might be considered a more sophisticated and nuanced vehicle for disseminating gossip and circulating rumors than a modern print tabloid.

“Secret histories”—defined more thoroughly in Chapter I below—exist within the realm of historical revisionism, concerned with presenting a narrative in a fashion that seeks to achieve political and, in Prynne's case, religious aims. Prynne's three secret histories we will address posit a similar conclusion. That conclusion, admittedly spurious, is that Laud is a complicit partner in the affairs of the Roman Catholic Church. The tracts were published in the place and time of the advent and commencement of the English Civil War. The Civil War, which would result in the deposition and execution of Charles I, had a variety of causes. As Ann Hughes, a historian of seventeenth century English history has observed, the underlying development of the Civil War and the political environment of Charles' reign is a complex historical arena that remains ripe for exploration. “Historians trying to understand the causes of the civil war, one of the most complex and contested issues in English historiography, face dilemmas inevitable in any historical analysis, but here particularly pressing,” Hughes notes, because the civil war “still matters to us.”⁶ We shall not endeavor, here, to take on the Herculean task of identifying and explicating every cause of that seminal moment in English history that was the Civil War. That notwithstanding, it is impossible to separate from the historical narrative the actors of Laud, Prynne, and their contemporaries from the unsettled world of the 1640s, and some treatment must be given. They must be analyzed within that realm and they must be understood as contributing players in the collapse of the governmental and political structure that would follow and be replaced with Cromwell's Interregnum government.

⁶ Ann Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1998): 1.

In the case of Prynne and Laud, their dispute stems from a widespread series of political and religious disputes that no doubt had some part to play in fomenting and directing the course of the Civil War. Many of the themes of that moment which come to mind in historiographical renderings include the place of religion and politics. Importantly, adds Hughes, this time period in religion emphasized more than ever a sense of division between warring sects⁷—the Calvinists, Anti-Calvinists, Arminianists, Laudians, Puritans—terms which will be considered in detail in Chapter II. For now, it is sufficient to say that there was considerable factionalism in the religious structure which presented conflict. Of these, the Arminianists and Laudians would come to dominate and court the favor of Charles I. For instance, argues Hughes, Laud circulated a list of leading clergy following the death of James I “classified as orthodox or Puritan, showing clearly how Laud saw divisions in the church.”⁸ This episode illustrates well, even anecdotally, the forging of the religious divide that would come to upend the religious establishment and result in division. For our purposes, the causes of the English Civil War relied in part on a destabilized religious state which would come to foment real religious conflict.

Central as well to an understanding of these tracts is a brief entreaty to the study of Anglicanism. Anthony Milton has challenged that there was ever (or remains) a unified Anglican theology or practice, because the Anglican tradition was carved out of the Catholic faith it separated from in 1534. Historians of Anglicanism, he writes, “often assert that it is ‘a distinctive trajectory of faith and practice,’” and suggest that the result was that a “recognizably distinctive form of Christianity’ launched in the sixteenth century.”⁹ This general assessment of unity, however, is at odds with the historical reality of the Anglican faith under Laud’s leadership.

⁷ Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, 105-106.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Anthony Milton, “Introduction” to *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, Vol. 1, Anthony Milton, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 1.

Rather than a model of uniformity and consistency, Anglican practice in the 17th century—as we shall see—was divided sharply along parish lines, regionalism, and tradition. The difference may be generalized, to an extent, to reveal a recognizable rural-urban divide in the Anglican landscape, but even such leaps must be made cautiously. In the historiography of the time, contends Milton, we must be careful to even avoid our use of the term “Anglican” as anything more than a demonym for those practicing a religion in England, as to define otherwise implies that the “Church of England had a specific, settled identity (that people were either grouping towards, achieving, or seeking to re-establish) whereas in fact no such thing existed.”¹⁰ Thus, chief of mind in any study of the period—and in our review of Prynne’s texts—must be that the religious identities of those named were loosely part of this broad Anglican network of faith.

Prynne’s three tracts operate within this realm, purporting to argue against the idolatrous and alleged Catholicism of Laud. Prynne’s works are distinctly Puritan, tending to favor considerable divergence from Roman practice and theology, and their arguments present Rome as the singular threat to continued religious independence in England. Laud, meanwhile, is left to fend for himself and indicate how as Archbishop of Canterbury he has remained true to the Anglican faith as its chief expositor and theological leader below the titular sovereign. Our study here will consider not only the meaning of their religious dispute, but also their deeply personal one. In this mould of historical revisionism, too, we are left with an acute sense after reading these tracts of the scope of their coverage. While we shall only address here a selection of these topics—Roman connections, governmental sovereignty, Puritan suppression—their actual concerns are far broader. Prynne extends his criticism to everything from Laud’s attempts at reforming religious education for lay people to Laud’s impertinence in public address. Still,

¹⁰ Milton, “Introduction” to *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, 7.

despite this scope, Prynne manages to remain concerned and leave his reader's with a sense of Laud as dangerous to the continuity of the Church. To effectuate this grand design, Prynne turns to the secret history in all of its rhetorical construction and acclaim. Indeed, it is in the secret history that Prynne manages to most incisively attack his principal enemy, Laud, and make his case for his removal and later execution at the hands of Puritan revolutionaries.

Our study will begin in Chapter I with a survey of how we understand, definitionally, the "secret history." The historiography of secret histories is offered, touching particularly on the issues, devices, evidence, and other materials that typically distinguish a secret history from other forms of polemics and libels. Critically, we will also ask whether or not there is a definitive version of the secret history that can be adequately put forward as a model. In the case of Prynne, he never seemed content with one particular genre or aspect of the history. Instead, he consistently turned his focus to deploying a variety of stylistic devices which connote a secret history: from the insertion of false or fictitious narratives to a reliance on sources of uncertain origin. Chapter I also raises and situates Stuart secret histories in the wider historical study of the genre. Much has been written about the Restoration secret histories which accompanied the English Court of James II, William III, and later Queen Anne from the 1680s and early 1700s. Attention too, has been given to the secret histories that contend with Elizabethan concerns toward Catholicism. However, little has been written of the Stuart period which comes in between. Chapter I will seek to address why that is, and what concerns prompted the development of Stuart polemics cast in the mold of secret histories.¹¹ Chapter I, too, exposes us to the question of Stuart print culture and audience—resumed in Chapter IV—and forces us to consider the full panoply of actors who must be engaged in any polemical enterprise.

¹¹ For a thorough examination of this gap in the historiography of secret histories, see Chapter I, *infra*, at 20 to 22.

Chapter II, building on some of the allusions made here by Milton to fragmentary Anglicanism, challenges the conception of any uniform orthodoxy in Anglican religious practice. Instead, Laudianism and Puritanism, and many of its associated sects and branches, are considered. Their development, primarily from the 1620s, illumines two central issues: the inherent religious arguments which are necessary to understand Prynne's tracts, but also the central role that religion played in both the lives of Prynne and Laud. Religion is very much a personal issue for both men and it would not seem improper to term Prynne's tracks "religious secret histories." Chapter II touches upon the theological differences and development of the two warring major branches of Anglican thought (Laudianism and Puritanism) that would foment tension in the 1630s. As divergent as their perspectives are, Chapter II also points to some historical alternative realities. For instance, under James I, scholars seem to agree, religious difference was not as intolerable to the monarchy and to those in leadership in Canterbury as under the latter years of Charles I's reign. The factors which led to this difference, considered briefly, help illumine our understanding of Prynne and why certain Puritan radicals felt a need to speak freely and contest the existing Anglican hierarchy.

Chapter III delves into the personal relationships of the two men. Their longstanding dispute, stemming from the theological differences considered in Chapter II, become manifest in other ways. The two men divide in their recollections and accounts of Prynne's treatment in the Star Chamber and his subsequent imprisonment. Indeed, Chapter III explains the vociferous and uninhibited qualities of Prynne's secret histories, which hold little back in their criticisms. As Haller has observed of Prynne, "probably no man ever lived in whom common caution weighted less in comparison to the intoxication of rushing into print. There is a vanity men of a certain kind enjoy in loudly expressing moral indignation and so figuring with self-approval in the

public eye.”¹² Such a vanity is considered in Chapter III as we seek to understand how the relationship between Prynne and Laud begins as an intellectual division and develops into a conflict over the direction of the church and, ultimately, a personal feud over matters of character. This intellectual division begins in the 1620s, is fomented in the 1630s in the wake of increasing prosecution of Puritan idealists and concludes with Laud’s execution in 1645 as the Civil War carries on. Further, Chapter III turns its focus to Laud’s own motivations and efforts at church reform and practice. Challenging the conventional narrative of a strong Archbishop encouraging Charles to undertake drastic parliamentary actions, a careful analysis of secondary sources suggests a different reality: the Archbishop likely lacked the full scope of authority that Prynne might have imagined.

Chapter IV will turn to an assessment of the tracts themselves, seeking to identify those elements common to secret histories established in the first chapter and also exploring the purpose and intention of Prynne in selecting to raise certain arguments and allusions. Importantly, Chapter IV demonstrates the value and assumption of trust implicit in the publication of any secret history: the readership is expected to accept and believe the contentions set forth in the tracts, even when their so-called sources and materials are dubious in origin. Chapter IV also identifies how Prynne’s tracts characterize the variety of styles that are common to the secret history genre: they deal with issues of evidence, issues of structure and organization, and—critically—begin to address the overwhelming and central issue, the breadth of association with Rome, which divides Puritans and Laudian Anglicans during the Stuart era. Further, Chapter IV leaves open another question that may not be resolved here to our satisfaction: what compels a Puritan such as Prynne to create and craft a secret history in lieu of other polemics?

¹² Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 233.

Chapter V will consider the implications of Prynne's works, their reception among the Puritan community, and their influence on the wider Anglican perception toward Laud and his regime as the Civil War commences. This chapter raises serious questions, including the extent of spread and the extent of knowledge of internal Anglican squabbles. Though, at the same time, we are also given some resolution to the question of sourcing and the import of evidence. Chapter V illustrates some of the privileges that Puritans and Puritan sympathizers would have given to certain sources and also assesses the persuasiveness of Prynne's arguments raised in the three tracts. Their reliance on personal correspondence, alleged first-hand accounts, and distortions of published remarks and defences propagated by Laud point to both the ease with which the truth was adjusted, and the rapidity by which the print culture of Stuart England could deliver responses from the readership. Chapter V will, ultimately, assess how Prynne's tracts contributed to Laud's execution and the Civil War that occurred concurrently.

Our last major question—constant throughout these chapters—concerns revisionism and the impact of revisionist history on narratives and what we accept as historical truth. Doubtless, Prynne's tracts were written for an audience of his contemporaries, but they also allude to an interest in future historical reception for his works. They suggest not only an acute awareness of the written record, but also an understanding that the dominant, published narratives will control much of the way historians view actors and construe space and time. For Prynne, this historical narrative is constructed and based around a structure that values and privileges "reason" in the construction of the historical narrative. Both Haller and, in particular, R.T. Ottley, considering the motivations of revisionism, recognize that in Christian histories there is a distinct conception that "[t]he moral faculty or 'conscience' is best regarded not as a separate element in human nature, but an aspect or function of reason—what may be called the *practical* as distinct from the

speculative reason, *i.e.* reason reflecting upon and judging the various springs of action, and so distinguishing a ‘better’ from a ‘worse’ in affairs of conduct.”¹³ In short, though Prynne certainly engages in and deploys aspects of speculative reason throughout his secret history tracts, he also presents his argument as the only one that rational, free thinking Puritans could accept when fully considering the evidence presented before them. In this sense, Prynne’s argument rests on what may be understood as an overarching Christian desire for practical outcomes and truth. The construction of the secret histories we will consider rely on and appeal directly to this sensibility. They are not polemical libels that make bald assertions without evidence. Rather, they are sophisticated tracts which reflect an understanding of both their audience and their purpose: to warn other Puritan leaders of the threat of the existing power structure and foment widespread and concerted opposition to the existing Anglican establishment. We will explore this question of truth and perception most in Chapter V, though its concerns resonate throughout the thesis.

For instance, the extent of the need for that revisionism becomes apparent in Chapters II and III, particularly as we see a radically different perception and intentionality in Laud’s actions and the actual historical narrative against the *mélange* of fiction and fact which Prynne creates. There is a real intellectual quandary we are faced with is sorting through Prynne’s claims and discerning the historical record. Indeed, Prynne’s place in this narrative is one of complicity in assisting with the violence and disorder that would follow. As Haller suggests, Prynne’s “avowed aim could only be construed only as the overthrow of everything established in the church. He wrote for the utmost immediacy of provocative effect. If the authorities ignored him, he was outraged. If they noticed him, he embraced the opportunity to make a louder outcry

¹³ R.L. Ottley, *Christian Ideas and Ideals: An Outline of Christian Ethical Theory*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909): 56.

before a larger audience.”¹⁴ There must be a reliance in the narrative in working to correct the historical record from one of provocation to a speaker of truth, from a Puritan radical to a reasoned Puritan thinker who foresaw the devastation that Anglicanism under Laud could impart on the full extent of Anglican worship and practice. The secret history is thus both a tool adopted by Prynne in pursuit of political and religious aims, as well as a preemptive device which seeks to set the tenor of historical debate in the Restoration. As much as Prynne would seek to undermine Laud’s credibility in the present, he is also acting within his secret histories to establish his own historical reputation and legacy. In this respect, Prynne’s works are an illuminating reference point for how we perceive and understand historical sourcing and, particularly, how historians writing of their own moment embellish contemporary times in the interest of posterity. Prynne’s focus and interest in telling these chronicles thus reflects many motivations and it is those that influence the Restoration narrative that will be considered here.

Our consideration of secret histories will conclude with a final touchstone—the place of the narrative secret history as a vehicle for encouraging and aiding the Civil War. Given the context, we must also address Prynne’s audience, who were deeply resentful of Anglican power and the state of governance under the personal rule of Charles I, which began in the 1629. The advance of literacy—incidentally through religious and Biblical education—would allow for a literate Puritan elite to preach and spread their message of religious threats, such as Laud, to the masses. Prynne fits into this literary culture as a bridge between the Puritan clerics and commoner adherents of the faith. Understanding Prynne helps to illumine especially what permitted the development of secret histories, literary texts, that could appeal to a wider audience and contribute to England’s civil unrest in the decade which followed.

¹⁴ Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 219.

Chapter I. “The History of Secret Histories”: A Historical Consciousness and the Drive for Truth

The Righteous is delivered out of Trouble, and the wicked commeth in his stead.
-PROVERBS 11:8, from the frontispiece to Prynne’s *Hidden workes*

What historians today call secret histories can trace their origins to Procopius’ aptly titled *Anecdota* or the *The Secret History*, a 5th century account of scandal and intrigue in the time of Justinian, the Late Antique Roman emperor. In recounting the acts of the Justinian court from the perspective of individuals, Procopius’ narrative reflects both a disillusion with leadership and an attempt—in narrative form—to present an alternative to the official record. That effort is among the chief characteristics of secret histories. At times, Procopius offers a libelous and often clearly false¹⁵ account which sullies his courtiers, which belies our understanding of Justinian the Great as the “law giver” of Byzantium and undermines our views of his trusted associate General Belisarius. Here, Procopius presents Justinian as a character of controversy and courtly intrigue, to be remembered not for his public accomplishments but rather for his scandalous private life. The historical rendering Procopius offers contends that the *Corpus Juris Civilis* was the result of an orderly and well-managed imperial domain and prompts a reevaluation of the “legal might” of Byzantium. *The Secret History* is—in layman’s terms—perhaps best described as a narrative tabloid of a few hundred pages, existing at the “boundaries between fact and fiction, and between public and private worlds.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Some of Procopius’ claims about the events of Justinian’s reign have, however, been lent historical credence (*cf.* John of Ephesus affirming claims that Theodora—Justinian’s wife—was a former prostitute), though many have drawn historical skepticism and criticism. *See:* Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁶ Brian Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” review of *The Secret History in Literature, 1660-1820*, Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, eds., and *Secret History and Historical Consciousness: From Renaissance to Romanticism* by Peter Burke, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, No. 1 (Spring 2018): 121.

As the wellspring of the genre, Procopius's text set the standards that would come to define "secret histories" and their historical evolution over the course of ensuing centuries. Indeed, through the Middle Ages and well into the time of Stuart writers such as Prynne—the subject of this thesis—a "Procopian form" characterizes secret history literature.¹⁷ That form, with a few exceptions, is perhaps best described in a foreword to Procopius' *Secret History* by G.A. Williamson:

For Procopius history was made by persons, sometimes by God Himself but generally by human beings, swayed by human passions though perhaps subject to demonic influences; indeed, they might actually be themselves demons in human form.¹⁸

In short, this "Procopian" form that Prynne adopted was one uniquely concerned with the individual, one that sought to distinguish itself in style and form from the "economic and other material causes" that were often central to a conventional historical narrative that addressed a broad spectrum of issues.¹⁹ First and foremost, Procopius' concern was with the individuals of the Justinian court. Just the same, Prynne's concern was always Laud: Laud the Anglican leader, Laud the individual, Laud the perfidious manifestation of the Catholic Church. The true justifications—be they economic, intellectual, or practical—for Laud's religious actions were largely relegated to irrelevancy in Prynne's works. It was within this spirit, of venturing beyond the conventional and full narrative, that Stuart writers before the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 undertook their works.²⁰ William Prynne was certainly no exception to that Procopian

¹⁷ Procopius' work was "lost," at least to the popular imagination, and then rediscovered in the Vatican's Library in 1674. It was later translated into Latin in the early seventeenth century by the Roman antiquarian, philosophe, and Catholic cleric Nicolo Alemanni as *Arcana Historia* ("Secret History"), according to Cowan. Cowan, "The History of Secret Histories," 123-124.

¹⁸ G.A. Williamson, foreword to Procopius' *The Secret History*, (London: Penguin Group, 1981): 8.

¹⁹ These narratives in juxtaposition here are envisioned as classical historical texts and chronicles concerning "total history," such as Tacitus' *Histories*, Polybius' *Histories*, and Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

²⁰ It is important to note that while a secret history may retain the elements of biography and hagiography, it cannot be placed in either class. Secret histories lack the attempt at historical accuracy of character in biography and are often not adulatory in their depictions and writings on individuals, a trait common to hagiography.

tradition, though he would come in a sense to experiment with the boundaries and limitations imposed by a Procopian focus on the individual. Cowan, writing on the “history of secret histories,” identifies two, distinct modalities within the genre that developed from their Elizabethan roots and came to diverge in the decades leading up to the Restoration.

There were those works that adopted Procopius’ narrative—written with political intentionality and motivation that also seek to offer an alternative to the contemporary canon and accepted historical narrative. Conversely, there is also a discernable literary mode, which emphasized “historical storytelling anchored by notions of authorship, canon, and genre,”²¹ a combination of the historical narrative interspersed with elements of fantasy and mystery. In the case of the political, the intention was clear: to influence a set of events or encourage history to remember certain individuals for facts or actions not previously recorded. For the literary, there was a distinctive sense of personal style and a sense that the history should be remembered both for its subject and for the authorial attribution of the secret historian himself. These two categorizations are, at best, arbitrary and there is significant fluidity, especially at this juncture, which limits serious engagement and distinction between the two. The divide, Cowan goes on to suggest, became a source of concern within the tradition itself: “must a secret history invoke the keywords ‘secret history’ or ‘anecdotes’ in its title or paratexts? Does it have to imitate Procopius? Must it at least pretend to provide a factual, nonfictional account of what really happened?”²² By any estimation, it seems safe to suggest that no one answer has proven satisfactory to historians of the genre and the authors writing within the tradition themselves.

One definition, presented by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, expands on Williamson’s (and Procopius’) focus on the individual. But Bullard and Carnell’s vision is

²¹ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 122

²² *Ibid.*, 130.

insufficient and, to an extent, limiting for our analysis of Prynne. For Bullard and Carnell, secret histories reveal secrets, are iconoclastic, privilege marginalized voices, and unify a conception of secrecy with an ideal of self-awareness. In this sense, they are Procopian (in which the primary historical narrative is driven by someone on the outside looking in, illuminating the secrets of an upper caste within the Eastern Roman Empire). Still, Bullard and Carnell also reject the Procopian call, as they suggest that the secret history avoids “fragmentary forms of documentation” such as anecdotes,” are aware of the various forms of “mediation” in early modern society (*e.g.*, oral and written communications), and exist at the intersection of “non-literary” and “literary” writing.²³ The assessments of other scholars on Procopius, however, reject these latter three elements, as his work decidedly adopts and deploys anecdotes to great rhetorical acclaim, focusing primarily on oral communiques,²⁴ and Procopius is manifestly clear in his narrative that his is a historical account, not drawn or attached to some literary theme or poetic verse. Bullard and Carnell’s focus, then, is difficult to apply to the secret histories against Laud precisely because they look beyond Prynne’s period to the literary texts of the eighteenth century and regard the idea of the Procopian model as “necessary” with some measure of skepticism.

As Cowan has suggested, the use of the Procopian model was widespread and its appearance is altogether unsurprising, for writers across centuries relied on the model to support their works.²⁵ These writers seem to have been distinctly aware of the existence of the secret history genre, itself drawn from the classical tradition (and later medieval adoption) of the

²³ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 133.

²⁴ Though not exclusively. For a more exhaustive survey of the evidence in Procopius’ narrative and the circumstances of its composition, see K. Adshead, “The Secret History of Procopius and Its Genesis,” *Byzantion* 63 (1993): 5-28.

²⁵ Prynne, too, appears to have drawn on and written as an inheritor of the Procopian tradition in his own paratexts. For an examination of Prynne’s major polemics against Laud and their similarities to Procopius’ form, see Chapter IV of the within disquisition.

classical Milesian Tale.²⁶ The notion of Milesian Tales and their prevalence, writes M.C. Howatson, have recognized influence as “forerunners of such medieval collections of tales as the *Gesta Romanorum*, the *Decmaeron* of Boccaccio, and the *Heptameron* of Marguerite of Navarre.”²⁷ Procopius’ work, then, combines this classical tradition with a strong historical narrative that would drive later writers. Roberto Farneti, writing of Boccaccio’s *Decmaeron*, examines and goes so far as to explicitly acknowledge the presence of political and scandalous elements common to a secret history within Boccaccio’s work.²⁸ Farneti acknowledges the *Decameron*’s association with scandal, but does not explicitly classify it as a secret history. This may, in part, be a result of many of the *Decameron*’s boldest and most scandalous assertions reflect what are now recognized as proven, historical truths, rather than libel.²⁹ Classical influences have also been recognized in the development of the politically-motivated secret histories, too, suggests Martine Brownley, with authors often looking “to classical historians, particularly Polybius, Thucydides, and above all, Tacitus,” to inform their approaches and their works.³⁰ Brownley further recognizes the influence of continental writers such as Machiavelli, Guiccardini, Famiano Strada, and Enrico Davila on the development of a distinct political focus to the genre.³¹ Secret historians, too, still found themselves relying on the titans of classical history for their structure and tones.

²⁶ Adshead, among other scholars, has suggested that Procopius’ work may be considered, in part, a Milesian tale (Greek: Μιλησιακά, Latin: *fabula milesiaca*), a story or fable with an erotic or intriguing theme that contributed to later literary developments in the medieval world. See note 24, *supra*.

²⁷ *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, M.C. Howatson, ed., 2nd rev. ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 364.

²⁸ Roberto Farneti, “Naturalizing Humanity: Genealogy and the Politics of Storytelling in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*,” *The Review of Politics* 71, no.3 (Summer 2009): 365, 368-371.

²⁹ David J. Wallace, *Boccaccio: Decameron*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 7, 12.

³⁰ Martine W. Brownley, “Secret History and Seventeenth Century Historiography” in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660-1820*, Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 34.

³¹ Brownley, “Secret History and Seventeenth Century Historiography,” 34.

But above all, Procopius still retains the spotlight as the originator and father of the genre.³² However, suggests Eve Banet, the connections of the secret history genre to a common writer and originator, Procopius, would not be formally recognized by scholarship within the historical genre until the widespread dissemination of the Latin version of the original in 1674.³³ Thus, we are presented with a fascinating development in tracing the evolution of the genre's tradition. Procopius is recognized as having influenced Tudor traditions and even medievalists in his stylistic approach to secret histories.³⁴ However, his proper assessment and place within the classical world remained elusive until the dawn of the Enlightenment. While Prynne certainly seems reminiscent of Procopius at times in his phrasing and decisions within the texts themselves, how he came upon the Latin text as a model remains a source of historical uncertainty.³⁵

However, irrespective of when Procopius' was formally declared as the "father" of the genre, his model had certainly become ubiquitous within European literary circles by the seventeenth century. Cowan, by his own estimation, documents nearly "four hundred titles" that invoked the "exact phrase 'secret history'"³⁶ by the end of the Restoration. For Bullard and Carnell, secret histories flourished "during the last decades of the seventeenth century and the

³² For instance, it "is in a 'neo-Procopian mode—as anecdotes,'" that Voltaire would come a century later to publish his *Le siècle de Louis XIV*. Cowan, "The History of Secret Histories," 126.

³³ Eve Tavor Bannet, "Secret History": Or, Talebearing Inside and Outside the Secretorie," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68, no. 1-2 (March 2005): 2.

³⁴ For treatment of Procopius and the Tudors, as well as its role in early Britain, see Annabel Patterson, "Foul, his wife, the mayor and Foul's mare": The Power of Anecdote in Tudor Historiography," in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, eds., *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁵ The first Latin edition, printed by Nicholas Alemmanus, an official in the Vatican library in 1623, was in the library of Edward Montagu, a noted Anglican cleric and academic who would confront Prynne's own contemporaries at the York House Conference of 1626. Jayne Sears Reynolds, *Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance*, (Godalming, UK: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1983).

³⁶ Cowan, "The History of Secret Histories," 124.

first decades of the eighteenth.”³⁷ These definitions—however—leave open the world of the Stuarts, especially in addressing secret histories that may have been discussed in Stuart religious debate and certainly within Stuart social circles. Prynne, for his part, appears hesitant to commit himself to either form completely, for he operates between the world of two traditions, embracing in certain respects the distinctly literary style of Bullard and Carnell which would dominate in the eighteenth century, but also retaining aspects of the departing classical, politically motivated tradition which heralded Procopius as its bellwether. While Bullard and Carnell do not go as far as dismissing Procopius, they seem to look beyond his historical dominance of the genre for other influences and originators.³⁸ Prynne, meanwhile, makes categorization difficult in the qualities present in his own secret histories.

The idea of intrigue and critique disguised under the terms of authority and historical accuracy was not merely a phenomenon of any one century, nor were its sole aims always historiographical. A secret history, argues Cowan, is defined by two approaches: the distinct literary genre (Bullard and Carnell) whereas another, popularized by historian Peter Burke, considers it a political tool, in the spirit of classical and continental writers, that addresses “public opinion shaping” and its place in the narrative.³⁹ For Cowan, considering both the Burkian approach and that proffered by Bullard and Carnell, neither is satisfactory precisely because the secret history cannot be categorized—in his mind—with any degree of uniformity. This, then, is the historical challenge: how do we understand Prynne in the context of his unsteady historical footing, where the classical boundaries begin to shift and give way to a new

³⁷ *The Secret History in Literature, 1660-1820*, Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 137.

³⁸ Bullard and Carnell, *The Secret History In Literature*, 148-151; For instance, one particular chapter focuses on the notion of John Milton and *Paradise Lost* as a secret history commenting on the religiosity and culture of England during the Interregnum.

³⁹ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 123.

polemical tradition that falls between the neat categorizations of political and literary? The challenge of Prynne is not merely in identifying the elements that make his polemics secret histories—and in placing him within the context of the genre relative to Procopius and the literary tracts that followed the Restoration. Rather, Prynne presents two historical challenges: how can we formulate an assessment of his historical world through the lens of Procopius, while also understanding how the genre of Stuart secret histories attempts to bridge a discernable gap between two periods of scholarship—the Elizabethan and the Restoration, but also two styles, classical and literary. That gap remains crucial to understanding how developments and publications of secret histories underlay and contributed to the unrest of the English Civil War.

A true historiographical review of the development of the genre would not be undertaken until more than a century and a half after Prynne, during the time of the Enlightenment, by noted English historian Edward Gibbon. Writing of the *Secret History* in his own *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon says of Procopius: “[A]ccording to the vicissitudes of courage or servitude, of favor or disgrace, Procopius successfully composed the *history*, the *panegyric*, and the *satire* of his own times.”⁴⁰ However, upon reflection, Gibbon interjects a sharp criticism of the liberality taken in the *Secret History*, noting that its “base inconsistency must doubtless sully the reputation, and detract from the credit, of Procopius.”⁴¹ These “base inconsistencies”—intentional in the construct of a secret history—are among the critical elements that became commonplace in the Stuart works (like those of Prynne) which would foment the Civil War.⁴² Still, we are left unsatisfied. What is the value of these “inconsistencies” if they undermine our sense of the proper historical narrative? Gibbon posits an

⁴⁰ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. VII, (London: W. Allason, B. Whitrow and Co., 1819): 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴² See note 15, *supra*, for reference to Cameron’s inconsistencies identified in her *Procopius and the Sixth Century*.

answer: that there is discernable value in the “residue of the *anecdotes*,⁴³ even the most disgraceful facts,” in how we get at conceptions of “public history” and the efforts of society to memorialize itself.⁴⁴

“Public history”—one which presents itself as the official account of a state or time—is often present as an ordered or aspirational element of a secret history. It is both essential and anathema to the construction of these suspect narratives, as they can be drafted in support of or against a political state, an individual, or a religious institution, among others. In the case of Procopius, his *Secret History* served both functions: it was “public” in its attempt to rewrite the character of the imperial court for the historical record, relying on a sense of anonymity in sourcing, and “secret” as a subtle (and not publicized) partner to his *History of the Wars*, which has generally been accepted as more historically accurate at the time than its companion.⁴⁵ In time, secret histories would often become conflated with historical narratives commissioned by wealthy patrons and rulers. Polydore Vergil’s *Anglica Historia*, for instance, a result of Henry VII’s patronage, is a prototypical account of the regulated “public history,” subject to the editorial discretion of the patron.⁴⁶ Still—the *Anglica Historia* also reflects what is absent from secret history narratives—a focus by Polydore on historians who are “judicious and scrupulous

⁴³ Greek: Απόκρυφη Ἱστορία, *Apókryphe Historía*; Latin: *Historia Arcana*. Gibbon, incorrectly, translates in his *History* the title of Procopius’ work as the “anecdotes,” when “anecdota” has been accepted by scholars today as the correct presentation. See note 40, *supra*, at 63.

⁴⁴ The reader would be apt to note that “public history,” as referenced herein, refers to a previous definition that focuses on accounts of the state, often prepared at the behest of a ruler or rulers. Modern historians have reimagined this term, understanding it to include efforts to incorporate and value sources and writings beyond the pale of the academy. See Robert Weible, “Defining Public History: Is It Possible? Is It Necessary?,” *Perspectives on History: The American Historical Association*, March 1, 2008, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2008/defining-public-history-is-it-possible-is-it-necessary>.

⁴⁵ James M. Gilmer, *Procopius of Caesarea: A Case Study in Imperial Criticism*, *BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA* 23 (2013): 46-47; the manuscript of the *Secret History* has now been accepted as published sometime after Procopius’ death and not directly within his lifetime.

⁴⁶ Andrew Hadfield, “Sceptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution,” *Renaissance and Reformation, Nouvelle Série* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 27.

in their treatment of evidence”⁴⁷ in support of his arguments. In most contemporary secret histories, there is a strong sense of intended (though false) veracity but also an absence of authoritative sourcing that affirms individual viewpoints. In the case of Stuart secret histories such as Prynne’s—and those of the closely related literary genre of *Roman à clef*⁴⁸—sources become fabricated and amended to suit the particular political and argumentative needs of authors. Prynne’s *Breviate of the Life of William Laud*—examined in Chapter IV—embodies this principle. It is presented as a true rendering of the “diary” of Laud, composed as he awaited imprisonment in the Tower of London, though in reality it is nothing more than selected, edited fragments by Prynne which speak to the religious and political issues of interest to a radicalized Stuart readership. The facts, if that term carries weight, fit the narrative the author seeks to tell. There can be no judicious selection of sources when the sources themselves exist only by the hand (and mind) of the author.

Prynne, then, finds himself a party to many traditions concurrently, adopting elements of the classical tradition in a style that possesses characteristics of the literary one outlined and later identified by Bullard and Carnell. He is both a “public historian” in his attempts to define the historical reputation of Laud which would persist into the Restoration, and also a polemicist writing with a definite political purpose, one which would—in part—argue for the Civil War which was to follow. Prynne’s style is certainly political, an approach Burke argues for in the evaluation of the genre and is written in a “high style” that emphasized “high motives, and the effectiveness [or ineffectiveness] of political and military leaders.”⁴⁹ This polemical and high-

⁴⁷ Hadfield, “Sceptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution,” 34.

⁴⁸ The *Roman à clef* genre, recognized as distinct and outside of the focus here, developed separately and later, though it drew upon the secret history genre as inspiration in many of its political aims. Bullard and Carnell, *The Secret History in Literature*, 3.

⁴⁹ Hadfield, “Sceptical History,” 27.

minded style became influential in the Presbyterian and Puritan social circles and, in due course, their writings would contribute to the undermining of Laud's authority and leadership of the church that was to follow. As Mary Coate has suggested, the social life of Stuart society lent itself well to offering an engaged and interested audience receptive to the polemical works of Prynne published in the years leading up to the Civil War. For Coate, the world is one where church and life were inseparable and constant. Church life was an all-consuming aspect of society and topics of church order, worship form, and liturgical tradition were commonplace in the customary activities of daily life.⁵⁰ As David Cressy has suggested, within the social order—even in the English countryside—there was a distinct sense of a Protestant scriptural tradition which embraced literacy and spiritual engagement. Cressy argues that this “new tradition emerged which placed very heavy emphasis on holy texts and which held literacy dear,” precisely because these texts were seen as a “means to advance religion”⁵¹ and avoid Satanic and anti-Christian influences and perversions. Texts and their promulgation were essential elements of the religious Establishment in England, contributing markedly to their influence and success.

The central difference, however, in the use of texts in urban and country environments was found in the tension of the “country parson,” sharing “intimately in the life of a parish.” This was in contrast to an urban environment, where ministerial boundaries were more readily defined. The country, in short, represents an audience who would become especially receptive to promulgating the secret history Prynne promised. Prynne used the norms of the countryside to his advantage, drawing upon the idea of the history as an “idiom of intimacy,” making private religious information public and mirroring the experience of lay people with the seemingly non-

⁵⁰ Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971): 53-57.

⁵¹ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 3, 4-7.

existent boundaries of their own parish.⁵² That intimate life exposed the parson and, consequently, his parishioners, to the “danger that the spiritual side of his life would be sacrificed to the material.”⁵³ This concern and involvement in the daily lives of parishioners was among those attributes Laud sought to crush and those which generated the most controversy, for a minister concerned with worldly affairs certainly became susceptible to embracing “differences” in the practice of worship.⁵⁴ Ministers and parishioners alike shared a common concern with balancing a fervent religiosity—increasingly present in the court of Charles I and championed by Laud⁵⁵—against the common bonds of community. In short, Laud’s outlook on religion interfered with the private lives of those in the country. Thus, the style of Prynne’s works was tailored to an audience concerned with this overreach.

The country parson and their parishioners were minorities in the Laudian regime, at least in their treatment by an Establishment centered in Canterbury and often based in London. Secret histories of Stuarts like Prynne, too, were constructed from the perspective of a minority. They were always written from the idealism and critique of an outsider, a Puritan subject to Presbyterian influence, looking in on a Laudian regime rife with ritualism and religious practice foreign to a country man such as Prynne. Here, too, Prynne drew in his works by relying on the tradition, ironically, of his enemies: the Catholics in Elizabethan England. As John Guy has suggested in his review of Peter Lake’s *Bad Queen Bess*, the most “rhetorically powerful of these [secret history] tracts were written by Catholics.”⁵⁶ These secret historical narratives, suggest

⁵² Peter Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness: From the Renaissance to Romanticism*, (Brighton, UK: Edward Everett Root, 2016): 25.

⁵³ Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*, 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ For a more thorough analysis of the shift in Anglican religious thought and philosophy that guided Prynne’s dissent, see Chapter II.

⁵⁶ John Guy, Review of “Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I,” by Peter Lake, *The Journal of Modern History* 89, no. 4 (December 2017): 931.

Lake, were not “only or even primarily concerned with that we might term ‘Political Thought.’”⁵⁷ Rather, Lake argues, they represented distinct, deliberate attempts to “come to terms with, to describe and analyse [sic], the conduct of contemporary politics as a process, a series of interactions, undertaken in distinct institutional, ideological, and social locales, between and amongst groups of political agents or actors intent on realizing their own particular ends and interests.”⁵⁸ In this sense, Lake argues, the Catholic and Puritan tracts are rejections of humanist history *in toto* because they seek to reject the conventional narrative.⁵⁹ Humanism, in this sense, embraces a sense of spiritual self-discovery—through prescribed texts—that the Protestant scriptural tradition encourages. As Cressy notes, this humanism was embraced by Protestant leaders who recognized both “its practical secular utility” and its “contribution to the maintenance of civilization” by safeguarding significant works.⁶⁰ The humanism of Protestant England, defined by the embrace and deliberate deployment of a Protestant-driven intellectual ethic, met with disagreement and dissent from the Puritans, of whom Prynne was an ardent supporter. As I.M. Green argues, the Anglican Church and urban politics found themselves—especially in the country—faced with a religious tradition that bore little resemblance. In the country, this religious tradition was the result “of negotiations in which the views of lay parishioners were as important as, and on some issues even more important than, those of the clergy.”⁶¹ The ecumenism and almost democratic approach that drove religious practice in the largely provincial Anglican Church thus became fertile ground for the scandal and intrigue Prynne could offer about Laud the opprobrious religious conservative.

⁵⁷ Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess: Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-21.

⁶⁰ Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 9, 47-54.

⁶¹ I.M. Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education*, (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2009): 6.

For the Stuarts, Prynne, *et al.*, would embrace the same public-private approach to exposing Laud as their religious rival, writing in a Procopian mode but deploying a markedly similar style to the Catholics of Elizabethan England in their efforts to make sense of a contentious and fragmented political world. Prynne, too, would grapple directly with these questions of political and moral philosophy in his reflection on Laud's trial—*Canterburies Doome. Or the First Part of a Compleat History of the Commitment, Charge, Tryall, Condemnation, Execution of William Lavd Late Arch-Bishop of Canterbury* [sic]. But it is not enough to view the Stuart works as merely descended from the Catholic or as the progeny of a classical tradition. Catholic secret histories, and to an extent their Protestant counterparts, are very much part of a “dialogue between the elements within the establishment” and their critics.⁶² Prynne, too, is forced to examine and consider his place outside of the Protestant establishment as he revisits Laud's tenure and seeks to reimagine it for an audience of outsiders. As Burke suggests, it is at that moment that the secret history operates to “undermine the official version of the past” while revealing the “weaknesses of humanist history” which emphasized the “effectiveness of political and military leaders.”⁶³ Prynne, too, adopts this approach in his subsequent recount of Laud. Burke, then, gets at the heart of what became the final element of secret histories at the dawn of the Civil War: tales of intrigue and disreputable character are recast to paint governments, establishment, and individuals as threats to decent and civil men of all sorts. In titles and presentation, Prynne's work existed in this highly political and religious culture, fueled by an intense series of public disputes prior to the Revolution that concerned the imposition of religious practice and scriptural direction from Canterbury.⁶⁴

⁶² Lake, *Bad Queen Bess*, 7.

⁶³ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 27.

⁶⁴ These changes, collectively known as Laudianism, are explored in greater detail in Chapter II, *infra*.

The political secret history of Stuart England, into which we may place Prynne, then, considers both the politics of *religion* and the politics of *government*.⁶⁵ It became increasingly concerned with the “shifting borders between the public and the intimate” that began to coalesce in these mid-seventeenth century subjects.⁶⁶ In our case, Laud’s personal and public life is on trial: the innermost thoughts of his religious convictions play out in the pages of Prynne’s works, suggesting that the totality of the individual had become subject to criticism. This larger shift toward exposing the private realm and exploring ideals beyond the bounds of self-reflection, a central aspect of the humanist vision, exposes precisely that anti-humanistic spirit—which embraced a conformity and sense of traditional boundary—which had come to characterize the Catholic and later Puritan resistance within the secret history genre.

The resistance to humanism, suggests Noah Millstone, was to be expected in a world that was increasingly politically aware and made its principal objective the discernment of the truth and fact of a particular event. Millstone contends that this fascination—and the secret histories that reside therein—were part of “an interpretive framework, a way of ordering the world of experience and rendering it meaningful, of posing and answering the question: What is it that is going on here?”⁶⁷ Here, then, Prynne’s works inhabit a world with a population that has become more aware of political ramifications but also distinctly privy to its own historical consciousness.

Secret histories, by nature, concern themselves with revealing a purported “truth.” Whether such truth is, in fact, actually true is beside the point: to their readership, they present themselves as revelatory accounts of the real historical position, as histories that reject the conventional, establishment narrative and illustrate it as deceitful. The Stuart world, too, was one

⁶⁵ The question of religion is considered in Chapter II’s survey of a divergent Anglicanism, while the matter of government and the dispute with Prynne is treated in Chapter III in an examination of Laud’s character and role.

⁶⁶ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 21.

⁶⁷ Noah Millstone, “Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England,” *Past & Present* 223 (May 2014): 80.

preoccupied with this constant quest for fact.⁶⁸ As Barbara Shapiro has argued in her aptly-titled *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720*, this time period represents a transition from a world wherein “fact” was under the dominion of law to where “fact” was a constituent element of the individual conscious.⁶⁹ The discovery and presentation of these facts, suggests Shapiro, rely on another classical concept—*historia*—“referring to particular happenings, events, and stories, which only sometimes distinguished real happenings from fictional ones.”⁷⁰ Ergo, even from the outset, the development of this fact mindset recognized that history, as a discipline, exists at the precipitous boundary of real occurrences and fictional accounts. The development of historical facts, argues Shapiro, also “required evidence if they were to be believable” and the expectation by the age of the Stuarts was that it was “the obligation of the historian to provide the evidence that would support belief,”⁷¹ though the qualities and types of evidence were never clearly defined.⁷² The secret historians—such as Prynne—took it upon themselves to identify alleged sources and, to use Prynne’s own words, ensure that “hidden workes of darkenes [are] brought to publike light” [sic].⁷³ Critically, these works were developed with a knowledge of their intention and inaccuracy, with, writes Cowan, an assurance that their authors can parse the realm “between the high politics of court life and forms of popular politics that reveal the reception of political ideas and attitudes about rulership by the ruled.”⁷⁴

⁶⁸ This may, too, have included a quest for spiritual fact and truth, a common trope of Protestant writings. See: Peter Berger, “Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty,” *The Christian Century*: 782-796.

⁶⁹ Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000): 8-12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷¹ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 45.

⁷² Present in histories of this period, both secret and conventional, is an extensive reliance on what may be readily termed hearsay evidence. Whether this was a cause for concern with respect to a text’s veracity at the time is not readily apparent, though it certainly presents the question of what forms of evidence were socially and intellectually acceptable to prove a contention.

⁷³ William Prynne, *Hidden workes of darkenes brought to publike light, or, A necessary introduction to the history of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s trial*, (London: Thomas Brudenell, 1645).

⁷⁴ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 134.

Secret histories, too, adopt the fact-based mindset that Shapiro identifies precisely in their repudiation of humanist narratives and affirmatively present their cases as accurate and original. Humanist historiography, writes Shapiro, embraced “Romances and Arthurian tales,” allowing “invented speech” to guide the historical narrative and elide reality with the imagination.⁷⁵ Conversely, secret histories make no effort to admit that the speech they attribute to their subjects, such as Laud, are invented (even if it, in fact, is).⁷⁶ We need look no further than our own case: Prynne’s invented language of Laud in his purported diary is manifestly different from what Laud wrote or intended to say.

Still, in a secret history, there is an attempt to arrive at Shapiro’s ideal of fact and also to adopt Burke’s notion of a historical consciousness about the events and time period in which the secret history is drafted. In their creation, Burke suggests, there is a true “crisis of historical consciousness,” of identity and a sense of institutional legitimacy, that came to the fore at the dawn of the Civil War.⁷⁷ This crisis could find its mode of expression precisely in the secret history, foreshadowing the development of Pyrrhonism—a philosophy of historical skepticism that believes narratives are beset by a concern with non-evident concerns⁷⁸—which would come to predominate later in the seventeenth century.⁷⁹ That crisis of historical value and a pervading sense of skepticism was guided by two arguments which secret histories similarly embrace.

Secret histories, like their Pyrrhonic skeptics who would follow, reject the conventional history’s

⁷⁵ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 40-41.

⁷⁶ This subject, as indicated *supra*, is examined in Chapter IV in considerable detail, particularly with respect to the rewriting and “invented speech” that Prynne introduces in Laud’s diary.

⁷⁷ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 53.

⁷⁸ These non-evident, corrupting influences may include dogma, religion, or theological beliefs.

⁷⁹ Pyrrhonism, an intellectual doctrine named for the Greek sceptic Pyrrho of Elis, questioned the value of historical knowledge and its ability to present an accurate account. For a more thorough treatment of pyrrhonism and its continental origins, see Gisela Striker, “Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo-Pyrrhonism” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 13-24. *See also*: Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind*, *infra* note 85, and Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

usual affiliations: an “argument from bias” and an “argument from forgery,”⁸⁰ instead adopting the notion that many of the contemporary historical accounts are corrupted by the particular influences and concerns of religious dogma and theological certainty. The former, “bias”—that inability to separate from our loyalties to “a church, a nation, or a political party”—was achieved in Prynne’s written assault on Laud’s religious and political affiliations.⁸¹ The latter, “forgery,” was aptly presented by Prynne allegedly exposing the secrets and laying bare the true history of Laud and the Anglican Church during the reign of Charles to arrive at the “great truth” of Laud’s misdeeds. Thus, secret histories—and the renewed interest in Pyrrhonism that followed—share common ground in their similar rejection of the conventional narrative and its corrupting influences. They are not perfect equals, however, as secret histories merely masquerade as a noble quest for the truth. In reality, they are obscured by their own political ambitions.

Within the ambit of this intellectual crisis, Prynne arrives with his answers that, to the foolhardy and impetuous Puritan Stuart radical, “pierce the veil of misdirection that cloaked human conduct” and expose Laud for who he really is.⁸² It is within this rich intellectual tradition, combining a strong anti-humanism with classical models and Elizabethan Catholic secret histories, that Stuart secret histories by Puritans such as Prynne can be best understood. As Michael McKeon has suggested, they are written within a Procopian spirit but are concurrently “akin to and joining” the “broader tradition of political allegory that flourished from the late Elizabethan era into the eighteenth century.”⁸³ Rather, Prynne’s works present as starkly divergent in their audience and their distribution which, for the first time, encompassed a broad

⁸⁰ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 53.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁸² Millstone, “Seeing Like a Statesman,” 82.

⁸³ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2006): 42.

array of individuals and ideas. Prynne is not merely political nor is here strictly literary. Instead, he moves forward as an inheritor of tradition with a sense of both political purpose and a unique rhetorical style that is a forbearer of later developments.

As McKeon notes, it was within Stuart England on the eve of the Civil War, especially, that a burgeoning print culture developed and permitted the secret history to advance well-beyond its previous limited audience of clerics and elites. Indeed, the “revolution” here—divisible from the Burke’s notion of a historical consciousness—may well have been the proliferation of print, the “very mechanism by which the tacit is made explicit.”⁸⁴ Indeed, in Caroline England,⁸⁵ the publication and dissemination of these “secret histories”—texts masquerading as accounts of truth—had become rampant. Secret printings were, as D.R. Como has recognized, a constituent element of the “consensual and conservative nature of early Stuart political culture.”⁸⁶ As vehicles that exposed unpopular political concerns, these printings were necessary to the network of information that would come to foment political and religious dissent and were a critical means of remaining connected in this social community defined by faith.⁸⁷

Even more critical to the development of this genre was the recognition of the secret history as both a vehicle for news and a vehicle for debate on matters of public import. As Andrew Pettegree writes, the “desire to be informed, to be in the know, is in one respect as old as human society itself,”⁸⁸ but the principal desire by the time of the Stuarts was to be both actively *informed* and actively *engaged*. Moreover, the concept of news—suggests Pettegree—becomes

⁸⁴ McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, 49.

⁸⁵ Caroline refers to the reign of Charles I (1625-1649), whereas Carolean refers to the reign of his son—Charles II—after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

⁸⁶ David R. Como, “Secret Printing, the Crisis of 1640, and the Origins of Civil War Radicalism,” *Past & Present* 196 (August 2007): 37.

⁸⁷ Print and publishing culture, especially relative to Prynne’s own works and connections, are also explored in detail in Chapter V in a consideration of the historical reception by contemporaries of Prynne’s works.

⁸⁸ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014): 2.

inseparable from the concept of gossip at this early stage of development. News and the diffusion of information had spread “beyond those for whom it was a professional necessity to be informed to new, more naïve and inexperienced consumers.”⁸⁹ This culture of print and information had thus moved beyond the educated establishment and become an element of the lived experience of a new class of radical intellectuals and individuals.

Printing controls and restrictions on the press, Milton contends, were comparatively limited in the Stuart era, and much of the extant press addresses the 18th century, making Stuart England ripe for additional study. Instead, Stuart print culture—which enabled small printers to operate and encouraged the publication of polemical secret histories—was not subject to “censorship as the control exerted by a monolithic government over ‘oppositionist’ writers,” but can instead be recognized as “one of the many ways by which competing religious groups sought to establish their own criteria of orthodoxy.”⁹⁰ For Prynne, then, utilizing and developing the printing world was an essential part of the Stuart experience of secret histories—the revolutionary crisis that would follow had as its “signal precedent...the momentous events” of the English Revolution, contends McKeon, and it was in the publication of texts that these revolutionary ideas were promulgated.⁹¹ By one account, he notes, the “record for the annual number of publications, set in 1642,” would not be surpassed until the 1690s. The import of print culture in engendering the Civil War was recognized early on in the Restoration. Richard Atkyns, a royalist and counselor to Charles II following the Restoration, noted that:

The *Liberty* of the Press, was the principal furthering Cause of the Confinement of Your most Royal Fathers Person: for, after this *Act*,⁹² every *Male-content* vented his Passion in

⁸⁹ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 257.

⁹⁰ Anthony Milton, “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England,” *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 627.

⁹¹ McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, 57.

⁹² Referencing a Parliamentary statute—17 Car. I, c. 10—which abolished the Star Chamber in early 1641, leading to widespread discontent over the regulation and oversight of public officials in the Court.

Print ... the Common People that before this Liberty believed even a *Ballad*, because it was in Print, greedily sucked in the Scandals ... the *Parliament* finding the Faith of the *Deceived People* to be implicitly in them,... so totally possess the Press that the King could not be heard: By this means the *Common People* became not only *Statists*, but *Parties* in the *Parliaments* Cause, hearing but one side....⁹³

McKeon recognizes that this development was not static, but by every measure related to the political and religious events of the time. Prynne's own charges against Laud, which include in his *Canterburies Doome* allegations of censorship, reflect the Protestant (and distinctly) Puritan sensibility that "an unrestrained press" could function as "the very mechanism of Protestant explicitness and crucial to reason."⁹⁴ Prynne's writings, then, were part of a publication tradition that recognized that "[f]reedom of the press was tantamount to freedom from papist absolutism."⁹⁵ Further, as Anthony Milton has argued, the print culture of Stuart England, especially by the Caroline era under Charles' rule, presents us with outstanding questions of when secret histories and polemics arise to the point of disorder. Indeed, Milton argues, "[t]he point at which criticism constituted a threat of disorder was therefore itself the battleground in the seventeenth century," it must be understood within its context as a fluid boundary, subject to the motivations of those determining the threat.⁹⁶

The presence and significance of the press, then, to the proliferation of secret histories is among the critical developments of the genre within the Stuart world. Prynne's works exist both in the nebulous, transitory period from the political history examined by Burke's research to the literary and dramatic allegories and *Roman à clef* that Bullard and Carnell consider in their studies. Those literary secret histories that Bullard and Carnell critique would come to govern the

⁹³ William Harris, D.D., *An Historical and Critical Account of the Lives and Writings of James I and Charles I and of the Lives of Oliver Cromwell and Charles II*, vol. v, (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1814): 251.

⁹⁴ McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, 52.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Milton, "Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England," 627.

genre in the eighteenth century and foment a different revolution nearly a century and a half later.⁹⁷ To place Prynne's work within any measure of certainty is nearly impossible, though his reliance on and adoption of the classical, Procopian, and anti-humanist traditions seems apparent. Still, Prynne and Stuart histories exist within a period that is difficult to discern. Stuart histories embrace some of the Enlightenment philosophy that would follow but, in their character, also appear as the progenitors of a print culture that would flourish during the Civil War, under Cromwellian rule, and well into the Restoration aftermath that followed. Prynne, too, follows in this fact-tradition elucidated by Shapiro: one where the new historian, secret historians included, had come to place an emphasis on "trust," recognizing that "who was deemed trustworthy depended in part on circumstances."⁹⁸ In great irony, it was Prynne who would come to be trusted under the Puritan-friendly government of Cromwell in the wake of the Civil War. It was Prynne who, in the "discourses of fact," would be viewed as honest in his accounts of Laud's alleged transgressions and contumacies while imprisoned.

It may be best to consider Prynne, then, as a part of a greater movement toward the intellectual uncertainty and vibrancy of the eighteenth century, as a partner on the road to crisis.⁹⁹ As Paul Hazard writes of that "crisis of historical consciousness" in his venerable *The Crisis of the European Mind*, we can imagine that the world of the Stuarts was on the environs of the Classical Age, as the inheritors of "an equilibrium so miraculously attained" that, at any moment, stood ready to return to "the Renaissance and the Reformation—big adventures

⁹⁷ For treatment of secret histories and the French Revolution, see Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991) and also Allison Stedman's chapter "'Secret History' in Pre-Revolutionary France" in Bullard and Carnell, *The Secret History in Literature, 1660-1820*, 205-227.

⁹⁸ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 84.

⁹⁹ For discussion of this crisis specifically, see Burke's chapter "Two Crises of Historical Consciousness" in his *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 51-71.

these!”¹⁰⁰ Prynne—with his Puritan counterparts—would trod that road to intellectual instability with their secret histories, critiquing and dismantling in their writings a world of Anglicanism fraught with disaffection under the direction of Laud.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind, 1680-1715*, J. Lewis May, trans., (New York: New York Review Books, 2013): 4.

Chapter II. Conflict and Contention—Anglican and Puritan Religious Disputes, c. 1620-1640, and the Foundations of the English Civil War

Both Prynne and Laud, as clerics and parties invested in the intellectual and religious community of Stuart England, existed in a world defined by Anglicanism. Not even a century old in 1620, Anglicanism and the definitions of worship and liturgy required increasing clarification for religious practitioners and laypersons alike. Further, it became the prime subject of discourse by an educated religious elite who approached questions of church policy from increasingly divided viewpoints. It should be no surprise then that polemicist writings, *viz.* those prepared by Puritans such as Prynne against the Church of England and those prepared by others in its defence, had become part and parcel of a burgeoning religious discourse taking shape in the interpretation of Episcopal beliefs by the commencement of Laud's term as Archbishop of Canterbury. Further, this religious difference also relied on a definite understanding that discussions of religious practices were now acceptable in the public sphere.¹⁰¹ To understand Prynne's polemics and the impact of their contents on the English Civil War that was to follow, a survey of the key attributes and concerns of this Anglican¹⁰² religious discourse is imperative.

The wellspring of religious disputes began as a new group of clerics graduated from the halls of Oxford and King's College, Cambridge, eager to partake in these discussions of worship. Among them was Richard Montagu,¹⁰³ a noted English prelate and King's College graduate who held the favor (and friendship) of Laud in the 1620s. Though Laud's junior by a few years, Peter

¹⁰¹ Laud served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633-1645, though he held increasing sway in the intellectual debates around Anglican practice that characterized the latter half of George Abbott's term as Archbishop. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Laud's name subscribed to articles and injunctions of the church. *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, Kenneth Fincham, ed., (Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998).

¹⁰² The separation from the Catholic Church in 1534 under the reign of Henry VIII, a result of an annulment dispute with Pope Clement VII, would herald the English Reformation and establish a new religious tradition, Anglicanism.

¹⁰³ His name also occasionally appears as "Montague." Either is accepted as correct, though "Montagu" is used herein for the sake of conformity.

White observes that Montagu was in many respects the architect of Laud's Arminianistic policies, which would be subject to written assail by Prynne a decade later. Arminianism, a theological position in the English Church which rejected wholesale the concept of predestination and concerned itself with proper methods of liturgy and worship, was the crux of disputes during the rise of Laudianism. Arminianism cites as its namesake and father Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian, partial to Catholicism, who similarly spurred the Remonstrant movement. Arminius sought to rebut the Calvinist faith, particularly with respect to its predestination ideology, and embraced a theology that any religious principle must "be checked against the Scriptures, since the Bible was the only ground upon which the Christian faith could be established."¹⁰⁴ Arminius, drawing on principles of antiquity, also embraced an ideal of conditional election. Further, in an Arminianistic liturgical outlook, the Augustinian ideal guides an explicitly trinitarian "celebration of the presence of the living Christ."¹⁰⁵ As White has suggested, there is an explicit connection amongst a discernable Augustinian reverence for liturgy, Laud, and the Arminians subsequent embrace of the notion that "external worship" is "manifested in and through ceremonies."¹⁰⁶ Arminianism, meanwhile, was defined by Prynne himself as the "denial of an absolute, immutable, and irrevocable degree of predestination."¹⁰⁷ For clerics such as Montagu and Laud seeking to buttress the Church of England as an institution that recognized its heritage in the Roman Catholic Church, their support of Arminianism signaled a shift away from radical Calvinist beliefs that moved the English Church toward an

¹⁰⁴ Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal, "The Life and Struggle of Arminius in the Dutch Republic" in *Man's Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius*, Gerald O. McCulloh, trans., (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007): 14.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003): 31.

¹⁰⁶ Kevin Sharpe, "Archbishop Laud" in *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*, Margaret Todd, ed., (London: Routledge, 1995): 74-75.

¹⁰⁷ Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 3-4.

embrace of a more continental, Dutch tradition. Prynne, conversely, was a Puritan—a Calvinist—committed to the theology of predestination and concerned that the Church of England had not “purified” itself enough from the perfidious influence of Catholic practice.¹⁰⁸

For Prynne, the Arminian shift under Laud was a leap into the world of the Romanists, a step backward into the Catholicism against which the English Church had always been carefully balanced against. “The Reformed Church of England,” writes White, had since the schism in the 1530s occupied “an independent position between Romanism on the one hand, and Lutheranism and Calvinism on the other, with strong affinities and antagonisms in both directions.”¹⁰⁹ An anti-Calvinist sentiment, writes Nicholas Tyacke, can be clearly discerned in the upper echelons of Anglican clerics during the early Stuart rule.¹¹⁰ Two decades before the religious furor of the late 1620s that would later engender revolution, Laud’s predecessors met at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 to outline a clearer Arminian doctrine and reject increasing calls for Puritan independence and recognition. Central to this debate was a Puritan proposal, introduced at the Conference, that sought to supplement the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, a document outlining the central aspects and beliefs of the Anglican faith.¹¹¹ Puritans had seen their growth in England, primarily in Scotland, as John Knox heralded the Scottish Reformation in the 1560s. Knox brought with him “a sense of himself as part of a Protestant international,” as a “preacher and a prophet” who embraced the Calvinist ideal of predestination and a connection to

¹⁰⁸ The term Puritan and Calvinists are interchangeable, insofar as they share the same beliefs and exist in the tradition outlined by John Calvin. Puritan itself comes from a sense that the English Church must “purify” and break away as much as possible in practice and belief from the Romanist tradition.

¹⁰⁹ White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987): 7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10-12; Of note, the Thirty-nine Articles may define the faith in some abstract sense, but central to Anglican theology, especially today, is a right and ability of the individual to determine which articles are adhered to in their particular religious practice. *See also*: Bryan D. Spinks, “Liturgy and Worship” in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, Anthony Milton, ed., vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

continental idealism.¹¹² Knox's commitment and willingness "to take calculated risks" and also knowledge of how "to beat a strategic retreat," recognized in the fight for the Scottish Reformation, seems almost to foreshadow the sense of Puritan strategy of controversy and retreat that would be on prominent display at Hampton less than half a century later.¹¹³

The Puritans' proposed supplement at the Hampton Conference, known as the Lambeth Articles, enshrined the Calvinist idea of predestination: "the eternal election of some to life, and the reprobation of others to death" and "those who are not predestined to life shall necessarily be damned for their sins."¹¹⁴ The Articles were a vestige, drawn up by the former Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift under Elizabeth I in 1595, with the goal of placating the Puritan faction. Whitgift had been labeled by some contemporaries as a borderline Puritan himself during the 1590s.¹¹⁵ Tyacke notes that while the Lambeth Articles were not adopted, under "most of James's reign Calvinism was in fact to enjoy greater royal favour than it had under Elizabeth," predominately in the form of toleration.¹¹⁶ However, despite this surface level toleration and the agreement to drop the matter of Lambeth, Tyacke notes that the Hampton Conference provided Arminianists with a platform and a resolve. Indeed, in the shadow of the conference, "the makings of a future Arminian party are already discernable."¹¹⁷ As Mark Curtis has suggested, the Hampton Court Conference demonstrated a willingness of James I, as an attentive monarch, to address issues of corruption and scandal. Curtis writes that James was "readier than the

¹¹² Roger A. Mason, "Introduction" to *John Knox and the British Reformations*, Roger A. Mason, ed., (London: Routledge, 2018): 7-8.

¹¹³ James Kirk, "John Knox and the Historians" in *John Knox and the British Reformations*, Roger A. Mason, ed., (London: Routledge, 2018): 38-41.

¹¹⁴ V.C. Miller, *The Lambeth Articles: Doctrinal Development & Conflict In 16th Century England*, (London: Latimer House, 1994): 96-99.

¹¹⁵ William Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996): 61-63; Prynne himself also attempted to claim Whitgift as a Puritan.

¹¹⁶ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism*, 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

bishops to acknowledge the abuses in the Church were serious matters demanding immediate remedies” and, consequently, he was “more willing than they to make concessions with the Puritans.”¹¹⁸ Importantly, notes Curtis, James’ increasing toleration was more out of concern for the public perception of the Church of England itself than out of a true agreement with Puritan ideals.¹¹⁹ In this sense, the Hampton Court Conference left unresolved actual questions of the acceptance of Puritan theology and instead focused on temporary compromise. It was following Hampton that men such as Laud and Montagu, rising in the clerical ranks, would seek out and forge the opposition to Calvinist practice and toleration as the 1620s progressed.

In that twenty-or so-year period before the Laud ascendancy in 1633 and the Hampton Conference, Arminian and high church Anglicans began to chart the way forward. Among the singular achievements was the assembly of the Durham House group as a response to Puritan compromise. As Bryan Spinks has identified, Durham House—which united the likes of Laud with more established clerics such as Bishop of Durham Richard Neile¹²⁰—became the central group who sought to a return to a state of proper order and decorum in worship that had, by their estimation, been lost in an increasingly Puritan-tolerant Anglican Church.¹²¹ Many of Durham House’s members were younger clerics, including Laud and Montagu. Neile—a staunch Arminian—saw an opportunity to bring “to fruition his earlier theological and ecclesial interests”¹²² among these young men. Durham House, writes Tyacke, was “‘saddled’ with a sense of ‘history as inevitable decline and decay,’ and turned to antiquity as a form of

¹¹⁸ Mark Curtis, “The Hampton Court Conference and Its Aftermath,” *History* 46, no. 156 (1961): 7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁰ Other members included John Buckeridge, Thomas Jackson, Robert Newell, Augustine Lindsell, Gabriel Clarke, Francis Burgoyne, Marmaduke Blakiston, John Cosin, and Eleazer Duncon, and Laud’s contemporary and friend—Richard Montagu. See note 110, *supra*, and Andrew Foster, “Durham House Group (Act. 1617-1630),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sep. 23, 2004.

¹²¹ Bryan Spinks, “Durham House and the Chapels Royal: Their Liturgical Impact On The Church of Scotland,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, no. 4 (Nov. 2014): 383-384.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 384.

escapism.”¹²³ The cause célèbre of the Durham House men would be the restoration of that antiquity devotion through the publication of tracts and they would form the first “organized opposition to English Calvinism.”¹²⁴ Indeed, by 1624, most considered Neile as the group’s leader and recognized him as the cleric who most “had the ear of King James.”¹²⁵ For much of the 1620s, “to the extent that there was an Arminian candidate for Canterbury, Neile was the man, for...Laud [was] not yet sufficiently established.”¹²⁶ The increasing political viability of Arminian belief in this period signaled the continuing divisiveness over Puritan concerns about proper ecclesiastical succession and appointment.

William Lamont, writing of Prynne specifically, identifies his concerns as associated less with the outlook of the English Church toward doctrines of predestination than with their form of appointment. Lamont contends that, as a Puritan, Prynne’s concern “was not with their absolutism but with their clericalism, which put their *iure divino*¹²⁷ claims for their office above *iure humano*¹²⁸ claims for royal supremacy.”¹²⁹ Indeed, the Arminianism of Laud preferred order and hierarchy and attributed the source of that power to the divine. The Lambeth Articles, which had codified Puritan ideals, were conversely grounded in human law and, as one Puritan cleric put it plainly, the “litmus test for a ‘puritan’ was fidelity to *iure humano* claims for episcopacy.”¹³⁰ Thus, the centralized church of divine rule envisioned by Laud—and later embraced and extended by Charles—proved antithetical to Puritan ideals of an episcopacy that was governed in the spirit of human law. The *iure divino* approach that Laud adopts, suggests

¹²³ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 119.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Latin for “by divine law.”

¹²⁸ Latin for “by human law.”

¹²⁹ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 58-59.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

E.T. Davies, finds its heritage in Whitgift's notion of the one Christian commonwealth, a nation governed by an Anglicanism that embraces "a view of the civil power, the magistrate, and political authority, [all of] which is essentially religious."¹³¹ Under this "one Christian commonwealth" theory, the source of all power must be *iure divino*, as Anglicans predominate in all civil and religious offices. Thus, the increasing spread of clericism, under the guise of the divine, into the civil government of the 1620s and 1630s represented an increasing source of frustration for *iure humano* adherents such as Prynne.

By 1626, with the Durham House operation progressing and Laud's political power increasing, it was determined that the Arminian Anglicans needed to deal a fatal, public blow to the toleration for Calvinist predestination philosophy. White places Montagu's arguments of the period at the fringe of Arminian thought, embodied most fervently in his *Appello Caesarem*, a controversial polemic "blessed" by the Durham House circle for its theological musings.¹³² Montagu's ideals were viewed with trepidation by more moderate clerics such as Anthony Wotton, a Puritan professor at Gresham College, and Matthew Sutcliffe, Dean of Exeter. Sutcliffe characterized Montagu's works as "a mountain of Popish heresy"¹³³ that entered the dangerous territory of a Romanist embrace. All of these critics were of a dying breed, part of an old guard associated with James I who increasingly saw their authority evaporate in the face of a new Laudian regime that embraced Montagu's audacious rejections of predestination.

Clearly, the task of drafting polemical writings to vanquish the Calvinist spirit had fallen on Montagu. His writings and status as a controversialist ultimately culminated in the York

¹³¹ E.T. Davies, *Episcopacy and the Royal Supremacy*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1950): 127-128.

¹³² White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*, 229.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 230.

House Conference of 1626,¹³⁴ precisely the public intellectual and theological display that Durham House and its supporters had long sought. Set against the backdrop of Montagu's vitriolic rejections of predestination in *A New Gagge* and *Appello Caesarem*, the York Conference—before Lord Chamberlain and the Earl of Pembroke¹³⁵—has been painted as a “show confrontation between ‘Puritan’ and ‘Arminian’ clerics” that would affix the division of religious beliefs leading into the 1630s and place Laud in a position of increasing power and, ultimately, control over the direction of Church politics.¹³⁶ Indeed, writes Barbara Donagan, the conference's outcome “clarified the king's support for the Arminian party in the church and Buckingham's affiliation with the rising Arminian or Laudian party.”¹³⁷ In the debate, Montagu was challenged to defend the Arminian affront to conceptions of Protestant orthodoxy against Puritan critics, and his fervent arguments would contribute directly to a sense of political and religious unrest. Writing at the time, George Carleton—Bishop of Chichester—suggested that Montagu was “a young scholar...[who] did not well foresee these consequences, but from the grounds that he hath laid, these things must follow.”¹³⁸ There is, then, an extent to which this

¹³⁴ The Conference has also been viewed as a retort to the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619, which set the stage for a purported settlement of the controversy of Arminianism. That Synod became beset by the difficulties of determining the truth of “speculative matters which Calvin and his large-minded contemporaries had not felt it essential to include in creed or catechism,” viz. a precise outlook on single or double predestination and its place in reformed Protestant theology. Herbert Darling Foster, “Liberal Calvinism: The Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort in 1618,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 16, no. 1 (January 1923): 17.

¹³⁵ Most conferences, including the York and the Hampton, occurred at the country estates of the aristocracy and take their names from these residences. For the most part, the aristocrats merely attended the engagements, rather than directly arguing with the invited guests of each party.

¹³⁶ Barbara Donagan, “The York House Conference Revisited: Laymen, Calvinism and Arminianism,” *Historical Research* 64, no. 155 (October 1991): 313.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹³⁸ White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*, 231. See also: G. Carleton, *An Examination of those Things Wherein the author of the Late Appeale holdeth the Doctrines of the Pelegians and Arminians to be the Doctrines of the Church of England* (1626).

conference set into motion an irretrievable breakdown that later prompted Prynne to bring his attacks against the Laudian regime in the 1630s.¹³⁹

The conference, suggests White, set the stage for the Parliamentary and governmental breakdown of 1629, beginning a decade long Parliamentary recess and increasing centralization of power. Charles, with the support of Laud and his Arminian contemporaries, suspended Parliament and instituted personal rule as a result “not of intractable differences of political ideology dividing the court” but as a corollary of the “rise of Arminianism,”¹⁴⁰ contends White. Alexandra Walsham understands White’s approach in the terms of a broad mandate, a denial of the “existence of any such ideological cement,” rooted in a “broad spectrum of standpoints and attitudes in which no one group monopolized ecclesiastical office.”¹⁴¹ For Walsham, the controversy that ensued and laid the foundation for these religious disputes lacks proper scholarly attention to the parochial experience¹⁴²: indeed, the historiography has restricted “themselves to considering the culture and thought of educated, literate Protestants, in particular that of ordained ministers and university divines.”¹⁴³ Prynne—in many respects—would cast himself in the light of a representative of the parochial classes that Walsham identifies as absent from discourse. He was, by any measure, as much a Presbyterian outcast who felt that he spoke for the masses of the English Church as an educated elite, and his “low church” perspective would come to place him opposite Laud in the religious confrontation that followed.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Prynne’s polemics and their religious and absolutist charges are examined in significant detail in Chapter IV, *infra*.

¹⁴⁰ White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*, 238-241.

¹⁴¹ Alexandra Walsham, “The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and ‘Parish Anglicans’ in Early Stuart England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49, no. 4 (October 1998): 622.

¹⁴² It bears mention that the Archbishop of Canterbury for much of Jacobean rule was George Abbott, who prevailed over the original expected successor in 1609, Lancelot Andrewes. Abbott “had no parochial experience whatsoever” compared to the aged Lancelot who had long tenures in country appointments. See note 110, *supra*, at 94.

¹⁴³ Walsham, “The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited,” 623.

¹⁴⁴ See also the discussion of Mary Coate and the ideal of the “country parson” in Chapter I, *supra*, at 23-24.

Anthony Milton, meanwhile, looks to the Conference as the first time since the separation that the idea of the “true faith” finds widespread acceptance among the clerical elite. Indeed, argues Milton, those clerics aligned with Montagu seemed of the opinion that “Rome still retained the fundamentals of the truth faith.”¹⁴⁵ For Milton, the York House Conference and the ideals espoused by Montagu increasingly viewed the Roman Church as making slight “errors of the faith,” in liturgy and practice, which did not require the wholesale condemnation of the church.¹⁴⁶ In the aftermath of the York House Conference, the religious and political unrest that had marred the 1620s came to a fore as Laud ascended to a new position in 1626: Dean of the Chapel Royal.¹⁴⁷ This placed Laud in close proximity to Charles and for the first time opened a pathway for Arminian influence to rise in Canterbury.

This period also reflected an increasing concern, especially among Puritans, around the proper authority and appointment of ecclesiastical office. Laud and his contemporaries, though adopting publicly the *iure divino* role, nevertheless ascended to office on the basis of human law: favoritism and corruption. Linda Levy Peck, addressing court patronage and corruption under Charles, notes that the English Church was a key partner in networks of patronage. Peck notes that some of those factions under Jacobean¹⁴⁸ and early Caroline¹⁴⁹ rule, centered around the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Salisbury Robert Cecil. Buckingham in particular, the sole favorite under Charles, would become close with Laud in the court and had previously defended Richard Montagu from Romanist charges.¹⁵⁰ Laud and his leading clerics would come to play on

¹⁴⁵ Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 183.

¹⁴⁶ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 183-184.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁴⁸ The Jacobean era refers to rule under James I and James VI (1603-1625).

¹⁴⁹ The Caroline era refers to rule under Charles I (1625-1649).

¹⁵⁰ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption In Early Stuart England*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990): 55-56.

the “power of favorites,” based on the “personal affection of the monarch,” to install Arminian sympathizers in court offices. This entrenchment of the Arminian cause was a significant source of Puritan frustration. Henry Wakeman notes that the Arminianistic cause gained increasing popularity during the uncertainty because of its historical focus, because of its “vivid realisation [sic] of the continuous life of the Church...and in its deep sympathy with man’s moral nature.”¹⁵¹

With Laud’s succession in 1633, Arminian support would be solidified and apparent. The religious disputes of the 1620s and the Arminian ideals would come to serve as fodder for the Prynne’s charges and polemics of the next decade. Importantly, religious disputes are increasingly viewed in scholarship as a principal contributor to the English Civil War that would follow. Conrad Russell, in his monumental *Origins of the English Civil War*, urges consideration that the degradation of religious views in the 1620s was by no means a foregone conclusion and notes that the violence that would follow twenty years later could well have been avoided. The connection of religious difference—suggests Russell—is in large part attributable to Charles himself. For Russell, the “Puritan Anglicans whom he alienated were not natural enemies of authority.”¹⁵² Instead, they were forced to avoid acceding to an Arminian orthodoxy contrary to their continental beliefs. They were not always “Puritan” in the most traditional sense. They were Puritan in “terms of Calvinist predestinarian teachings” but distinct in their conception of the “Bible as a religious model.”¹⁵³

Still, the conflict would bore out and the Puritan Anglicans would make their opposition to the absolutist cause known, even if it could have been avoided. Charles would be crowned in 1626—just as Laud was promoted—and 7 years later Laud would succeed Abbott as Archbishop

¹⁵¹ Henry Offley Wakeman, *The Church and the Puritans, 1570-1660*, (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, 1888): 87.

¹⁵² Conrad Russell, *The Origins of the English Civil War*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1973): 23.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 121.

of Canterbury. Christopher Hill, writing on the intellectual origins of the English Revolution, identifies the ideas of Francis Bacon shortly before Prynne's first polemics as a natural corollary to the Puritan arguments that began to present themselves as Arminianism became codified as Laudianism. Bacon's ideals, argues Hill, concerned the notion that "reality could be changed by human effort," that men's attention is merited "to the real world in which they lived."¹⁵⁴ That focus on reality, Hill notes, parallels the Puritan effort to "realize God's kingdom on earth" as valid and his offices held by and orchestrated by man. In this sense, there are echoes of *iure humano* and the ingredients for a successful intellectual opposition to Laudianism's divinity.¹⁵⁵

Manifest in Laud's divinity-focused approach shortly after his appointment was the "divine appointment" of a number of close associates. Importantly, Laud sought to consolidate and achieve the "recovery of political power and the prestige of the bishops after decades of neglect and contempt," suggests Lawrence Stone.¹⁵⁶ Laud's immediate changes on church policy focused, too, on restoring sacramentalism and a formal, ritualized liturgy. Charles—who by the time of Laud's inauguration had initiated personal rule following a horrendous showing at the Parliament of 1629¹⁵⁷—had turned his attention to religious concerns. Tim Harris, writing from a revisionist perspective on the historiography of the problems facing the early Stuart Church, notes a consensus of a "Jacobean balancing act, with James seeking to incorporate different interests within the Church" that had dissipated or was, at the very least, neglected by the time of Laud's ascendancy.¹⁵⁸ Significantly, notes Harris, Charles did not "destroy a preexisting

¹⁵⁴ Christopher Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965): 110.

¹⁵⁵ Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, 110.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972): 118-119.

¹⁵⁷ The Parliament of 1629 is explored further in Chapter III, specifically with respect to Laud's role in governance. For a more exhaustive survey of this historical moment, see: Richard Cust, "Was There An Alternative to the Personal Rule? Charles I, the Privy Council, and the Parliament of 1629," *History* 90, no. 299 (July 2005): 330-352.

¹⁵⁸ Tim Harris, "Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 625-626.

religious harmony by recklessly promoting a new avant-garde group that no one had much sympathy for before he came to the throne.”¹⁵⁹ If the record of the 1620s—*viz.* Dunham House and Montagu—had anything to say about it, any balancing act that had been achieved was doubtless precarious and struggled to survive as a long-term solution. Charles made a singular effort, which proved successful for the next decade, at reconciling the Puritan and Arminian ideals around predestination. This 1628 Declaration would affirm Charles’ duty to maintain church unity and would also, White argues, affirm that the King had a “commitment to the existing formularies.”¹⁶⁰ That attempt to maintain some of the unsteady Jacobean balance would help to sustain his rule for a period, but not indefinitely. Hillel Schwartz notes that by the time of the Parliament of 1629, just four years into Charles’ reign, Parliament was at odds with the monarchy and the church on the question of religious practice: the Arminians were viewed by the Commons as “innovators in religion” who, given their beliefs, could “pursue policies that similarly subverted parliamentary privilege,”¹⁶¹ and the Commons sought to stifle their work. Thus, as the 1630s began, Laud and Charles had already positioned themselves as starkly opposed to Parliamentary attempts to control religious practice, stemming from a place of concern about the scope of the Church’s power, and the revolutionary concerns with absolutism grew from these fissures between government and church.

The Puritan vision of history in the 1630s—and the cultural stereotypes typically associated with Charles’ court—find their origins in the increasingly divergent beliefs of the Puritan and Arminian religious sects. As David Underdown contends, the “cultural stereotypes of ‘Court’ (corrupt, effeminate, popish, tyrannical) and ‘country’ (virtuous, patriotic, Protestant,

¹⁵⁹ Harris, “Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War,” 625-626.

¹⁶⁰ White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*, 252.

¹⁶¹ Hillel Schwartz, “Arminianism and the English Parliament, 1624-1629,” *Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 2 (May 1973): 68.

liberty-loving) were steadily gaining ground.”¹⁶² These stereotypes track elements commonly associated with Arminian philosophy and Puritan philosophy, respectively. Opposition to Laudianism and these hierarchal practices, Underdown notes, “was fiercest in the wood-pasture areas, and especially in the clothing districts.”¹⁶³ Puritans, thus, gained a foothold in the countryside and found the Laudian practices increasingly conflicting with their own religious experiences and practices. These differences, of locality and government, were derived from those religious disputes that marked the course of Anglican thought 1620s.

Harris echoes Underdown’s provincial concerns but cautions that many of the Laudian reforms could not have been achieved without “some backing in the localities.”¹⁶⁴ Laudianism was “feared and hated so much in part because it was successful; its very success made it so social divisive,” Harris argues.¹⁶⁵ In this sense, Laud on the eve of the Civil War turned his attention to consolidation and enforcement. At first, suggests Kenneth Fincham, Laud had to accede and understood his place as a servant to Charles. Still, his influence and counsel to the king were critical in helping to apportion ecclesiastical offices and install Arminian contemporaries: “it is the king’s rule...to appoint to bishoprics only men whom he knows ‘as having been his own chaplains in ordinary or otherwise.’”¹⁶⁶ Fincham asserts that Laud faced no major clerical rival by the time of his accession to the office of Archbishop—rather, Laud invited his associates to share in the appointment process. Laud’s “fellow metropolitan, and former patron, Richard Neile, had an occasional role in crown patronage, probably being responsible for royal chaplaincies for Benjamin Laney and John Cosin and, possibly, the deanery of Hereford for

¹⁶² David Underdown, “Popular Politics Before the Civil War” in *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*, Margaret Todd, ed., (London: Routledge, 1995): 218-219.

¹⁶³ Underdown, “Popular Politics Before the Civil War” in *Reformation to Revolution*, 218-219.

¹⁶⁴ Harris, “Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War,” 627.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 627.

¹⁶⁶ Kenneth Fincham, “William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 1 (January 2000): 71.

Jonathan Browne in 1636.”¹⁶⁷ Prynne’s charges in polemics would also center around this patronage and authority, expressing particular concern with Laud’s decision to elevate his associates at the expense of other distinguished, long-serving clerics.¹⁶⁸ Together, these religious concerns present the grounds and the basis for the secret histories of Prynne that would follow. Their central focus and ultimate place as a fomenting authority in Prynne’s works would remain the corruption and malfeasance of Laud’s administration and his apparent, deliberate contempt for Puritan religious acceptance and practice.

White, speaking on the religious origins of the English Civil War, admits the ongoing historical ambiguity around the extent to which Laud and Charles truly were “Popish” and actually adopted precepts which drifted toward the Roman Catholic. White argues that the religious traditions which preceded the Civil War’s commencement in 1642 had little to do with the issues of predestination and concerned far more the structure of the Anglican Church:

Lacking his father’s adroitness and his love of politics, and incapable of being all things to all men, Charles I sought a real compromise rather than a cosmetic adjustment. Whatever his failings, his settlement of predestination disputes in 1628 was a result of consensus, and its operation under the Personal Rule was so manifestly fair, and seen to be fair, that by 1640 it could be appealed to even by John Davenant as a ground of reassurance to Puritan ministers suspicious of the oaths required of them.¹⁶⁹

This assessment seems to track Prynne’s primary concerns, which—as examined above—express concern less with predestination philosophy and more with the value of the *iure humano* ideal. Lamont, too, recognizes that there still exists a gap in identifying the true historical motivations and causes of the English Civil War. Certainly, religion played a part in the eventual outcome, but the extent of its significance remains a subject of dispute. As Lamont observes, ideals of “‘liberty’ and ‘puritanism’ seem as natural a pairing at first as ‘revolution’

¹⁶⁷ Fincham, “William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage,” 82.

¹⁶⁸ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 70-72.

¹⁶⁹ White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*, 312.

and ‘puritanism.’” By Lamont’s estimation, both of the claims afforded to the origins of the Revolution necessarily rely on one assumption: that “Calvinism [and its Puritan adherents] offered a bleak and pessimistic judgment to the human race, but comfort to individuals,” whereas the Arminian view “was generous and liberating, but was cruel to individuals.”¹⁷⁰ Thus, there remains in scholarship a sense of frustration with the full extent of the Civil War and the extent to which religion played a part. What is clear is that religion and religious ideals were complex and the beliefs of Puritans and Arminians were increasingly divergent as Laud was installed.

Therefore, for our study of Prynne, we are called to assess his individual texts and, so far as they relate to secret histories, identify the falsities he presents in his efforts to libel Laud. As Burke notes, that assessment is difficult, given that secret histories may well “be described as frivolous, but under the cover of frivolity” launch criticisms. Just as they tell “some lies” and “passed on a good deal of unreliable information,” so too do they lay bare “a number of unofficial and uncomfortable truths.”¹⁷¹ Prynne’s works require dissecting and moving beyond an analysis of intent: also critical to that discussion are questions of religious audience and religious receptance. Among the Puritan audience of Prynne, tales of Laud’s associations and corruption would not have been surprising. Just as Laudianism had its origins in the Dunham House circle of Anglican elites, so too do Prynne’s ideals of Puritans governed by human law see their origins in intellectual and social circles that are predominately rural in origin.

In evaluating Prynne and his religious convictions, we are also called to be mindful of Burke’s identification of sourcing. The claimants and origins of some of the most detestable charges levied at Laud were likely the same clerics who were “given access to official documents.” With the help of Prynne, unlike those who often presented official court and

¹⁷⁰ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 81, 90.

¹⁷¹ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 29.

religious histories, these men could inquire into the “reasons for the fall of a minister or the invasion of a neighboring country.”¹⁷² How Prynne obtains the information to make his claims—and how he comes into possession of Laud’s diary itself—will be examined in Chapter IV. But the careful reading and attention he gives to Laud’s own hand, and the thrust of his claims, reflect an acute understanding of Puritan belief and Arminian religious beliefs informed by the disputes and intellectual disagreements among clerics under Jacobean and Caroline rule that were manifest in the 1620s.

¹⁷² Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 27.

Chapter III. Laud the Archbishop, Prynne the Polemicist—Their Public Disputes and the Road to the Secret Histories of the 1640s

Archbishop Laud, by the account of the venerable British historian H.R. Trevor-Roper in his biography of the bishop, had “misjudged his allies” and surely “was equally deceived by his enemies, for in seeking to restore the old social framework, he took no account of the new forces which it was to enclose and did not focus on the varying perspectives of Puritans which would come to foment the English Civil War. This account, likewise, focuses on what may be Laud’s greatest failing: his inattention to the common lay persons.¹⁷³ By any measure, at the conclusion of the 1630s and the advent of the Long Parliament in 1640, it was clear that Laud had made miscalculations of judgment in his rush to impose the precepts of Laudianism among Anglican parishes.¹⁷⁴ These missteps would, in time, come to imperil his own safety and result in his eventual imprisonment for treason in 1641. The genesis of the charges of Prynne in his three secret histories of the 1640s stem—in part—from Laud’s imprisonment of prominent Puritans and their prosecution in the *Camera stellata* or “Star Chamber” of Charles’ England at the height of increasing religious tensions in the 1630s. It would be the vitriol between these two men—largely a result of actions that involved or seemed to intimate the involvement of Laud—that would form the crux of Prynne’s secret histories in the 1630s. The contentious and contempt the two men shared is manifest in Prynne’s works and central to an understanding of how the secret history was weaponized in pursuit of Prynne’s Puritan aims, both in preserving his version of history and in furthering the Puritan cause on the eve of the Civil War.

¹⁷³ H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1940): 436.

¹⁷⁴ For a more thorough discussion of Anglican religious thought and practice in the decade preceding Laud’s reign as archbishop, see Chapter II, *supra*.

In the age of Laud and Prynne, the English judiciary's Star Chamber, constituting Privy Counsellors¹⁷⁵ and judges of the common law, was responsible for addressing a variety of civil and criminal matters in Stuart England. Generally, the court sought to ensure that equity was served in trials of notable political and religious individuals, and it had been extant in some form or another since the time of Henry VII.¹⁷⁶ Edward Cheyney has observed that, for all the ire spilt against the Chamber by Puritan dissenters, its proceedings were in fact open to the public and its cases fell into two general categories that required resolution: "first, cases of breach of public order; secondly, cases of violation of royal commands."¹⁷⁷ The Chamber was—in the mind of Stuart provocateurs such as Prynne—an extra-legal panel of monarchial loyalists committed to the persecution of political rivals and dissenters and the continuation of power. As Thomas Barnes has noted, this mythological viewpoint is riddled with falsity: merely because the Star Chamber was a "'prerogative' rather than a 'common law' court"¹⁷⁸ did not foreclose its independence as a judicial entity, free to hold individuals accountable to the laws of England.¹⁷⁹ This perception, as Barnes argues, was also misplaced in the degree of punishment that the Chamber could impart: while Prynne rose cries of an almost craven judicial overreach that could

¹⁷⁵ The Privy Council constituted advisors to the King on matters of governance and royal charters. Often consisting of senior members of Parliament, Pollock and Maitland have noted that privy counsellors were "ecclesiastics holding deaneries or canonries; they were sworn of the king's council; some of them were *doctors utriusque iuris* ["doctor of both laws"]; they were graduates, they were 'masters'; some of them as notaries of the apostolic see were men whose 'authenticity' would be admitted all the world over." Frederick Pollock and William Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923): 193-194.

¹⁷⁶ William Blackstone, *Commentaries On The Laws of England*, Christian, Chitty, Lee, Hovenden, and Ryland, eds., 2 vols., (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1903): 218-219. Blackstone argues for the Star Chamber's origins as preceding the court of Edward I as part of the ancient treatment of contracts with Jews, remarking that "[I]t is well known that before the banishment of the Jews under Edward I, their contracts and obligations were denominated in our ancient records *starra* or *starrs*, from a corruption of the Hebrew word *shetâr* [שטר], a covenant." Blackstone suggests that the Star Chamber originated as "[T]he room at the exchequer where the chests containing these starrs were kept." *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Cheyney, "The Court of Star Chamber," *The American Historical Review* 18, no. 4 (July 1913): 733.

¹⁷⁸ These criticisms stemmed from the fact that the Star Chamber was a court established by the King himself, rather than in the common law tradition. However, interestingly, by adopting the definition of a "King-created" court as at odds with equity, other well-regarded institutions of the English judiciary would merit castigation, including the Chancery courts, the King's Bench, the Court of Common Pleas, the Exchequer, and assize courts.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas G. Barnes, "Star Chamber Mythology," *American Journal of Legal History* 5, no. 1 (January 1961): 4.

send the adjudged to the gallows, the reality was that the Chamber could only lend its rulings to the implementation of “the common and statute law of England, primarily the law of misdemeanors because Star Chamber could not touch life or limb.”¹⁸⁰ By the time of Prynne’s trial, however, the Chamber and the mythology around its rulings had become a rallying cry for Puritan dissent and the focus of their polemic energies, regardless of the truth of the accusations.

With that said, Laud’s assent to and maintenance of supremacy in the Anglican Church during the Caroline era relied, at least in part, on a perceived culture of fear and suppression that Prynne expressed. Laud took liberties in determining the forum to try his Puritan rivals because the Star Chamber—with its emphasis on royal policy—was a conducive and, to some extent, legally sensible forum for the hearing of actions which concerned the proper resolution and practice of worship.¹⁸¹ Prynne, for his part, could not have disagreed more vociferously with the construction of the venue: he took particular issue during his own persecution in the Chamber in 1633 with matters of procedure, objecting vigorously to the presence of bishops and clerics, arguing against the presence of Christian leadership in temporal affairs of state. Prynne noted harshly that “It is both against Gods Laws and mans that Bishops and Clergie should be Judges over any Subjects within this Realm, for it is no part of their office.”¹⁸² The Chamber’s prosecution of Prynne in 1634—brought by Attorney General William Noy—stemmed from Prynne’s publication of the controversial and ill-received 1633 *Histrion Mastix: The Players Scourge, or, Actors tragoedie*,¹⁸³ a firm denunciation of theatrical performances as an invitation

¹⁸⁰ Barnes, “Star Chamber Mythology,” 5; Barnes does note that the Chamber did “occasionally sentence convicted defendants to mutilation by cutting off ears or the slitting of nostrils,” but the “vast majority of its sentences consisted of a pecuniary fine and imprisonment.” Ibid., 7.

¹⁸¹ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 210-211; Laudianism’s prime aim was the reformation of religious procedure and order.

¹⁸² William Prynne, *A Terrible Outcry Against the Loytering Exalted Prelates*, (London: Richard Smethurst, 1641): 3.

¹⁸³ It is sometimes referred to as “*Histrion Mastix*” and “*Histrionmastix*,” though both seem to be accepted in canonical references. For ease of reference, *Histrionmastix* will be used herein.

to public indecency and religious immorality.¹⁸⁴ Critically, while it was this trial that was central to Prynne’s accusations against Laud—conspicuously—Laud himself was largely absent from the Chamber and was but one among twenty-one judges who would vote to convict Prynne.¹⁸⁵

As Mark Kishlansky has argued, contemporaries viewed the publication not as a dispute with rising Laudian policy but as a tract against the increasingly scant religiosity of the general population, a tract that was a

‘voluminous invective against all manner of interludes’, a libel against general classes of English society: noblemen who supported companies of players or produced shows for their own entertainment; magistrates who failed to enforce the statutes against vagrant actors; Sabbath breakers who gamboled and gambled rather than attend afternoon sermons.¹⁸⁶

Prynne had, by the 1630s, turned his focus and polemical attention to the perfidious influences that Puritans felt had corrupted both the Anglican faith and the wider Anglican social community. Chief among those charged was Laud and, notes Lamont, there was even at this stage a sense of historical revisionism that seems almost reminiscent of Prynne’s later secret histories against Laud. Lamont notes that the *Histriomastix* itself is more concerned with a lack of divine engagement and laments “that people were more familiar with Shakespeare than with the Bible.”¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Prynne goes further in the text, alluding to an abject crisis of homosexuality within the Anglican commune, attributing this desire to both the conforming practices of Laudianism and a “lascivious thrill at seeing boys embrace one another on stage.”¹⁸⁸ The radicalism in Prynne’s works naturally attracted the attention of the court and of Charles in particular, who was eager to stem the tide of dissent against his administration. Historians seem

¹⁸⁴ Ramie Targoff, “The Performance of Prayer: Sincerity and Theatricality in Early Modern England,” *Representations* 60 (1997): 52.

¹⁸⁵ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 18.

¹⁸⁶ Mark Kishlansky, “A Whipper Whipped: The Sedition of William Prynne,” *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 3 (2013): 607.

¹⁸⁷ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 18.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

to estimate that there was little original in Prynne's assaults: they were largely written with an air of "trite providentialism" and, by Lamont's assessment, they ransacked the ideas of other Puritans¹⁸⁹ in an attempt to "tell the whole of history (not just of stage plays) in terms of God's retributive justice."¹⁹⁰ However, the real gravamen of the claim against Prynne were particular allusions and references to the place of the royal court itself in the promotion of—plainly put—a libel against Queen consort Henrietta-Maria, wife of Charles I. The veracity of the claim remains a subject of historical dispute, but Prynne's text was published around the time that Henrietta-Maria "was acting, in English as a Christmas present for the king, in the masque, *The shepherd's paradise*."¹⁹¹ To the court, Prynne's invective in an appendix of "women actors, notorious whores" was a direct allusion to the Queen herself and many of Prynne's critiques of government as implicit in the corruption of the Anglican mind appeared to speak to the actions of Charles and his coterie of Laudian clerical elites.¹⁹²

Prynne was met with swift justice in the Star Chamber—and did not contest his responsibility for the publication. Indeed, he was proud of the charges and seemed ready to rally them to aid the fledging Puritan cause. In character, he was "fearless" and "doctrinally rigid and morally upright; an old school puritan who believed in the Manichean struggle between the saved and the damned."¹⁹³ Prynne felt he had a strong defense, arguing that the text itself had been "written four years, licensed almost three, printed fully off a quarter of a year, and

¹⁸⁹ Among these Puritans Prynne imitated was Thomas Beard, whose *Theatre of Gods Judgments* appeared for a third time in 1631 shortly before the completion of the *Histrionmastix* and was excessively quoted therein. Beard was a noted Puritan who had previously testified against Richard Neile, the Archbishop of York, who was tried in the House of Commons for his pre-Laudian sensibilities in the late 1620s. Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 19-21.

¹⁹⁰ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 18.

¹⁹¹ Kishlansky, "A Whipper Whipped," 607.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 605.

published 6 weeks before the Queen's Majesty's Pastoral¹⁹⁴ against which it was falsely voiced to have been principally written."¹⁹⁵ The extent of this defense was, to a measure, defeated upon arrival with the introduction by the prosecution that "the pastoral had been in rehearsal since the summer and the queen had acted in prior productions,"¹⁹⁶ not to mention that Prynne introduced the remark in an appendix to the original text shortly before publication.

The role to which Laud has been castigated despite his minimal influence in the proceeding's outcome has attracted the attention of both Kishlansky and Lisa Freeman, who point specifically to Prynne's willingness to engage libel for a sort of religious expediency. Kishlansky, quoting Laud himself, notes that it was Laud who later "urged mitigation of his [Prynne's] sentence," stating that he "notwithstanding desire for him that he may have books ... and let him have liberty to the come to the church...If he hath done anything against me, God forgive him, and I do. I am sorry for him."¹⁹⁷ Freeman, too, notes that during the trial itself Laud displayed a certain measure of restraint, with Prynne's focus being instead a misguided attempt to link Laudianism's precepts with the corruption of common Anglican men.¹⁹⁸ The strategy, Freeman notes, relied on a "'chains of sin' logic, whereby venial infractions—the 'quotidian or social sins of the city'—are magnified as precursors to the inevitable commission of grievous sins" as descended from the "new conformity" enforced by Laud and clerical elites.¹⁹⁹ In short, Laudianism's conformity beget a lackadaisical response from the population toward proper religious strictures and morals. The attempt at conformity, for Prynne, contributed directly to

¹⁹⁴ *The Shepherd's Paradise* is a pastoral or masque of the Caroline era written by noted playwright Walter Montagu, who was in part connected to the diplomacy that arranged the marriage of Henrietta Maria.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Burton, *A divine tragedy lately acted*, (Amsterdam: J.F. Stam, 1636): 43.

¹⁹⁶ Kishlansky, "A Whipper Whipped," 608.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 609; *see also*: John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: The Second Part* (London: D. Browne, 1721): 248.

¹⁹⁸ Lisa Freeman, "In The 'Publike' Theater of William Prynne's *Histrion-Mastix*" in *Antitheatricality and the Body Public*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017): 34.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

what Lamont characterizes as an acute sense of social attack.²⁰⁰ It was an attempt to undermine a sense of religion as related to man himself, an introduction of that perfidious *iure divino* that Puritans had come to detest with such rancor by the time of Prynne's imprisonment.²⁰¹

Laud's attempts to mitigate Prynne's sentence, however, were largely ignored by his contemporaries. Prynne would be sentenced, in 1634: he was "fined £5,000, sentenced to life imprisonment, and had his ears cut off."²⁰² The extent to which the latter punishment—*viz.* the removal of ears—was effectively carried out remains a source of historical uncertainty,²⁰³ though most seem to agree that for one reason or another it was never carried out to completion.²⁰⁴ During a second trial in 1637 (he had been imprisoned since 1634), Prynne was charged again, this time with continuing to pen seditious texts against the Laudian administration. The second trial, however, would come to provide the basis in the public sphere for a Puritan charge of continued abuse of power by Charles and his contemporaries. This trial charged two additional Puritans, "Henry Burton (a divine) and John Bastwick (a doctor)" who, together, came to constitute in the public imagination the persecution of the professional class.²⁰⁵ Lamont argues that they "represented the great professions—Law, Medicine and Gospel" and reflects that their persecution resulted in a "social undercurrent in the resentment [that] many felt at their punishments."²⁰⁶ And, thus, Prynne had the grounds to develop the charge he would come to

²⁰⁰ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 20.

²⁰¹ For a more thorough discussion of *iure divino*, the controversy around the notion of divine appointment, and Puritan outlooks on Anglican episcopacy, see Chapter II, *supra*, at 41-42.

²⁰² Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 19.

²⁰³ The irony of this corporal punishment should not go unnoticed, especially as the Star Chamber—by Barne's estimation—had little authority to impose sentences regarding "life and limb." See note 164, *supra*, at 7.

²⁰⁴ Lamont observes that, as a technical matter, Prynne was tried again and sentenced to "having his ears cut off a second time, as well as having his nose slit, and the initials "S.L." burnt into his cheeks." S.L., meaning "Seditious Libeller," would later be imagined by Prynne somewhat flippantly as shorthand for "*Stigmata Laudis*" or "Stigma of Laud." *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰⁵ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 20.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

embrace in his secret histories: that Laud and his clerical elites had sought to suppress and eliminate from the intellectual and professional sphere the contributions of the Puritan class.

Laud, for his part, seems not to have connected the common thread of Puritan identities among Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne or at least not considered their ramification from a public perspective. A portion of Laud's 1637 Star Chamber speech was concerned not with the seditious texts of the dissenters, but rather with the minutiae of religious practice, taking up the issue of the placement of the communion table during worship.²⁰⁷ Still, there seems to be historical disagreement about the scope of Laud's ultimate objectives: certainly, he was less involved in the singular targeting of Prynne than may have been generally assumed, but his hand was often handedly introduced in the Star Chamber. Charles Carleton, in his biography of Laud, characterizes him as a "guiding force" in the Puritan prosecutions and cites specifically that Nathaniel Bernard, a Puritan and Rector of Remenham, "appeared before Star Chamber at Laud's instigation" and, on a myriad of occasions, Laud's friends initiated actions at his behest.²⁰⁸ The motives, Carleton admits, remain somewhat ambiguous but suggests that Laud commanded the persecutions with "a venom that belied any good intentions....His zest was as unsavory as it was unchristian."²⁰⁹ Carleton's critique here seems at odds with Laud's own forgiveness of Prynne and, thus, the precise intentions of Laud's writings remain elusive. It seems clear, however, that the Puritan interpretation of Laud's actions—regardless of their intentions—had given the public the martyr they had sought. Laud had created "men whom the

²⁰⁷ Tyacke notes that Laud was wholly concerned with Burton's assertions around theological practice, contending in the case of Bishop John Davenant of Salisbury that an order from Davenant (and, ergo, Charles) clearly "inhibit[s] you the church-wardens, and all other persons whatsoever, to meddle with the bringing downe of the communion table or with altering the place thereof at such times as the Holy Supper is to be administered." Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 210.

²⁰⁸ Charles Carleton, *Archbishop William Laud*, (London: Routledge, 1987): 79.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

public remembered, and victims with long memories for revenge.”²¹⁰ The quasi-secular Star Chamber thus proved itself an inefficient vehicle for the enforcement of religious conformity and could not achieve the shift in thinking in favor of Laudian ideals that the Caroline regime sought.

Prynne, though mistaken in some respects, began to increasingly castigate Laud after 1637, especially on the question of religious disputes and theological practices. The Arminianism Laud embraced became an increasingly liability for faithful Puritan adherents and was sharply in contrast with Prynne’s own desires for performance and wit. The Star Chamber affair was, argues Trevor-Roper, the last signpost on the road to the revolution that would follow. Indeed, Trevor-Roper adds, “[I]f ever government was given a signal warning of the results of censorship, it was the government of Charles I.”²¹¹ When the dissenters were scheduled to be pilloried at Westminster, the men found an opportunity to “justify their martyrdom to a sympathetic mob, which readily agreed to their claims to resemble Christ on Calvary, strewing flowers in their way, and collecting blood from their mutilated ears in handkerchiefs.”²¹² The macabre sense of these events—and the romanticism that came to adorn them in Puritan history—certainly appears consonant with Prynne’s desire to revel as a Puritan martyr.

Prynne, too, made use of the event and recited an oft-quoted story of a legendary confrontation between the two enemies. Supposedly, during his imprisonment, Prynne prepared an “indignant protest in prison that, one gathers, went much further than his printed works to date in his denunciation of Laud.” Following the discovery of the text, Laud confronted him, “delighted” and with great glee because of the probative value of the evidence, whereupon Prynne promptly “seized the paper from Laud, swallowed it in front of the bemused Archbishop,

²¹⁰ Carleton, *Archbishop William Laud*, 80.

²¹¹ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 321.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 322.

and boasted that this was one piece of evidence that would not be used against him.”²¹³ The humor of the tale notwithstanding,²¹⁴ it illustrates both a sense of the Laudian regime as opposed to free discourse and uniquely concerned with sedition while simultaneously illustrating the crux of charges made in later Prynne secret histories centered around Laud. The concern is always with the presence of Laud himself in actions and Prynne focuses in his recounting of this story (and in his later secret histories of Laud) on his callous and vindictive character. Laud is thus a man unconcerned with his fellow men and particularly sadistic in his retribution.

In the immediate aftermath, William Palmer notes, Laud had to contend with the reality of an incensed Puritan crowd eager to seek retribution for a wounded Prynne. Palmer asserts that the opposition to Laudianism found its apex in 1638 following an attempt to “impose his ceremonial innovations on Presbyterian Scotland.”²¹⁵ The Scottish crisis, which Prynne readily embraced, began an outright revolt by Scotland’s General Assembly against English domination broadly under Charles and the so-called “Laudian prayerbook”²¹⁶ that had come as an enforcement mechanism in country parishes.²¹⁷ Despite this, argues Trevor-Roper, Laud could never come to admit, “even in the hour of his manifest failure...that he might have been in error even in his methods.”²¹⁸ It is here that, to an extent, Laud’s reputation may suffer unduly: Lamont and Kishlansky have attempted to recover some sense that Laud may not have earned

²¹³ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 19.

²¹⁴ *The Histriomastix*—for which Prynne was imprisoned—was a large volume of nearly a thousand pages. Lamont speculates that we must assume, *arguendo*, that the polemic in question here was substantially less than a thousand pages if he were to have successfully accomplished and consumed the paper as a veritable delicacy.

²¹⁵ William G. Palmer, “Invitation to a Beheading: Factions in Parliament, the Scots, and the Execution of Archbishop William Laud in 1645,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52, no. 1 (March 1983): 19.

²¹⁶ The prayerbook in dispute was the 1637 printing of the Book of Common Prayer—a text which, historically, directed the course of Anglican worship. The dispute began in July 1637, following adoption at some Easter services, and continued until the formal outbreak of violence in February 1638. *See also*: Anthony Milton, “Unsettled Reformations, 1603-1662” in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, Anthony Milton, ed., vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²¹⁷ Palmer, “Invitation to a Beheading,” 19.

²¹⁸ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 322.

the repressive historical badge that he has long-since earned. In suggesting this ire is misplaced, particularly on the Scottish question, Leonie James notes that Laud himself had foreseen the Scottish troubles and had “begun privately to criticize the king for failing to quash the troubles.”²¹⁹ Laud’s failing, then, seems to have been in realizing the intractability of certain political and religious situations: he criticized Scotland and its Anglican ministry for their “lack of action” in responding to the uprisings, while failing to realize that “within Scotland the episcopate was linked in many popular minds with the prayer book, idolatry, superstition and the threat of popery.”²²⁰ The fear of Romanist influence—long a concern for a Presbyterian Scotland cast in the mold of John Knox—was now touted regularly as a “pulpit polemic” and Prynne, ever the instigator, seized the opportunity.²²¹

Ethyn Kirby—singular as a Prynne biographer—cites that in the growing Scottish unrest, Prynne published an especially vicious polemic targeting religious practice, *Brief Instructions for Church Wardens*, while he remained imprisoned for the troubles of his *Histriomastix*.²²² The tract provided “legal advice to the wardens on how to avoid prelatial visitations” from the Anglican clerical elite under Laud’s command.²²³ Laud was taciturn and Prynne continued the assault bringing—while still imprisoned and standing trial—a “cross-bill against the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishops of Oxford and Norwich, and others in the High Commission,” alleging that they had exceeded their power in attempting to define a sense of religion through texts such as the prayer book without the assent of Charles.²²⁴ Like many of his

²¹⁹ Leonie James, “Laud, the Scottish Crisis and the First Bishops’ War, 1637-39” in ‘This Great Firebrand’: William Laud and Scotland, 1617-1645 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017): 118.

²²⁰ James, “Laud, the Scottish Crisis and the First Bishops’ War,” 119.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ethyn William Kirby, *William Prynne*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931): 38-39.

²²³ Ibid., 40.

²²⁴ Kirby, *William Prynne*, 40. The charge itself was “usurping upon His Majesties prerogative royall with Innovations in Religion.”

more audacious efforts, Prynne brought into the fray others, including his fellow compatriots Burton and Bastwick, and the result was ill-received by Laud, who promptly championed the men's banishment as well-deserved and lauded the Star Chamber for their "unanimous dislike of them and defence of the church."²²⁵ By this point, however, the Puritan crisis was spiraling out of control and the Scottish dispute would lead to the gradual end of Charles' personal rule.

Prynne, imprisoned in Carnarvon on the Welsh coast, continued to maintain the unity of the quasi-martyrdom narrative, and proceeded to write "a full account of his sufferings" that spoke of his particular encounter with the executioner at Westminster. William Lamont, writing of Prynne specifically, identifies this as a time at which Prynne's religious beliefs remained moderate, though staunchly Puritan, but saw him identify Laud and his clerics as not merely incorrect but deleterious to Anglicanism itself.²²⁶ Prynne also had a strong and incisive agenda, especially in the waning days of the 1630s: more than any other pamphleteer, Lamont argues, Prynne identified as "vipers...the direct enemies of Church and Crown."²²⁷ The claims and controversies thus provided ripe opportunity for Prynne to argue for both a conception of "a staunch Royalist and a loyal Anglican" who respected the institutions but detested their corrupt, "viperous" figureheads among the leading men of the Caroline regime.²²⁸ Within this spirit, Prynne lived out the remaining two years of the Scottish controversy, finding creative and innovative ways to disseminate his polemics to Puritan sympathizers.

Charles—meanwhile—had lost control of Scotland and sought legal relief. It was in November 1641 that the Long Parliament was called after a disastrous defeat of English forces at Newburn in August 1640, a continuation of the Scottish unrest that had developed over the

²²⁵ Kirby, *William Prynne*, 43.

²²⁶ William Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, (London: Routledge, 1963): 41.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

prayerbook and part of the Second Bishops' War.²²⁹ The decision to call Parliament was made singularly by Charles and, by Russell's estimation, Charles did not see "any connection between calling a Parliament and making peace."²³⁰ The decision was one made with an eye toward belligerence and Laud, for his part, seemed resolute in continuing to enforce the church practices that had drawn concern from Puritans and an increasing number of moderate Anglicans. The fatal error of these Parliamentary negotiations that would ultimately fuel the furor of Laud's imprisonment was that while the "conventional wisdom" among ministers was that "right or wrong, these [Laud's] policies had ceased to be viable," Charles remained disagreeable to concessions over ecclesiastical changes until things had devolved too far.²³¹ Thus, the political and religious instability stemmed from Charles as much as it did from Laud; it seems historically untenable to apportion total responsibility to either of them.

A true assessment of Laud as an individual during these contentious later years of Caroline rule is difficult to parse, particularly given the degree to which his role as Charles' advisor had been cast historically. James suggests that Laud's power in the English court had waned by the time the Bishop's Wars were thoroughly underway, but Laud was nevertheless present in conversations and plans because he had had "deep involvement in Scottish policy prior to this point."²³² Laud himself, James argued, seems to have realized that the situation with sedition and opposition to his policies had grown increasingly unstable and by the middle of the Bishops' Wars "Laud's wish to disassociate himself from Scottish policy was becoming evident to watchful observers."²³³ Even as the grip of Laudianism unraveled, however, Prynne argued

²²⁹ Conrad Russell, "Why Did Charles I Call The Long Parliament?," *History* 69, no. 227 (1984): 377. Before the Long Parliament, Parliament had not been called into session since the 3rd Parliament's dissolution in 1629.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 377.

²³¹ Russell, "Why Did Charles I Call The Long Parliament?," 382.

²³² James, "Laud, The Scottish Crisis and the First Bishops' War," 123.

²³³ *Ibid.*

that Laud remained unrepentant and committed to finding a way to enforce his ecclesiastical agenda. In November 1640, shortly after the Newburn defeat and the calling of the Long Parliament, Prynne was released from exile and began his crusade by joining the radicals in what Lamont has described as the increasingly “clear division between the moderate and radical opponents of Laud” that had formed in the wake of Parliament.²³⁴ It was thus possible, argues Lamont, to see a shift in thinking and the spread of the Scottish problem into the Anglican Church itself. The moderate Anglican agenda that had tolerated Laudianism came to embrace opposition to those policies, even within England itself.

For Lamont, moderate Anglicans at the time of the Long Parliament stood for “what Prynne had suffered for in the thirties the repudiation of the *iure divino* claim; the localized guilt of the Laudians; the worth of the martyrs; the recognition of the value of the Elizabethan Church by the civil magistrate.”²³⁵ Prynne and his radicals went a step further, not merely contesting these issues with Laudianism in practice but fearing that the church and the episcopal system itself had been corrupted beyond recovery. With some trepidation then and despite his ardent Erastianism²³⁶ and faith in some measure of Anglican structure, Prynne concluded that “only a total rejection of episcopacy could save England from profanity.”²³⁷ This marks a shift in Prynne’s thinking from Laud himself as an isolated actor and signaled a change that would lead to an increasingly Puritan-centered Anglican practice in the wake of the Civil War.

At the time, however, some suggest that Laud’s actions indicated a sort of willful ignorance toward the declining authority of the episcopacy. Carleton argues that this

²³⁴ Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, 55.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Erastianism, named for Thomas Erastus, believed that the state retains supremacy over church affairs and also repudiates the notion of withholding Sacraments as punishment. *See also*: J. Neville Figgis, “Erastus and Erastianism,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 2, no. 5 (October 1900): 66-101, and Weldon S. Crowley, “Erastianism in England to 1640,” *Journal of Church and State* 32, no. 3 (1990): 549-566.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

characteristic was in Laud's nature: he became a scapegoat for the religious and political instability of the period because as an individual he "made enemies needlessly through the infusion of vinegar."²³⁸ Carleton frames Laud's character and insecurities as consequential to the failures that would follow, noting that

A profound sense of insecurity helped make the archbishop, at least, behave in this fashion, especially when he felt that people did not like him, and that secretly, behind their well-kept hands, they were sniggering at his physical appearance, or his humble origins. Insults drove the archbishop to a cruelty that was almost pathological.²³⁹

Carleton's portrait, however, fails to take into account that Laud was a tactician of some skill and had worked throughout the 1620s to cement his place as both an expositor of the Arminian tradition and was attuned to the perilous state of the episcopacy by the end of the decade. W.J. Tighe, writing on Laud's attempts to reunite the churches and quell the uncertainty in the Protestant tradition, notes that Laud—in attempting to preserve control over the Scottish churches—extended warmth to disparate Lutheran communities and "seized upon a convenient argument to repel anti-episcopal assertions of general protestant consent to presbyterian polities," a tactic that was consistent with "a good knowledge of continental protestant practice in these matters."²⁴⁰ Ergo, there is a degree to which Laud is misunderstood: his policies seem to have been poorly executed but his motivations and intentions may have been earnest.

Trevor-Roper, too, is somewhat unrestrained in his criticism of Laud's character, contending that Laud's failures were entirely to do with his political and religious persuasions that were out of step with an Anglican population that preferred some degree of moderation and simplicity. For Trevor-Roper, Laud's final blow came with the onset of the Bishops' Wars:

²³⁸ Carleton, *Archbishop William Laud*, 147.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ W.J. Tighe, "William Laud and the Reunion of the Churches: Some Evidence from 1637 and 1638," *The Historical Journal* 30, no. 3 (September 1987): 721.

For six years he had been fighting a losing battle, seeking by the exercise of despotic authority and backstairs influence to establish a form of responsible autocracy: and he had failed. The opposition was too strong: his own methods were too impolitic: and his plans had been sabotaged from within by those who understood better than he did the secrets of the art politic.²⁴¹

Still, this definition too seems to overlook the place of Laud as—by this time—merely a counselor to Charles whose political clout was becoming increasingly restricted. James, for her part, attributes much of the unrest in the Bishops' Wars and the Long Parliament to Charles and his governmental misadventures, noting that he was very much an independent king and that his decisions on some matters of ecclesiastical policy were his own. Indeed, at the time of the Scottish crisis, Charles “preferred not to entrust the resolution of the situation to the Scottish privy Council or to a committee, but opted instead for a sole representative of his personal choice: James, 3rd Marquis of Hamilton.”²⁴² Charles was thus very much responsible for the government's response and had, to an extent, curbed the authority of Laud by exercising his own royal prerogative to appoint Marquis.

The limitations of Laud's role in the Scottish affair—and in the debates over government sovereignty that came in the wake of the Long Parliament—are apparent in Prynne's polemical interests themselves. The first act of the Puritan radicals was not the immediate pursuit of Laud, contends Lamont, but instead reflected an effort to assure the continuity of Parliament's sovereignty and buttress the institution against further attacks from Charles. In 1643, Prynne prepared his “official defence of the sovereignty of Parliament,” titled *The treachery and disloyalty of Papists to their sovereigns, in doctrine and practise, together with the first part of*

²⁴¹ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 378.

²⁴² James, “Laud, The Scottish Crisis and the First Bishops' War,” 121.

the sovereign power of parliaments and kingdomes.²⁴³ The work, notes Lamont, sets Prynne's priorities not with a grand inquisition of Laud and an indictment of his ritualism but, rather, with setting forth an "expose of Papist treachery; and *only then* the defence of parliamentary sovereignty."²⁴⁴ While in time this tract would form the basis for Prynne's secret histories against Laud within the next several years—and adapted portions relevant to Romanist intrigue appear in the *Breviate* his first secret history, in 1644—the focus at the outset was manifestly with exposing the wider need for episcopal reform and precipitating the removal of a sovereign who, by that time, was viewed as a player in a vast and growing Roman conspiracy.

While Laud escaped the public charges and invectives at the outset of 1643, Prynne's attention and work soon drifted toward the formulation of his first secret history, the *Breviate*, and he became increasingly focused on entrapping Laud in the affair. Prynne made use of some early Laud material in his invective *Rome's Master-Peece: Or, The Grand Conspiracy of the Pope and His Jesuited Instruments to Extirpate the Protestant Religion*.²⁴⁵ Kirby notes that Prynne used this polemic to invoke a sort of second "Gunpowder Plot,"²⁴⁶ suggesting that a "plan had been revealed to William Boswell, agent of the king at The Hague, by Habernfeld, who in turn had been informed by an agent of Cardinal Barbarino, for the assassination of the king by an 'Indian poisoned nut' or knife."²⁴⁷ This early invective and the suggestion of the "Habernfeld

²⁴³ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 61; William Prynne, *The treachery and disloyalty of Papists to their sovereigns, in doctrine and practise, together with the first part of the sovereign power of parliaments and kingdomes*, (London: Michael Sparke, Sr., 1643).

²⁴⁴ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 61; emphasis in original.

²⁴⁵ William Prynne, *Rome's Master-Peece: Or, The Grand Conspiracy of the Pope and His Jesuited Instruments to Extirpate the Protestant Religion*, (London: Michael Sparke, Sr., 1644).

²⁴⁶ The first Gunpowder Plot in 1605, known for invoking "Jesuit Treason," was a failed attempt by Robert Catesby and a group of disparate Catholics from the countryside to assassinate King James I. The plot, which would have destroyed the House of Lords during the opening of Parliament, was a significant inflection point for Romanist influences and Puritan fears in the intervening decades. See also: A.H. Dodd, "The Spanish Treason, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Catholic Refugees," *The English Historical Review* 53, no. 212 (October 1938): 627-650, and Mark Nicholls, "Strategy and Motivation in the Gunpowder Plot," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (December 2007): 787-807.

²⁴⁷ Kirby, *William Prynne*, 63.

Plot” introduced the specter of Romanism into the dispute and raised increasing concern over the stability of the sovereign. For Laud’s part, it was “proved” by this tract that “he had tampered with affairs of state in that he had ‘vitiating and altered the king’s oath at the coronation’” of Charles.²⁴⁸ While the historicism of this episode remains in dispute,²⁴⁹ the implication of Laud here foreshadows the public and vitriolic charges that would be present in Prynne’s three secret histories and reflects the changing nature in the final days of Caroline rule.

Still, by the dawn of the English Civil War, the rhetoric of martyrdom and censorship propagated by Prynne and his allies remained a strong rallying cry against encroachments by Puritans and their successors. “To call the English Civil War the War of Prynne’s Ears would be to overstate its importance by a huge margin,” Lamont observes, but it would be a mistake to disregard the powerful emotional focus engendered by the “suffering of Prynne and his fellows.”²⁵⁰ That singular incident was at once a rallying cry for the Puritan cause and also a cautionary tale of an overzealous and misrepresented regime of persecution. Prynne was uniquely positioned as an expositor of this polemical tradition and was prepared to utilize those skills to the advantage and benefit of the Puritan cause.

Laud—in character and action—remained resolute in his defense of Laudianism and the actions that he had overseen. Trevor-Roper suggests that by the time of his imprisonment following the Grand Remonstrance in 1641,²⁵¹ he had become concerned and resigned, accepting that he might be “ready to resign the defence of what he had achieved into the hands of those

²⁴⁸ Kirby, *William Prynne*, 63.

²⁴⁹ See W.C. Abbott, “The Origin of Titus Oates’ Story,” *The English Historical Review* 25, no. 97 (January 1910): 126-129.

²⁵⁰ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 21.

²⁵¹ The Grand Remonstrance were a set of charges presented to Charles over his relations with Parliament and the Bishops’ Wars, among other matters, and also included an indictment of Laud for treason. For an excellent account of the affairs, charges, and aftermath, see William H. Coates, “Some Observations on ‘The Grand Remonstrance,’” *The Journal of Modern History* 4, no. 1 (March 1932): 1-17.

who seemed more confident of preserving it.”²⁵² Laud, however, made no apology for his religious convictions and, at trial in 1645, set forth an ardent defense without resignation. The conflict between these two men—and the deep animosity harbored by Prynne over the Star Chamber and Laudianism itself—would soon find its exposition in the virulent secret histories that would condemn Laud as a Popish traitor who had brought ruin to the Anglican Church.

²⁵² Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 379.

Chapter IV. The Secret Histories of William Laud: Prynne's Falsities and Historical Revisionism in the Age of the Stuarts

Prynne wrote many pamphlets during his lifetime which address issues of religion and politics in the Stuart era. The focus of our study, however, will be limited here to his three significant pamphlets that sought to illustrate and impugn the credibility and integrity of William Laud and, further, expose him as a traitor to the Anglican Church and a threat to the operation of an independent English church.²⁵³ These works²⁵⁴—*A Breviate of the life of William Laud* (1644),²⁵⁵ *Hidden workes of darkenes brought to publike light* (1645),²⁵⁶ and *Canterburies doome* (1646)²⁵⁷—each address Laud's actions differently, focusing on particular aspects of his tenure as Archbishop and function, in some form, as secret histories. The *Breviate* presents itself as Laud's authentic diary, which he wrote while imprisoned in the Tower of London prior to his execution (an extensive portion is also dedicated to Laud's alleged conversation with Prynne during the course of the Star Chamber affair).²⁵⁸ *Hidden workes*, meanwhile, focuses on Laud's alleged Romanism and religious beliefs, seeking to undermine his place as a Protestant leader and painting Laudianism as antithetical to the English Church. Finally, *Canterburies doome*—

²⁵³ For instance, another tract—which is in fact a poem—was titled “Canterburies conscience convicted, or His [Laud's] dangerous projects and evill intents tending to the subversion of religion.” Published by S.I., an anonymous publisher, in 1641, “Canterburies conscience” in many respects lays the ground for *Hidden workes* but is too brief in form to be considered here.

²⁵⁴ For the sake of convenience and ease of readability, the following shorthand will be observed herein: *Breviate*, *Hidden workes*, and *Canterburies doome*. The full titles of the aforesaid primary sources may be reviewed in the Bibliography appended hereto at 130 to 138. It also bears mention that the primary sources are offered herein in their original form, with spellings conforming to early modern English and italics preserved as they appeared in Prynne's respective works. Thus, [sic] will not be adopted throughout to denote changes in original spellings.

²⁵⁵ William Prynne, *A breviat of the life of William Laud, arch-bishop of Canterbury: extracted from his owne diary, and other writings, under his owne hand*, (London: F.L. for Michael Sparke, Senior, 1644).

²⁵⁶ William Prynne, *Hidden workes of darkenes brought to publike light, or, A necessary introduction to the history of the Archbishop of Canterbrie's triall discovering to the world the severall secret dangerous plots, practices, proceedings of the Pope and his confederates*, (London: Thomas Brudenell for Michael Sparke, Senior, 1645).

²⁵⁷ William Prynne, *Canterburies doome, or, The first part of a compleat history of the commitment, charge, tryall, condemnation, execution of William Laud, late Arch-bishop of Canterbury*, (London: John Macock for Michael Sparke, Senior, 1646).

²⁵⁸ See Chapter III, *supra*, at 53-55.

published after Laud's trial in 1644 and beheading in January 1645—demonstrates Prynne's foray into historical revisionism and his attempt to direct how the trial would be understood after the fact: as the culmination of attempts by Protestants to rid the church of Romanist influence.

These texts, like many secret histories, suggest a deliberate attempt by Prynne to mislead his readers on the question of truth. And, like most texts in the secret history genre, their origins and assertions are almost always unascertainable. In short, the reader has little option but to accept their assertions and sources at face value or decry their authenticity altogether. In the case of the *Breviate*, which will be considered first in this survey, the text is offered by Prynne as “extracted from his [Laud's] owne diary” and all the writings are offered as being in “his owne hand.”²⁵⁹ In this respect, Prynne makes his intentions clear from the outset: the text is to be construed as the work of Laud's own creation, an intentional and deliberate recollection of his own life and events. However, the reality is markedly different. The work contains numerous inaccuracies that misrepresent Laud's actions and his intentions and was written, in this form, largely by Prynne. Prynne tried to selectively rewrite the history of Laud and his actions in an effort to buttress his Puritan leanings and, most importantly, lend support to the charges that had been brought against Laud at his trial.

There is a sense, throughout Prynne's works, of both conveying alternative narratives that is common to the secret history genre. Prynne's works also seem reminiscent of what Burke has identified as the secret history's challenge to the age-old question of the “limits and foundations of historical knowledge”²⁶⁰ by challenging the conception that historical narratives can be derived from one particular expositor or source. There is, then, an effort by Prynne to assert in

²⁵⁹ Prynne, *Breviate*, 1.

²⁶⁰ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 52. For a more exhaustive discussion of what broadly constitutes a “secret history” and the elements of a “secret history,” see Chapter I, *supra*.

his tracts both an “argument from bias” and an “argument from forgery”²⁶¹ in an effort to represent Prynne’s views on Laud’s actions and activities. Indeed, Prynne attempts to fill in the historical record to reflect the charges that he had elucidated for much of the past decade and make his own version of history the reality. In this respect, the secret histories of Prynne demand special consideration for their attention to inherent political and religious interests and what role they may have played in the outcome of his trial which occurred during the publication of some of his secret histories.

There are, as well, issues of evidence and credibility that come to the forefront of debate. How these issues of authenticity were discerned by readership, and how they were accepted, will be examined in Chapter V. Of interest here, however, is the rhetorical devices and evidence that Prynne introduces in order to make the case in these tracts against Laud. These issues are acute and present throughout and present questions of both intention and purpose. Prynne’s efforts to install Laud as a corrupt Archbishop rely directly on assumptions of trust and faith in his contentions. Ultimately, however, we see in these tracts that Prynne commits himself to a style that is understood now as a secret history: a narrative with an emphasis on altering the perception of a historical actor (in this case, Laud) by focusing on disputing his public character in an appeal to Prynne’s audience of associates and Puritan leaders.

I. *A Breviate of the life of William Laud (1644)*

Prynne offers in the *Breviate*²⁶² numerous historical inaccuracies and false statements regarding Laud’s heritage and upbringing. In reality, the *Breviate* is offered as extracts from the

²⁶¹ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 53.

²⁶² *Breviate*: 1.) abbreviate, abridge; 2.) a compendium, summary, abstract; 3.) *obsolete*: a brief note or dispatch—also: a lawyer’s brief. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “breviate,” accessed Mar. 17, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/breviate>. On a few occasions in the work, Prynne (or, perhaps, his printer) misspell “breviate” as “brevariate.”

real diary of William Laud—which was begun during his time of imprisonment in the Tower of London. Though the diary’s origins are observed by Prynne and later biographers of Laud, precisely how Prynne obtained the original diary or was able to confirm its authenticity is not clear. Laud’s private papers, in an 1839 edition, are presented as a “compilation from Archbishop Laud’s Diary, his History of his Chancellorship of Oxford, and his History of his Troubles and Trial.”²⁶³ By all accounts, two of those texts that were ultimately published and widely circulated in print in the centuries thereafter, the Diary and Troubles and Trial, bear the considerable imprint of Prynne’s hand and are by no measure exclusively the words of the Archbishop alone. Laud’s actual diary, at least so far as the *Breviate* claims to be extracted from, is held at St. John’s College Library at Oxford, and—while not widely circulated—lacks many of the flourishes and comments, especially with respect to Prynne himself, that are readily apparent in the *Breviate*.²⁶⁴ H. Wharton, who was an early Laud biographer and a devout “high church” Anglican historian of the late sixteenth century, was the first to publish his papers in a compilation in 1695.²⁶⁵ In an oft-published preface to the diary, Wharton observed that, in May 1643, after Laud’s commitment to the Tower, Prynne:

[T]ook from the Archbishop twenty-one bundles of papers, which he had prepared for his defence [sic]: his Diary, his Book of private Devotions, the Scotch Service Book, and directions accompanying it, &c. And although he then faithfully promised restitution of them within three or four days, yet never restored any more than three bundles employed such against the Archbishop at his trial, as might seem prejudicial to his cause; suppressed those which might be advantageous to him; published many, embezzled some; and kept the rest to the day of his death.²⁶⁶

Here, then, Wharton, who functioned as an Anglican historian by trade, sheds light on

²⁶³ William Laud, *The Autobiography of Dr. William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Martyr*, (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1839): 9. See also: 11-14.

²⁶⁴ William Laud, Diary, Correspondence, and Papers, MSS 259-61, 302, 328, Oxford University: St. John’s College Library Archives.

²⁶⁵ H. Hensley Henson, *Puritanism in England*, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972): 104-106.

²⁶⁶ H. Wharton, Preface to “The Diary of the Archbishop’s Life” in *The Works of the Most Reverend Father In God William Laud, D.D., Sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, Vol. III, (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1853): 112.

how the altered version of the diary came to originate in Prynne's hand. Moreover, he suggests that even by the end of the 17th century, historians and critics had come to acknowledge the gaps in reasoning in Prynne's tract.²⁶⁷ Indeed, Wharton continues, contending that "[A]s soon as Prynne was possessed of the Archbishop's papers, he set himself with eager malice to make use of them to his defamation, and to prove the charge of Popery and abetting arbitrary government, by the publication of many of them."²⁶⁸ With respect to the *Breviate* itself, Wharton extends his criticism farther, positing that Prynne "altered, mangled, corrupted, and glossed in a most shameful manner, accompanied with "desperate untruths."²⁶⁹ Wharton—then—seems aware of the limitations of Prynne's works and the historical inaccuracies that are presented as truth. Wharton makes clear that Prynne's amended version of Laud's diary had a derisive influence both among contemporaries and in the intervening decades. The "life of the Archbishop was chiefly aimed at by the plotters," meaning Prynne, and Wharton notes that their interest in adjusting the Archbishop's words presented an issue of interpretation for future historical scholars. Specifically, he adds, those "who wrote anything of this excellent prelate, have been forced to make use of it; not being able to gain the sight of the original, nor perhaps so much as suspecting any such fraud in the edition of it."²⁷⁰ Prynne's reworking of Laud's diary seems to concentrate on Laud's corruption and his Romanist sympathies. Laud himself objected extensively to the treatment, writing in the margins of a copy of Prynne's version while in the Tower that "if God lend me life and strength to end this (History) first, I shall discover to the world the base and malicious slanders with which it is fraught."²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Explored further in Chapter V, *infra*, Wharton's comments seem to suggest that the objective of Prynne, insofar as it related to relating and revising Laud as an unsympathetic character to the English, had largely faded by the time of the Restoration.

²⁶⁸ H. Wharton, Preface to "The Diary of the Archbishop's Life," 112.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

²⁷¹ Laud, *The Autobiography of Dr. William Laud*, 36.

Prynne divides the diary into three parts: a biographical account, written as if Prynne were Laud, of his own origins and upbringing; a contemporary account of Laud's imprisonment and reflections on Laud's interactions with Prynne; and a set of charges and commentary appended at the conclusion of the work that appear and identify Prynne as the author. From the outset, Prynne, writing as Laud, indicates in the biographical reflection that Laud was born "of poore and obscure Patents [sic], in a Cottage."²⁷² In fact, Laud's mother was hardly an obscure figure: she was involved in London politics in the late 16th century as the sister of William Webbe, the Lord Mayor of London, who hailed from a line of notable clothiers in Reading.²⁷³ Prynne, clearly, seeks to paint Laud as a man of ignoble birth, unworthy of such a high religious office that demands respectability, in an attempt to undermine and demean his character.

Prynne pursues and achieves his political aims of undermining Protestant leadership in the *Breviate* as well, specifically in offering his own interpretation and account of Laud's relationships with high-ranking associates of Charles during the religious disputes of the 1620s. In particular, Prynne targets George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, who was a favorite of Charles. Buckingham—who helped to defend Robert Montagu, Laud's compatriot, from Romanist charges,²⁷⁴ is presented by Prynne as a "patron" of Laud who imparted his own prosperity and political success to support the Archbishop. Indeed, Prynne describes the relationship thusly in the following interchange:

April. 9. The Duke of *Buckingham* most venerable to mee by all Titles, certified mee, that some body, I know not out of what envy, had blemished my name with *King Charles*, his most Excellent Majesty.

April 10. What a professed Votary and Creature this Bishop was to the D. of *Buckingham* will appeare by these his speciall Prayers for him, written with his owne

²⁷² Prynne, *Breviate*, 2.

²⁷³ *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia*, (London: E.J. Francis & Co., 1878): 30-31.

²⁷⁴ For a discussion of the Duke of Buckingham's relationship with Laud, see Chapter II, *supra*, at 43-45.

hand, in his booke of privat Prayers and Devotions found in his Chamber at the *Tower*, P. 164.165.166. much used, as is evident by the fouleing of the leaves with his fingers.

Pro Duce Buckinghamiae.

GRacious Father I humbly beseech thee, blesse the *Duke of Buckingham* with all spirituall and temporall blessings, but especially spirituall: make and continue him faithfull to his Prince, serviceable to his Country, devout in thy truth and Church. A most happy Husband and a blessed Father, filled with the constant love and honour of his Prince, that all thy blessings may flow upon himselfe, and his posterity after him. *Continue him a true-hearted freind to me thy poore servant, whom thou hast honoured in his eyes, make my heart religious and dutifull, to thee, and in, and under thee, true, and secret, and stout, and prudent in all things which he shall be pleased to commit unto me.* Even so Lord, and make him continually to serve thee, that thou maist blesse him; Through Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour, *Amen.*²⁷⁵

Prynne is careful to detail several facets that speak to his political and religious aims in the *Breviate*: first, the Duke of Buckingham is offered as a sympathetic foil to the Romanist Laud, as someone who, at first glance, was unwillingly complicit in a Laudian scheme by acting to tip Laud off to “some body...[who] has blemished my name with *King Charles*, his most Excellent Majesty.”²⁷⁶ However, the relationship between Laud and Buckingham is thereafter couched as one of creditor and debtor. Buckingham, for disclosing to Laud the fact that his name has been “blemished,” is rewarded with a blessing that promises that Buckingham shall be “prudent in all things which he shall be pleased to commit unto me.” This exchange, though specific to the time, appears to reflect a view that Laud was an Archbishop of corruption, a man committed to abusing his office in pursuit of political and personal gain. As William Haller has suggested, Puritans did not take Laud’s efforts at reform as innocent, worthwhile endeavours for the good of the church. Rather, the effect was instead the provocation of “more determined [Puritan] preachers to a bolder stand” and encouraging “extremists in general to more active agitation in the press and among the sects.”²⁷⁷ The corruption, for Haller, called for nothing short

²⁷⁵ Prynne, *Breviate*, 14.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 230.

of a complete reformation of the episcopacy, a Puritan “reorganization of society, beginning with church government, and a throughgoing change in manners and morals” to avoid the corruption engendered by men such as Laud.²⁷⁸

In this sense, Prynne suggests that Laud has a certain duality in his motivations: publicly, he seeks to bless Buckingham for his kindness, but privately Laud reminds us that his good fortune and prosperity is partially the result of the protection Buckingham has offered him in alerting him to the attempt at tarnishing his reputation. In other words, Laud is complicit in relationships which advance his own interests over those of others and abuses the office of the Archbishop for purely personal gain. Prynne is so certain that Buckingham, in part, contributed to Laud’s status as a favorite that he inserts an editorial comment in the midst of Laud’s alleged diary entry, observing that “Buckingham was “privy to his [Laud’s] Journey into *Spaine* with Prince *Charles*, (now our Sovereign, which voyage was purposly plotted to pervert him in his Religion, and reconcile him to *Rome*) is apparent by this insuing prayer, annexed to the former.”²⁷⁹ Clearly, Prynne observes, Buckingham was acting to protect Laud from public scrutiny and hide the scandal of Laud’s attempts to “reconcile” Charles to Rome and the Catholic Church. Thus, Laud and Buckingham were not only partners in personal profit from their relationships. They are also complicit in a cover-up and yet another governmental scandal that evinces another aspect of corruption rampant from those in Charles’ coterie of advisors and prelates. Significantly, Prynne demonstrated here that the corruption confirmed the worst fears aroused among his Puritan contemporaries: Laud was conspiring to reunite with Rome.

Prynne, then, seeks to position the central narrative of court favoritism during the Stuart era as a disagreement between Protestantism and Laudianism. In reality, there is little practical

²⁷⁸ Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 220.

²⁷⁹ Prynne, *Breviate*, 14.

evidence that any trip to Spain by Charles resulted in an embrace and interaction with Catholic theology, nor is it likely that Buckingham's own propensities and outlook toward Laud was some deliberate attempt to dispense with rumor and reinforce a sense of collective Protestantism. A.O. Meyer has observed that on the trip to Spain, Charles did not appear persuaded by Catholic theology. Instead, he actually appeared dismayed at their practices and taken aback by their "excessive cult of the Virgin," being especially "shocked by seeing that the people knelt to the Madonna, while they [Anglicans] only bowed to the crucifix."²⁸⁰

Furthermore, Buckingham was likely far less concerned with protecting Laud's reputation. Indeed, it had already been rumored that Buckingham was a fervent supporter of the Romanist cause, in effect an agent of the Pope. Siobhan Keenan has observed that it is now believed that Buckingham "collaborated with England's enemies, including Spain and France," by supporting "a Spanish marriage for Prince Charles" and by collaborating with the French and proceeding "with the loan of English ships to the French in 1625 knowing that they were to be turned on the French Huguenots."^{281,282} If Buckingham were truly a protector of Laud and his reputation, it seems unlikely that he would make such public prevarications as financing an assault against French Protestants in an effort to ensure the continuity of the Anglican Church by feuding with continental parties. The more likely outcome, suggests Kennan, was that Buckingham was concerned—as with most favorites—with the preservation of his own interests and a veritable "selfishness and corruption" for his own gain. Still, there is a staying power in

²⁸⁰ A.O. Meyer, "Charles I. and Rome," *The American Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oct. 1913): 18-19.

²⁸¹ The Huguenots were French Protestants in the Calvinist tradition. While Anglicans sought to reject Calvinist views on predestination, to target Huguenot interests would be to further the ideological and parishioner divide between, for instance, Puritans and Arminianists. Geoffrey Treasure, *The Huguenots*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013): 256-261.

²⁸² Siobhan C. Keenan, "Staging Roman History, Stuart Politics, and the Duke of Buckingham: The Example of 'The Emperor's Favourite,'" *Early Theatre* 14, no. 2 (2011): 76-77.

Prynne's narrative: by capitalizing on an existing rumor and using Laud's diary to confirm it, Prynne has given a new veil of legitimacy to the text that he puts forward.

Indeed, central to Prynne's success here is an attempt to affirm a popular conception—that Buckingham is a “Romanist” sympathizer—and further reinforce its legitimacy by associating him with the unsavoriness of the Rome scandal by what purports to be Laud's own hand. The incident served Prynne's narrative ambitions well. In the context of secret histories, Prynne in this situation presents a close relationship between the presence of scandal and rumor, two central hallmarks of a secret history. In crafting and amending Laud's diary to suit ambitions in this way, Prynne reflects the tradition of secret histories in acting to deliberately rewrite or alter the historical chronology. His actions toward Buckingham reflect a sense of the secret history as addressing the Burkian notion of “public opinion shaping” that is ubiquitous to the secret history genre and its political ambitions.²⁸³ Buckingham's character appears to be maligned, at least among those who considered Laud an unsavory political character, in this interchange contrived by Prynne. Indeed, observes Haller, an incident such as this reflects one of Laud's greatest failures: his lack of “conception of, [and] certainly no respectful attention to bestow upon, the seething activity of thought and expression which had sprung up among the populace with the dissemination of the Bible and the spread of literacy in the vernacular.”²⁸⁴

In another episode of particular interest to the impacts and consequences of secret history writing, Prynne alters Laud's diary to include an account which was previously nonexistent in the Archbishop's actual diary:²⁸⁵ a retelling of the incident in the Star Chamber. Here, then,

²⁸³ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 123. For a more exhaustive treatment of Burke's position and Cowan's commentaries, see Chapter I, *supra*, at 7, 19-20.

²⁸⁴ Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 234.

²⁸⁵ The actual diary contains no reference to the episode of the letter itself and instead directs its attention primarily at the death of Noy, who was a close friend and—by Prynne's estimation—a functionary of Laud. See William Laud, *The Autobiography of Dr. William Laud*, 48-57, and note 287, *infra*.

Prynne deploys the strategy of inserting into the narrative events and moments which simply did not occur. The account—which is amended to be sympathetic to Prynne’s cause—reflects, in a clear allusion to Procopian style, careful and purposeful attention on the individual. In the account, it is immediately clear that Laud is made out to be the central figure who is acting against a helpless and interred Prynne, situating Laud as an instigator who cares little for the plight of the Puritan and all the more for the cause of the Catholic. There is, as well, a sense in which this moment absolves Prynne of guilt for the actions he may have committed, painting him again as a martyr of the Puritan cause of practicing their faith free from interference:

*Pryn sent me a letter about his censure in the Starre Chamber for his *Histriomastix*, and what I said at that Censure, in which he hath many wayes, (hath no wayes) mistaken me, and spoken untruth of me, June 16. I shewed this letter to the King and by his Command sent it to Master *Attorney Noye*, June 17. Master *Attorney* sent for Mr. *Pryn* to his Chamber, shewed him the letter, asked him whether it were his hand. Mr. *Pryn* said he could not tell unles he might read it, the letter being given into his hand, he tare it into small peeces, & threw it out at window, fearing it seemes an *Ore tenus*,²⁸⁶ For this, June 18. Mr. *Attorney* brought him into the *Star-Chamber* where all this appeared, I there forgave him July 26. I received word from *Oxford* that the Statutes were accepted, and published according to my letters in the Convocation house that weeke, August 9. Saturday Master *William Noy*,²⁸⁷ his Majesties Attorney Generall, died at *Brainford*, circa horam noctis decimam,²⁸⁸ And Sunday morning August 10. his servant brought me word of it, to *Croyden* before I was out of my bed, *I have lost a deare freind of him, and the Church the greatest she had of his condition since she needed any such.*²⁸⁹*

²⁸⁶ In law, referring to a statement that is made or presented orally (literally, from the Latin, “by word of mouth”). See *Ore Tenus*, *Black’s Law Dictionary* (10th ed. 2014). The inference here is that Prynne would have feared that the letter could have been used to impeach him at trial during oral testimony.

²⁸⁷ William Noy led the prosecution of Prynne in the original Star Chamber proceeding on behalf of Charles’ government and died in the midst of the trial. For an exhaustive treatment of Noy and the Star Chamber proceeding broadly, see Chapter III, *supra*, at 53-57.

²⁸⁸ Latin: “About the tenth hour of the night,” which in the context of Medieval Latin likely references an evening Anglican service of compline or vespers. It bears mention that this allusion—coming before the 1662 Elizabeth revision to the Book of Common Prayer—may reflect yet another attempt by Prynne to tie Laud to the Catholics by suggesting that he had adopted the Romanist practice of Latin timekeeping for religious services. See also: Sarah Handley, “From the Sacral to the Moral: Sleeping Practices, Household Worship and Confessional Cultures in Late Seventeenth Century England,” *The Journal of the Social History Society* 9, no. 1 (2012): 27-46, and Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁸⁹ Prynne, *Breviate*, 19.

Replete with numerous mistruths in his account, Prynne indulges first in commentary by inserting himself briefly into the text to reject a charge that Prynne had misinterpreted Laud's intentions during the hearing in a letter ("in which he hath many ways, (hath no wayes) mistaken me."²⁹⁰ This effort by Prynne at self-preservation of his own image and, further, the references to his own character again evokes the trademark of a secret history in the Burkian mode. By rewriting the historical narrative for the sake of enforcing and, critically, protecting a political ambition or aim (in this case one that is abjectly personal), Prynne has ensured that the narrative reflects that he was not a "Puritan criminal" by any measure. Had Prynne allowed Laud's apparent assertion to stand—that he had misinterpreted Laud's statements in a letter—the rhetorical strength of his argument may well have been eroded and the notion of Prynne as a martyr and innocent victim to the Puritan cause would have been inhibited. In this respect, Prynne appears ready to excise from the narrative those moments that would otherwise adversely color his own version of events and thus put him at a disadvantage in the pursuit of his future political aims, as well as corrupt the trust embodied in his account.

In the concluding passages of the *Breviate*, Prynne—again writing surreptitiously as Laud—presents a list of Laud's alleged objectives for the Anglican faith as Archbishop that were prepared at the time that he assumed the post. Specifically, Prynne couches this list as "[T]hings which I have projected to doe if God blesse mee in them."²⁹¹ Interspersed between some seemingly innocuous objectives on the list—which numbers close to twenty-one goals—Prynne inserts some allusions to scandalous elements which seem to comport with the worst fears and concerns of Puritans—another strategy of employing signals to cause concern among particular

²⁹⁰ Prynne, *Breviate*, 19.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

factions—against the management and supposed “corruption” of the Anglican Church, including:

2. To overthrow the seofment [sentiment], dangerous both to Church and State, going under the specious pretence: of buying in impropriations. *Done*.
3. To procure *King Charles* to give all impropriations yet remaining in the Crown within the Realme of *Ireland*, to that poore Church. *Done*, and settle there.²⁹²

Specifically, these charges contend with Puritan concerns expressed toward Laudianism’s embrace of impropriations—an Ecclesiastical practice of granting “an ecclesiastical benefice to the use of a lay person, whether individual or corporate.”²⁹³ In laymen’s terms, this issue arises in the context of wider Puritan concerns about the influence of monied interests and their derisive effect on church practice. Benefices, which are in essence permanent church appointments to lower-level positions such as a rector, were key to the consolidation and power structure which characterized church practice in Stuart England. They were also central to maintaining and disseminating religious beliefs as the benefices also often entailed the ability to lecture from the pulpit. Thus, in this sense, Puritans realized that obtaining impropriations and removing their control from Laudian hands would be central to increasing “the number of Calvinist preachers.”²⁹⁴

Kirby, in an analysis of the Lay Feoffees—a group of militant Puritans aligned with Prynne’s interests—finds that the primary objection was the fact that by Charles’ rule, nearly “one-third of the livings [positions] in the church were owned by laymen” who were “favored courtiers,”²⁹⁵ meaning Anglican clerics. Thus, by arguing that Laud and, consequently,

²⁹² Prynne, *Breviate*, 33-34.

²⁹³ *Impropriation*, *Black’s Law Dictionary* (10th ed. 2014).

²⁹⁴ Ethyn W. Kirby, “The Lay Feoffees: A Study in Militant Puritanism,” *The Journal of Modern History* 14, no. 1 (March 1942): 2, 6-14.

²⁹⁵ Kirby, “The Lay Feoffees,” 12.

Laudianism, exerted their influence over the Irish Church in the realm of impropriations, Puritan fears about the continued encroachment on their ability to express their beliefs is apparent in Prynne's attempt at a secret history. As Kirby observed, Charles I and Laud's attempts to intercede were "bitterly resented" by Puritans as "prelatical and royal tyranny."²⁹⁶ In an examination of the environment of London under late Stuart rule, Alice McCampbell has observed that of the 109 London churches in 1638, "the Anglican Church held patronage rights in fifty-seven and the Crown in fifteen."²⁹⁷ By 1640, McCampbell contends, only "nineteen of those London churches were held by incumbents who may be styled Puritans."²⁹⁸ In other words, Prynne's comments on impropriations—which were absent from Laud's original commentaries and personal writings—reflect another touchpoint for Puritan distaste and concern with abuse by the Anglican establishment and an extension of Anglican control over Puritan efforts to see the representation of themselves and their faith in parish churches.²⁹⁹

At the conclusion of the *Breviate*, Prynne returns with commentary to contribute to our understanding of the journal entries and account of Laud's life that he presented as crafted in Laud's hand. Indeed, Prynne posits, Laud's own writings affirm what he has argued for years: the Laudians are the natural enemies of Puritans and stand against all that they believe in. They are corrupt and commit scandals to the Church and the proof is in Laud's text itself. Prynne asserts specifically that Laud's writings affirm, in part:

2. By what meanes he procured most of his preferments; to wit, by unlawfull Actions, as by marrying the Lady *Rich* to the Earle of *Devon*; by his base flatterie of, and obsequiousnesse to the Duke of *Buckingham*, by incensing his Majesty against

²⁹⁶ Kirby, "The Lay Feoffees," 25.

²⁹⁷ Alice E. McCampbell, "Incumbents and Patronage in London, 1640-1660," *Journal of Church and State* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 300.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 300-301.

²⁹⁹ Puritan distaste toward impropriations arose as one of the principal concerns at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, when the Anglican communion first attempted to address Puritan concerns. For a more extensive discussion of the Hampton Court Conference and its aftermath, see Chapter II, *supra*, at 38-40.

Parliament, invading the Subjects Properties, Liberties, &c. as will more fully appeare in the Relation of his tryall.

6. What a great favorite and Instrument he was to the Queene and Popish faction, and how grand an Enemy, a Persecuter of the zealous Protestant partie, under the name of Puritans.

11. That he hath beene exceedingly devoted to and promoted Popish Ceremonies, and greatly favoured, advanced men Popishly affected, as *Windebancke*, *Mountague*, *Manwaring* and others.³⁰⁰

In short, Prynne uses the idea of a secret history, embodied in the amended narrative he creates in the *Breviate*, to affirm his most egregious charges against Laud and affix clearly the terms and charges of Laud's trial which would follow. The charges of popery and a disfavorable view toward the Puritans color the *Breviate's* narrative and, in Prynne's case, several incisive comments draw to the fore the most serious concerns of the Puritan establishment. The *Breviate* thus strongly aligns itself within the realm of a political secret history, emphasizing here Laud's actions as the touchstone for the present political and religious unrest that had developed by the early 1640s. In many respects, the *Breviate* represents Prynne's first attempt to outline the case against Laud and establishes a clear sense of how the Puritans would prosecute Laud at trial.

II. *Hidden workes of darkenes brought to publike light (1645)*

Prynne's next work—in essence—is a more focused chronicle of the charges that had come to public attention in the context of Laud's trial. *Hidden workes* foreshadows the final work before the trial and purports to offer proof of the perfidious actions of Laud against the Puritan religious establishment. Published just as the trial began in 1645, *Hidden workes* is contrary to the *Breviate*, which leaves the reader to look to particular instances and statements in support of Puritan positions toward Laud and his coterie of associates. Furthermore, in *Hidden*

³⁰⁰ Prynne, *Breviate*, 33-34.

workes, Prynne implements several different rhetorical devices that appear emblematic of the secret history. He assembles previously “hidden” evidence—including government records—to illustrate the corruption of the Laudian regime in the Anglican communion. *Hidden workes* also contains elements of secret history literature, viz. the notion of conspiracy, and builds its argument principally from misinterpretations or misstatements of official documents and correspondence. As Prynne himself admits, these sources, drawn from “*rude Collections* (faithfully extracted out of many thousand scattered papers, the perusall and digesting whereof into order hath cost me no little pains),”³⁰¹ might also speak to the common presence within secret histories of using authoritative, official documents to reveal affairs to the public.

Prynne’s focus in *Hidden workes* is primarily the development and establishment—through documentary evidence—of Laud’s role in specific Romanist connections and plots. The key purpose—as the middle text in the trio—is in establishing the extent of Laud’s power and the degree of corruption. In the context of the secret history, Prynne perhaps achieves the least in *Hidden workes*: there is not the deliberate misrepresentation of authorship manifest in the *Breviate*, nor is there a considered effort to rewrite the entire historical chronology and depict favorably Prynne’s own positions and personal allegations apparent in *Canterburies doome*. Instead, *Hidden workes* presents as an introduction and stands among a unique class of evidentiary secret histories, being really a compilation of extracts that support the criminal charges that were later alleged against Laud at trial and ultimately resulted in his conviction. Some might suggest that it writes as a manual for trial, but with an undertone of certainty that is ultimately riddled with inaccuracies. *Hidden workes* may thus be understood as a secret history that distorts the truth and emphasizes making vague associates pronounced.

³⁰¹ Prynne, Preface “To the High and Honorable Covrt of Parliament” in *Hidden workes*, i.

As with many secret histories, the sources of these texts and paratexts are not subscribed with any degree of certainty, and the inquisitive reader has little recourse to determine the authenticity or veracity of the documents, or whether they even exist at all. *Hidden workes* also contains that essential element of a secret history—the notion of conspiracy. Prynne asserts that the extracts he presents, principally the result of conspiracies between Laud and Charles, reveal:

[A]s in a *Mirrou*, many *hidden*, or *forgotten Romish Plots of darknes* brought to *Publike Light and Memory* (from the first Marriage Treaty with *Spaine*, in the yeere 1617. till this present) to undermine our *Protestant Religion*, reduce both us and all our *Dominions* back to *Rome* by insensible degrees; together with the severall *Policie, A••ifices, Negotiations, Conspiracies used*, and *Instruments* imployed between the *Pope*, his *Confederates* and *Us*, to accomplish this long-agitated *Designe*.³⁰²

The text is offered from the outset as an account which strikes at the heart of Puritan issues. Here, the Romish Plots, certain to rally concern amongst sympathetic Puritan clerics, reflect the growing tensions and terminologies that had become widespread amidst the faltering reign of Charles. Indeed, Prynne’s allegations—so direct and without fear of reprisal—would not have been possible at the time the *Breviate* was published just a few years before. In directly addressing the relation between Charles and his spouse, Henrietta Maria, Prynne places Laud at the center of the affair, tying him as the cause of Henrietta Maria’s continued practice of Roman Catholicism and as the prime champion of the marriage.³⁰³ Prynne continues, asserting that Laud had played an intimate role in condoning the marriage, and suggests that a

popish party here and beyond the seas, endeavouring to make good the ground, liberty and immunities they had gotten by the former treaty of Marriage, and to carry on their forementioned designe, by the same prevailing meanes, engaged the *King* and *Prince* in a

³⁰² Prynne, “Preface” in *Hidden workes*, ii.

³⁰³ In reality, the relationship between Henrietta Maria and Charles was one of chance, while Charles was on a sojourn with the Duke of Buckingham seeking to arrange a marriage with infanta Maria Anna of Spain. This relationship, central to Prynne’s attacks, is considered further in Prynne’s portrayal of the Duke of Buckingham as “duped” by Laud in both pattern and practice. For more on the relationship between Henrietta Maria and the Puritan cause, see Michelle A. White, *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil War*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). For a contrary viewpoint on her relationship with Puritans, see R.M. Smuts, *infra*, note 305.

*new marriage-parley with France, to the Lady Henrette Maria Sister to the French King, a Princesse of the Roman Religion.*³⁰⁴

That “popish party”—meaning Archbishop Laud—allegedly solemnized the union and afforded the full support of the Anglican Church behind the union despite Henrietta Maria’s decision to decline acceptance into the Anglican communion.³⁰⁵ Thus, to Prynne’s Puritan contemporaries, Henrietta Maria was a wolf in sheep’s clothing and the prime cause of her installation as spouse to Charles was the support and condescension of the Anglican Church to the marriage. Laud, as head of the Church, was thus clearly responsible for permitting and authorizing such an action.

As Michael Winship has suggested, the Puritan interactions and incendiary language adopted by Prynne in pursuit of his objectives are both commonplace, in some respects, and also reflective of a departure from past polemics. What is expected is the notion of the “Popish plot,” which is by no means an innovation of Prynne. Rather, such charges by Puritans had been alleged as early as the Hampton Conference. Indeed, argues Winship, Puritans adopted the cautionary and fearful warnings of Popish influence as early as the 1580s as bishops advanced their “insatiable lust for power” and “started acting in breathtaking violation of the English civil constitution, at least as interpreted by puritan lawyers.”³⁰⁶ What is surprising in Prynne’s use of language is his direct appeal to political officers—in this case Parliament—as a member of the Puritan religious community. Rather, before Prynne, the general Puritan position had developed into two distinct critiques among two body politics: a religious one and a secular one. Thus, Winship contends, it would have been common for a Puritan lawyer to critique the “secular constitutional struggle” and place the argument against Anglican leadership as one uniquely

³⁰⁴ Prynne, *Hidden workes*, 69-70.

³⁰⁵ William J. Bulman, “The Practice of Politics: The English Civil War and the ‘Resolution’ of Henrietta Maria and Charles I,” *Past & Present* 206 (Feb. 2010): 43-46.

³⁰⁶ Michael P. Winship, “Freeborn (Puritan) Englishmen and Slavish Subjection: Popish Tyranny and Puritan Constitutionalism, c. 1570-1606,” *The English Historical Review* 124, no. 510 (Oct. 2009): 1051.

concerned with “enforcing an illegal ecclesiastical body of laws through illegal ecclesiastical courts.” To hear that same position emanate from a minister such as Prynne reflects the extent to which he was associated with a myriad of Puritan social circles, and also demonstrates the versatility of his secret history: it could appeal to both a secular audience concerned with legal and government reform (*e.g.*, Cromwell) and also the Puritan religious elite that Prynne sought to captivate with stories of Catholic treachery.

Of course, the so-called Popish plot that Prynne alludes to broadly was hardly founded in reality and more served to stoke the civil unrest that permitted the eventual execution of Laud. Henrietta Maria, though a practicing Catholic, hardly proves Prynne’s narrative with any measure of verisimilitude. Instead, the reality is closer to what R.M. Smuts has identified as Henrietta Maria’s willingness (backed, in part, by Laud’s support) to bridge Parliamentary divides worsened by an obstinate Charles. Indeed, Smuts contends, it was well-accepted in Caroline Court politics that the queen’s party “maintained close ties with leaders of the opposition to Charles’ personal government and fought for policies broadly congruent with those advocated by men who would lead the parliamentary cause.”³⁰⁷ Laud’s place in the debate was less pronounced and, in reality, Erin Griffey observes that Laud and Henrietta Maria had a “tense relationship”³⁰⁸ and, in only a few rare instances (such as her choice of a Catholic cross necklace) did Laud act to acquiesce as “a way of placating her.”³⁰⁹ Certainly, this tense relationship was not captured by Prynne, who instead chose to portray Laud as an intimate confidante of the Queen. Indeed, in many respects, Prynne’s portrayal seems more analogous to

³⁰⁷ R.M. Smuts, “The Puritan Followers of Henrietta Maria in the 1630s,” *The English Historical Review* 93, no. 366 (June 1978): 27-30.

³⁰⁸ Erin Griffey, “Devotional Jewellery in Portraits of Henrietta Maria” in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008): 179.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

that of the Queen's confidante, the "debonair new papal agent to the queen, the Scotsman George Conn."³¹⁰ For Prynne, however, it was essential to bind Laud and cast him as a player in the Catholic drama of Stuart Court life. Without asserting his place as a primary figure in the historical narrative, Prynne's contentions that Laud was the chief instigator and adversary of Parliamentary practice would fall short.

Prynne moves on from this focused review of Henrietta Maria to return to his theme of Catholic aggressors and the presence of the Catholic Church in Anglican affairs. In addressing the so-called Popish plot, Prynne targets Laud directly. First, he suggests the common place secret history notion that the truth of the matter stares the reader directly in his face. Indeed, Prynne observes that:

[T]he reality of this Conspiracy, (as ancient as the beginning of *Queene Elizabeths* Reigne) is so experimentally visible to all men, especially in these present times; so fully ratified by all *Acts, Proclamations, Petitions* in Parliament against *Iesuits, Seminary Priests & Popish Recusants*, from the first of *Queen Elizabeth* till this instant; so abundantly manifested by our *Histories, Writers* of all sorts.³¹¹

Again, there is a common adoption here by Prynne of those techniques and operative phrases that commonly appear in a secret history. There is a clear utilization, from the outset, of an effort by Prynne to resolve the gap in historical facts—to bridge the common historical practice that "made it clear that they [historians] were deliberately omitting certain material from their works."³¹² Certainly, in the spirit of Brownley, Prynne has constructed a narrative that relies on the secret history's central assumption: that there are recognizable gaps in dominant chronicles and those gaps can easily be resolved by comparing those accounts against trustworthy documents such as statutes and Parliamentary reports.

³¹⁰ Griffey, "Devotional Jewellery in Portraits of Henrietta Maria," 179-181.

³¹¹ Prynne, *Hidden workes*, 1.

³¹² Martine W. Brownley, "Seventeenth-Century Historiography" in *The Secret History in Literature*, 36.

Prynne's most direct assault against Laud in the *Hidden workes*, however, comes in his representation of Laud's formal nomination and elevation as Archbishop, which Prynne suggests was carefully timed with Walter Mountagu—a close friend of Buckingham and, at one point time, a contemporary and confidant of Laud. Here, conspiracy, connection, and Catholicism again dominate the narrative. Prynne employs these narrative elements to bring out the depth of concern and crisis that exists by allowing Laud to remain in power as Archbishop:

Bishop *Laud* being nominated Archbishop of Canterbury by the King, upon the death of Dr. *George Abbot*, had a serious offer made to him by one who avowed ability to performe it (and therefore doubtlesse a speciall Agent from the Pope) to be A CARDINALL, and a second serious offer of this dignity. *August 17.* as appeares by his own *Diary*. About which time Master *Walter Mountague*, under pretence of some disgust taken at Court, departed hence privately into *France*, and from thence towards *Rome*; by the way he professed himselfe a Papist, and let fall some words, that his designe was for *Rome*, to reconcile us to it upon the best and fairest termes: As soone as he entred *Italy*▪ he was most honourably entertained, presented, feasted, and brought on his way towards *Rome* in very great state and solemnity by all the Italian Princes & States neer whom he passed, and arriving at *Rome*, was there magnificently received by the Pope and his Cardinals with whom he had private conferences sundry houres together, taking place of all the English then in *Rome*, as a kind of extraordinary Ambassadour sent from hence; he was daily courted, visited, feasted with much respect by the Pope and Cardinals.³¹³

The context that Prynne imbues is central to our understanding of the role that Laud plays in Prynne's chronicles. As in the spirit of secret histories, there are direct efforts by Prynne to appeal to the sources³¹⁴—such as statutes and original, first-hand accounts from trustworthy and notable individuals—that can confirm the truth of Prynne's statements. In these events, too, Prynne makes regular allusions to the events as they “appeares [sic] by his own *Diary*.”³¹⁵ This connection forged by juxtaposition—between Laud's appointment and Montague's simultaneous

³¹³ Prynne, *Hidden workes*, 141.

³¹⁴ Prynne, again, seeks to buttress his argument with anecdotal evidence, observing that he “found among his [Laud's] papers, and have here faithfully exhibited to publike view in English as worthy to be known, as it was afterwards englished and given in evidence upon Oath at the Archbishops triall.” Prynne, *Hidden workes*, 140-141.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*; In this respect, Prynne has set-up a pantheon of texts to support his false statements and inaccuracies, using the inaccuracies he wrote in the diary to establish a foundation for subsequent inaccuracies in his other works. Thus, it may be proper to suggest that each secret history appears, in some respects, as a sequel of sorts to the former.

sojourn in Rome—reflects yet again a connection that has little basis in historical reality. While Prynne may have sought to propose that the two had ascended and aimed to consolidate Catholic power as expeditiously as possible in some sort of quasi-union, historical reality suggests otherwise. In fact, Montagu was allied more with Henrietta Maria, and her openly Catholic associates regularly clashed with Laud on matters of religious polity by the time of Laud’s ascendancy to Canterbury. As Caroline Hibbard has observed, the real and sole culprit of the Popish plot was Montagu: Laud’s interrogation by the Commons in 1639 convinced the government that “there was enough in it to discover great machinations against religion.”³¹⁶ Hibbard observes that Laud was conspicuously absent from any mention or discussion in connection with Montagu’s Romanist overtures. Further, she found that Laud was largely sidelined before the plot could get off the ground because of deteriorating relations with Scotland. In fact, Hibbard suggests, George Conn—a popular Papal emissary and Scottish minister—had taken Laud’s place: he had “been supplanted by Con [sic] by the end of 1637 as the most important religious influence at the court of Charles I.”³¹⁷ In other words, the notion that Laud could have wielded an intricate Romanist plot with conspirators—or that he had knowledge or assented to Montagu’s efforts—simply lacks substantial plausibility in the context of the Stuart Court. Laud, for all of the charges of Puritans, had less authority and power in the Caroline regime than some of those who were closely aligned with Catholic practice and were themselves active practitioners of the faith.

Prynne’s other major charge, aside from the broad contention that Laud is responsible for allowing the expansion and advancement of Romanist influence to take hold, is that Laud actively sought to protect those who were complicit in attempted associations with the Roman

³¹⁶ Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017): 137.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

Catholic Church. Specifically, Prynne advances the false and spurious narrative that, in one instance, the Duke of Buckingham was spared royal reprimand because of his association with the errant Laud. Buckingham is presented in *Hidden workes* as afflicted with a simple case of nepotism because of his association and status as a favorite of Laud. First, he encouraged Charles to draft a letter to the Pope, then encouraged a return to the Romanist faith, and lastly—when called before Parliament to face charges—had them dropped because of Laud’s association and authority:

That the Duke having severall times in the presence of the Earle of *Bristoll*, moved his late Majesty at the instance of the *Conde Gondomar*, to write a Letter to the Pope.

That the Pope being informed of the Duke of *Buckinham* his inclination and intention in point of Religion, sent unto the said Duke a particular Bull in Parchment for to perswade and encourage him in the pervertion of his Majesty then Prince, &c.

All these Articles with six others of like nature, the *Earle of Bristoll* preferred to make good against the Duke by Letters and Witnesses; but the Duke by his overswaying potency and instruments (whereof *Bishop Laud* was chiefe) dissolved the Parliament before any answer given to them.³¹⁸

Here, Prynne again takes an episode in which Laud is absent from the historical record and seems to have had no actual association with the proceedings whatsoever. Instead, he uses the scant associations of this episode with Romanist beliefs as a bridge to connect Laud to the affair. The actual articles, which were widely circulated in state papers and later printed collections in the mid-1700s, have no reference to Laud nor do they mention any attempt by the Archbishop to dissolve Parliament. In fact, it seems that the proceedings were not wholly dissolved but continued in some respect without any formal prosecution or resolution.³¹⁹ Thus, we have yet another attempt by Prynne to insert Laud into politically inconvenient and

³¹⁸ Prynne, *Hidden workes*, 31-32.

³¹⁹ *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: 1618-29*, Vol. I (London: D. Browne, 1721): 248-302.

compromising situations. There is a measure to which this is, again, to be expected in the secret history context: as Burke has suggested, central to political secret histories is their ability to adopt a distinct allegorical structure. Laud is offered as the equivalency of a great Anglican actor, working to develop the ill-fated actions which have inhibited Puritan objectives.

III. *Canterburies doome* (1646)

The last of Prynne's major works against Laud, *Canterburies doome*, in many respects constitutes the apex of Prynne's texts and sees his charges of Romanism and Popish endorsement by Laud at their most complete. By 1646, with Royalists and Presbyterians largely in a sort of interbellum amidst the Civil War, Prynne was able to compose his text and reflect on the execution of Laud which had taken place on January 10, 1645. In *Canterburies doome*, Prynne memorializes and affirms the story of the trial in the absence of any clear, distinct official transcript of the proceedings. Instead, *Canterburies doome* addresses and explicates, in a fairly direct manner, the charges laid against Laud, the evidence in support, and a severely excised and annotated supplement of the remarks that Laud's offered in his defence. In structure, here, Prynne is also careful to place Laud's edited defence at the conclusion, as an afterthought to the clearly proven charges and assertions against his character which form the majority of the text.

The principal charge against Laud was high treason and acts which tend to the subversion of religion. As Prynne asserts, the charges against Laud were separated into four distinct "Articles of his Impeachment":

1. His Trayterous endeavours and practises to alter and subvert Gods true Reli|gion by Law established in this Realme, and instead thereof, to set up Popish Superstition and Idolatry, and reconcile us to the Church of Rome, the particulars whereof are specified in the 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. Originall, and 6. 7. 8. 9. Additionall Articles.
2. His Trayterous usurpation of a Papall and Tyranicall power in the Church of *England*, in all Ecclesiasticall affaires, in prejudice, and derogation of his Majesties Royall Prerogative and the Subjects liberties: comprised in the sixt originall Ar|ticle.

3. His Trayterous attempts and endeavours to subvert the fundamentall temporall Lawes, Government and Liberties of the Realme and Subjects of *England*, and instead thereof to introduce an Arbitrary and Tyranicall Government against the Law and Subjects liberties; expressed in the 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 13: Originall, and 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 10. Additionall Articles.
4. His Trayterous endeavours to subvert the rights of Parliament, and auncient Course of Parliamentary proceedings, and by false and malicious slanders to incense his Majesty against Parliaments; contained in the 14. Originall, and 1. 9. 10. Additionall Articles.³²⁰

These charges—by their nature—already contain the same incendiary language that characterized Prynne’s earlier works and reflect a similar sense of his adoption of language which is both political and religious in character. There is an air in the charges of Prynne acting as a Puritan lawyer of sorts—and his averments brought against Laud reflect the contentious state of Puritan hostilities by the dawn of the trial. Prynne focuses in particular in *Canterburies doome* on evidence in the form of letters, written testimony, and the Laudian regulations promulgated to churches and ministers, some fabricated, some left in their original form. While a full examination of the Laud’s letters appended to *Canterburies doome* is beyond the breadth of this discussion, Prynne’s real focus on rewriting and actually misstating the truth is in the context of the trial itself and in his annotations to the text of Laud’s defence to the charges brought against him. What the inclusion of the letters do reveal, however, is an embrace of the trope of ‘secret histories’ offering insight into the personal lives of their subjects. The printing and publication of Laud’s correspondence not only acts to proffer support to Prynne’s charges, but also operates to confirm that Prynne has knowledge that is beyond the pale of public sources.

Prynne’s account of the trial defends the trial’s verdict against contemporary and anticipated critics, focusing especially on the fact that Laud’s rights at common law were maintained in some form. Prynne recounts the role he played at the trial, which was functionally

³²⁰ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 57.

one of an inquisitor. In the process of laying the charges before Laud, Prynne argued and suggested that Laud had crafted a “pernicious Plot” to:

suppress Preaching, Lectures and Lecturers, was drawn up by himselfe under his own hand soon after the Parliaments dissolution in *tertio Caroli*,³²¹ and presented by him to the *King*, under this spe|cious title which he gave it. *Considerations for the better settling of the Church-Government*: The Originall draught whereof, written with his own hand and found in his study by Mr *Prynne*, was produced and read in forme following.³²²

As with most of the evidence that Prynne makes passing reference to, there is no record or account of the text. Instead, as Prynne himself admits, the “Originall draught” was read orally into the record and “found in his study by Mr *Prynne*.”³²³ That the record is almost non-existent and that Prynne likely fabricated any such document, did it exist at all, is well-attested to by the historical record. As P.J. Klemp argues, Prynne would have been well-positioned to speak extemporaneously on the subject and likely “recite from memory” what Laud’s plan contained, as there was a rich “Puritan tradition of inspired, extempore religious speaking” that differed markedly from the Anglican practice of “preach[ing] and pray[ing] from a scripted text.”³²⁴ In this particular context, too, Prynne is cautious to illustrate that, in one of the charges against him, Laud supposedly penned texts. Those texts, according to Prynne, concerned directly matters which would result in considerable rancor amongst Puritan leaders such as:

9. That *Emanuel* and *Sydny* Colledge in *Cambridge*, which are the Nurseries of Puritanisme; may from time to time be provided of grave and orthodox men for their governours.

12. That his Majestie would be graciously pleased once in halfe a yeare to call for an Account of all, or so many of these as hee in wisdome shall thinke fitt.

1. The generall Feoffees for Benefices and preferment.

³²¹ From the Latin for “in the third year of Charles’ reign.”

³²² Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 368.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ P.J. Klemp, “Civil War Politics and the Texts of Archbishop William Laud’s Execution Sermon and Prayers,” *English Literary Renaissance* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 310.

2. A new authorizing of the Injunction.³²⁵

The distinct purpose and utility of the charges, again, revolve around what would have been construed as definite and purposeful attacks against the Puritan establishment and Puritan interests. The first objective, labeled as “9” above, would have acted to restrict the ability of Puritans to gather and propound their thought and principles in academic settings whereas the second would seek to curb any gains that Puritans had made in combatting the system of ecclesiastic impropriations that was frequently objected to.³²⁶ In short, Prynne utilizes falsehoods—couched in the veil of truth afforded by an unforeseen “document” that is in Laud’s hand—to ensure and reinforce his own contentions about Laud’s treachery against the nation. Purposeful appeals to truth and sources are, as Burke and Bullard and Carnell agree, quintessential aspects of secret histories.

Prynne’s extensive editing of Laud’s original written defence merits special attention, particularly those passages that concern the reconciliation of the church. Prynne is careful to, in essence, have Laud admit directly his implicit involvement in an attempted reformation. Indeed, in one passage supposedly made at oral argument by Laud, he asserts:

To this I answer in generall; First, that if the designe charged against me, were onely to reconcile the Church of *England* and *Rome* together in a just and Christian way, so farre as it might stand with truth and piety, I hope no Christian can blame, but rather commend me for such an enterprize; Such a reconciliation between both Churches as this, I confesse I have long desired, endeavoured, and published as much to the world in my *Reply to Fisher*, p. 388. in these words; *I have with a faithfull and single heart, laboured the meeting, the blessed meeting of TRUTH AND PEACE in Christs Church, which God I hope will in due time effect.* But other reconciliation then this to the prejudice of truth and piety, I never attempted, as my Epistle to that Book will manifest.³²⁷

³²⁵ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 369.

³²⁶ For a full discussion of the impropriations controversy in the context of the preceding *Breviate*, see pages 68-70, *supra*. See also: Lucy M. Kaufman, “Ecclesiastical Improvements, Lay Impropriations, and the Building of a Post-Reformation Church of England, 1560-1600,” *The Historical Journal* 58, no. 1 (March 2015): 1-23.

³²⁷ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 556.

In this passage, Prynne draws out two central theories that together constitute the crux of Puritan opposition: first, he highlights and makes clear to the reader that Laud was in fact a willing participant in the process of an attempted union between the English Church and Rome, thereby proving his guilt. Second, he characterizes Laud's representations as one of innocence and common sense. How could any man blame a Christian act grounded in "*the blessed meeting of TRUTH AND PEACE in Christs Church?*"³²⁸ That is insufficient, of course, for any Puritan seeking conviction. In retort, Prynne observes, there can be no reasoned Christian explanation for Laud's actions. Despite his explanations, Laud was—ultimately—convicted by the Commons and branded "the *Archest Traytor*, the cunningest *Underminer Subverter* of of [sic] our established Religion, the *greatest Advancer* of *Popery*, and most *sedulous Agent* to reduce us back to *Rome*, of any Archbishop or pretender to the *Protestant Religion*, that our *English Soile* or *the Christian world* have ever bred; concluding in the Poets words, *Dij talem terris avertite Pestem.*"^{329,330}

Thus, in a sense, Prynne here emulates the secret history as an addition to the narrative, what Isaac D'Israeli, a Georgian critic and man of letters, termed the "supplement of History itself, and its great corrector."³³¹ Cowan—recognizing D'Israeli's comment—notes a key characteristic of the secret history is its ability to correct and amend the historical narrative to suit the particular perspective of the author. Prynne's comments—therefore—when viewed in the context of a secret history, tend to push back against Anglican narratives which would have cast Laud as a martyr for a Christian cause. Permitted to stand alone, Laud's defence may even seem

³²⁸ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 556.

³²⁹ Prynne, here, quotes Virgil in a sort of macabre foreshadowing of Laud's execution: "Snatch him, ye Gods, from mortal eyes!" Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.101.620 (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1866).

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 565.

³³¹ Isaac D'Israeli, "True Sources of Secret History" in *A Second Series of Curiosities of Literature*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murraby, 1824), 3:209–37.

meritorious or at least understandable. However, when accompanied by the prose and response of Prynne, Laud's arguments falter against a strong narrative that tends to suggest some subversive intent against the Anglican Church. Prynne's commentaries are not mere falsehoods, but deliberately aimed at reaching and appealing to an audience—in this case radical Puritans—who were looking for a historical narrative that aligned with their worldviews and positions and removed any impediments to that understanding.

In this same passage, Prynne's transcript of Laud's statements also affords precisely the stability needed to convict by giving "substance to those charges of corruption and fears of arbitrary government that came to dominate" political discourse.³³² Prynne's aims are realized by stating Laud's defence, with emendations, and then roundly contesting each element of Laud's discourse. In the text and form of *Canterburies doome*, Laud is at a great disadvantage. As the great, inveterate leader of Anglican government, he can hardly muster a defense when the evidence against him numbers in the hundreds of pages and countless thousands of cited and uncited documents, while his own response constitutes less than an eighth of the volume. Prynne is careful, too, to place Laud's defence to the charges at the end of the text after his copious documents and evidentiary contentions have been introduced, examined, attested to, and submitted to the jury of the public for their consideration.

Canterburies doome also contains a significant area of correction around the text that addresses the direct actions within the Anglican Church environment that would have been considered subversive within the Puritan establishment. In particular, Prynne includes a lengthy tract of several dozen pages detailing the ornamentalism and ritualism of Laudianism, criticizing it as antithetical to a defined and separate English Church because of its preservation of Catholic

³³² Banet, "'Secret History': or, Talebearing Inside and Outside the Secretorie," 378.

traditions. Laud, broadly, is described by Prynne as engaging in ritualism, similar to the practices of Roman Catholicism, and allowing it to fester and corrupt the purity of Anglicanism. This same passage also strikes at Puritan fears of the indoctrination of the youth in the context of England's universities though, as with most of the charges, their extant and character is grossly misrepresented:

First, by his endeavours to set up and introduce all kind of Popish superstitious Idolatrous ornaments, furniture, ceremonies in our church formerly cast out of it upon the reformation: In pursuit whereof, they first trailed this *Romish Fox* to his own Kennel at *Lambeth*, where having unkenneled, they chased him from thence by his hot Popish sent, to the Kings own royall Chapel at *Whitehal & Westminster Abby*, from thence to the Vniversities of *Oxford* and *Cambridge*; from thence to *Canterbury, Winchester*, and most other Cathedralls in England; and from them to our Parish Churches and Chapels, all which he miserably defiled, corrupted with Popish superstitious Crucifixes, Altars, Bowings, Ceremonies, Tapers, Copes, and other Innovations.³³³

The reality was far different. Laudianism's historical roots and practices had always existed in some form or another in Anglicanism, if not by virtue of the very fact that the Anglican Church had its genesis in Catholicism itself. As Anthony Milton has suggested, it is impossible to understand or depict Laudianism as any more radical than the Puritanism that accompanied it: rather, the Anglicanism that preceded the Revolution was largely corrupted by warring factionalism. There was, contends Milton, an "evangelical consensus...[between] a shared Calvinism, [which] constituted a "common and ameliorating bond" between episcopalian and Puritan clergy."³³⁴ Moreover, Milton posits, the real "coup de théâtre was that it was none of the English suspects at all—it was the Scots" who contributed to a real division among the religious factions. Charles and Katherine George, in their monumental *Protestant Mind of English Reformation, 1570-1640*, identify the Anglican Church before the Civil War as walking

³³³ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 59-60.

³³⁴ Anthony Milton, "Arminians, Laudians, Anglicans, and Revisionist: Back to Which Drawing Board?," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 726.

the *via media* between a Protestantism which understood the importance of embracing a “surprising breadth and liberality in its willingness to recognize the complete validity of other Protestant churches in other nations.”³³⁵ The Georges recognize that, above all, there was a current of unity in the Anglicanism which preceded the Civil War, one which recognizes that the tradition provides “in the very nature of its logic a greater scope for the development and the acceptance of ceremonial, institutional, and even doctrinal variations than did Roman Catholicism.”³³⁶ Prynne’s attempts, then, to convey the sense of the religious practice in Anglicanism as inherently a “low church” versus “high church” source of tension seem misplaced. Prynne’s representations of Laud’s so-called subversions follow a similar approach to that examined *supra*: throughout *Canterburies doome*, they all contend with similar issues of quasi-Catholic Church practice and ritualism. In reality, many of the charges of Laudianism’s influence among collegiate society are manifestly false: Milton, in a survey of orthodoxy Stuart England, finds little support in the historical account. Instead, the reality of censorship and education requires a flat rejection of a “view [of] censorship as the control exerted by a monolithic government over ‘oppositionist’ writers.”³³⁷

Importantly, however, is the concerted effort by Prynne in *Canterburies doome* to construct a narrative of total polarization that offers little sympathy for Laud’s position. In this respect, *Canterburies doome* becomes Prynne’s most incisive commentary on the state of Anglicanism. His concluding evidence against Laud focuses on an analysis of the flaws of Laudianism coupled with the vicious personal attacks that have defined previous texts. However,

³³⁵ Charles H. George and Katherine George, *Protestant Mind of English Reformation, 1570-1640*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961): 377.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 380.

³³⁷ Anthony Milton, “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England,” *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (Sep. 1998): 627-628.

where *Canterburies doome* diverges in its final moments is with its attacks on the veracity and truth of Laud's defence, Prynne casts himself as the one responsible for the preservation of evidence and the revelation of the truth. Prynne is therefore committed to the advancement of a definite political and revisionist agenda here, seeking to secure his place in determining the resolution of the trial:

His [Laud's] own cōviction therfore of its reality should have enduced him, if not to prosecute, yet at leastwise to have revealed itto the Parliament, that they might have fifted it to the Bran, which he never did; Master *Prynnes* seizing it in his Chamber, to his great grieffe, being the onely meanes to bring it unto light: His argument, that it makes most of any thing for the justification of his sincerity to our Religion, and opposition to Popery, aggravates, not extenuates his offence in concealing it.³³⁸

This passage is a plain indication of Prynne's adoption of another similar rhetorical fascination with the secret history technique focused on romance. As Burke suggests, there is a distinct attempt to navigate the path between "history and fiction" and, in Prynne's case, to serve as a *romancier* focused on a narrative "not only set in the past but offered interpretations of historical events."³³⁹ Thus, manifest in *Canterburies doome* is an effort by Prynne to realize his own romantic vision of the Puritan cause. By positioning himself in the aforesaid passage as the savior and preservationist of the evidence which ultimately convicted Laud, Prynne serves to make himself an indispensable historical actor. This effort by Prynne to romanticize the historical narrative is juxtaposed against a clear repudiation of any defence that may have been mustered by Laud to the charges at trial: there is no room for him to assert "his sincerity to our Religion"³⁴⁰ when he is the very definition of detestable and damned, the antithesis of the faith and the chief corrupter of Anglican idealism cast in the Puritan tradition. *Canterburies doome* is in that respect a romantic secret history, committed principally to presenting a view of Prynne as

³³⁸ Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, 564.

³³⁹ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 28.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

a great savior of the historical record (when, in reality, they were confiscated upon his imprisonment in the Tower).³⁴¹ Separately, *Canterburies doome* concerns itself with solidifying the place of Laud as the chief antagonist and contributor to the just cause of the Puritan uprising in the English Civil War.³⁴²

Prynne's three tracts—the *Breviate*, *Hidden workes*, and *Canterburies doome*—all speak to similar qualities that all contribute to their sense as secret histories. Each work adopts a different approach, but all embrace the political and religious identities of the idea, aiming to, as Cowan elucidates, unmask “the disguises adopted by political actors—[and] not only the deceitful actions of those in government but also the ruses adopted by those seeking to undermine an established regime.”³⁴³ In preparing, in essence, a chronicle of Laud's life, traitorous acts, and final days—in the context of the English Civil War and widespread unrest—Prynne acted at an opportune moment, defining and consolidating the historical narrative and elevating those parts of acute concern to him to demonstrate and protect his own agenda.

Interestingly, Prynne's invectives against Laud may have had another purpose and motivation, especially his *Canterburies doome* that came on the heels of the execution and its reception at the onset of the Interregnum. They may have been designed to convince the discontented bureaucracy which remained fragmented and free from the direct authority and oversight of the Puritan factions, of the worth of the reformers' cause. In his assessment of the Puritan culture at the start of Cromwellian rule, Christopher Durston argues that although “victory in the Civil War had given English puritans control over the most important organs of central government, it had not delivered them a corresponding dominance over the various local

³⁴¹ See Wharton's discussion of this altercation, *supra*, at 75-76.

³⁴² The consequences and contribution of secret histories to the Civil War is examined, in part in Chapter V, *infra* at 106 to 108.

³⁴³ Cowan, “The History of Secret Histories,” 123.

jurisdictions of the English provinces.”³⁴⁴ Prynne, in presenting why Laud the prelate was a corrupt and detestable figure, may have sought, too, to convince those commoners and the faithful of the provinces of the value of his position and, thus, affirm the intentions of the Puritan reformers. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Prynne’s texts as catalysts for the development and expansion of Puritan-centralized dominance is an interesting touchpoint of their operation. We nevertheless face the methodological challenge, in assessing Prynne’s impact, of attempting to ascribe intention and purpose to the text.

What is more certain is that Prynne’s reliance in his secret histories on turning to certain types of sources, particularly his allusion to first-hand accounts and the formation of complex connections and relationships, relies on several commonplace assumptions and preferences that would have been desired by his Puritan audience. Puritanism in England, as a body of religious practice, emphasized that a “lack of learning was a grave fault, but far graver was contempt for human reason.”³⁴⁵ Reason—as a prerequisite to any strong Puritan argument—could not be discarded or forgotten, even in the fiery invectives that Prynne placed against Laud in his writings. In this sense, attributions to sources contributed to affirm this sense and value of reason. Even so, the Puritan methodology had its own evident flaws. As Henson argues, the driving point of unity for the Puritan cause (and, for that matter, throughout Prynne’s three secret histories) is the ever-present specter of Roman Catholicism. That “attitude of immitigable hatred against the Roman Church could not be maintained when the excitements of conflict had ceased,” argues Henson, indicating that inherent in Prynne’s tracts is the notion of conflict.³⁴⁶ Without it, the façade of concern toward Catholicism’s presence unravels and the Puritan

³⁴⁴ Christopher Durston, “The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700” in *The Culture of English Protestantism, 1560-1700*: 220.

³⁴⁵ Henson, *Puritanism in England*, 100.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

argument cannot long be sustained. In this sense, then, the value of sourcing becomes even more central to Prynne's arguments and to their lasting impressions on the Laudian narrative. In posterity, the secret histories maintain that sense of conflict and dissent which is essential to the continuation of the Puritan narrative of Roman Catholic aggression and infiltration, but are not as pronounced in Restoration narratives primarily because they posed a direct threat to the stability of the Restored government.

It might be proper, then, to identify a definite self-interest in the secret histories considered here, both in terms of preservation and posterity. The tracts of Prynne find themselves uniquely concerned with the promotion of a Puritan historical narrative, but also replete with commentary on the issues of concern to a now Puritan and unsettled Church leadership. Prynne's deliberate adoption of certain rhetorical techniques concomitant with secret histories and his frequent misrepresentation of historical truth leave for contemplation a critical historical question upon which we will conclude this study in the next chapter: how the secret history foments and illuminates popular conceptions and understandings of historical actors among contemporaries and, later, among historians themselves. The impact of this occurrence carries considerable weight for how history is understood and related. Critically, these questions also raise the implication of truth and provide that Prynne's tracts—for better or worse—continue to obfuscate and confuse the historical narrative even as we understand it today.

*Chapter V. Prynne's Impact and the Case for Historical Revisionism:
Understanding the Legacy of His Secret Histories*

Assessing the impact on the narrative of Laud of Prynne's three secret histories is a difficult methodological exercise. There is not a ready source of impressions to turn to, but there are fragments of reflections—certainly in early histories that came after the Restoration—that convey a sense of Prynne's reception and also his place in the Puritan hierarchy of the 1640s. The reception of Prynne's works is central to our understanding of the influence of his secret histories and, specifically, illuminate the extent to which Prynne may have influenced views of Laud both among his contemporaries and among historians. Central to our conception of this development is a sense of what Prynne meant (and how he was received) by the Restoration historians and commentators which would attempt to explain and understand the English Civil War. These Restoration historians had what might be termed two principal objectives: to understand the Puritan influence and Puritan place in the Civil War, and to ensure the continued stability of the restored monarchy against its opponents. Even so, an overarching concern is also an attempt by Restoration historians and commentators to bridge divides with their Puritan counterparts and find a way to mend religious difference in the unstable world of a restored monarchy. Into this world is the unsteady reception of Prynne, who is at once promoted by some Restoration historians and neglected by others in their construction of the narrative on Laud.

As R.C. Richardson has observed, there is little debate of the divisive role that the Puritans had in fomenting the Civil War. Richardson contends that "the Puritan clergy...had much to answer for; it was they, above all, who had raised the political temperature to such a height in the 1640s, rousing men's passions and goading them into action by their inflammatory

preaching.”³⁴⁷ Haller, too, has observed that the Puritans emphasized that “the ancient Christian images of spiritual struggle were the thing wherewith to catch the conscience of the common man.”³⁴⁸ By capitalizing on their connection and appeal to the commoners, Puritans saw an increasing share of political power, particularly amidst a fractured Anglican clergy that came into existence in the wake of Laud’s imprisonment. However, even this burgeoning influence and increasing Puritan dominance, F.D. Dow has suggested, did not mean that Puritans “even with the common law behind them, find it easy to justify a civil war.”³⁴⁹ Rather, the development of the radical Puritan agenda which was accepted by English society might be properly credited to polemicists such as Prynne.

In this respect, Prynne’s secret histories achieve their primary objective within the historical moment: an appeal to the popular masses that can help to stir discontent and stoke fears of the suppression of Puritan belief and, perhaps, foment later revolution. The strength of Puritan pamphleteers, argues Haller, was not “in a purer or loftier ideal of liberty nor in a greater power of lucid and coherent thought in their command of the art of suggestive, provocative, poetic speech, whether in rhapsodic diatribe or in racy journalistic description and narration.” Rather, it was in a simple and direct communication that could be received by a wide and accepting audience. Prynne’s command of this rhetoric of provocative commentary, embodied in his tracts, appear to have had a popular reception among the Puritans, particularly in their embrace of his theories in the executions and unrest that would follow. As his arguments were not difficult to comprehend or internalize, Haller posits, they were well-received and, in many respects, the realities he argued for—such as the return of local power to the churches—were eventually borne

³⁴⁷ R.C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977): 31.

³⁴⁸ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 33.

³⁴⁹ F.D. Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution, 1640-1660*, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985): 15.

out. Haller argues that Prynne's "immediately ensuing tracts [such as those against Laud] foreshadowed the subsequent development of the Puritan attack" and the alternative he offered was "Presbyterianism, the transfer of ecclesiastical authority from the prelates to the preachers and their supporters."³⁵⁰

While we lack many contemporary accounts, we do have a reaction toward the text shortly after its publication and dissemination. Trevor-Roper observes that after the publication of the *Breviate*, Puritans "throughout the country explored with relish the dark secrets of their old enemy."³⁵¹ Among those Puritans, Ralph Josselin, a Puritan Vicar of Olney and a contemporary of Prynne's, observed in his diary that "In a Breviate of Archbishop Laud's life...I find how the strings of his leg break without any stepping awry. Lord, how many sad and wrenches have I had in my walking, and yet Thou hast preserved me."³⁵² Here—in this reaction—the scope of the damage to Laud's reputation in the Puritan imagination becomes clear. Josselin seems shocked that he has not suffered from the same errors of judgment that Laud did and expresses his gratitude to the divine for his preservation. In the mind of a contemporary, then, Prynne has caused a view of Laud as unfortunate and not successful in his role as Archbishop for at least one Puritan thinker. Importantly, too, is that Josselin's remark speaks to another notion: how we conceptualize and understand the internalizations of the actions that would follow. Puritans could place their concerns in a supposed fear about Laud's tenure as Archbishop, but they would need to accept the truth of the charges Prynne outlines in order to justify his execution. Critical, too, is

³⁵⁰ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 221. Interestingly, Haller adds, this may not have been Prynne's sole motivation, for he also desired "the transfer of ultimate control in the church from the crown and court to the hands of the respectable moneyed Puritans represented by Parliament."

³⁵¹ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 426.

³⁵² *The Diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616-83*, E. Hockliffe, ed., (London: Camden Society, 1908): 18.

how men like Josselin would perceive and understand this historical moment in the Restoration period that would follow.

Prynne's tracts on Laud and the degree of the charges which he levies against him speak directly to those contemporary concerns surrounding Puritan fears of suppression. These fears were real, writes Peter Lake, for within episodes such as Prynne's condemnation of Laud, there could be seen "the danger of hidden, unacknowledged sins, the dreadful consequences of a false and hypocritical profession of religion, the awesome providential punishment handed out by God to sinners," and—Lake suggests—the opportunity for "the merciful saving power of his free grace."³⁵³ Here, then, was the great source of appeal for tracts such as Prynne's: they addressed, in their allusions and accounts, the key cultural touchpoints which were front of mind for practicing Puritans at the time of the Civil War. Setting these particular concerns as a central component of the tracts also speaks to the extent to which contempt toward Laud had become engrained in the minds of many Puritans, prompting them to eventually sympathize with many of the positions that Prynne elicited. Dwight Brautigam has asserted that Laud's powerful position in the state resulted in the alienation of "more and more of the godly from the state itself, with reciprocating vitriolic language aimed, in turn, at church, state, and monarch."³⁵⁴

In that same spirit of contempt and fear for Laud, Brautigam makes clear that the actual outcome and reality of reception and reaction in this moment depends on something of a fiction. Prynne, he asserts, "did not accept Puritanism as a badge of honor; he only used it when describing what his enemies were saying about those with whom he sympathized."³⁵⁵ In this

³⁵³ Peter Lake, "The Godly and their Enemies in the 1630s" in *The Culture of English Protestantism, 1560-1700*, Christopher Durson and Jacqueline Eales, eds., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996): 150.

³⁵⁴ Dwight Brautigam, "Prelates and Politics: Use of 'Puritan,' 1625-40" in *Puritanism and its Discontents*, Laura Lunger Knoppers, ed., (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 2003): 50.

³⁵⁵ Brautigam, "Prelates and Politics: Use of 'Puritan,' 1625-40," 59. For instance, *cf.* one of Prynne's charge against Laud in the *Breviate* which conveniently maligns Puritanism itself: "What a great favorite and Instrument he was to

sense, there is an opportunism in Prynne's works that seek to malign Laud even if Prynne himself does not believe wholeheartedly in the Puritan cause, or if the charges against Laud were designed to exacerbate fears about Laud's actions. Haller, too, recognizes that the Puritanism Prynne espouses in his pamphlets hardly bares resemblance to the ideal Puritan temperament. Instead, Haller suggests, "[n]o one but such a reckless bigot would have dared to print the things which Prynne uttered so copiously and defiantly."³⁵⁶ Even so, the reality that Prynne directed—while not perhaps emblematic of the conventional Puritan style—did serve the interests of many by “expressing so unmistakably the direction their thought was taking.”³⁵⁷ Prynne, then, designed and understood his writings with a distinct sense of needing to adjust and fill-in the narrative. Restoration commentaries, too, reflect a similar sense of historical revisionism in attempting to limit the extent and damage that the executions of Charles (and Laud) caused for monarchical stability. Prynne's works were certainly unlike the polemics of his contemporaries but captured—by Haller's estimation—some semblance of the thought and concerns which would soon manifest themselves above the surface and require adequate justification. Still, we are left here with a generalizing assessment of Prynne's arguments and their reception in the Puritan community. A more direct response in the context of the time, Kishlansky has observed, was related in response to Prynne's vitriolic *Histriomastix*, described by a contemporary as a “voluminous invective against all manner of interludes,” a “libel against general classes of English society.”³⁵⁸ Even with this—however—we see a similar reaction that may have been accepted in response to his later pamphlets. That reaction that Kishlansky identifies might be

the Queen and Popish faction, and how grand an Enemy, a Persecuter of the zealous Protestant partie, under the name of Puritans.” Prynne, *Breviate*, 34.

³⁵⁶ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 219-220.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

³⁵⁸ Kishlansky, “A Whipper Whipped,” 607. *See also*: Thomas Birch, *The Court and Times of Charles I* (London: Henry Colburn, 1848): 219.

characterized as a rejection or distaste for the form of Prynne's arguments but a begrudging acceptance of their veracity.

Tom Webster contends that the tracts contributed to a widespread shift in popular perceptions of ecclesiastical beliefs in Puritan thought. The sufferings of Presbyterians such as Prynne, related in his secret histories, also "helped foster godly hostility to prelacy."³⁵⁹ Webster's argument illumines another aspect of Prynne's impact on the wider discourse of religious practice—a fear among Puritans of any sort of ecclesiastical structure. Haller seems to concur with Webster's assessment and indicates that another objective of the secret histories was to imagine a fundamental reimagining of the religious hierarchy of the Anglican Church:

The preachers had adroitly confined themselves to doctrine in application to personal spiritual experience and in justification of the way of life embodied in the Puritan code. But the logic of their doctrine also demanded a complete reorganization of society, beginning with church government, and a thoroughgoing change in manners and morals. These demands Prynne uttered in no uncertain terms while reiterating his abomination of episcopacy and his detestation of individual bishops.³⁶⁰

This account demonstrates the full breadth of what Prynne's secret histories were after and, in some respects, this "reorganization of society" could only be achieved through an uprising such as the Civil War. There is a way in which Prynne's secret histories, though calling for a civil prosecution of Laud, point to a willingness or at least tacit acceptance that the eventual outcome may well be based in violence. Prynne's motivations, here, again seem to drift between a genuine encouragement of the Puritan cause and a resulting acceptance that even non-Puritanical behavior may be acceptable to achieve the political outcomes he believes were appropriate for proper governance.³⁶¹ Together, however, it seems evident that Prynne is seeking

³⁵⁹ Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620-1643*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 311.

³⁶⁰ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 221.

³⁶¹ Look no further, for instance, than Prynne's own aversion to the theater as non-Puritan and "seditious," yet his concurrent embrace and efforts to pillory Laud. Indeed, writes Stephen Woolsey, Prynne espoused an "'instinctive'

to achieve with his secret histories many discreet aims, including the destruction of Laud and the selective embrace of Puritan theology when it most readily aids his political interests.

An assessment of Prynne also necessarily relies on an acceptance of the historical revisionism³⁶² in his tracts and the objectives he attains by constructing false narratives. Separate from damaging Laud's reputation, the reconstruction of these narratives also reflects a distinct effort by Prynne to pursue historical revisionism. This revisionism, in Prynne's secret histories and in the context of Stuart histories broadly, is considered by Glenn Burgess in a review of several recent works on the subject. Burgess terms the collective works and tracts as a sort of "history of political thought," positing that this understanding is "crucial to the assessment of revisionism, because probably the most convincing doubts about the adequacy of revisionism concern its blindness to matters of political principle."³⁶³ Further, contends Burgess, these works, by demonstrating a lack of sensibility toward and concern for the political question, point instead to a singular objective, *viz.* the pursuit of providing an absolving historical narrative that assures that their particular beliefs survive in perpetuity. These writers are quasi-"whiggish" in their work, Burgess contends, in the sense that they seek to impart judgment on the past at the time and present the historical outcomes as almost inevitable. Indeed, Prynne's tracts seem to allude to the inevitable with great constancy, naming as the only solution the removal of Laud from power, an eventuality which later became reality. So, too, does Prynne embrace in his secret

or 'subliminal' revulsion against drama as a tissue of seductive lies, and against actors as lying agents of that seduction." Stephen Woolsey, "Staging a Puritan Saint" in *Puritanism and its Discontents*, Laura Lunger Knoppers, ed., (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 2003): 213.

³⁶² It is important to note that here we understand "historical revisionism" in the context of Prynne's selective rewriting of specific historical events. It has another meaning in the context of the Civil War: as a descriptor for the Whig history and Tory revisionism which centers around attempting to posit explanations for the Civil War's causes and aftermath.

³⁶³ Glenn Burgess, "Review: Revisionism, Politics and Political Ideas in Early Stuart England," *The Historical Journal* 34, no. 2 (June 1991): 465.

histories, particularly in *Canterburies doome*, a clear understanding that he is writing the historical record that will be drawn and relied upon by future historians of the period.

Among those early Enlightenment historians who address the issue of the Civil War after the Restorationists, David Hume, writing in his monumental *History of England*, writes the following about Laud's relations and his service as Archbishop:

In return for Charles's indulgence towards the church, Laud and his followers took care to magnify, on every occasion, the regal authority, and to treat with the utmost disdain or detestation [sic] all puritanical pretensions to a free and independent constitution. But while these prelates were so liberal in raising the crown at the expense of public liberty, they made no scruple of encroaching themselves on the royal rights the most incontestable; in order to exalt the hierarchy, and to procure to their own order dominion and independence.³⁶⁴

Hume is concerned, broadly, in his *History* with preventing the development of another revolution and affording some stability to the state. In a treatment of Prynne, then, Hume might view the polemicist as a threat and an instigator to revolution. In many respects, this passage seems almost descended from the arguments first established by Prynne and again alludes to a clear sense of what had become the dominant narrative about Laud by the time: that he sought to quell Puritan opposition and aimed to preserve and expand the scope of monarchical power under Charles. That Hume and his contemporaries would have been familiar with Prynne is readily apparent. Prynne's treatment in the Star Chamber is briefly addressed in the *History*.³⁶⁵ Interestingly, however, is the irony of the episode. John Seed argues that while Prynne is readily presented by Hume as deserving his punishment before the Star Chamber for his own "obstinacy," so too is Laud decimated and left to historical disgrace and ridicule.³⁶⁶ In his

³⁶⁴ David Hume, *The History of England From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, Vol. III, (New York: John B. Alden, 1885): 456.

³⁶⁵ "He was condemned to be put from the bar; to stand on the pillory in two places, Westminster and Cheapside; to lose both his ears, one in each place; to pay five thousand pounds fine to the king; and to be imprisoned during life." *Ibid.*, 462.

³⁶⁶ John Seed, "The Spectre of Puritanism: Forgetting the Seventeenth Century in David Hume's *History of England*," *Social History* 30, no. 4 (2005): 452-453.

treatment, Seed argues, Hume presents the Puritans as “socially and politically extremely dangerous,” though also acknowledges that the historical narrative represents “the heroic struggles of a Hampden or a Pym in the face of the tyranny of Laud and the king.”³⁶⁷ There is a sense in which the Restoration histories that followed Prynne appear to have adopted and accepted some aspects of his revisionist writings, though discarded the worst of the polemicism in his tracts. Though the secret histories and polemics here did not draw attention away from Prynne’s own actions and errors, they did sufficiently act to damage Laud’s reputation and continued to position him as a religious tyrant in subsequent historical narratives.

Further, there is a way in which Prynne’s secret histories—though illuminating for us in their focus on Laud—were not alone or perhaps as shocking to the conscious of Puritan (and later) sensibilities as we might imagine. William Haller, considering the scope and aftermath of Anglicanism following the Civil War, has argued that Prynne’s method “was, though extreme, the method of his age.”³⁶⁸ What he actually did for the “revolutionary cause was to heap up prodigious evidence of erudition to prove that players, bishops, the doctrine of free will, in fact all objects of Puritan abhorrence, were wicket innovations contrary to recorded precedent and authority.”³⁶⁹ Again, Prynne’s arguments against plots (such as those between the Duke of Buckingham and Laud) as set forth in his secret histories are excellent exemplars of the genre, but they are not necessarily unique in their reliance on a polemical style. John Wilson has noted that the rhetorical flourishes and grandiloquent exchange of Prynne drew from a Puritan tradition

³⁶⁷ Seed, “The Spectre of Puritanism: Forgetting the Seventeenth Century in David Hume’s History of England,” 456. John Hampden was a member of Parliament and a landowner closely aligned as a cousin of Oliver Cromwell. John Pym was also a member of Parliament. Both men were subject to an attempted arrest as among the “Five Members” Charles ordered incarcerated on January 4, 1642 that would later spark the English Civil War. See note 363, *supra*.

³⁶⁸ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 222.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Haller also notes that Prynne “ransacked libraries” when they disagreed with his case. While not in the literal sense, the implication is clear: those texts or statements which disagreed with Prynne’s cause would find themselves deliberately excluded from his narratives or otherwise clearly undermined in the text.

that embraced, for instance, the Bible's Book of Deuteronomy³⁷⁰ and its inherent legalistic formalism. Wilson argues that Puritan preachers and writers, particularly at the dawn of the Civil War, understood that it was the "duty of the prophet in ancient Israel to address the present—making use, to be sure, of the legendary Deuteronomic past."³⁷¹ If we think of Prynne's sourcing as an exercise in constructing from an ambiguous historical record a compelling argument that can persuade Puritan leaders, the formalism of citing to strong Biblical and religious texts could prove a compelling and similar effort. Importantly, though, is that Wilson casts insight into the fact that even Puritan preachers—standing as firebrands at the pulpit—recognized that their arguments could not rest on ambiguous facts alone. For their arguments to be persuasive, there had to be some reference to compelling source material. In the case of Prynne and his secret histories, that compelling material came in the form of alleged first-hand accounts, correspondence, and the miraculous discovery and publication of Laud's private diary as an expose of Laud's greatest crimes and purported high misdemeanors.

For an Enlightenment historian unpackaging this moment and attempting to find the illogic in revolution, Hume understands Laud and the Civil War as an aberration, as a distinct moment that must be explained—quickly—in order to preserve the admitted fiction of stability and continuity in English governance. The Earl of Clarendon, as we will consider below, is more concerned with distaste toward Prynne's character rather than the causes and underlying concerns of the Civil War. Thomas W. Merrill, writing on Hume's rhetoric and limited treatment

³⁷⁰ Specific reference among Puritans to Deuteronomy, especially the law code of Deuteronomy 12-26, might also reflect the importance of having clear sources and authority to reference in support of sermons. For a traditional look at the place of Deuteronomy in Puritan literature and preaching, see: Nicholas Tyacke, "The Puritan Paradigm of English Politics, 1558-1642," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 3 (September 2010): 527-550. For an equally interesting outlook on the application of Deuteronomy in a Puritan sermon of the time (which, incidentally, occurred in Hartford, Connecticut), see also: Michael Besso, "Thomas Hooker and His May 1838 Sermon," *Early American Studies* vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 194-225.

³⁷¹ John F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism During the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969): 202.

of the Civil War, acknowledges that while he avoided polemicism, he also avoided those matters which could galvanize polemicists. For example, Hume asserts that the “doctrine of resistance” must be kept from the populace in order to avoid yet another inevitable descent into chaos that accompanied an affair such as the Civil War. Even so, Merrill admits, Hume’s comments toward the Civil War are often conflicting, as he “does not want his readers to mistake a case of necessity for a rule of law, or a perhaps justified deviation from law for the law itself.”³⁷²

Enlightenment writers such as Hume were faced with a challenge: they had to balance their interests in maintaining the stability of legal theories (and emphasizing the values of the English legal system) against the realities of the underlying causes of the Civil War and their beliefs in, for instance, the preservation of property that could be justified by a reversion to violence. For instance, Hume does not address the substance of the Puritans’ beliefs themselves—or is less willing to acknowledge them—as he is with confronting the realities of the lawless world that men like Prynne had created. Hume defines the “confusions” of the Civil War following Charles’ murder as a “dissolution of all that authority, both civil and ecclesiastical, by which the nation had ever been accustomed to be governed.”³⁷³ There is, at this stage, a considered attempt by Hume to expose the realities of the executions that Prynne’s writings fomented and to provide some justification for their cause in an otherwise, by his view, largely unblemished narrative of English government.

For instance, in a survey of Restoration histories, Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille observes that there was a clear effort to turn “the regicide—a political event—into a highly theatrical

³⁷² Thomas W. Merrill, “The Rhetoric of Rebellion in Hume’s Constitutional Thought,” *The Review of Politics* 67, no. 2 (2005): 258.

³⁷³ David Hume, *The History of England From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, Vol. VI, (New York: John B. Alden, 1885): 3.

occasion.”³⁷⁴ Doing so might achieve two objectives: first, an effort to suggest a possible suspension of the state of nature at the moment of the execution as a way to excuse its occurrence and, second, an effort to avoid confronting directly the legitimacy or quasi-legitimacy of the allegations that men like Prynne brought forward against contemporaries of Charles’ rule. Interestingly, though, a similar effort to afford an explanation legalistically and politically cannot be said to exist for the execution of Laud. Simply put, the absence of direct efforts by Restoration historians to explain Laud’s execution may suggest that his reputation had been tarnished beyond repair or, at least, that the complexity of Prynne’s situation (and his own mistreatment at the hands of supposedly civil authorities entrusted with enforcement of legal equity) was too difficult a paradox to overcome. Hume’s uninterest in the execution may also speak to the straightforwardness of that moment as a failure of the English political system: an execution with a trial that is specious in many of its assertions presents a distinct challenge for a historian and philosopher who attempts to present the English system of governance as sound and preferable to other legal and political systems.

Consider, too, that Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, looks with distaste upon Prynne’s character in his magisterial *History of the Rebellion*, but cannot overcome the historical problem imposed by Laud’s own actions (which are, ironically, largely defined by Prynne). Clarendon argues that Prynne and his contemporaries had “no interest or any esteem with the worthy part of their several professions” and posits that their circumstances were “very scandalous and in language very scurrilous and impudent, which all men thought deserved very exemplary punishment.”³⁷⁵ Even so, notes Clarendon, the whole exercise of Prynne was effective

³⁷⁴ Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille, “The Tragedy of Regicide in Interregnum and Restoration Histories of the English Civil Wars,” *Etudes Episteme* 20 (2011): 9.

³⁷⁵ Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion*, W. Dunn MaCray, ed., vol. 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888): 126.

at arousing the sentiments of a segment of the nation. Clarendon asserts in an examination of seditious printing culture that while he “should not have wasted this much time and paper in a discourse of this nature, but that it is and was then evident, that this insurrection (for it was no better) and phrensy of the people was in effect of great industry and policy, to try and publish the tempter of the people.”³⁷⁶ There was, then, a clear statement made: though Prynne’s actions may be detestable and his character may be ripe to impugn, there is no doubt of his impact and successful deployment of sedition as a means of achieving his ends. Clarendon, then, departs from Restoration men like Hume, above, and Bolingbroke, below, in his acknowledgement that we must historicize Prynne’s motivations by considering his reception as a provocateur with an intimate knowledge of publishing culture within the time.

Clarendon’s description and treatment of Laud, meanwhile, would seem to rely again on the Prynne narrative. There is little evidence that he took at face value everything Prynne may have had to say in his narrative,³⁷⁷ though he does readily admit what is a basic premise of any post-Prynne driven account of Laud, that the Archbishop had by the end of the 1630s “exceedingly provoked or underwent the envy and reproach and malice of men of all qualities and conditions, who agreed in nothing else: all which, though well enough known to him, were not enough considered by him.”³⁷⁸ The assumption here—that “men of all qualities and conditions” even outside of the Puritan elite—had accepted this narrative reflects the scope of seditious works. Clarendon, while attempting some degree of favoritism or redemption toward

³⁷⁶ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, vol. 3, 270.

³⁷⁷ For instance, consider that Clarendon describes Laud’s origins as having been “born of honest parents, who were well able to provide for his education in the schools of learning.” *Ibid.*, 120, *cf.* Prynne’s interpretation of Laud’s upbringing examined, *supra*, at 77, of being born “of poore and obscure Patents [sic], in a Cottage.” Prynne, *Breviate*, 2.

³⁷⁸ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, vol. 1, 136.

Laud,³⁷⁹ still acknowledges that he made significant errors, specifically in his faith and outlook on governance itself. In this respect, then, Clarendon can still not free himself from the Prynne-inspired Laudian narrative of a government overreach in matters religious even as he attempts to discern legal justifications for the execution (grounded in notions of the temporary suspension of law) and understand its original causes. For Clarendon, Prynne is a man of ill-repute, but a man who had an influence, both acknowledged and unacknowledged, in defining our understanding of Laud and his failures.

Michael Finlayson also understands Clarendon as attempting to walk two lines, but interestingly finds himself allied in some respects with Prynne's own arguments. Trevor-Roper identifies Clarendon as affording an "insistence on rational religion and on ultimate lay control" in his *History*,³⁸⁰ agreeing to some extent with the positions that Prynne ultimately alleged against Laud and Charles. Even so, Finlayson sees in Clarendon an increasing point of contention in how we understand Restoration receptions and interpretations of the polemicists. Historians "sing the praises of Clarendon's *History*, often, however, only insofar as it exhibits characteristics near and dear to the values of the historians themselves."³⁸¹ The trouble with assessing someone like Clarendon, then, is that an interpretation of his work and the lens in which he is often understood is as a historian whose narratives (though unsupported with independent sourcing) are that he has the accepted account. Thus, when Clarendon adopts Prynne's account of some of Laud's actions or rails against the qualities of his polemical works,

³⁷⁹ "He was a man of great parts, and very exemplar virtues, allayed and discredited by some unpopular natural infirmities; the greatest of which was (besides a hasty, sharp way of expressing himself,) that he believed innocence of heart and integrity of manners was a guard strong enough to secure any man in his voyage." *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁸⁰ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975): 8, 28-29.

³⁸¹ Michael Finlayson, "Clarendon, Providence and the Historical Revolution," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 22, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 613.

there is a disconnect between the historical account and the likely reality of reception and attitudes that may have developed toward Puritans in the Restoration era.

Restoration historians and philosophers—Clarendon and Bolingbroke—as well as later Enlightenment philosophers such as Hume, while demonstrating a willingness to overlook some of these episodes for the sake of monarchical stability, also demonstrate an interest in redefining “puritanism” in the new Restoration period. Michael Winship, in a survey of Restoration thought around accepting and circulating Puritan narratives of the Civil War, notes that by 1667 “court corruption...had wilted public enthusiasm for Charles II’s reign” and with it “Clarendon was banished” and with his departure came a “new and more religiously tolerant ministry.”³⁸² This concern and frustration of early Restoration attempts to define the Puritan revolt and Puritan experience thus takes on a different dimension. In a sense, Winship argues, the efforts of Restoration historians were as much about ensuring stability of the restored monarchy as they were about mending religious divisions to prevent a future insurrection because by this time religious difference could not merely be stifled with an expectation that it would not return. Within this grain, texts such as Simon Patrick’s *A friendly debate between a conformist and a non-conformist* sought to move away from the radical hatred for conventional conformist Anglicanism that Prynne had fomented and toward an almost tacit acceptance of Puritan concerns. Patrick, an Anglican theologian and Bishop of Ely, approached the debate with an understanding that the text had to be “lively” and had to definitely lay out “lengthy excursions into the history of English puritanism” that would resolve the lingering antipathy that some in the Anglican community felt and bridge extant religious divides.³⁸³ This focus, then, may explain

³⁸² Michael P. Winship, “Defining Puritanism in Restoration England: Richard Baxter and Others Respond to *A Friendly Debate*,” *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 3 (2011): 692.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 698.

why treating Prynne in the Restoration with any degree of considerable support or attention would have only served to expose wounds that continued to fester, and open up unnecessary religious division.

On the other hand, Trevor-Roper, reflecting on Laud's treatment following the Interregnum, identifies this issue but does not go further in assessing why "historians, whose duty compelled them not to appear ignorant of his existence, passed him over with perfunctory deprecation."³⁸⁴ Thus, another of Prynne's objectives may have been achieved: making Laud historically obsolete. Indeed, Laud's surviving contemporaries and similarly aligned Anglican clerics who were restored as part of the Anglican establishment with the Restoration did not repeat Laud's forays into religious order and structure. Viscount Bolingbroke, in his *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, dismisses Laud and his entire tenure as Archbishop with a passing remark to his work on education in parish churches (a key concern of Prynne and his Puritan allies), adding that he lacked the "temper nor knowledge of the world enough to be entrusted with the government of a private college."³⁸⁵ Restoration historians seemed far less concerned with attributing to Laud any sense of success and passed over his influence as a historical actor. When he is mentioned by Restoration historians, the references often appear derisive or dismissive and have as their focus instead the injustices served to Charles I and his ignominious execution by the Puritans and attempts to explain this notion in the context of legal philosophy.

The secret histories, then, likely achieved some of their functional purposes by limiting the historical vision of Laud as a successful prelate. Still, what seems another aim of Prynne's secret histories—to present Laud as a villain and threat to the security of the religious

³⁸⁴ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 431.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. See also: Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, (London: A Millar, 1752).

orthodoxy—does not appear to have been achieved in posterity. Rather, Restoration historians look to Laud as unsuccessful in defending and assuring the continuity of Anglicanism during this limited time but appear to consider the breadth of the faith tradition itself secure, at least until the 1680s. William Lamont has observed that, for the damage the tracts caused to Laud’s reputation and their continual association as Prynne’s crowning achievements, the development of his secret histories really only occurred during a brief period of his life and as one portion of many substantive works. Lamont notes that for “this Puritan [Prynne] his ‘revolutionary’ period (in his entire life) was some four years, during which his continued desire for ‘blind obedience’ to magistracy had no focus, not even when he was writing his apologia for it in 1647.”³⁸⁶ Ironically, Lamont observes, Prynne’s real focus and beliefs are perhaps not represented well in his polemical works and invectives against Laud. While Prynne is willing in this period to take issue with Laud’s exercise of control over the religious establishment, he later returns to the value of the monarchy as the Civil War drags on. This apparent inconsistency between his invective against royal corruption and a later reversal appear to suggest that Prynne—despite his antipathy for the dramatic arts when he castigated Queen Henrietta Maria—was quite the actor in terms of his willingness to adjust positions.³⁸⁷ In other words, an assessment of his polemics suggest that they adopt forms and positions which suit the objects of his frustrations and anger in a particular moment, rather than the true breadth of his beliefs. Even so, what seems both clear and tangible is an abiding hatred for Laud that he attempts to impart to his readership.

Regarding the development of the Puritan radicals and their afterlife, Dow identifies another factor as both a motivation in Prynne’s works and a consequence of the positions they

³⁸⁶ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 62.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-59. Lamont goes so far as to assert that “until civil war broke out, Prynne was more royalist than the King.”

take. In the arc of his secret histories, it might be suggested that Prynne becomes increasingly more radical and forthright in the charges and assertions he levies as he continues to publish new tracts. This seems to mirror, for Dow, the need of Puritan dissenters like Prynne to “legitimize the Republic brought to the fore radical new theories” of both political and religious obligation.³⁸⁸ By all accounts, this sense of the *necessity* of radicalism in the Puritan narrative is an interesting one. Ethan Shagan has suggested that this needed radicalism—much like the inevitability of some violence in pursuit of the outcome—relied in part on an assessment of faith in the arguments brought forward by the radicals themselves. Shagan, too, addresses the folly of revisionism in the context of revisionist historians of the Restoration. Specifically, Shagan identifies these historians’ problematic role in accepting “their sources’ claims to moderation even while critiquing other sorts of claims these sources make.”³⁸⁹ This reflects the same assumptions which Prynne seems almost to have predicted—that by connecting even his most tenuous claims to sources with a vague sense of worth, the truth of his claims can prove sufficient to survive scrutiny. In the case of Restoration historians and Prynne’s own contemporaries, it seems that the majority, especially among the Puritan elite, accepted the claims and actively supported their distribution.

How, then, do we understand what impact the secret history has on our perceptions of Laud in Restoration England? The whole historical narrative, in some respects, is tainted by Prynne’s polemical secret histories, particularly when reference is had to Laud’s diary. A.S. Duncan-Jones, in an early history of William Laud, seems to confirm the systemic methodological issue that Prynne has created. On the question of Rome, Duncan-Jones

³⁸⁸ Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution, 1640-1660*, 9.

³⁸⁹ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 24.

characterizes the exchange at Laud's trial as follows: "He [Laud] did not attempt to deny that he had even heartily prayed for the peace and reconciliation of torn and divided Christendom, but only such a one as might stand with truth."³⁹⁰ Here, then, is Prynne's influence again at play. Laud did not, in reality, admit to any of the charges of collusion with Rome, but even Duncan-Jones is forced to admit that the existing narrative about Laud places historical weight on these supposed relations that must be acknowledged.

The illusion, then, has become reality. Regardless of the actual course of Laud's relationship with Rome, the historical revision of the chronicle has been completed. Prynne's pursuit and accomplishment in crafting narratives that—though polemical to our eyes—were believed within the contemporary times forces us to contend as well with what Haller describes as the perpetual nature of religious historical disputes: they will "never end because there is no rule by which to end them."³⁹¹ Prynne's tracts are not extensively contradicted or challenged extensively in subsequent versions of the historical Laud narrative that follow the Restoration. In Haller's mind, they are premised on a religious question that will inherently continue to divide the historians based on their particular denominational concerns.³⁹² Whether this assessment is right or not—that religious questions are detrimental (or, for Haller, render impossible) a faithful recounting of a moment may be beyond the scope of this study. Still, it raises a key parallel: among Prynne's many motivations for preparing these tracts was to render his own perspective on the religious divide between Puritanism and Anglicanism at this moment before the Civil War. So, too, was the focus of Restoration historians often both buttressing the restored monarchy and also imposing their own religious positions on the events at this particular

³⁹⁰ A.S. Duncan-Jones, *Archbishop Laud*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1927): 249-250.

³⁹¹ William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955): 235.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

historical moment. The impact of any exaggeration of that divide on how we understand the causes of the Civil War is significant and, in the case of Prynne's tracts, tends to make religion appear the primary motivation for distrust toward Charles' regime.

However, Haller also cautions us in a broad interpretation of Prynne's motivations. Just as there may be grand causes for which his secret histories were prepared, they are also marked by what Burke has described as the notion that "great events had petty causes."³⁹³ The pettiness of Laud's operations and the attempt of Laudianism to undermine the Puritan religious establishment is often presented by Prynne in his works as the result of Laud's incompetency and error, reflecting a disconnect between reality and the fictitious narrative. Ironically, it may be properly discerned that Prynne himself is the petty one in the nature of his attacks. Haller has described Prynne's tracts and their reception as

not sustained arguments equipped with the panoply of learning, but diatribes against the author's opponents. They owed something to the minatory prophets of the Old Testament. They owed something no doubt to the tradition of railing against the great as practiced by medieval preachers. But they also owed much to the peculiar joy that Englishmen of that age took in abandoning themselves full-mouthed to expressive speech.³⁹⁴

There is a contrast drawn here between Prynne's arguments which, with their reliance on particularly compelling sources, attempt to appeal to a Puritan sense of reason, and his arguments which tend to support the position that he was principally concerned with eviscerating his enemies with little regard for strong rhetorical argument. It would seem that the reality is somewhere between the two extremes. The Puritan audience at this time, even while united on issues such as clerical overreach by prelates such as Laud, is that there was a wide diversity in religious preference and thought and, consequently, likely a wide variety of accepted style and

³⁹³ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 27.

³⁹⁴ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 223.

rhetoric. As Webster has observed, the Puritans of this period were varied in their thoughts on the best substitution for the existing power structure. Some who were more Presbyterian made clear their “explicit calls for a specific form of church government,” whereas others turned to “the possibilities of a primitive episcopacy” continuing in the wake of the Civil War.³⁹⁵ The key reality is one of balance then that recognizes that Prynne’s Puritan audience would likely have had different reactions to his polemical assertions depending on where they stood on key religious issues. Certainly, those of the Presbyterian disposition (which, incidentally, is how Prynne termed himself) would have embraced the more revolutionary “possibilities that lay in the press for making trouble for government.”³⁹⁶ Regardless, that Prynne’s arguments in the secret history convinced even a minority of the Puritan regime to act and to speak strongly in favor of Laud’s execution and removal from power appears to suggest that they were widely circulated among Puritan decision-makers and may have afforded justification for the actions that followed.

Considering Burke again, however, the Puritan embrace of Prynne’s secret histories reflects Burke’s contention that the value of these texts as historical sources is that although “they might reasonably be described as frivolous...under the cover of frivolity they launched some penetrating criticism. They were usually malicious, they told some lies and they passed on a good deal of unreliable information. However, these texts also made public a number of unofficial and uncomfortable truths.”³⁹⁷ This seems an especially apt description of Prynne’s arguments here. The arguments, though evidently replete with mistruth, carry an undercurrent of the great Puritan concerns of the day. To many Puritans, Laud was the great enemy acting toward

³⁹⁵ Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*, 325.

³⁹⁶ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 223.

³⁹⁷ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 29.

their suppression and information about his motivations, his intentions, and his actions would have been of great interest.

While we can assess and realize how Prynne might have constructed his argument in the Puritan model (and the extent to which he diverges from it), we are still left with the question of assessing his impact on the Civil War itself and its subsequent development during the Interregnum. Haller seems certain that Prynne's tracts inspired and contributed to the spread and riotous sensibilities that would later constitute widespread violence. Lamont, too, has long viewed Prynne, his sufferings, and his polemics as having an appreciable impact on the outcome of the Civil War. While it may be improper to term the English Civil War "the War of Prynne's Ears," Lamont argues that the "powerful emotional focus for the discontent of the times of the sufferings of Prynne and his fellows should not be discounted," nor should the widespread readership of the invectives against Laud.³⁹⁸ Meanwhile, earlier historians such as Hume and Bolingbroke have scoffed at the influence of Prynne and Laud for that matter, viewing them as aberrant in the wide annals of English history. Instead, historians such as Hume, Bolingbroke, and to a lesser extent Clarendon seek to present the Civil War as a moment that is difficult for historical study to explain and the development of any sort of certainty around its events precisely because it does not capture the character or qualities of English democracy. In other words, to acknowledge legitimacy in Prynne's accounts or to acknowledge virtues in the Civil War is to admit of a failing in the English government, something these historians were not willing to undertake at a time that the England was presented as a paradigm of democracy.

Conversely, Richardson offers an account which frustrates our interpretation of Laud and the role that Prynne may have had in promoting his long-standing reputation as that of a religious

³⁹⁸ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 21.

tyrant and in prompting unrest. Writing on White Kennett, Bishop of Peterborough, Richardson observes that Kennett as a Restoration historian attempts to restore Laud's character: "Another popular outcry against Archbishop Laud and the bishops directed by him was innovation in matters of religion; few people being willing to distinguish between arbitrary alterations and the restoring an antecedent decency and order, which latter was undoubtedly the good archbishop's meaning."³⁹⁹ Kennett complicates our understanding because the wide variety of historical accounts in the Restoration seem to attempt to make out Laud and Prynne as minor actors in the overall Civil War and attempt to write off the event as an aberration. Such an effort to downplay their role makes sense, particularly in the context of a recently restored Charles II looking to retain power and stability. Even so, Kennett's narrative challenges the perception that Prynne's tracts were successful—in the context of history—in rewriting the narrative of Laud's misdeeds in the Restoration. While the overwhelming number of historians seem to draw attention *away* from the actions of Laud and Prynne, Kennett's concerns are isolated and not within the majority, perhaps because of his particular concern with (and background in) theology.

Haller, perhaps best, summarizes what we can surmise about the extent of Prynne's influence. The Puritan preachers of the time, he argues, were "converting their hearers not only to godliness but also to the appetite for reading godly books, which the preachers were not slow to supply to the booksellers or the booksellers to the public."⁴⁰⁰ Within this market for publication, Prynne found his audience. Indeed, by the time of the English Revolution, the "number of books circulating among the people had increased and accumulated beyond anything that had ever been known in England before, and a prodigious amount of that material came

³⁹⁹ Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution*, 42-43. Interestingly, Richardson adds, Kennett was later "accused of Whiggery in the eighteenth century" by historians despite his propensity here to save the reputation of Laud. In this respect, Richardson argues, the "conventional Whig label seem(s) inappropriate." *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 82.

from the pens and brains of the Puritan preachers.”⁴⁰¹ It should come as little surprise that Prynne’s tracts should be widely read and circulated in a society (and among a religious sect such as the Puritans) that had embraced literacy to such an extent as never before seen in England. The importance, then, of Prynne’s contributions may be less their content and more their accessibility by the general public.

In making these texts accessible to a wider audience, Prynne was able to seize on an opportunity. He had a remarkable talent, contends Haller, when he “wrote merely to rouse and please the populace” with secret histories that could be read by a population which had “not yet been diluted and enfeebled by academic education, by rationalism, or by the cultural aspirations of the middle class.”⁴⁰² Prynne’s polemical secret histories had a varied influence, but perhaps they have endured and resulted in adjustments to certain accounts because their contentions and arguments were plainly stated.⁴⁰³ Though he purported to expose great secrets and bring to the forefront dangerous realities, the substance of his argument is quite accessible: Laud is a threat to your Puritan religious faith, and only his removal, imprisonment, and perhaps execution will be suitable to ensure the protection of your religious interests. While the extent of Prynne’s influence is subject to historical discussion, it seems evident that Prynne has left an indelible mark on the world of Puritan polemics and presented a challenge for treatment by historians of the Restoration who sought to balance the dangerous invectives of the polemics with the uncertainty of continued religious peace in Restoration England. His works were read and received and, certainly, contain many of the charges and ideas that would later become hallmarks

⁴⁰¹ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 82.

⁴⁰² Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 256.

⁴⁰³ Though, in reality, Prynne’s personal motivations are always something of an enigma and constitute a subject which the author believes merits considerable historical attention, particularly in assessing as complex an event as the English Civil War.

of the Civil War. As secret histories, they reveal the power that the written text can have when introduced into a literary culture that is eager for explanation for events and actions beyond its control.

Conclusion. Prynne's Tracts as a Guide to Understanding Secret Histories?

Prynne's secret histories, by any estimation, represent a critical point of historical study. They offer insight into the world of secret histories and also speak to the realities of the Puritan existence at the time of Stuart England. Lamont observes, in particular, the aptness of Prynne's obituary as a description of the man and his penchant for polemics:

Hear earless William Prynne doth lie
And so will eternally
For when the last trump sounds to appear
He that hath ears then let *him* heare.⁴⁰⁴

These secret histories reflect perhaps Prynne's place in history best: he is a clear-eyed polemicist who reserves nothing from attack and invective. However, in death, Prynne is left to perhaps reflect in this obituary on the causes and actions of his contentions. The arrogance that Prynne has displayed in life becomes all the more apparent in the context of his secret histories. There is a constant and unbridled sense of attack against Laud which reveals Prynne's motivations but, likewise, speaks to the context of the time and the Puritan literary culture in which he wrote.

Haller also recognizes that Prynne was perhaps destined, as it were, to utilize the pamphlet to great rhetorical effect. "His instruments were the pamphlet and the publicity which punishment afforded. Both these he exploited with a temerity and an effect which surpassed anything of the sort which had so far occurred."⁴⁰⁵ In this respect, we have had the benefit of studying here the tracts as secret histories, as texts which correlate strongly with what Burke has often described as a broad approach to understanding the publicization of the private. Indeed,

⁴⁰⁴ Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 25. The obituary, crafted by Prynne's research assistant Anthony Wood, represents a rebuke to the scholar. Of historical interest for a future work, however, was the Restoration of Prynne's reputation as a member of the establishment. Lamont adds that Charles II "expressed his gratitude to Prynne at the Restoration by making him Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London" and cites F.W. Maitland, who remarked that in this role Prynne was a "heroic" figure. *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁰⁵ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 219.

across Prynne's three tracts—the *Breviate*, *Hidden workes*, and *Canterburies doome*—there seems an acceptance that different rhetorical actions, types of evidence, and purposes can all coexist within the panoply of secret histories. Burke's contention, then, is borne out: understanding the "publication of the private" in secret histories requires that we not assume that the "terms 'private,' 'intimate,' 'unofficial' and 'secret' are equivalent in any language, still less that their meanings were fixed, but only that there is a considerable overlapping between these ideas."⁴⁰⁶ Prynne's works cannot be understood as a stand-alone contribution to polemical literature. As we have considered here, they are best understood within a line of literature which has, since Procopius, sought to tell us things that we would otherwise not know. Making the unconventional and unknown accessible is a hallmark of intent in secret histories and, in this respect, Prynne has certainly met the expectation. Throughout his tracts, he certainly acts to harm the reputation of Laud and to provide considerable work for future historians to deliberate and discern. But his works also illuminate our understanding of secret histories in the Stuart era, an era which has largely been absent from discussion within the historiography of secret histories.

Prynne teaches us that secret histories need not always be anecdotal, nor even follow the Procopian mode. Yet, still, he does not depart entirely from it either. He offers in his polemics a useful study in balance, working between several different styles and adopting, when efficient, models of secret histories that can speak to the needs of a particular moment. Prynne's secret histories have no qualms with engaging in spurious sources and readily present themselves as true and complete accounts. Yet, even when their most reckless claims are challenged, they continue to serve as persuasive texts to the Puritans that actively read their assertions. This may embody what Haller has described as the wider Puritan landscape and sensibility: Prynne's

⁴⁰⁶ Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness*, 21.

arguments were “substantially what was being uttered from the Puritan pulpits, but Prynne said it directly to the powerful of the land.”⁴⁰⁷ Haller notes that Prynne truly was the “perfect exemplar of those things in Puritanism which have subsequently been called puritanical, the hammer of God against cakes and ale.”⁴⁰⁸ In this respect, Prynne’s secret histories speak directly to our understanding of the tremendous impact and power that written tracts can have on the development and publication of ideals. They help us to understand the factual realities and complex religious concerns which accompanied the development of Puritan dissent in advance of the Civil War, and also offer some assurance of their consequence to Restoration historians.

Still, even after a considered review of Prynne’s works, we are left with an uncertainty of how to measure their actual reception. The readership of the tracts was surely broad, just as Puritan beliefs were broad, and they require a more thorough analysis than we can undertake here. Even so, the absence of direct accounts, of statistical evidence, and of a variety of references presents a historical challenge. We are still left—much like the secret histories themselves—to take certain things on faith and make reasoned assumptions about the realities of this particular moment in time. While Prynne’s works inform our understanding of Laud’s final days, they still leave us with abiding uncertainties. It is not within their capability to proffer an answer our most pressing questions of intent, nor can they resolve with the degree of efficacy we might desire relative to issues of reception. Even so, in studying the secret histories of Prynne, we might have gained a better understanding of that age old question of historical narrative and some small measure of insight into Stuart England and English history broadly at the onset of that momentous time that saw the Civil War and the collapse of the monarchy as we knew it.

⁴⁰⁷ Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 220.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

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A Note on Plates and Typefaces

Plates:

Frontispiece: Portrait of William Laud from *Canterburies doome*.

Courtesy of the Watkinson Library at Trinity College, which maintains an original and a facsimile copy of the first edition (QUARTO 209.2 L367p).

Endpaper: Portrait of William Prynne from *Canterburies doome*.

Courtesy of the Watkinson Library at Trinity College, which maintains an original and a facsimile copy of the first edition (QUARTO 209.2 L367p).

Typefaces:

The chapters of this thesis are set in Times New Roman, a standard serif typeface in the Roman family designed for the *Times* of London newspaper in 1929 by Stanley Morison. Today the gold standard for academic writing, it has been at times called ubiquitous and bland. In his memoir on typography, *A Tally of Types*, Morison observed that in considering its design, he wondered what William Morris (the designer of the ITC Golden Type font) would think of Times New Roman, remarking that “as a new face it should, by the grace of God and the art of man, have been broad and open, generous and ample; instead, by the vice of Mammon and the misery of the machine, it is bigoted and narrow, mean and puritan.” The font remains particularly popular with newspapers in a nod to its origins.

The title page and headings of this thesis are set in Goudy Old Style, with chapter headings underlined and set *in Goudy Old Style Italic*. Goudy (or GOS) is an old-style serif font designed by American type designer Frederic W. Goudy for American Type Founders in 1915. Inspired by the Italian Renaissance, the font is also individualistic, with its eccentric upward facing “g” and diamond dots above the “i” and “j” and clever, gentle swells at the base of “E” and “L.” The italic form was completed by Goudy in 1918. Today, the font is especially popular in luxury magazines, and has been the font of choice in distinguished publications such as *Harper’s* (formerly *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*) in the twentieth century. The font also finds regular use among those remaining bastions of American correspondence manufacture (such as Crane) It might best be termed “graceful” or, as Goudy himself described the font, it is “book letter with strong serifs, firm hairlines, and makes a solid, compact page.” Truly though, the use of the font here is perhaps a coy nod to the future publishing ambitions of the author and his recent predilection with typographic history.

A Note as to the Index

With gratitude and respect, the author respectfully notes that he retained the services of Mr. Griffin H. Plaag, current of Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, late of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, to index this thesis.



*All flesh is grass, the best men vanity;
This, but a shadow, here before thine eye,
Of him, whose wondrous changes clearly show,
That GOD, not men, swayes all things here below.*