TYRANNY AND TYRANNICIDE IN MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND: A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE?

Claire GHEERAERT-GRAFFEUILLE
Université de Rouen

Women seem to have been mostly absent from the proceedings that led to the execution of the King on 30 January 1649. The commissioners who signed Charles I's death warrant were reluctant to accept women's participation in the debates. In January 1649, they notoriously silenced the Presbyterian Lady Ann Fairfax and the Royalist Lady Anna De Lille who had interrupted their session, notifying them that the trial of the King was none of their business[1]. In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton mocks "Court Ladies, not the best of Women; who, when they grow to that insolence as to appeare active in State affaires, are the certain sign of a dissolut, degenerat, and pusillanimous Commmon-wealth"[2]. It should also be noted that the supporters of the King were apparently more interested in women's emotional responses to the regicide than in their verbal comments: they mostly portrayed the King's female sympathisers as passive creatures, mourning for the King:[3] "As women, beholding Christ's passion wept: so many women, beholding their Sovereign of a Scaffold, wept bitterly"[4]. Such representations of female passivity – that are also typical of the iconographical representations of the regicide – are not surprising given the fact that women were legally excluded from politics. A collection of statutes and customs (published in 1632) stated they had "no voyce in parliament. They [made] no laws, they consent[ed] to none, they abrogate[d] none. All of them [were] understood either married or to be married and their desires [were] subject to their husbands"[5]. It should also be remembered that the Bible prohibited women from speaking in public, most notably in Paul's Epistle: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a

[1] Marcus Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 51-54.
[2] John Milton, *The Complete Prose Works*, 8 vols, Don M. Wolfe (ed.), New Haven, New Haven UP, 1953-1982, vol. 3, p. 370.
[3] Nevitt, *op. cit.*, p. 55-59.
[4] *The Life and Death of King Charles the Martyr, Parallel'd With our Saviour in All His Sufferings*, London, 1649, p. 6.
[5] *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights;* or, *The Lawes Provision for Women*, London, 1632, p. 153.

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woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2.11-12). However, despite these traditional restrictions on women's participation in the public debate, their relative silence in the pamphlet discussions of the trial and execution of the King is paradoxical because of their loquacity in the 1640s, when they preached, prophesied, petitioned Parliament, and published political and religious writings in an unprecedented way. In this paper, I shall not investigate the reasons for the scarcity of women's responses to the fate of the King – Marcus Nevitt has already done this convincingly – but explore their contents. My paper will be concerned with the royalist prophetess Mary Pope (*fl.* 1622-53?) who rejected the proceedings of the army and purged Parliament as utterly illegal[6]. I shall then discuss the prophecies of Elizabeth Poole (*bap.* 1622? - *d. after* 1668), a Baptist who went before the Council of the Army on 29 December 1648, to deliver a vision about the cure of the kingdom and who returned there on 5 January 1649 to give a paper in which she cautioned the army officers against killing the King[7]. Finally I will briefly deal with the case of Fifth Monarchist Mary Cary (*b.* 1620 - 1621)[8] who, in 1651, retrospectively defended the regicide in a millenarian prophecy, *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall; Or, A Scripture-Prophesie of King James, and King Charles, and of This Present Parliament, Unfolded*. Contrary to what we may expect, these women who come from various Protestant churches all show an acute awareness of their adversaries' arguments as well as an excellent knowledge of contemporary events. Nevertheless, they much differ in their treatment of regicide. What is particularly striking, though, as the common denominator of their productions, is their descriptions of Charles I as a tyrant, "a wicked king," wielding absolute power and trampling the laws of the land[9] – a characterization that would prove essential in Bradshaw's sentence on Saturday, 27 January 1649: "the said Charles Stuart, as a tyrant, traitor, murderer; and public

[6] She was married to John Pope (d. 1646), a member of the London Salters' Company (Hilda Smith, Mihoko Suzuki and Susan Wiseman (eds.), *Women's Political Writings,1610-1725,* London, Pickering and Chatto, 2007, p. 67). She did not agree with the Independents and the Presbyterians (Mary Pope, *A Treatise of Magistracy, Shewing the Magistrate Hath Beene, and for Ever Is to Be the Cheife Officer in the Church,* London, 1647, p. 80). N. Smith describes her as an Erastian (Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 125). She wrote a *Treatise of Magistracy* (1647) and two petitions to the Parliament and Army discussed here: *Behold Here is a Word* and *Heare, Heare, Heare, Heare*.

[7] Smith, *Women's Political Writings, op. cit.,* p. 45. She followed the minister William Kiffin into the Particular Baptist sect. She was expelled from her congregation for heresy and immorality, and migrated to Abingdon, Berkshire (*Cf. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*).

[8] She began writing in 1645 (*The Glorious Excellencie of the Spirit*). She was a Fifth Monarchist by 1648. In 1651 (*Little Horns Doom*) she wrote that she changed her name from Cary to Rande (Smith, *Women's Political Writings, op. cit.*, p. 165).

[9] "[…] le caractère distinctif fondamental de toute tyrannie n'est pas tant l'usurpation, la prise illégale du pouvoir ou l'usage de la violence et de la méchanceté, que la forme du gouvernement arbitraire, 'absolu,' sans bornes" (Mario Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, PUF, 2001, p. 33). Voir aussi Robert Zaller, "The Figure of the Tyrant in English Revolutionary Thought", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54.4, 1993, p. 585-86.

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enemy to the good people of this nation, shall be put to death by the severing his head from his body"[10]. My contention is that women's reflections on tyranny illuminate an event that was almost exclusively discussed from a male point of view, thus sharpening our understanding of gender politics in mid-seventeenth century England. Therefore, before looking at women's discourses on tyranny and tyrannicide in detail, I would like to examine how they justified their meddling with state matters, because, as a commentator put it in a newsbook in May 1649: "[i]t can't be a good world when women meddle in State matters. If their tongues must be pratling, they may finde other talke, And their Husbands are to blame, that they have no fitter employment for them"[11].

In order to circumvent the restrictions on their participation in the political debate Cary, Pope, and Poole all presented themselves as God's prophets – a current posture and "democratizing force" for women in mid-seventeenth-century England[12]. However, unlike more mystical women prophets such as Quakers or the Fifth Monarchist Anna Trapnel, they did not unequivocally portray themselves as God's passive instruments to authorize their speech: it can also be argued that they deliberately used the genre of prophecy to address the issue of regicide in a personal and rational way.

In order to be heard by the army officers gathered at Whitehall, Elizabeth Poole unsurprisingly claimed to be a prophetess of the Lord, declaring before the grandees that the vision she received from God overwhelmed her and that the "gift of God" was upon her, being "in divine pleasure made sensible of the might of the affaires which lye[d] upon [them]"[13]. However, despite the necessity to appear as God's messenger, she maintained that the interpretation of the visions she received from God were her own. This caused a stir amongst the officers because they were at odds with the rest of the message and the prophetess seemed to have uttered them on her own initiative: "Bring him to his triall, that he may be convicted in his conscience, but touch not his person"[14]. There is a similar paradoxical position of utterance in Mary Cary's prophecy. In the liminary pieces to her 1651 treatise, she professed to have been inspired by the Lord, to be a "very weake, and unworthy instrument," and not to "have done this worke by any strength of [her] owne"[15] –

[10] Voir URL <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/17century/topic_3/trial.htm>. Consulted 15 April 2009.
[11] *Continued Heads; Or, Perfect Passages in Parliament* (20-27 April 1649), sig. B2^{v}.
[12] Jane Baston, "History, Prophecy, and Interpretation: Mary Cary and Fifth Monarchism", *Prose Studies* 1.3, 1998, p. 7.
[13] Elizabeth Poole, *A Vision: Wherein is Manifested the Disease and Cure of the Kingdome*, London, 1648, p. 3.
[14] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 6.
[15] Mary Cary, *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall; or, A Scripture Prophecie of James and King Charles, and of This Present Parliament, Unfolded*, London, 1651, A8^{v} ; see as well her *Resurrection of the Witnesses* (Mary Cary, *The Resurrection of the Witnesses, and Englands Fall from (The Mystical Babylon) Rome Clearly Demonstrated to Be Accomplished*, London, 1648, p. 65-67).

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yet, once again, her agency is perceptible throughout the rational and systematic exegesis of the seventh book of Daniel that follows[16]. At the end of the prophecy she even admits that "things of [her] own suppositions [may] have slipt [from her]," and therefore, she offers an apology: "I shall not presse any to believe these things, because I have said them, unlesse they do therein hear the voice of Christ"[17]. Finally, like Mary Cary and Elizabeth Poole, Mary Pope insists both on the divine authorship of her tracts and on her own responsibility. In order to defend herself against potential attacks, she reminds her reader that "God hath gilded [her] wings with confidence in his promise, and raised [her] spirits"[18]; she also says that because of the "power of God," she will not have to "restrain [her] tongue"[19]. Yet, her two tracts reassert the divine right of kings in a most rational style – Pope is in no way overwhelmed by the Lord and her agency is unquestionable.

Hence, far from being mere passive instruments of God, Cary, Pope and Poole found in prophecy the ways and means to develop their personal views. The words used for the titles of their tracts – "alarum," "behold," "heare" – are reminiscent of Old Testament prophecies and testify to the sense of urgency they wanted to convey: one cannot but listen to what God says; one cannot block one's ears to his Word. In this respect, the genre of prophecy is not a mere device for women to excuse themselves for transgressing gender boundaries, but also an instrument of power and a way to influence rulers. Mary Pope interestingly explains that only prophets who are commanded to speak by God have the right to advise kings; it is noteworthy that the role of political counsellor she gives to the prophets of the Old Testament is precisely the role she gives to herself:

> And we know *Saul*, and *David*, and *Solomon* was [*sic*] not without their failings; yet they were not reproved by any of their own Subjects, not so much as by the Prophets, but by special command from God to the Prophets; and then their arrand was expressely given them from God, every word that they should say, and God hath left the same word.[20]

Similarly Poole presents herself as a divine advisor, using her authority as a prophet of the Lord, to influence earthly powers. In *An[other] Alarum*, she goes so far as to impersonate God, whom she deems to be the supreme judge: "*Charles*, bow downe thy head to the stroke, thou hast deserved it at my hands, saith the Lord, and doe thou confesse it, but accuse them not, leave them to my

[16] David Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary", *Studies in English Literature*, 46.1, 2006, p. 138.
[17] Cary, *Little Hornes*, *op. cit.*, p. 45-46.
[18] Mary Pope, *Heare, Heare, Heare, Heare, A Word or Message from Heaven; to All Covenant Breakers*, London, 1648 [1649], p. 32 bis.
[19] Pope, *Treatise of Magistracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[20] Mary Pope, *Behold, Here is a Word; or; An Answer to the Late Remonstrance of the Army*, London, 1649, p. 9.

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Judgement"[21]. There is no denying that the sacred and urgent dimension of these women's political interventions isolates them from the rest of the polemic production and that some of their arguments are gendered – the fact that women were excluded from the forum and that they did not share the same legal culture as their male counterparts unquestionably affected their conceptions of the regicide[22]. Nevertheless, in their visions of tyranny, religious and ideological choices prevailed over gender as I shall now try to demonstrate.

In their tracts, both Mary Pope and Elizabeth Poole opposed the regicide before it occurred. They both viewed the execution of a king as a sacrilege that would provoke God's wrath[23], but their visions of the English monarchy and their readings of contemporary events diverged. Although they were both critical of Charles I, they did not agree on what should be done – or should not be done – against him. In 1647, in *A Treatise of Magistracy*, Mary Pope, a "moderate Puritan who remained within the Anglican church"[24], hints at the tyranny of Charles I whom she thought was not a good Christian king because he did not safeguard the integrity of the church, not being the "cheife officer in the church and over the church" he should have been[25]; she dwells at length on his impiety and compares him with biblical tyrants such as Rehoboam who did not listen to the advice of his grandfather David[26]. On the other hand, she advises him to follow Nebuchodnozor, who also violated divine law, on the path of Reformation[27]. In two of her later tracts, *Behold, Here is a Word* and *Heare, Heare, Heare*, she continues to highlight the King's "failings"[28], recognizing that "he [has] acted and done contrary to the command of God and his own laws"[29]. Nevertheless, this criticism of the King's government does not lead Mary Pope to adopt the ideas of Charles's enemies. Despite her excellent knowledge of Presbyterian and Independent arguments, and more generally of anti-royalist literature, she defends to the utmost the divine institution of monarchy with the King at the head of an Episcopal church[30]. The idea of tyrannicide appears totally illegal and unthinkable to her. Without a king,

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[21] Elizabeth Poole, *An[other] Alarum of Warre,* London, 1649, p. 11.
[22] Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England,* Oxford, Oxford UP, 2006, p. 169.
[23] Pope, *Behold, op. cit.*, p. 15.
[24] Stevie Davies, *Unbridled Spirits. Women of the English Revolution: 1640-1660*, London, The Women's Press, [1998] 1999, p. 142.
[25] Pope, *A Treatise, op. cit.*, p. 69; Zaller, "The Figure of the Tyrant", art. cit. p. 594 and 596.
[26] Pope, *A Treatise, op. cit.*, A1-A1^{v}.
[27] Pope, *ibid.*, A1^{v}.
[28] Pope, *Behold, op. cit.*, p.3.
[29] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 7 ; See also Pope, *ibid.*, p. 36**:** "[he] himself did actions contrary to the Rule, and suffered others to doe so too. First, in marrying an outlandish woman, and suffering idolatry to be set up in the Kingdome, and in prophaning the Lords day, seconding his Fathers sin, in that he suffered the Bishops, and others about him to neglect to hold forth those just, holy, righteous and good Lawes that were left unto him by his Ancestors, and made in and upon the Morall Law."
[30] Zaller, "The Figure of the Tyrant", art. cit., p. 585.

the kingdom is "a preposterous Body without a Head"[31]. Her condemnation of the projected killing of the sovereign consists in a systematic confutation of the arguments of *The Remonstrance of the Army* of November 1648[32], mostly concerned with the "tyranny and the injustice of kings and others"[33]. She disagrees with the analysis and conclusions of the *Remonstrance* but also with its method and presuppositions. Describing the text as "monstrous"[34], she regrets that in it "Reason is said to be the teacher"[35]). She believed indeed that political decisions and theories had to be founded on God's word[36]. The Bible should not only serve as a store of examples – as "a directory"[37] – but also provide arguments *per se.* The model of good government is to be found in the Bible as "Kingdomes and Armies are to be regulated and ordered by it"[38]. Consequently, the providential power to judge Charles I claimed by the Army was unlawful because "God hath not anywhere in his word put [kings] over to any of their Inferiours to be tryed by them"[39]. Besides, she argues, bringing Charles to trial amounts to ignoring biblical precedents where only God could lawfully judge tyrants. Herod, she says, was not deposed by God despite his massacre of the Innocents, but was to be judged in heaven[40]. For, she repeatedly states, the King is above the law and protected by "absolute Impunity"; he is "supream", "not to give an account to any man on earth of any of his matters; but to God that is in heaven"[41]. Logically, Pope despises human justice which she describes with accuracy – "the laws of the land", "Court Maxims" and "Law-books"[42] while she extols God's law "which ought to be the highest law to be observed amongst men", because, she added, "God is the great Law-giver"[43]. This conception of divine justice also explains why she believed that the proceedings of the purged Parliament and army were totally illegal and why she detested the "man of blood" argument contained in the *Remonstrance*: the King had to be brought to justice for "the treason, blood, and mischief he [was] therein

[31] Pope, *Behold, op. cit.*, p. 5.
[32] See *A Remonstrance of his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax, Lord general of the Parliament's Forces, and of the General Council of Officers, held at Saint Albans the 16thof November 1648.* Reproduced in J. P. Kenyon (éd.), *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary,* Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1986, p. 286-92.
[33] Kenyon, *ibid*, p. 281.
[34] Pope, *Heare, op. cit.*, p. 8.
[35] Pope, *Behold, op. cit.*, p. 4.
[36] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 1-3.
[37] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 1.
[38] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 1.
[39] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 2, *Heare, op. cit.*, p. 3.
[40] See Pope, *ibid.*, p. 9**:** "And when our Saviour Christ was born and *Herod* made king over the Jews by *Caesar Augustus*, we read in holy writ that many male children *Herod* slew thinking thereby to destroy Christ; yet for all that blood he shed, God did not take him away till the full time of his dayes were expired: Nay God caused *Joseph* to carry his own sonne Christ into *Aegypt* till *Herod* was dead."
[41] Pope, *Behold.*, p. 2.
[42] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 15, p. 2.
[43] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 15, p. 1.

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guilty of"[44]; namely, once a king had shed blood, he was polluted and he "could be a king no more"[45]. On the contrary, Mary Pope thought Parliament and the army – not the King – were to be held responsible for the bloodshed of the civil wars: "your height of disobedience in resisting Gods command hath brought all this blood upon the Land"[46].

Besides, the supremacy of divine law implies subjects should obey their magistrates, even though they are tyrants. True liberty, Pope argues on the title page of *Behold, Here is a Word*, lies not in rebellion but in obedience to the King because only subjection to God's deputy on earth can lead "out of bondage". In order to defend such unconditional submission, she refers to the fifth commandment and uses patriarchal arguments, portraying the King as the natural father to his nation[47]; in case of tyranny subjects should bear their oppression patiently: "Children must obey their Parents in all things; and Servants their Masters according to the flesh; yea, though they are wicked, and doe beat them for well doing, they are not to turn again, but to bear it patiently"[48]. Pope's vision of tyranny eventually excludes all contractual elements and disregards the people's natural rights, rejecting the supremacy of "that suprem Councel or Representative body of the people"[49], *i.e.* Parliament; it opens on to an apocalyptic warning addressed to all those who would dare break God's command in executing the King. Political theory is here re-absorbed into a threatening discourse reminiscent of female Quaker prophecies in the 1650s; the tyrant here becomes the instrument of God's wrath – a function he has in divine right theory:[50]

> You were told long agone […] who was the Person in chief that God hath set to govern: you will see it suddenly, you that are so hasty to try your brethren that break your commands, and forget God, take heed, he is comming to tear you in pieces, and who shall deliver you, Christ will not own your cause.[51]

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[44] Kenyon, *op. cit.*, p. 289; Patricia Crawford, "Charles Stuart, That Man of Blood", *The Journal of British Studies*, 16.2, 1977, p. 53-57.

[45] Crawford, *ibid.*, p. 42. The Biblical texts that support this argument are Genesis 9.6 ("Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed") and Numbers 35.33 ("for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that it shed therein, but by the blood that shed it").

[46] Pope, *Heare*, *op. cit.*, bis 22, 25.

[47] See Pope, *Behold*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[48] Pope, *ibid.*, p. 9; Katherine Gillespie, *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century: English Women Writers and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 26). See similar arguments in John Maxwell, *Sacro-sancta Regum Majestas: Or, The Sacred and Royall Prerogative of Christian Kings*, London, 1644 and Dudley Digges, *The Unlawfulnesse of Subjects Taking Up Arms against Their Soveraigne*, Oxford, 1644.

[49] Pope, *Heare*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[50] Robet Zaller, "Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29.3, 1998, p. 764.

[51] Pope, *Behold*, *op. cit.*, p.18.

As for Elizabeth Poole, her visions and reflections addressed to the Council of the Army were originally delivered on 29 December 1648, and 6 January 1649, at a time when the officers discussed the fate of the King[52]. Like Mary Pope, she tried to halt the execution of the monarch in a final apocalyptic address to the army: "Wherefore thus saith the Lord, Behold I will lay your skirts upon your face, so that all that pass by, may behold your nakednesse; for I will bring downe the Mountaines and exalt the Vallies; for behold, all the high places of the Earth shall be brought downe, not one left"[53]. Her arguments, though, are radically opposed to Mary Pope's. The main reason for this divergence is religious as Elizabeth Poole originally moved in Baptist circles where many people considered the execution of the King as a necessity[54]. Like most members of her community and the officers gathered at Whitehall, she supported the fact that the King had to be punished but she abhorred the idea of an execution which she regarded as a transgression of divine law: the King had to be punished for his crimes but his body remained sacred. "Bring him to his trial that he may be convicted in his conscience, but touch not his person" are the very words by which she concluded her second hearing at the General Council of the Army[55]. Reminding the officers that the King was a consecrated figure caused her fall and her ostracization, "her view being apparently unaligned with any substantial interest group"[56]. The fact that she disapproved of tyrannicide did not mean she did not think Charles I was a genuine tyrant. She mentions the traditional features of tyranny reminding her audience that the King reigned by his own will[57], "betray[ed] his trust", "prophaned his Saviour-ship," and exercised "absolute" power[58]. In order to shed light on the nature of the King's tyranny and show its consequences in an edifying way, she compares the monarch to a "father and Husband," who "forgot his Subordination to divine Faith hood and headship" and who took the army as a wife "for his own lusts". Poole infers from the patriarchal husband-wife analogy that the "yoke [is] taken from your necks [the army's]"[59], suggesting thereby that the army is no longer subordinated to the King. Nonetheless, the divorce she here promotes is limited as she rules out the very idea of executing the tyrant, reminding the army that what God hath bound man cannot

[52] Manfred Brod, "Politics and Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Poole", *Albion* 31.3, 1999, p. 398-401; Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 136-49.
[53] Poole, *An[other] Alarum, op. cit.*, p. 17.
[54] Brod, art.cit., p. 397-98.
[55] Poole, *A Vision, op. cit.*, p. 6. Her words are also reminiscent of Psalms 105.14: "Touch not the Lord's anointed."
[56] Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 147 and Brod, "Politics and Prophecy,", art.cit., p. 399.
[57] See for instance *A Briefe Discourse upon Tyrants and Tyranny* (1642) quoted by Zaller ("The Figure of the Tyrant", art.cit., p. 595): "Tyrannie is most commonly taken for the irregularity of him that governs in chiefe, who only rules according to his own will" (1). In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton defines the tyrant as someone who "reigns only for himself and his faction" (Milton, *op. cit.*, 3, p. 212).
[58] Poole, *A Vision, op. cit.*, p. 3, p. 4.
[59] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 4.

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unbind:[60] "although this bond be broken on his part, you never heard that a wife might put away her husband, as he is the head of her body, but for the Lords sake suffereth his terror to her flesh, though she be free in the spirit of the Lord"[61]. The notion of an indestructible sacred bond existing between man and wife serves to invalidate the argument of the regicides who said that blood guilt had to be expiated[62]. Elizabeth Poole did not deny Charles was to be held responsible for the bloodshed of the Civil Wars but like the Presbyterians she reminded the army of the third clause in the *Solemn League and Covenant* (1643) in which the signers declared that they "should preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority." On this point, she opposed the army that by 5 January 1649 had set up the High Court for the King's trial: "there was nothing would satisfie you, but the blood of the King; a man with whom you were in Covenant, and had sworne to defend his Person[63]. Thus, Poole asserted that the people had to protect the King because of the covenant that existed between them; this covenant, however, was not reciprocal: in her quasi mystical representation of kingship the monarch is ultimately not accountable to the people but to God who alone is able to judge tyrants. No contract could limit the king's patriarchal power:

> Stretch not forth the hand against him: For know this, the Conquest was not without divine displeasure, whereby Kings came to reigne, though through lust they tyranized which God excuseth not, but judgeth; and his judgements are fallen heavy, as you see, upon *Charles* your Lord.[64]

So the prophetess did not endorse the Leveller idea of popular sovereignty – Kingly power should not be given to the people: the "kingly power" committed to the army should remain in their "hands," she explains, because they embody, as it were by proxy, "the spirit of Judgement and Justice"[65]. In this providential transfer of power, royal authority should be preserved and improved as Poole solemnly declared: "The Kingly power is undoubtedly fallen into your hands; therefore my advice is, that you take heed to improve it for the Lord"[66]. The officers are

[60] In the Church of England separation *a mensa et thoro* was authorized – but not divorce *a vinculo*; remarriage was not allowed. See Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille, *La Cuisine et le forum. L'émergence des femmes sur la scène publique pendant la Révolution anglaise (1640-1660)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, p. 52.
[61] Poole, *A Vision, op. cit.*, p. 5. On this marriage trope, see Gheeraert-Graffeuille, *op. cit*., p. 81-92 and Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 150-152. Susan Wiseman concludes: "the examples all indicate that the operation of civil society may be contractual but, *in the last instance*, social relationships are divinely decreed and God's representatives (kings and fathers) possess certain elements of divine authority" (152).
[62] Manfred Brod, "The Seeker Culture of the Thames Valley", *Cromohs Virtual Seminars. Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries)*, M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), 2006-2007, p. 5.
[63] Poole, *An[other] Alarum of War, op. cit.*, p. 3.
[64] Poole, *A Vision, op. cit.*, p. 5.
[65] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 2.
[66] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 2.

supposed to be "watchmen" looking after a diseased commonwealth, which Poole sees as "a woman, crooked, sick, weak & imperfect in body"[67]. In this scenario, the royal office is only delegated, it is neither degraded nor altered; in no way is the army supposed to kill a king they provisionally replace; on the contrary, the person of the king is to be "honour[ed]"[68] so that the sacred bond between him and his kingdom may be preserved. Thus, in Poole's vision, tyrannicide is not the appropriate solution to punish the King because it goes against God's will.

Unlike Pope or Poole whose prophecies were delivered publicly before the execution of Charles I, the Fifth Monarchist Mary Cary[69] published her pro-regicide tract two years after the King's execution, explaining that the prophecies contained in *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall* had been written *seven years* earlier[70]. To account for this delayed publication, she also writes in several places that "[a]ll prophecies are best understood in the fulfilling of them, the truth of the thing will doubtlesse now be the more prevailing with the Saints"[71]. This may refer to the fact that the full meaning of tyrannicide and its consequences could only be fully grasped some time after the event. It may be also understood as a way to claim the right to counsel the Rump and the Council of State – in 1651, Cromwell was still sympathetic towards Fifth Monarchists. This is suggested by the epistles of three famous millenarian divines (Christopher Feake, Henry Jessey, and Hugh Peters), as well as by Cary's dedication of her work to the wives of three political leaders of the Commonwealth – Lady Elizabeth Cromwell, Lady Bridget Ireton, Lady Margaret Rolle[72]. But the main reason for publishing a prophecy after it was fulfilled lies in the fact that Cary, as a Fifth Monarchist, regarded the killing of the King as a step towards the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. Tyrannicide is unequivocally defined as a foundational event; it is indeed the keystone of the movement's political platform, appended to *The Little Horns Doom* and entitled *A New and More Exact Mappe, Or, A Description of New Jerusalems Glory.* In this tract, the death of King Charles is described as a providential sign of the imminent return of Christ. The execution of the monarch could not have been achieved by the New Model Army, Cary argues, "had not the Lord assisted them with thousands of Angels, and evidently manifested himselfe to bee with them"[73].

[67] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 2, p. 1.
[68] Poole, *ibid.*, p. 4.
[69] K. Gillespie interestingly calls her "a minister through print" (Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 40).
[70] Batson, art.cit., p. 9-10.
[71] Cary, *Little Horns, op. cit.*, p. 46-47.
[72] Batson, art.cit., p. 9-10. Elizabeth Cromwell is the wife of Oliver Cromwell; Lady Bridget Ireton is the wife of Henry Ireton, parliamentary army officer and regicide; Lady Margaret Rolle is the wife of Hery Rolle, parliamentary radical who was appointed chief justice of King's Bench and to the Council of State.
[73] Cary, *Little Horns, op. cit.*, p. 31-32.

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In *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall,* Cary's defence of the regicide elaborately combines historical observations, traditional theories about tyranny and tyrannicide with a close scriptural exegesis of the Book of Daniel[74]. She wants "to make this present age more sensible of the late past, and present footsteps of God in the world, in order to the setting up of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus; and the making of all dominions to serve and obey him"[75]. Throughout the prophecy, Charles, the "wicked King"[76] is indeed identified with Daniel's "little horn," that is to say with the tenth King of the fourth and final Antichristian monarchy mentioned in the seventh Book of Daniel: "Now this directly [Dan. 24. 8, 20] was the late King; he came up in the roome of three of the hornes and reigned over three of the Kingdoms subjected to the Roman Beast; and before him three hornes were pluckt up by the roots"[77]. Cary's indictment of Charles's tyranny thus consists in a systematic confrontation of the Seventh Book of Daniel with contemporary history[78]. On the one hand, the Fifth Monarchist woman visionary characterizes the King as any regicide would have done; Charles is a wicked king who ruled in an arbitrary way infringing existing laws and inventing new ones, persecuting and enslaving the people, trampling justice:

> And hee thought to have changed those Lawes, which had been by preceding Princes made for the priviledges of the people, in civil, and spirituall respects; and to have imposed lawes destructive to the peoples freedom and liberty; and to have ruled all by his own will, and the people slaves thereunto.[79]

On the other hand, she expounds the verses from the Book of Daniel that announced such subversion of law and power. Thus, she points out that "this Horn that came up in the room of three, did in all things answer this description of him, which is given in these 24 and 25 verses, and hee comes in no little short of it[80]. Similarly she sees the contemporary "Puritans, and Roundheads" as antitypes of the "Saints of God" whom the Little Horn "spoke great words against"[81]. Eventually, Cary is adamant that Charles's execution was planned by Daniel "in the 11th verse of his seventh book." Here again we have a combination of scriptural exegesis with the traditional regicide argument of the "man of blood":

> [S]o in the 11 verse the beast, or the horne, or King himselfe, was said to be slaine, and his body destroyed: so it came to passe that his blood was also justly required at

[74] Loewenstein, art.cit., p. 133-35.
[75] Cary, *The Little Horns, op.cit*, A3.
[76] Cary, *ibid.*, p. 42.
[77] Cary, ibid., p. 6.
[78] She began to study the Scriptures in 1636 at the age of 15 especially the Book of the revelations and the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel "wherein so many things concerning the latter days are spoken off" (Cary, *The Resurrection, op. cit.*, "To the reader", C4v).
[79] Cary, *Little Horns, op. cit.*, p. 11.
[80] Cary, *ibid.*, p. 12.
[81] Cary, *ibid.*, p. 26.

> his hands, having caused so much innocent blood to bee shed […]. God suffered not such a man to die in his bed but as he was a man of blood so gave hee him blood to drink […]. For so it was written, verse 11; that he should be slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame of justice.[82]

So it appears that unlike Pope and Poole, Cary does not show any deference to King Charles; in her apocalyptic prose, the monarch is completely desacralized. His execution is represented as an act of justice decided by "a company of Saints convened together by the wise providence of the most high, and invested with power and authority, and a spirit of judgement", "whereby they should take away the dominion of the little horn, to consume and to destroy it unto the end"[83]. In other words, tyrannicide is the logical – almost mechanical – consequence of tyranny. No doubt such radicalism contradicts the assumption that women could not do anything but mourn and weep for the King. What we have here is the very example of a genuine pro-regicide voice that makes itself heard despite the restrictions on female speech and the taboo surrounding the King's death.

What may be inferred from this is that although women did not share the same outlook on the death of Charles I, they all chose the genre of prophecy as if only a divinely inspired voice was suitable for women to deal with such a traumatic event. Women's interventions in the debate over tyranny and tyrannicide reveal a deeply religious apprehension of the world and a relative ignorance as regards political theory. These prophetic contributions, however, should not be undervalued for they confirm the political independence of a few women who were neither instrumentalized nor manipulated. Mary Pope does not mention any patron and seems to be guided only by the Bible and an accurate knowledge of the political situation. Mary Cary includes the epistles of three patrons – three millenarian ministers – but her whole text demonstrates her agency in the "opening" of scripture and in her reading of history. As for Elizabeth Poole, her case is more complicated, her visions bearing the mark of the disputes between the Levellers, army officers and Baptist ministers over what was to be done with the King. But as Manfred Brod and Susan Wiseman have shown[84], Poole was probably not the puppet of a specific faction. In any case, it is clear that the prophetic genre as used by Cary, Pope and Poole did not serve as a mere device to authorize oneself; in the hands of women prophecy was a political weapon, a way to address burning issues. In this sense, the genre of prophecy is not a limited means of expression for women. It provides them with a potent vehicle to voice their views and the right to participate in public discourse. Still, unlike Mary Cary who imagines a blue print for a regenerated society, Mary Pope and Elizabeth Poole's interventions remain limited: as counsellors and pamphleteers they look backwards

[82] Cary, *ibid.*, p. 40-41
[83] Cary, *ibid.*, p. 35, p. 32.
[84] Brod, "Politics and Prophecy", art.cit., p. 401-03, Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 155-70.

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and are good observers of times present but they do not propose a new constitutional settlement.

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