Journal of British Studies 58 (January 2019): 1–27. doi:10.1017/jbr.2018.173
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Popularity in Early Modern England (ca. 1580–1642): Looking Again at *Thing* and *Concept*

Cesare Cuttica

Abstract An important object of study in the historiography of early modern England, popularity has been examined in relation to figures such as the Earl of Essex and the Duke of Buckingham. It has been equally accounted for as the activity of MPs who fostered the cause of patriotic and freeborn Englishmen during the absolutist reigns of the early Stuarts. Popularity has also been dealt with when addressing resistance theory and people's power in pre-societal arrangements ("popular power") and with regard to the popular component within a mixed government ("popular sovereignty"). Far less studied is another meaning of *popularity*, identified with direct democracy and its practices ("popular government"). This article shows how a large portion of public debate between the 1580s and 1642 focused on what were perceived as the threats of democratic strategies pursued by various (subversive) actors in England. Besides setting forth a revised understanding of the pejorative "popular" that distinguishes it from constitutional (republican) meanings on the one hand and from elite or royal popularity seeking on the other, this article unearths usages that presented it as an anarchic empowerment of the meanest of people—neither a mere theoretical sovereignty nor a mere right to be represented by one body in a mixed regime. Considering a composite range of sources and analyzing political, social, and, above all, ecclesiastical controversies, the article explains what democratic popularity was thought to stand for, who its exponents were, and how it was attacked from a wide spectrum of perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

Existing scholarship on early modern conceptions of "popularity" tends to construe it as implying populist politics, "popular power," or "popular sovereignty."[1] This article, by contrast, identifies it with direct democracy and

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[1] See Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London and New York, 1989), 72–106; Thomas Cogswell, "The People's Love: The Duke of Buckingham and Popularity," in *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell*, ed. Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake (Cambridge, 2002), 211–34; Richard Cust, "Was There an Alternative to the Personal Rule? Charles I, the Privy Council and the Parliament of 1629," *History* 90, no. 299

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2018.173 Published online by Cambridge University Press

its practices ("popular government"). By considering the period ca. 1580–1642, the following pages argue that popularity often referred not to republican or quasi-republican understandings of the House of Commons as a neo-Roman assembly but to various efforts to empower "the people," understood as the mass of uneducated, mechanical, and turbulent plebeians. In philosophical treatises as well as political pamphlets, sermons and state papers, popularity was taken to typify a commonweal characterized by limitless liberty ("licence"), where the "many-headed multitude"—often manipulated by demagogues—installed a regime of coercion directed at their superiors. This kind of *democratic* popularity was seen as the end of civilization; it was considered a cradle of anarchy and disorder. A study in antidemocratic writing, this article examines the hysteria and fears that decisively shaped early modern convictions about popular politics. However, what follows also attends to real-world manifestations of early modern popular politics: endeavors to reform political and ecclesiastical affairs along antimonarchical and antiaristocratic lines, which provoked fierce opposition to individuals or groups perceived to advance ancient and modern democratic values.

This article shows the great extent to which popularity was viewed as a serious menace not only to ecclesiastical and political order but also to natural, divine, and social hierarchies. In consequence, it draws attention to popularity as a key component of debate not just within the circles of government and public office but in a broader arena of ecclesiastical, philosophical, and moral reflection.[2] This wider net is intended to catch the complex variety of actors involved in controversies where popularity was interpreted as the explicit search for directly democratic—rather than republican or populist—politics.[3] Popularity was widely (and transconfessionally) attacked because it was read in different contexts as a defense of democratic government and an inclination to embrace equality in church and property matters.

Taking a long view of the phenomenon of democratic popularity enables us to pick up on shifts in its meaning and application and to point out continuities that are not always noted in standard historiographical accounts. A longue durée approach reveals the interpenetration of ecclesiastical, political, and socioeconomic valences

(July 2005): 330–52; Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); Richard Cust, "The 'Public Man' in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester, 2007), 116–43; Paul E. J. Hammer, "The Smiling Crocodile: the Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan 'Popularity,'" in Lake and Pincus, 95–115; Cesare Cuttica, "Kentish Cousins at Odds: Filmer's *Patriarcha* and Thomas Scott's Defence of Freeborn Englishmen," *History of Political Thought* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 599–616; Peter Lake, "'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' (and the Fall of Archbishop Grindal) Revisited," in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, 2007), 129–47; Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford, 2012); *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Aldershot, 2013); *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*, ed. Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 2016). See also *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 709–854, with articles by Laura Stewart, Peter Lake, and others.

[2] Peter Lake, "The Politics of 'Popularity' and the Public Sphere: the 'Monarchical Republic' of Elizabeth I Defends Itself," in Lake and Pincus, *The Politics of the Public Sphere*, 59–94, at 87.

[3] Here *democratic* means the common people's participation in decision-making and the plebeian pursuit of equality; *republican* entails elective oligarchies and educated citizens being in charge; and *populist* refers to demagogic pandering to the multitudes on the part of aristocrats or to politicians strategically engaging in spin.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2018.173 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the term and demonstrates that popularity was often portrayed as a foreign disease. It is also argued below that condemnations of "ecclesiastical popularity" were the starting point for what would expand into a political and social critique of popularity. This is not to reduce all talk of popularity to its ecclesiastical context, but to underscore the chronological priority of that context. The late Elizabethan period framed the language of popularity, which then moved into a Stuart era marked by continued bouts of economic distress, rising religious polarization (including sectarian fragmentation) and conflict over the authority of Parliament.

In brief, the five sections that follow elucidate and revise what democratic popularity was thought to stand for; they clarify how and why different groups in England were singled out as its advocates and unfold the multiplicity of theoretical traditions and discourses that were deployed to criticize it. The extensive critical reaction to "popularity" signified more than the rejection of a specific type of political or ecclesiastical government associated with democratic Athens, Anabaptist Münster, and Calvinist Geneva: it targeted a social condition and a state of mind oriented around *homo democraticus*. Although depictions of popularity featured in literary (e.g., Shakespeare)[4] and ecclesiastical (e.g., anti-Puritanism)[5] genres, other references to classical (notably, Greek, not Roman) *and* to contemporary events and people (notably, the Swiss) provide new insights into this significant early modern ideological matrix.

ALL AGAINST PRESBYTERIAN DEMOCRACY (1580S)

The future archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift (1530/31?–1604) was an early and formative user of "popularity" to denote the pursuit of democracy (1574).[6] During the Admonition Controversy, he accused Puritans like his archenemy Thomas Cartwright (1534/35–1603) of promoting "popularitie" in theory and practice through the argument that the people had the right to elect pastors and ministers in the church.[7] (Cartwright himself characterized his preferred ecclesiastical form as a "mixed polity."[8]) Cartwright's "popular and friuolous arguments," fumed Whitgift, extended "the popular … gouernment of the Church" to the "common weale," with dangerous consequences for England's preservation (a situation aggravated by the disorderly, and nepotistic, nature of "popular elections").[9]

While this controversy has been thoroughly investigated by Peter Lake,[10] less appreciated has been the role that the Presbyterian surge in the parliaments of the 1580s played in setting the terms of the discourse of democratic popularity. In the

[4] See, for example, Jeffrey S. Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 2017).

[5] See, for example, Patrick Collinson, "Antipuritanism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul Lim (Cambridge, 2008), 19–33.

[6] See Lake, "'The Monarchical Republic,'" 137–39.

[7] John Whitgift, *The defense of the aunswere to the Admonition against the replie of T.C.* (London, 1574), A4r.

[8] See, for example, Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), 59.

[9] Whitgift, *The defense*, 171.

[10] Lake, *Anglicans*, esp. 53–64. Lake, however, did *not* focus on popularity as democratic experiment (see 129–35).

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polemics over Presbyterianism, popularity was understood as more than a daring notion of active, quasi-republican citizenship by the elite godly.[11] It was instead condemned for threatening to introduce the government of the rude multitude. Popularity was construed as the opposite of politics, that is, of legitimate political authority, for it turned the lower orders into political agents with power. Popularity made the vulgar feel equal to their superiors, so that they—like the Athenians—urged political and ecclesiastical authorities to adopt the policies they fancied.[12] Popularity was also considered an irrational quest for novelties in the public domain, a view that displayed abhorrence not just vis-à-vis the ecclesiastical and political role of the people and of popular leaders such as Cartwright, but also for their deficient intellect and lack of moral fiber.[13]

It was in this context that the Whitgiftian MP and lawyer Richard Cosin (1548?–1597) attacked the anti-episcopacy religious radical and fellow MP William Stoughton over the legitimacy of non-preaching ministers exercizing their ministry. Significantly, the strategy chosen by Cosin when rejecting "popular approbation and election" of ministers was to discredit Stoughton as promoter of a "plat of popularitie" (that is, a democratic platform).[14] In 1588 the pillar of the establishment Richard Bancroft (bap. 1544–1610) joined the fray by denouncing the Presbyterian "false prophets" who were then introducing "Anabaptisme and popularitie" in England.[15] On Bancroft's staunchly monarchist account, popularity destroyed "all good rule and government" because, by rousing the "brethren of the poorer sort" against the "gentlemen and wealthier sort" (some of whom—Bancroft admitted—oppressed the former), it incited the resentful rabble not to "suffer this unequall distribution of these worldlie benefits" and spurred them on to set up a regime where people "had all things common."[16] Though aiming to repair injustice, incendiary popular spirits with their strict scriptural literalism ended up promoting a more extremist, unfair parity. The disease of popularity, Bancroft thundered, having spread from Geneva to France and then on to Scotland where the radical Calvinist George Buchanan had taught and worked, had now reached England's shores, menacing the most cherished values of order and hierarchy, property, and propriety. Implied in Bancroft's overarching denunciation (it touched on much more than conformity) was also the despicable foreignness of democratic popularity.

Counter to Patrick Collinson's reading,[17] Bancroft's virulent rhetoric was not directed at Cartwright's Presbyterian "republicanism" but instead attacked the threat to church and state posed by the twin dragons of parity and democratic popularity. For Bancroft, the Presbyterian model was no Venetian-style republican mixed regime: it constituted a straightforward Athenian stronghold of popular rule. In

[11] Representation constituted a form of disempowerment of the people; it symbolized their renunciation to direct agency. See, for example, Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen. Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore, 2007), 4, 12, 24.

[12] See, for example, Whitgift, *The defense*, 377.

[13] See John Whitgift, *A godlie sermon preched before the Queenes Maiestie at Grenevvich the 26. of March last past by Doctor VVhitgift Deane of Lincolne* (London, 1574).

[14] Richard Cosin, *An ansvver to the two fyrst and principall treatises of a certaine factious libell* […] (London, 1584), 87.

[15] Richard Bancroft, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 9. of Februarie* […] (London, 1588), 3, 75.

[16] Bancroft, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse*, 26, 25.

[17] Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2013), 17, 18.

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contrast to republican ideology, democracy was a more unadulterated rule of will, unalloyed by eschatological beliefs or by godly imperatives (such as the destruction of the pope or the overthrow of a tyrannical king) that were in some sense adjudicated by elites. Moreover, republicanism, which was based on a set of values such as courage, integrity, reason, and arms-bearing, was essentially aristocratic and thus excluded the virtue-lacking mobs from the core of power. As the Bodinian absolutist thinker Charles Merbury (d. 1597) argued, whereas republics like Sparta, Genoa, and Lucca pursued the commonweal's general interest, democracies only endeavored to advance "the commonaltie," promoting those affected by the "poorest, and meanest condition at their owne foolish fancie, without all order, or discretion."[18]

Such alarmism responded to the devising by local Puritan preachers, in the 1570s and in places like Northampton, of a parish-level Genevan system of preaching and catechizing. Discipline was executed by ministers and churchwardens acting like the Genevan eldership with its consistorial system. When in Northampton "a weekly assembly of the mayor and bailiffs" and "a quarterly assembly" comprising the ministers of the shire were put in place,[19] men such as Whitgift, Cosin, and Bancroft reacted vehemently. They denounced as perilous experiments in democracy such efforts to import the Genevan way into England. Attacks on popularity were not merely polemical utterances restricted to a political or constitutional context: they condemned a social attitude toward politics and religion, a restless desire for disruptive change.[20] This is to say that the authors here referred to were not merely involved in an exercise of trading insults; they were alarmed by enterprises that for them inclined toward democratic notions of the polity and democratic practices such as electing elders in Presbyterian circles or permitting mechanics to express political opinions. They feared that the Presbyterian (sectarian) quest to assign a new role to the individual and his—sometimes even *her*—conscience would eventually affirm a new political agency.

For the authorities, who were already fighting provocative publications such as the satirical anti-episcopate Marprelate tracts (1588–89), the chief objective of radical Protestants was to establish an illegitimate parity in the church, and a degrading leveling of goods and merits in the state. For people such as Bancroft, this scenario constituted a door open onto a landscape of Athenian-inspired and Anabaptist-shaped desolation. Scottish Presbyterianism jeopardized stability in ecclesiastical and public affairs,[21] and Whitfgift, Bancroft, and others feared that dynastic uncertainty in the 1580s and '90s would prove a fertile breeding ground for the same kind of dissent in England. Elite conformists could be paranoid and out of touch, but grain riots, unemployment, food scarcity, and diffuse social distress were undeniably causes for great concern and exacerbated antipopular animosity among the authorities.[22]

[18] Charles Merbury, *A briefe discourse of royall monarchie, as of the best common weale* […] (London, 1581), 9.

[19] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley, 1967), 142.

[20] David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution, 1066–1649* (Cambridge, 2010), 12.

[21] Jenny Wormald, "Ecclesiastical Vitriol: The Kirk, the Puritans and the Future King of England," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (1995; repr., Cambridge 1999), 171–91, esp. 189–90.

[22] James Sharpe, "Social Strain and Social Dislocation, 1585–1603," in Guy, *Reign of Elizabeth I*, 192–211, at 198.

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Moreover, evidence of increasing support for procedures that theatrically fostered popular "approval" of church ministers came from texts such as the anonymous *A Lamentable Complaint of the Commonality* (1585), written to affirm a congregational role in selecting local ministers.[23] Citing electoral measures adopted in the primitive church, the *Lamentable Complaint* inspired a group of MPs in the parliamentary session of 1584–85 to complain that the picking of ministers was being done privately, not publicly in front of the whole body of the godly. Their petition, with its language of popular appeal, was resoundingly rejected by Whitgift, for whom such moves savored of democratic popularity, setting in motion "popular elections" that had long ago (and rightly) been abandoned in the ecclesiastical sphere. To many, congregational elections did not mimic parliamentary representation (which was hardly popular and usually conducted in secret)[24] but threatened—or promised—a higher degree of pure democracy in both church and state.

Such fears were exhibited, for instance, by the anti-Presbyterian Matthew Sutcliffe (1549/50–1629), dean of Exeter, in a text written against John Udall, a polemicist close to the Marprelate printer Robert Waldegrave (1590). Sutcliffe assailed Udall's *Demonstration* (1588) for promoting a "confused popular vnpreaching, temporarie, mechanicall *Presbyteri,* or Aldermanship."[25] According to Sutcliffe, the Presbyterians resorted "to the maner and custome of the multitude in some popular common wealths of Greece, to signifie their assents by lifting vp their hands to matters proposed."[26] Connecting Presbyterianism with democratic procedures, Sutcliffe treated all claims of "popular … intermedling in elections of people, or of any such elders" as a source of tumults.[27] After all, he remarked, it was sufficient for one to "dissent," for "the election [to] be dashed."[28] To assume that those "gouerned, must haue a stroke in the choice of the gouernour" was "too popular" a reform, contradicting the "diuine rule of nature."[29] Sutcliffe's concerns illustrated the long-standing image of democratic politics as theatrical, fatuous, and mob-like.[30] He was adamant that Udall's attempt "to set forward these elections" savored of Greek "popularitie" in that "the greater part ouercommeth the better."[31] The Presbyterian scheme entailed the dismantling of all hierarchies, after which "all goeth to popular democracie." Here, Sutcliffe asserted, "a few vnlearned people"—"subject" to voluble words and passions—judged of important things with the same competence to be expected in "a blind man" judging "of colours."[32] Ultimately, for Sutcliffe—as for Cosin and Bancroft—Presbyterian "popularitie" was more than the harmful push toward unorthodox ecclesiastical policies. It

[23] *A Lamentable Complaint of the Commonalty, by way of supplication to the high court of Parliament, for a learned ministery* (London, 1585), A3r, A3v, A5v, D5v, D6r.

[24] See Arnold, *The Third Citizen*, 36–37.

[25] Matthew Sutcliffe, *A remonstrance* […] (London, 1590), 40.

[26] Sutcliffe, *A remonstrance*, 78.

[27] Sutcliffe, 90.

[28] Sutcliffe, 83.

[29] Sutcliffe, 82.

[30] See Peter Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage. Power and Succession in the History Plays* (New Haven, 2016), 467. Lake does not deal with "popularity" in the sense studied in this article but looks at it from the populist angle.

[31] Sutcliffe, *A remonstrance*, 92, 83.

[32] Sutcliffe, 98.

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was a devastating attempt to replace all order and monarchical government with Athenian or Swiss democracy.[33]

POPULARITY IN THE TROUBLED 1590S: *BASILIKON DORON*, "PURITANICALL" JESUITS, AND THE SWISS MODEL

The examples above confirm that "the second reign of Elizabeth I" was obsessed with the threatening wave of "popularity."[34] Polarization between social groups intensified, more markedly dividing gentry and rabble. Vagrancy and crimes against property were linked with popularity as signs that "plebeian forces were dangerously on the increase"[35]—a fact corroborated by the Hacket-Coppinger Puritan conspiracy (1591) and the abortive and exaggerated Oxfordshire Rising (1596).[36] The swelling of the London populace was depicted as a menacing appropriation of elite, even royal, space by the shapeless, many-headed multitude. The sick democratic body of the rabble threatened not only the cohesiveness of the urban body but the very health of the monarchical body politic.[37] The pressure of the urban mobs created fears of a coming popular clash. So too did the concomitant growth of the electorate in local elections, as well as higher levels of popular engagement in local government.[38] In early modern England, elections were public affairs where candidates stood on a stage surrounded by the congregated—often unruly and noisy—electorate.[39] Parliament was thus understood as the repository of grievances coming not only from the gentry but also from the "wider populace."[40]

In this climate, with social tensions, economic crisis, and especially the rising prominence of Parliament reorienting debates about "popularity," one of its main critics was King James VI and I (1566–1625), who associated it with parliamentary attempts to limit his prerogative. In *Basilikon Doron* (1599) James condemned popularity as a democratic attack on kingship. He claimed to have been "calumniated in their [Puritan] *populare* Sermons, not for any euill or vice in me, but because I was a King, which they thought the highest euill." Seditious, unreasonable, popularity-frenzied Puritans, he maintained, essayed to alter the whole of society in democratic

[33] See Randolph C. Head, *Early Modern Democracy in the Grisons: Social Order and Political Language in a Swiss Mountain Canton, 1470–1620* (Cambridge, 1995).

[34] John Guy, "Introduction: The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?," in *The Reign*, 1–19, at 1.

[35] Guy, "Introduction," 11.

[36] In their plan to abolish episcopacy and stage a coup against Elizabeth, the self-proclaimed messianic popular prophet William Hacket (d. 1591) and his co-conspirators had been motivated by the attempt to free Cartwright and other Presbyterians from prison. See Alexandra Walsham, s.v., "Hacket, William (d. 1591)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 June 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11840.

[37] Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and Its Double* (Basingstoke, 2005), 16, 23.

[38] See, for example, John H. Plumb, "The Growth of the Electorate in England from 1600 to 1715," *Past and Present* 45, no. 1 (November 1969): 90–116.

[39] Arnold, *The Third Citizen*, 270n25.

[40] Chris R. Kyle, introduction to *Parliament, Politics and Elections, 1604–1648*, ed. Chris R. Kyle (Cambridge, 2001), 1–12, at 8.

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directions.[41] For James, democratic reforms in the ecclesiastical domain led straight to popular rule in the body politic. This was, he pressed on, the situation he had experienced already a few years earlier when "some fierie spirited men in the ministerie"—having managed to control the people—had begun "to fantasie to themselues a Democraticke forme of gouernment." Parading their autonomy of judgment, these insolent popular spirits had "setled themselues so fast vpon that imagined Democracie" that "they fed themselues with the hope to become *Tribunis plebis*." These modern democrats imitated their classical predecessors in that they deceived the people by guiding them "by the nose" so as "to beare the sway of all the rule."[42] James's criticism of popularity operated at different levels, but he consistently chastised the moral, intellectual, and political cornerstones of popular government. To James, popularity could signal the power that accrued to demagogues seeking mob approval; it could also denote democracy, cultivated by Puritan preachers and antimonarchical agitators, who inculcated in the plebs democratic convictions (including beliefs subversive of patriarchy).[43]

Attacks on democratic popularity targeted not only Presbyterians and Puritans but Jesuits as well. In the Appellant Controversy (1598–1602), the Catholic priest Christopher Bagshaw (1552–1625?) accused the Jesuits of teaching "how to canton a Kingdome," namely, how to turn a monarchy into a democracy modeled on Swiss standards.[44] Likewise, referring to the Parliament of 1601 (the year of Essex's Rebellion), the diarist Simonds D'Ewes (1602–1650) recorded in his journal that there had been much awareness of the perilous state of disorder affecting England, where, according to Robert Cecil, some people—acting like the "*Clamours*"-making "*Athenians*" in their "popular State" (who had been reproached by "*Demosthenes*" for behaving like children)—"would be glad that all Sovereignty were converted into Popularity."[45] The main reason for concern was not an assertive parliamentary privilege and a scrupulous attention to the rights of the freeborn Englishmen but a clear effort to stamp out monarchy and turn England into Switzerland. Hence, popularity embodied a more radical menace to the integrity of the social and political texture than episodes of contestation within the parameters of political debate carried out in the Commons.

Democratic popularity occupied the mind of the members of the establishment much more than disquiet about, say, notions of the kingdom as a mixed polity (which were generally intended to bridle the absolute leanings of royal power and as such had to do with popular sovereignty, not with popular government). Popularity created the possibility of an alternative social order where the "democratization of thought, speech and action" might be accomplished.[46] Anxiety about popularity in

[41] James VI and I, "Basilicon Doron," in *King James VI and I, Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge, 1994), 1–61, at 26, 27 (emphases added).

[42] James VI and I, "Basilicon Doron," 25, 26.

[43] James VI and I, 54.

[44] Christopher Bagshaw, *A sparing discouerie of our English Iesuits, and of Fa. Parsons proceedings* […] (London, 1601), A2r.

[45] Simonds D'Ewes, *A Compleat Journal* […] (London, 1693), 653. See also William Cornwallis, "Of Popularitie," in *Essayes* (London, 1600–01), R4r and R6v.

[46] See Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, "Introduction: Towards a Definition of Print Popularity," in *The Elizabethan Top Ten*, ed. Kesson and Smith, 1–15, at 3. See also Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge, 2014), 7, 32–35.

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late Elizabethan England, moreover, evidences intense apprehension about the threat of internal democratic enemies rather than external geopolitical foes such as France, Spain, or the pope. This confirms Peter Lake's remark that "the monarchical republic of Elizabeth I was definitely laid to rest in the 1590s" because of the strong reaction of absolutist, anti-Puritan, and antipopular (as well as anti-Jesuit) forces. For this reason, historians should be cautious when speaking of the monarchical republic; "between the maximum and minimum versions" of it, it is the latter that that can help us better understand the ideas and the mechanisms of early modern English political life.[47]

A large portion of public discussion was framed by the battle over antidemocratic popularity, not republican principles or commonwealth jargon. This is not to deny that commonweal ideology could be, and in some cases was, reactive toward an oppressive and omnipresent state,[48] but it does not signify that it was purposely democratic. It is one thing to say that governors aimed at the common good, or that the monarch was the protector of his or her people in a move that can be defined as popular politics; it is another, though, to maintain that there were people actively seeking a popular (i.e., democratic) government where the rabble—which should be silent—were entitled to participate in the political process, with all the ensuing disruptive consequences. Popular politics could work, and thereby be seen as worth pursuing, if channeled through the intervention of MPs in favor of freeholders' rights and liberties and against absolutist policies. More damaging to the general being of the commonweal was a popular government that empowered the mechanical masses.

Equally, for all their subversive potential, resistance theory, urban rioting, and peasant rebellions against the state or the nobility were singular manifestations of mass discontent rather than overt democratic enterprises. Nor did mixed government and republicanism act as vehicles for popular government: the language of the mixed government still operated within a monarchical paradigm, while in the case of republicanism we need to wait for James Harrington (1656) to have a republican conceiving of democracy in positive terms. This is why this article speaks of "democratizing" rather than republican or populist tendencies. In this respect, democratic popularity (identified with the undertaking of direct democratic government, comprising mass approval of laws, popular consent to and criticism of policy making, and so forth) can be distinguished from the idiom of classic republicanism, which foregrounded anticorruption, the "just constitution," and virtuous (and armed) citizenship.[49]

The distinction between democratic and republican values emerged in many treatises from the 1590s, including translations of foreign texts. Among them was that by the Polish author Laurentius Grimaldus Goslicius (1530–1607), who vehemently criticized democracy (where "the Magistrates" were "chosen by lott").[50] Favoring

[47] Lake, "'The Monarchical Republic,'" 145–47. See also Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 69, no. 2 (1987), 394–424.

[48] Rollison, *Commonwealth*, 433.

[49] Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1995, reprinted 2004), 2, 7.

[50] Laurentius Grimaldus Goslicius, *The Counsellor* […] *Newlie translated into English* (London, 1598), e. g., 62.

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a mixed constitution, Goslicius stressed that "none of the base multitude, or mechanicall people shoulde beare office in the state." Good government was instead best ensured by the "wisedome" and "knowledge" of an aristocratic counseling body such as the Venetian senate.[51] Republican or civic humanist discourse emphasized merit as a springboard from which to ascend the political ladder as officers and magistrates, but it often conveyed hostility to any leveling democratic tendencies.

This markedly antidemocratic ideology colored the deep-seated anti-Jesuitism with which the new century began, as exemplified by Bagshaw's text above.[52] Thus, in a searing attack on Jesuit doctrines, the Appellant Catholic priest William Watson (1559?–1603) identified Robert Parsons as ringleader of antimonarchical rebellion and also as somebody who "delude(d) simple people" by persuading them of the legitimacy of what Watson called "a temporized [i.e., political] popularitie."[53] To advance a democratic, popular state, Watson commented, Parsons had cunningly adjusted "to the conditions, manners, and minds of the common people, which euer do delight in noueltie and change," so that at that time in England he had become enormously popular. Intellectually as well as materially impoverished, "the *mobile vulgus*"—whose "wauering harts" knew no consistent thought—had swiftly seized "vpon this popular doctrine" to the extent that they now felt entitled to "ouerthrow" not only "their soueraigne" but "the state, their landlords, and all other nobles" too. In Jesuitical style, they fancied themselves authorized to hold monarchs to account and, if unsatisfied, "call for an election" to appoint new popular rulers. Parsons had instilled in the lower orders the idea that "*vox populi*" was "*vox Dei*."[54]

Parsons was the paragon of the democrat—not the republican—combining persuasive but devious words to conquer the rabble with actions directed at subverting social order. He was depicted as a misleading popular tribune seeking mass acclaim. The Jesuit was a Brutus and an Essex, and his paradoxical fellow travelers were "the Puritanes" who wanted to reduce "all Kings and common-wealthes to a popularitie … and so would the Iesuites."[55] These two sects, pressuring the Church of England in religious terms, also strived to "bring all into a *Swisserly* popularitie, or a *Geneuian* gouernment" where neither hierarchies nor legitimate differences of status among its inhabitants were allowed. Because of their Swiss-inspired democratic convictions, "Puritanian Iesuits" à la Parsons tended "wholy to a Puritanes popularity," threatening a willful despotism of the worst part of the popu-

[51] Goslicius, *The Counsellor*, 21, 38. The same reasoning can be found, for example, in Barnabe Barnes, *Foure bookes of offices* […] (London, 1606), 64–65.

[52] In 1589 the French king Henry III had been murdered by the allegedly Jesuit-influenced Jacques Clément. Significantly, this was when the Catholic League had been accused of supporting the concept of a popular state. See Cesare Cuttica, "Tyrannicide and Political Authority in the Long Sixteenth Century," in *Routledge Companion to Sixteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Benjamin Hill (New York and London, 2017), 265–92, at 269.

[53] William Watson, *A decacordon of ten quodlibeticall questions concerning religion and state* […] (1602), 333. Parsons promptly defended himself and the Jesuit Order from Watson's accusations of their disposition to "popularity." (See, for example, Robert Parsons, *A manifestation of the great folly and bad spirit of certayne in England calling themselues secular priestes* […] (Antwerp, 1602), 67, 112.)

[54] Watson, *A decacordon*, 333.

[55] Watson, 28.

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lation.[56] Democratic popularity was one of several political traits (e.g., regicide, "conspiracy," "treason") that Jesuits and Puritans shared.[57] However, for people like Bagshaw and Watson, their *Swiss* popularity loomed as a particular danger, portending a radical transformation of societal norms that could undermine political deference.

It could not have been otherwise: in 1603, the popularity-obsessed writer-king James Stuart ascended the throne.

PARITY, LEVELING, PLEBEIAN UPRISINGS, AND FOREIGN POPULAR WINDS (1603–1614)

The start of the Jacobean reign saw popularity consistently associated with the political principles of Parsons and Buchanan. Critics of the resistance theorists advanced the notion that "popularity in the ciuill state, doth not well disgest a Monarchie in the ecclesiasticall."[58] James's first parliament was prorogued due to "great populars" in the Commons, who meddled in affairs above their station and made dangerous use of eloquence.[59] In ecclesiastical affairs, the Hampton Court Conference (1604) brought the Presbyterians back under the antipopularity radar, exposing them as relentless seekers of democracy. To be sure, "popular politics" and the rhetoric of popularity could enjoy a more positive resonance in Jacobean England. However, such a defense came from above, top down; it referred to Essex-like demagogues or to those in power, not to the rabble or even to the middling sort. As Markku Peltonen has shown,[60] popularity was used positively in the *ars rhetorica* (following Cicero's authority). The "counsel of princes" tradition could also invoke the benefits of popularity. But democratic popularity, implying a regime type in church or state, was never portrayed favorably. When scholars identify positive evaluations of popularity during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, they are usually describing a discourse that served to exalt monarchy. Popularity was used by monarchs, as Kevin Sharpe has so thoroughly illuminated,[61] but this does not mean that popular political participation was encouraged or embraced—least of all under James and his son. It was not fostered precisely because it stank, among other things, of the egalitarianism and the voluntarism to be found in Athens, Münster, and the Swiss cantons. For all its appealing to the sentiments of the people as sign of the growing place occupied by popular politics, the act performed by elite figures of addressing the multitudes bespoke a fundamental error, intellectual and political: in agora style, it debased the serious and exclusivist business of politics to the passions of the commoners. Such performances smacked of democratic popularity and therefore were generally condemned.

[56] Watson, 157–58.

[57] Watson, 169.

[58] William Clark, *A replie vnto a certaine libell, latelie set foorth by Fa: Parsons* […] (London, 1603), 76.

[59] Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Cambridge, 2013), 231.

[60] Markku Peltonen, "Political Argument," in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, vol. 1, *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford, 2011), 252–62, 261.

[61] See Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2009); Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603–1660* (New Haven, 2010).

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In line with these considerations, the royal chaplain, and subsequently, dean of Lichfield Cathedral, William Tooker (1553/4–1621) accused the Presbyterians of aiming to establish "paritie" in church *and* state.[62] Presbyterianism, wrote Tooker, meant to "take away all pluralities, and maintenance of learned men, and reduce all inaequalities to an aequalitie," bringing "all to popularitie, or Democracy, and afterwards to Anarchie."[63] Tooker's critique combined widely shared fears of an unjust popular egalitarianism that would eradicate private property with ancient Greek concerns that popularity would undermine learning. Polemicists turned to antiquity for a storehouse of exempla providing a highly negative image of the inhabitants of democracies and their character. In the politico-ecclesiastical demonology of Catholics like the steadfast Appellant priest William Clark (1568–1603),[64] or in that of anti-popish loyalists like Tooker, popularity threatened ecclesiastical and political hierarchy and deference and corrupted natural mental habits of obedience.

To dispel the impression that this attitude only prevailed in polemical literature, it is useful to consider another substantial criticism of democratic popularity from a less hostile source. The MP William Stoughton (fl. 1584), mentioned above, wrote passionately about England as a mixed government.[65] In so doing, he underscored the democratic nature of the Commons as a collective, law-making body. The history of the Commons indicated that the English had been accustomed to both democracy and aristocracy since they had cohered as a people and developed constitutional structures. Stoughton was here rehearsing the 1589 conflict between Bishop Thomas Cooper (1517?–1594) ("the Admonitor") and his enemies (e.g., Martin Marprelate). In particular, Stoughton dismantled Cooper's claim that the Presbyterians intended to transfer democratic government from the church to the state by insinuating democratic ideas in plebeian heads. According to Cooper, whenever democratic "principles" were "made … by experience familiar in the mindes of the common people," so that they acquired "the sense and feeling of them," it was "greatly to bee feared, that they will very easily transferre the same to the Gouernement of the common weale."[66] Stoughton boldly riposted that England had long been "acquainted with the principles & reasons of Democracie, or Aristocracie." Cooper, he charged, was a scaremonger resorting to "the strangenes of these vncouth, and vnknowne greeke names, of *Democracie,* and *Aristocracie*" to smear what was a historically grounded and politically healthy mixture of elite and popular power.[67] This is to say that despite positively viewing England as a well-balanced government in which the popular component (the Commons) was acknowledged a pivotal role, Stoughton nonetheless distinguished this source of democratic sovereignty from the altogether extreme government to be found in ancient Greece and throughout this article identified with a democratic popularity.[68]

[62] William Tooker, *Of the Fabrique of the Church* […] (London, 1604), "The Epistle Dedicatorie," A3r.

[63] Tooker, *Of the Fabrique of the Church*, A4r.

[64] See above note 58.

[65] For other supporters of mixed government, see, for example, Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 93, 177–89.

[66] Thomas Cooper, *An admonition to the people of England* […] (London, 1589), 92–93. Cooper also referred to the Peasants' Revolt (1381), with its dangerous calls for general equality (159–60).

[67] William Stoughton, *An assertion for true and Christian church-policie* […] (London, 1604), 359–64.

[68] It is important to reiterate that magistracies might be organized around a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, but the overall commonweal remained kingly.

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Texts and exchanges of this kind played out against a charged political and social context. Events such as the Gunpowder Plot (1605) and the Oath of Allegiance controversy (1606) pressured the notion of popular sovereignty and resistance by associating them with Catholicism. Equally significant were enclosure riots such as the Midland Rising (1607), at the head of which stood the Leveller-Digger *avant la lettre* John Reynolds (d. 1607), whose program betrayed political convictions shaped by democratic impulses.[69] Growing alarm at egalitarian proposals can be detected in royal proclamations targeting the riotous multitudes (often led by women!) whose gatherings were considered a major threat to order.[70] In particular, the Midland Rising sharpened political awareness among the lower orders and rendered their public language more menacingly democratic. At the same time, the Commons were perceived by some as representatives not just of the politically active nation but also of those who lacked any active role in the selection of MPs.[71] In 1601, the MP William Hakewill (bap. 1574–d. 1655) urged his colleagues in the Commons to embrace the cause of those who had no voice and truly represent them by identifying with their plight.[72] Hakewill thereby promoted a form of extended representation. Given this scenario, it is not surprising that King James became obsessed with the Commons prying into his political affairs. He accused the leaders of the opposition of being people-stirring tribunes. In a speech delivered to the two houses on 31 March 1607, he denounced those celebrating the considerable powers of the Scottish Parliament as a way of cutting down to size the traditional authority of the Stuarts. The king unequivocally equated these adversarial arguments with a fondness for democratic "popularitie."[73]

For his part, Martin Fotherby (ca. 1560–1620), the Whitgift protégé, royal chaplain, and future bishop of Salisbury, uttered nothing new when he claimed that the goals of radical godly preachers "were principally two, *Parity*, and *Popularity*: the two deadly banes of all good order, and of ciuill policie, and the beaten pathes to confusion and *Anarchie*."[74] Much more interesting/important in the wake of the insurrection of 1607, Fotherby specifically complained that many rascally "men may seeme to please and applaud themselues, in making a conscience to resist the Magistrate."[75] Similarly, another royal chaplain, William Wilkes (d. 1637), warned justices of the peace, city magistrates, and churchwardens against radicals who promoted innovation ("*newfanglisme*")[76] so widely as to undermine all public order, including "the Lawes."[77] This "*newfangled* faction" intended to democratically "leuell" every

[69] See John Walter, s.v., "Reynolds, John [*alias* Captain Pouch]," *ODNB*, accessed 21 June 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/67261.

[70] Brents Stirling, *The Populace in Shakespeare* (New York, 1965), 128.

[71] Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford, 1989), 144–45.

[72] See Arnold, *The Third Citizen*, 34–35.

[73] James VI and I, "Speech to Parliament of 31 March 1607," in Sommerville, *King James VI and I*, 159–78, at 174.

[74] Martin Fotherby, "The fourth Sermon, at the Court, Nouemb. 15. Anno 1607," in Fotherby, *Foure sermons* [...] (London, 1608), 87–108, at 97, 98.

[75] Fotherby, "The fourth Sermon," 96.

[76] "Newfanglism" referred to people "with a liking for novelty". *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "newfanglist, (n.)," accessed 7 March 2017, http://accesdistant.bu.univ-paris8.fr:2174/view/Entry/126556?redirectedFrom=newfanglist.

[77] William Wilkes, *A second memento for magistrates* […] (London, 1608), 18.

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aspect of life in England.[78] These were "*Geneuating passauantians*,"[79] namely, anticonformists who not only subjected religion to a "popular" ballot but aimed to create "a strange *pollicie*" of plebiscitary politics in the Swiss manner.[80] Theirs was a "proude *popularitie*"—morally, economically, and politically detrimental to legitimate "*monarchie*." Moreover, their constant search for novelty betrayed spiritual apathy, testifying to the populace's exclusive love of material possessions.[81]

Besides offering a rich array of antipopularity tenets, these examples show how tirades against rival religious positions frequently escalated into full-on denunciations of those same positions' deleterious repercussions for the preservation of social order, monarchical institutions, and private property. Moreover, it was argued or implied that a democracy of the soul, abolishing priestly mediation, would give way to a civil democracy of the citizen and the householder. Democratic popularity served as a universal foil. The intensity of such critiques varied, peaking at times such as the 1610s, when the spreading of "radical egalitarian tendencies" within the Separatist fringes became common currency.[82] An increasing number of people agitated for a popular voice in ecclesiastical government; thus, the Baptist minister and militant nonconformist John Smyth (d. 1612) assigned a central role in ecclesiastical affairs to the congregation,[83] and the Leiden-based separatist John Robinson (1575?–1625) contended that the church was formed of the "three kyndes of polities"—"Monarchycall," "Aristocraticall," and "Democraticall."[84] In the face of this development, a range of available positions emerged about what was wrong with democratic popularity and how its dangers could or could not be mitigated. Some degree of popular participation in church government came to be accepted, especially through support for the theory of mixed government or thanks to commonwealth thinking as methods with which to abolish absolutist episcopal governance and limit possible abuses of power by the elders.

Yet openness toward a broader popular involvement in the running of ecclesiastical communities does not suggest that Puritans (who repelled the multitude, privileging the godly few)[85] and radicals like Smyth and Robinson embraced democratic popularity. They both rejected accusations that they propagated its ideals.[86] What they did advocate was the proposition that "the negative voice is in the body of the church, not in the Elders." Superior to a person taken individually, the elders could not "governe contrary to the definition & voice of the body."[87] For them, power

[78] Wilkes, *A second memento for magistrates*, 22, 19.

[79] Wilkes, 29. "Passauantians" recalls the French verb *passer avant* ("to go forward").

[80] Wilkes, 36, 37.

[81] Wilkes, 54.

[82] David Como, "Radical Puritanism, c. 1558–1660," in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, 241–58, at 247.

[83] John Smyth, *Paralleles, censures, observations* […] (Middelburg, 1609), 54–55.

[84] John Robinson, *A iustification of separation* […] (Amsterdam, 1610), 132–33.

[85] See, for example, David Zaret, "Religion and the Rise of Liberal-Democratic Ideology in 17th-Century England," *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 2 (April 1989): 163–79, at 169.

[86] Robinson dismissed all speculation that he and his coreligionists conceived "any popular, or democraticall Church-government." John Robinson, *A Iust and Necessarie Apologie* […] ([Amsterdam], 1625), 38. He also excluded women from all "matters truly publique and ecclesiasticall," 39.

[87] Smyth, *Paralleles*, 55.

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resided in the whole popular "body" of the church, but its "use" legitimately pertained to another element within it.[88] In substance, Smyth and Robinson—no more and no differently from other radical Protestants—rejected operative democracy, and their congregational model did not foster a popular government of the church. The people enjoyed a kind of background popular ecclesiastical sovereignty but were ruled by church officers.[89] This is not to minimize the new participatory, popular functions devised within Protestant radical groups (accompanied by the concomitant development of notions of popular accountability).[90] Rather, it is to reiterate that true democratic popularity, with its enfranchisement of the "rabble" and its aspirations toward a broad egalitarianism, remained utterly unpalatable for another forty years.[91]

DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT, SEDITIOUS POPULAR LITERATURE, AND ROYAL PROCLAMATIONS IN LATE JACOBEAN ENGLAND

The 1610s witnessed various parliamentary efforts to limit James's prerogative (notably, in 1610 and 1614). These tactics assumed added urgency by a sense of international Protestant crisis. At the time of the so-called Addled Parliament (1614), the Catholic convert and king's chaplain-in-ordinary Benjamin Carier (1566–1614) maintained that the Protestants of Europe had in a "short time" degenerated and "become either Tyrannicall, or Popular." According to Carier, it was not so much the former degeneration of which James had to be aware but the latter, the rise of which would deface monarchy beyond repair. The wind of Protestant popularity—blown up by "the Puritans of England, the Hugenots of France, and the Geuses of Germanie," all of them constituting ("with the rest of the Caluinists of all sorts") "a great [popular] faction of christendom"—would "quickly" transform England's political regime "into Heluetian, or Belgian popularitie."[92] Carier's treatise prompted George Hakewill's (1578–1649) piqued riposte that, as "for popularity," "the Heluetians had it long before any change of religion, and those very Cantons

[88] Robinson, *A iustification*, 223–24.

[89] See also John Robinson, *Of Religious Communion* […] ([Amsterdam?] 1614), 23. Richard Tuck has posited the critical distinction between popular sovereignty and popular administration; see Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign. The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge, 2016). The passages illustrated above show that this distinction was first developed in ecclesiological theory, which is particularly important given that Hobbes is one of Tuck's "democratic" theorists, and a thinker who was deeply interested in congregational elections. I thank Jeffrey Collins for his suggestions on this point.

[90] See, for example, Jason S. Maloy, *The Colonial American Origins of Modern Democratic Thought* (Cambridge, 2008), 178.

[91] Popular advice and consent were often viewed as indispensable tools to regulate decisions and actions taken by the eldership and the ministry; they were even invoked. Yet they were no endorsement of a fully democratic government at the head of which stood the demos.

[92] Benjamin Carier, *A treatise* […] (London, 1614), 19. "Belgian" means Dutch, whereas the Geuses are the "Gueux" or "Geuzen" (in English, "Beggars"). They were Calvinists who in the second half of the sixteenth century had opposed Spanish rule in the Netherlands and had founded a republic in the north of the country. The opposite view of the Dutch was to be put forward by the well-known anti-popish polemicist Thomas Scott (1580?–1626), who praised their commonwealth government (Thomas Scott, *The Belgicke Pigsmire* […] (London, 1622), 89–91).

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which call themselues Catholike, retaine that forme and none other vnto this day."[93]

That religious contentions mingled with political issues is not surprising, but it is nevertheless striking how different religious groups and their doctrines were coupled with particular forms of government. Thus in early modern England the discourse of antipopularity implicated the character of a nation, and its foreign rivals, as much as political and theological arguments. Political and religious liberty, ecclesiastical authority and political power, were interconnected aspects of rival modes of thinking; the two dimensions need therefore to be considered together in any analysis of early modern controversies over popularity. The conjunction of the political and the religious was mirrored in the composite use of sources; biblical, classical, and historical materials as well as contemporary *geopolitical* references were employed seamlessly in antidemocratic polemics.

As a result of accumulated tension vis-à-vis his parliament(s), King James caustically referred in 1616 to the "vaine popular humour of some Lawers at the Barre" who fancied themselves "not eloquent and bold spirited enough" except when meddling with the royal "Prerogatiue."[94] Never tired of hunting for popular foes, James singled out those whose "[dis]content with the present forme of Gouernement" fostered "a kind of libertie [i.e., license] in the people" along democratic lines. These firebrands gave "a snatch against a Monarchie, through *their Puritanicall itching after Popularitie*."[95] The twofold challenge to royal sovereignty advanced by lawyers and Puritans was, the choleric James proclaimed, the first disastrous step toward the establishment of democracy.[96] This targeting of lawyers indicates a shift in the application of "popularity," and the discrediting label "popular," to a new category of professionals. Lawyers were deemed to be increasingly vocal in opposing royal policies regarded as absolutist. James associated their opposition to monarchical prerogative with the democratic dynamics of free debate and broad popular political participation.

Authors like James also discriminated between "liberty" and "licence," in that whereas the former indicated rationality, commitment to the public weal, self-mastery, and in some cases property ownership and patriarchal values, the latter implied irrationality, selfishness, amorality, and the pursuit of factional interest. Once again the target was not so much popular sovereignty—which in some generally accepted sense lay behind the authority of the Commons—or republican notions of mixed (mediated) power, but rather direct democratic government tout court.[97] This view is explained, in part, by the circumstance that in the 1620s the electorate (tenants included) became "more independent," further escalating worries about

[93] George Hakewill, *An answvere to a treatise vvritten by Dr. Carier* […] (London, 1616), 87.

[94] James VI and I, "Speech in Star Chamber of 20 June 1616," in Sommerville, *King James VI and I*, 204–28, at 213.

[95] James VI and I, "A Speach in the Starre-Chamber," 222 (emphasis added).

[96] The same opinion had been expounded six years earlier by Lord Keeper Ellesmere (Thomas Egerton, "Speciall Obseruacions Touching all the Sessions of the Last Parlement Anno 7 Regis and etc." (1611), in *Law and Politics in Jacobean England. The Tracts of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere*, ed. Louis A. Knafla (Cambridge, 1977), xi, 254–62, at 254).

[97] Even when deploring past and present republics, the principal focus of much Stuart literature was on unveiling their being *popular* states.

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democratic political aspirations.[98] Popular sovereignty was the expression of a representative organ charged with protecting the interests of the voters (i.e., freeholders); democratic popularity operated on a different—that is, more drastic—scale, since it devolved direct rule to the *demos* or multitude.

As his attitude toward Parliament in the 1620s demonstrates,[99] for James the disadvantage of the House of Commons compared with a body like the Cortes of Castile was precisely that the former was a large, noisy, and disorderly *popular* assembly.[100] In a similar vein, the Venetian ambassador (1622) reported that the members of the Commons were a bunch of "semi-rustics," for the most part "unaccustomed to any authority," which was why that unwieldy body "deliberated with great slowness."[101] This unflattering picture reflected the widespread refrain that the Lower House was incompetent and rash in handling "procedure."[102] It also turned the heat on this body as a quintessential reincarnation of the Athenian assembly's cumbersome inner workings. As a realm of words rather than actions, the Commons were taken to symbolize what was wrong with democratic deliberation altogether.

For James, the rhetoric of popularity typified parliamentary policies appealing to the passions of the multitude. The king keenly felt "the dangers of turbulence to which the pressures for an expanding public sphere were leading" in the last years of his reign.[103] Evincing these concerns, he issued a proclamation (1621) denouncing the "violence" used by "the inferior and baser sort of people" against foreign ambassadors, ministers, and members of the gentry in London. This proclamation followed the throwing of stones at the Spanish ambassador in the capital in March of that year by a group of apprentices. This episode was another sign of what happened, according to James, when things fell into the hands of hostile popular elements.[104] Antipopularity discourse was thus disseminated via royal proclamations for the correction of the broad populace.

Early modern monarchy might court popularity at times but remained implacably opposed to mechanisms for the expression of popular will. After all, in the Jacobean era, petitioning was still a privileged, deferential, and restricted channel, not an instrument for the mass expression of the *vox populi*.[105] Despite their "political implications," in pre-revolutionary England "appeals to public opinion" did not denote

[98] David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000), 79.

[99] See, for example, James VI and I, *My Lords and Gent: all* (Report of James I's speech accepting subsidies but refusing parliamentary supervision of foreign policy), ca. 1621, MS X.d.150, fol. 1v, Folger Shakespeare Library.

[100] Andrew Thrush, "The Personal Rule of James I, 1611–1620," in Cogswell, Cust and Lake, *Politics, Religion and Popularity*, 84–102, at 84.

[101] Cited in Kevin Sharpe, "Introduction: Parliamentary History, 1603–1629: In or Out of Perspective?," in *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (Oxford, 1978), 1–42, at 13.

[102] Sharpe, "Introduction," 27–28, 39.

[103] David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge, 1999), 70.

[104] "A Proclamation for suppressing insolent abuses committed by base people against persons of qualitie, aswell Strangers as others, in the Streetes of the Citie and Suburbes of London, with the parts adjacent [Westminster, 8 April 1621]," in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. 1, *Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603–1625*, ed. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes (Oxford, 1973), 508–11, at 509.

[105] See Zaret, *Origins*, 68, 81–99.

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calls for altering the nature of the body politic or of society.[106] Typical were sermons like that preached by Walter Curll (1575–1647), dean of Lichfield Cathedral, at Whitehall in April 1622. Curll warned that peace and order were menaced by internal popular sedition. Couching his argument in semi-medical terms, he attacked those (Protestants) "troubled with this itch of Innovation," which encouraged them "to turne Monarchy into Anarchy." These "turbulent Tribunes" were pathologically affected by a "vaineglorious humur of popularity."[107] In the same year, the doctor in divinity Robert Willan (d. *1630*) set forth similar convictions regarding those who manipulated "the giddie people," who were always "weyward, when pleased, as when opposed."[108] Willan's main target, however, was not radical Protestants but the "Iesuits, and all such Romanists" who had attempted to assassinate James in 1605.[109] In tune with Curll's and Willan's positions, the king two years later issued a proclamation condemning the spreading of "Popish and seditious Bookes and Pamphlets" and "seditious Puritanicall Bookes and Pamphlets, scandalous to Our person, or State."[110] James again grouped together "Jesuiticall" and "Puritanicall" thinkers as promoters of democratic popularity seeking to provide new spaces of political maneuver for the vulgar populace.

Reflecting the ideological dynamics that informed the final years of Jacobean rule, the pro-Spanish Match Catholic controversialist Matthew Pattenson (fl. 1623) treated Calvinism and popularity as synonymous. Calvin knew "that in popular estates he might preuayle stronglier, and vvith better hope of success, for all his religion is popularitie."[111] Pattenson was adamant that, despite his reputation as a defender of order, Luther was guilty of similar political sins. Luther had delivered "popular" sermons (a potentially democratizing medium) in which he had pressed "the people"—as often, an unspecified entity—under pretence of "zeal and reformation to pull down all … authoritie."[112] That the Catholic Pattenson viewed both Calvin and Luther as popular rebels should not surprise, given that, in the estimation of their enemies, "seditions and popular consistories" were typical of Protestant groups.[113] Turning to a more immediate target, Pattenson then referred to the democratic threat posed by the "popular furie and such seditious Aphorisms as [the German Protestant reformer David] Parraeus and the puritans of the Palatinate hold."[114] Pattenson's rhetoric suited an increasingly heated polemical climate in which James was criticized for his failure to intervene in the Palatinate in support of the Protestant cause. In this context, arguments such as the right to resist royal acts that had not been approved by Parliament became widely popular. In consequence, the treatises of resistance theorists (especially continental ones) were carefully scrutinized—so much so that in May 1622 Cambridge booksellers had been "examined in consistory" concerning purchases of Calvinist resistance literature. Among

[106] Zaret, 173.
[107] Walter Curll, *A Sermon preached at White-Hall on the 28. of April in 1622* (London, 1622), 21–23.
[108] Robert Willan, *Conspiracie against Kings, heavens Scorne* (London, 1622), 19.
[109] Willan, *Conspiracie against Kings, heavens Scorne*, 45.
[110] "A Proclamation against Seditious, Popish, and Puritanicall Bookes and Pamphlets [Nottingham, 15 August 1624]," in Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 599–600, at 599.
[111] Matthew Pattenson, *The image of bothe churches* […] (Tornay, 1623), 90.
[112] Pattenson, *The image of bothe churches*, 45.
[113] Pattenson, 163, 52.
[114] Pattenson, 232.

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these works were the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, Bucanus's *Loci communes*, and Pareus's *Ad Romanos*.[115]

In Jacobean England, accusations of popularity were fired off in several geographical and ideological directions: novelty-seeking Puritans and hotheaded Jesuits were lambasted alongside innovation lawyers. Plebeian levelers, presumed to be full of a dangerous resentment, also became primary objects of public scorn and fear. The frequent use of royal proclamations to contain (perceived) democratically oriented threats from the lower orders (who were afflicted by an economic slump due to the crisis in the textile industry, which led to riots in various counties)[116] betrays the level of official anxiety. Jacobean authors (first and foremost James) were marked by an inordinate animus toward popular dissent. This animosity was to become an ideological and practical staple of the Caroline reign as well, perhaps in an even more uncompromising form. Charles I (1600–1649) and James VI and I might have had very different personalities, but both loathed ideas of popular government and democratic practices, whether identified with vociferous MPs opposing absolute royal prerogative or with radicals endeavoring to enlarge the people's participation in state and church. These views commanded a broad consensus. Catholics, Arminians, and moderate Calvinists—despite their mutual distrust and despite the uproar generated among English Protestants by Jacobean policies vis-à-vis Catholic Spain—shared the conviction that democratic popularity was the worst political, religious, and social calamity of all.

FROM TURMOIL TO DISASTER: JOURNEYING WITH LIBELERS AND COVENANTERS TOWARD THE CACOPHONOUS 1642

The start of the Caroline reign saw a crescendo of political as well as religious tension, due in part to the regime's disastrous military campaigns of 1625–1628. Political conflict pitted those who thought God was punishing England for increasing popery at court against royalists convinced that the king was being betrayed by his subjects. Adverse climatic conditions damaged the harvest, exacerbated unemployment, and triggered popular unrest such as the Western Rising (1629–1630). Charles and his government responded by hardening poor regulations and disciplining all acts thought to be sources of disorder.[117]

Unsurprisingly, writers close to the Stuarts continued to characterize popularity as an attempt to change things along a democratic trajectory. Patrick Scot (fl. 1618–1625) singled out Presbyterians like the theologian Andrew Melville (who had died in 1622) as "*firebrands*" who labored "to enflame the *Church,* and incense the *state*."[118] Through "their designes to studie popularitie, and being drunke with vulgar applause," such reprobates pushed "their conceits many strains higher then

[115] Dwight Brautigam, "Prelates and Politics: Uses of 'Puritan,' 1625–40," in *Puritanism and Its Discontents*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (London, 2003), 49–66, at 64.

[116] John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), 69.

[117] Derek Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603–1660: Kingdom, Community, Commonwealth* (London, 1999), 112–22, 139–40.

[118] Patrick Scot, *Vox vera: or obseruations from Amsterdam* […] (London, 1625), A3a.

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really they are."[119] However, this familiar version of popularity—a performance put on by arrogant demagogues—was not the only one that Scot deployed. While acknowledging that there were "bad *States-men*" who acted "vniustly" toward their subjects, much "worse *Statesmen*," Scot charged, were those who "touch the string of *soueraignty* with too rough a hand, or rather breake it in pulling the natural feathers from it, to enlarge *popular* libertie." This democratizing maneuver opened "a dore" through which "licentiousnesse and disobedience" entered "into the commonwealth" and the polity ended up in the anarchical hands of politically inept and intellectually deficient mechanics.[120]

In the early Caroline years, democratic license (*not* liberty) and incapacity were linked to another hallmark of popularity: the perilously rapid spreading of news among the populace whose appetite for novelty disrupted church and state. For Francis Bacon (1561–1626), popular tumults and circulated libels differed "no more but as brother and sister, masculine and feminine."[121] It was necessary to prevent the common people from accessing political news that they could not fully grasp. Gullible, poor, and uneducated, the rabble knew no discretion but judged news and rumors based on initial appearances. In democratic commonweals, distortion and disinformation were the norm. Through rumors and libels, the "Brayneles Multitude" abandoned their natural docility and pried into princely affairs.[122]

This already contentious situation was aggravated by controversial publications such as *Appello Caesarem*, in which Richard Montagu (bap. 1575–1641) targeted the "popular irregularitie, and puritanicall paritie" propagated by Calvinist divines seeking to place "*Popes* in every Parish" and to introduce "popular Democraties and Democraticall Anarchies in the State."[123] Like his Elizabethan and Jacobean predecessors, Montagu argued that Puritans and papists wanted "to bring in Genevanisme into Church and State, wholly, totally."[124] Recalling an older polemical context, Montagu depicted these two groups as Cartwright's followers, for they attempted to plant "the Presbyterian Anarchie" in England.[125] Popularity for Montagu represented more than a disruptive attempt to alter the ecclesiastical structure of the church: it was an appeal to change the state drastically along democratic lines. Thus, following the eventful 1628—a year when the Petition of Right was passed, the Duke of Buckingham's astrologer, Dr. Lambe, was lynched by a London mob, and Buckingham was murdered by an army officer—the multitude was compared to boisterous sea-waters. Above all, popularity-seeking commoners

[119] Scot, *Vox vera*, 1.

[120] Scot, 53–54.

[121] Francis Bacon, "Of Seditions and Troubles," in *Francis Bacon, The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2002), 341–456, 366–71, at 366. Bacon viewed seditions as having social and economic causes too: as he put it, "rebellions of the belly are the worst" (367). However, Bacon lauded democracies for their lack of internecine sedition and praised Switzerland and the Low Countries for their meritocratic system in appointing counsellors (Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 266).

[122] See Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge, 2004), 30. See also Alastair Bellany, "Libels in Action: Ritual, Subversion and the English Literary Underground, 1603–42," in *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500–1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke, 2001), 99–124, 111.

[123] Richard Montagu, *Appello Caesarem: a jvste appeale from two vniust informers* (London, 1625), 3, 44.

[124] Montagu, *Appello Caesarem*, 72.

[125] Montagu, 112.

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were vilified as mentally insane, morally irresponsible, and politically unfit.[126] As Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) argued in the preface to his translation of Thucydides (1628), the central problem was that demagogic orators were at work "amongst the common people."[127] Hobbes's stance matched Charles I's strategic rhetoric of authority based on "silence"; at the inception of his reign, with war being a priority, the king stated, "The times are now for action, action I say not words."[128]

Parliament was dissolved (1629), the Personal Rule followed (1629–1640), and Ship Money was—very *un-popularly*—imposed (1634–1639). New popular scapegoats were to come to the fore (especially in light of the harsh anti-Calvinist Laudian turn), but attitudes toward popularity did not change (something sustained by the fact that the period 1629–1631 witnessed increased popular disorder due to economic crisis and food dearth).[129] In 1632, Calybute Downing (1606–1644), a clergyman and author, targeted what he called "Democraticall" clergymen for their "Democracie of that new nature," enabling "lay Elders that are neither Ministers nor Magistrates" to assume government in the church.[130] For Downing, these people wanted to "enlarge their owne liberty, till it be dissolved into a loose licentious libertinisme."[131] Unable to restrain themselves, these self-professed "popular[s]" were not even in a position to limit "the vulgar" and so had to endure their "insolencies" and "please" them. From this "truly Democraticall" scenario, only a hideous "popular paritie" could emerge. Calvinist innovators fostered not just "libertie" but also "equality" ("*isegoria*").[132] The 1630s witnessed rising concerns about equality as a feature of democratic popularity. In a sermon delivered in 1636, the royal chaplain Thomas Hurste (d. 1680) admonished his audience to watch out for those "inferiours" who propagated the unnatural notion "that one should bee as good as another: that as wee were at our births, and shall be at our deaths; so in our lives we should bee equall."[133] Among the culprits who promoted this degrading equality were both "Anapbastists" *and* "Jesuiticall" groups. These factions gathered size like "snow-balls"; they aimed to "make themselves a turret or pillar by popularity."[134] At this point, tensions were rising in Scotland too. Here, according to the steadfast Episcopalian dean of Rochester, Walter Balcanquhall (ca. 1586–1645), Puritans and Covenanters were determined to create a democracy. Such rebels sought to preach "to a great troupe or multitude, whose breath" was "the onely aire" they desired "to live in, being shot quite through the head with popularitie."[135]

[126] See, for example, William Vaughan, *The arraignment of slander periury blasphemy* … (London, 1630), 114.

[127] See Noel Malcolm, *Reason of State, Propaganda, and the Thirty Years' War: An Unknown Translation by Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, 2007), 87–88.

[128] Cited in Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge, 2000), 143.

[129] See, for example, Walter, *Crowds*, 69–70.

[130] Calybute Downing, *A Discourse of the State Ecclesiasticall of this Kingdome, in Relation to the Civill* […] (Oxford, 1632), 12.

[131] Downing, *A Discourse of the State Ecclesiasticall*, 16.

[132] Downing, 17.

[133] Thomas Hurste, *The Descent of Authoritie* […] (London, 1637), 2.

[134] Hurste, *The Descent of Authoritie*, 23, 25.

[135] Walter Balcanquhall, *A Large Declaration concerning the late tumults in Scotland* … (London, 1639), 405.

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In the aftermath of the disputes over the imposition of the Prayer Book (1637), King Charles depicted the multitude as a sleepless "hydra" always on the verge of bursting forth with beastly savagery. This explains why court masques such as William Davenant's *Salmacia Spolia* (1640) presented an image of Charles, the divinely appointed sovereign, "subdue[ing]" this cruel monster, cast as unruly democratic Puritans.[136] During the early years of the Long Parliament, within the exploding print culture, the depiction of popular politics in bestial (a famished, many-headed creature) and auditory (a noisy mass fallen prey to persistent/false rumors) terms became prominent. The imagery of cacophonous sounds produced by the rabble was accompanied by the idea molded within the elites of the mobility of the vulgar *mob* (on the move, unstable). The noisy and turbulent spirits of the populace represented the opposite of the reasonable public officers who guaranteed peace in the kingdom.

Democratic popularity threatened to make the cacophony of the vulgar a normal aspect of everyday public life. This prospect represented the antithesis of the Homeric ideal of "*muthos*," authoritative public speech, which was the prerogative of aristocratic and superior (male) actors in the political arena.[137] Popularity legitimated licentious talk by unmuzzling the commonalty to gossip, access news, mock those in power, and make prophesies about the body politic and its governors—whereas monarchy prevented subjects from forecasting the future of kings and queens (something amounting to treason). In this respect, Caroline absolute monarchy promised to nullify all such sources of disruption connected to popularity. Anxiety about the spreading of news and popular texts discussing religion and politics among the unlearned became paramount among the members of the established orders.[138] In a context where the voice of the multitude—identified also with a disorderly crowd deprived of legal personality—had reached unprecedented peaks, the intimidating power of popular cries took center stage in the general dread of democracy-shaped popularity.

Reflecting on the uncontrolled verbal frenzy of popularity, the military commander Robert Ward (fl. 1639) castigated popular speakers whose "windy Oratory" moved "the Sea of waves and billowes of common people to inveigh and batter against their shores, and rocks of Authority."[139] Relying on the populace's fickleness, these seditious orators had made it their trade to seek innovation in political affairs during the Personal Rule. Ignorant "Novelists" denigrated monarchy with the objective of persuading the rabble to embrace democratic popularity. A manifestation of this despicable conduct had occurred, Ward claimed, with the demonization of the once-popular duke of Buckingham. The duke's despisers, Ward concluded, were typical representatives of a "Democrasticall government": people influenced by the practices of ostracism and constantly in thrall, through mental "weaknesse," to

[136] Richard Cust, "Charles I and Popularity," in Cogswell, Cust and Lake, *Politics, Religion and Popularity*, 235–58, at 257.

[137] See Mary Beard, "The Public Voice of Women," *London Review of Books* 36, no. 6 (20 March 2014): 11–14, at 11.

[138] Anna Bayman, "Printing, Learning and the Unlearned," in Raymond, *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, 76–87, at 80–84.

[139] Robert Ward, *Anima'dversions of vvarre* […] (London, 1639), 164.

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the "reports" of orators.[140] English subjects had treated Buckingham exactly as the Athenians had treated Alcibiades. Ward's animosity toward popular orators—"a strange Brood" of late "hatcht" in the country[141]—was typical of antipopularity discourse during the later phase of the Personal Rule. A year later, the diarist John Evelyn (1620–1706) blamed scandal-mongering "libells" filling "the streetes" of London for inciting "the rude rabble" to take an active role in public affairs, a standpoint that reflected increasing fears of the Commons' encouragement of popular petitions.[142] Branded "a furious multitude" and a "disorderly rout," the mob that had attacked Laud's Lambeth residence, given that it was formed by a broad spectrum of the urban male population, ignited real consternation.[143]

In tune with those who identified democratic popularity with the realm of words, Thomas Hobbes in *The Elements of Law* (completed in May 1640 just after the dissolution of the Short Parliament) scathingly defined "the Popular State or Democracy" as nothing "but the Government of a few Orators."[144] According to Hobbes, "a Democracy" was "in effect … no more then an Aristocracy of Orators, interrupted sometimes with the temporary Monarchy of one Orator."[145] Democratic "popularity" insinuated itself into a polity through "Opinions by eloquent Sophistry."[146] Popular governments were arenas of "Eloquence," subject to cascades of untruth(s), leading "to the stirring of Rebellion."[147] After all, this was a time when Charles struggled to control the flourishing market of newsbooks and corantos reporting on events from the Continent, which expressed *popular* thirst for news in both England and Scotland.[148] Popularity was understood to breed libels and mob violence. However, what David Zaret has called "communicative rights"—the possibility for the people to speak, write, and publish freely—were as yet unimaginable. Notions of "consent, openness, and reason" were not the validating "criteria" of political opinion.[149] At this historical juncture, representative government still signaled the empowerment of a fictional "people" with a purely theoretical sovereignty rather than an active popular government. Even the supporters of the idea that Parliament derived its authority from the people reserved for them only a passive role. It was rare to find authors prepared to approve of the full participation of the whole body of citizens (republics), let alone of that of the common people (democracies), especially in a country of considerable territorial size and population like England. The historiography of the period tends to fixate on the question of representation as a marker of democracy and neglects the persistence of antidemocratic opinion

[140] Ward, *Anima'dversions of vvarre*, 165, 166.
[141] Ward, 164.
[142] *The Diary of John Evelyn* […], ed. William Bray (London, 1890), vol. 1, 23.
[143] David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640–1642* (Oxford, 2006), 116.
[144] Thomas Hobbes, *De corpore politico, or, The elements of law, moral and politick* […] (London, 1652) 152 and 105, respectively.
[145] Hobbes, *De corpore politico*, 75.
[146] Hobbes, 172, 173.
[147] Hobbes, 164.
[148] See, for example, Anthony B. Thompson, "Licensing the Press: The Career of G. R. Weckherlin during the Personal Rule of Charles I," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 653–78, at 669.
[149] Zaret, *Origins*, 262, 265.

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across the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[150] The common people (comprising audacious mechanics deemed to be at work to subvert the pillars of government and order) continued to be deeply disparaged. If it is true that they began to acquire a new visibility on the political scene and in political debates, thanks to the consolidation of the theory of mixed government, it is also important to remember that for many this was the tragic consequence of the machinations of noisy *democratic* factions in the Commons (even though we know this was not the case, as nobody embraced democracy full on).[151]

In the early 1640s, the conviction that popularity in the Commons had awakened a popular Hydra was widely shared. Sustained by a tradition of municipal "civic democracy" and marked by outbreaks of rioting,[152] London was seen as a theatre of soaring discontent. Swelling multitudes of irrational and ill-educated commoners of all ages, statuses, and genders were arrogantly expressing their opinions; for the courtier and baronet Sir Thomas Aston (1600–1641), who was reacting to the petitions organized to demand the abolition of episcopacy (1641), it was a circus of madness, a world turned upside down.[153] Because of the numerous "licentious raylers (whose pamphlets garnish every stall),"[154] many in England were being "deceived" by the "imaginary good" of "parity and libertie infus'd into vulgar apprehension under the pretext of pietie, and reformation."[155] So grave was the situation, Aston thundered, that "such popular poisons" would "soon" contaminate "the body of the Common-wealth," dissolving "the Nerves & Ligaments of Government."[156] The voting freemen of the capital with its wards structure, crowd action, and alehouse debating culture augmented Aston's sense that an inundation of democratic ideas and practices was swamping all order and hierarchy.

After all, attacks that had initially targeted the bishops and the lords had become open condemnations of the king. It was therefore no surprise that the House of Commons was accused of kindling popular tumults and of *popularizing* activities in the country—an accusation that the stalwart parliamentarian Henry Parker was at pains to rebut.[157] In *His Majesties Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* (1642), Charles himself expressly denounced the chaos caused by "Democracy," which threatened "Tumults, Violence and Licentiousnesse."[158] He referred contemptuously to "the Common people" whose lack of political vision (due to "their number") and "Licence" and "wilde humours" were utterly "contrary soever to established Law." Charles then blamed the Covenanters—who encapsulated the principal features attributed to democratic popularity during the pre-Civil War years—for

[150] Glenn Burgess, *British Political Thought, 1500–1600: The Politics of the Post-Reformation* (Basingstoke, 2009), 226.

[151] Christopher Hill, "The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking," in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. C. H. Carter (New York, 1965), 296–324, at 311.

[152] See, for example, Hirst, *England*, 186, 187.

[153] See Thomas Aston, *A Remonstrance, against Presbitery* […] (London, 1641).

[154] Aston, *A Remonstrance*, B3v.

[155] Aston, C3v, C4r.

[156] Aston, C4r.

[157] Michael Mendle, *Dangerous Positions: Mixed Government, the Estates of the Realm, and the Making of the "Answer to the xix propositions"* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 169–70, 182.

[158] *His Maiesties answer to the xix propositions of both Houses of Parliament* (London, 1642), B1v.

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pursuing "Parity and Independence," for erasing "all Rights and proprieties," and for leveling "all distinctions of Families and merit," so as to transform monarchy into "a dark equalle Chaos of [popular] Confusion" dominated by the likes of "a *Iack Cade*, or a *Wat Tyler*."[159]

Only a little later, many in England came to feel that equality-hunting spirits like these rabble-leaders of two notorious rebellions had their *popular* ways put into practice. But this is another story, and one that has been told many times before.

CONCLUSION

In the historiography of early modern England, popularity has been correctly associated with aristocratic demagogues like Essex and Buckingham, with participatory political roles among elite and semi-elite officeholders, and with notions of a mixed polity.[160] But popularity was more than these things: more than fear of popular spirits in Parliament seeking to restrain monarchical prerogative, more than a label used to describe support for freeholders' right to vote in elections. Interpreted in these terms, popularity sounds rather *elitist,* in that it refers to factions of rival politicians intent on undermining monarchical power, or to members of the politically active classes accused of pandering to the common people. By failing to take into account the plurality of meanings that popularity carried, historians have ignored how, across the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and early Stuart eras, the *thing* and the *concept* of popularity were invested by preachers, politicians, and pamphleteers with a profoundly negative implication: the impulse to cultivate a democratic leveling across English society.

Criticism of popularity entailed direct and specific criticism of democratic principles and practices. It presumed a shared negative attitude toward the possibility that the populace, or even the middling sort, might become legitimate political interlocutors in the *polis*. Opposition to democratic popularity did not limit itself to one perspective on merely political, social, or religious order: instead, this ideological horizon was marked by multiple shifting points of views adopted by different agents. This antidemocratic front did not present a coherent blueprint set out to defeat the alleged supporters of popularity. What it did offer was a clear assessment of why popular government was an unviable prospect in state as much as in church affairs. In this respect, we can speak of the catholicity of this antipopularity paradigm. It was possible to be a Puritan and reject all things democratic; people attacked popery and Arminian tyranny without wanting to implement popular government; Catholic authors who branded Swiss-affected Protestants democratic rebels were, in turn, smeared as supporters of Parsonian or Jesuitical democracy. Puritans, Jesuits, and Presbyterians were the most common targets of antipopularity rhetoric, particularly in its early years, but they had company: lawyers and vociferous (internationally influenced) preachers at various stages in the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras; libelers, and demagogic orators at the start of the Caroline reign; Scottish Covenanters and opinionated urban mobs in the late 1630s and early 1640s. All came under fire for promoting democratic popularity.

[159] *His Maiesties answer to the xix propositions*, B2r.
[160] See above note 1.

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The long approach taken by this article has demonstrated that the Swiss model, or the Genevan way, was feared as both a democratic ecclesiastical model and a democratic political one. Particularly in the aftermath of uprisings, antipopular rhetoric was directed at equality-seeking democratic figures. During periods of intense parliamentary opposition to royal policies, that rhetoric excoriated the faults of democratic assemblies. During phases of intense ecclesiastical dispute, church "radicals" of different hues were portrayed as foreign agents stirring things up in Athenian fashion (significantly, *republican* Rome was not much of a target). Instead of intensifying at certain historical junctures, as was the case with religious conflict in the 1590s and 1620s,[161] criticism of democratic popularity remained strong and unwavering. For all its hysteric tones, antipopularity articulated serious concerns throughout the period ca. 1580–1642. *Democratizing* forces—neither republican (expounding Ciceronian principles of active and virtuous citizenship) nor populist (connoting demagogic but elite pandering to the multitude)—were seen as a particular threat in early modern England, seeking to empower new classes in a regime of broad participation.

That popularity was no mere polemical slur is indicated by the detailed descriptions of it in the sources referenced here and by the diverse political models and intellectual traditions they deployed to define it. Even as a label-libel, it was a telling aspect of the political culture of late Tudor and early Stuart England. In fact, the enduring offensive on popularity suggests the considerable range of popular tendencies developing at that time in response to absolutism, episcopacy, and censorship. Much remains to be understood about the shape of democratic ideas as they circulated during this period, but the extensive and rich tradition of antidemocratic rhetoric helps us to make out its (future) outlines.[162]

This article has indicated how pervasive antidemocratic criticism was around the turn of the seventeenth century when it infiltrated diverse political, economic, social, and, most decisively, ecclesiastical debates. This discourse linked popularity to a mean egalitarianism and eventually to the abolition of property, to popular violence, to the fickle rabble seeking political and ecclesiastical innovation, to territories of limited extension such as Athens and Switzerland, to the inversion of divine, natural, and social order, and to spiritual impoverishment. The language of antipopularity was spoken fluently by a wide swath of authors throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and up to the Caroline reign. In fact, it shaped public controversies from at least the 1580s.

Popularity was perceived as not only the attainment of the elite demagogue but a dangerous political and ecclesiastical system. It was understood to threaten a complete relocation of authority: indeed, it implied a seismic shift in the exercise of power, defying notions of inherited privilege and exploding traditional justifications for inequality.[163] Popularity was said to amount to an eruption of rebellious activities and, at the same time, to a long-term unrealistic possibility. It also corresponded to the opening of the floodgates for the worst kinds of disorders: the politicization of

[161] John Guy, "The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Polity," in Guy, *The Reign*, 126–49, at 148–49.

[162] This was to be so in conjunction with notions of representative democracy and popular accountability formulated by such pamphleteers as John Streater.

[163] All of this explains why *democracy* remained a dirty word well into the nineteenth century. See, for example, Robert Saunders, "Democracy," in *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Craig and James Thompson (Basingstoke, 2013), 142–67, esp. 142–44.

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mad-brained multitudes, the appropriation of public space by fanatic Puritans and Jesuits, the abolition of traditional societal hierarchies, the instauration of all sorts of heresies based on foreign standards, and the entitlement of base mechanics to express their unpredictable judgment on things they knew nothing of. Democratic popularity was depicted as a disease affecting the state, the patriarchal household, and the soul. In substance, it represented in the mind of many observers and commentators (writers, theologians, philosophers, kings) the end of civilization and the very antithesis of politics. Popularity—*thing* and *concept*—was more than a disruptive type of politics conducted by elites: it was an attempt at creating a democratic society, indeed, at inventing *homo democraticus*.

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