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“Not infected with the vermine of the times”?: Commonwealth Educational Reform and the Parliamentary Visitation of Winchester College, 1649–50 (working paper)

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“Not infected with the vermine of the times”?:
Commonwealth Educational Reform and the
Parliamentary Visitation of Winchester College,
1649–50

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WORKING PAPER

Abstract

Scholarly interest in educational reform in the mid-seventeenth century has largely been devoted to the Hartlib Circle and activities within the universities. By contrast, efforts of Interregnum governments to reform places of education have been underexplored. This is especially true of attempts by the English Commonwealth (1649-1653) to manage places of learning. This piece uses concepts of academic self-fashioning to explore the motivations, processes, and limits of state intervention in scholarly communities. Using a case study of the parliamentary visitation of Winchester College in 1649/50, this piece demonstrates the commitment of England’s first republican government to manage places of teaching as a means to secure their secular and spiritual rule. It also explores the limitations of this reforming program, namely the handicaps produced by ecclesiastical and theological confusion and the sheer difficulty of reform due to the plural national and local identities of scholars and statesmen. Ultimately, this case study revises understandings of educational institutions in the Interregnum and argues for the conceptual utility of identity-making in the early modern world for scholars of educational reform.

Keywords: Academic Communities • Educational Reform • English Revolution • Local Politics • Rump Parliament • Self-Fashioning • Seventeenth Century • Universities • Winchester College

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I

In 1649, the newly established republican government of England ordered an investigation of Winchester College with articles of questions delivered to the warden, John Harris, accusing him of royalism and Laudianism.³ By the standards of the time, Harris ought to have lost his position or been punished in some way. However, the visitation oversaw no changes and historical memory of it faded away, captured in brief summaries by historians of Winchester College.⁴ Such brevity is typical of the historiography of government-led educational reform during the English Commonwealth (also called the Rump Parliament, 1649-53); by contrast, the literature on the largely extra-parliamentary educational reforming group around Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and Jan Comenius is rich and voluminous.⁵ Magisterial works such as Charles Webster's *The Great Instauration* have outlined how these Baconian-inspired Puritan reformers demanded a complete overhaul of the curriculum and teaching in England during the 1640s and 1650s, pursuing a utilitarian, omniscient pansophia only to be let down by a conservative Parliament more interested in removing royalist scholars. It is this negative perspective of educational reform between 1649-1653 that we challenge.

This piece shows how teaching and learning were of great importance to the English Commonwealth. Harris is an effective case study that allows us to investigate the motivations and processes underlying educational reform as well as its limitations. This is necessary as there is currently a tendency to judge the Parliament, unfairly, on the priorities of the Hartlib Circle and their aim to completely renovate institutions and curriculums. To a new and fragile government, however, such plans were anathema. The first section of this piece shows how the Commonwealth was interested in governing places of teaching for specific ends: to train a learned clergy and a new generation of gentlemen in loyalty to the Commonwealth, as well as to ensure the political supremacy of the ruling party. As this was the point of reform, it

³For establishment of the visitation and charges see Winchester College Archives [hereafter WCA], 395, 396, 397, 399; CJ, vi, 200–1, 219.

⁴T.F. Kirby, *Annals of Winchester College...* (London, 1892); A.F. Leach, *A History of Winchester College* (London, 1899).

⁵The literature on this topic is extensive but the following are especially useful, R. Greaves, *The Puritan Revolution and Educational Thought, Background for Reform* (New Jersey, 1969); M. Greengrass, M. Leslie, T. Raylor (eds), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge, 1994); C. Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution – Revisited* (Oxford, 1997), esp. 3-65, 268-81; H. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, Reformation, and Social Change* (Indianapolis, 2001), 219-272; J. Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Reformation, 1625-1688* (Cambridge, 1990), 206-233; C. Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626-60* (New York, 1976); C. Webster (ed.), *Samuel Hartlib and the Advancement of Learning* (Cambridge, 1970), especially 1-72.

is on these terms, rather than by unfair comparisons with a vocal but still relatively un-influential group, that their efforts should be judged.

This case study of Harris not only shows the commitment to reform but also the problems such endeavours encountered. Specifically, the story of Harris is a tale of early modern self-fashioning. Identity in any age is multi-faceted, but for seventeenth-century scholars and statesmen with well-defined national and local roles on top of connections to institutions and communities, it was particularly protean and the subject of perennial reconstruction.⁶ Harris survived despite terrible odds because he understood this fact and was willing to act quickly and sharply to change and emphasize aspects of his identity to suit the situation. As the second and third sections of this piece will show, he emphasized his status as a local grandee, something he shared with many of the commissioners investigating him, to draw support and plant doubt in the minds of the visitors about deposing him. He worked zealously to reinforce his regional standing as danger loomed through gift-giving, and utilized the friendship of several MPs to gain influence in Westminster. The confusion of Harris's accusers due to their split loyalties, the shrewdness of his answers in the context of the Engagement Controversy, and the religious uncertainty of the new regime reveal some of the limitations of this educational reform. However, we will show that Harris was not exonerated due to indifference; Parliament was committed to educational reform on their terms, but it was still a business complicated by contextual limitations that were exacerbated by issues of identity.

II

In 1649 the New Model Army grandees Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell exchanged battlefields for the bowling greens of Oxford. After defeating the nearby Leveller uprisings they visited the university in triumph and were treated to sumptuous feasting and honorary doctorates. Thomas Barlow, the future Bishop of Lincoln, recorded how on one May evening they went to Magdalen Hall 'where they had good chear and badd speeches. after dinner they goe to the booleinge-Alley and Bowle.'⁷ There were significant moments amidst these pleasant past-times, not least when Cromwell announced to the fellows of All Souls (where he had slept) that all 'knowe noe Com[m]onwealth would flourish without learninge, and that they [the government] (wtever the world said to the contrary) meant to' secure it.⁸

⁶For a recent overview and further reading see, R. Kirwan (ed.), *Scholarly Self-Fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University* (London, 2016), especially Kirwan, 'Scholarly Self-Fashioning and the Cultural History of Universities,' 1-20.

⁷BodL, MS Wood F. 35, 341v.

⁸Ibid, 341r-v.

It has been little appreciated how serious Cromwell was about this commitment. Control and reform of the places of teaching in England was of the utmost importance to the Commonwealth government. Consequently, the visitation of Winchester only makes sense when placed in this reforming context. This section shows how the Rump's involvement in educational reform was unusual for its commitment, scope, and success. The latter aspect is explicable once we revise our understandings of the motivation for this area of domestic reform. This is to challenge conceptions of a harassed Commonwealth blandly allowing places of education to meander into the 1650s.⁹ Instead, the Commonwealth era was a time when England's education was brought under the boot of its government in the service of its church.

Admittedly, it was not unusual for a ruling regime in early modern England to interfere in places of learning. Higher education in this period was rapidly expanding and universities and schools were thought crucial for determining the lay and spiritual hierarchy of the kingdom, acting as the training grounds of clergy and statesmen.¹⁰ In one respect, they functioned as finishing schools for young men taking a form of education without necessarily gaining a degree, for example in law, in order to govern their estates and serve in local government. On a spiritual level, they trained succeeding generations of ministers in conjunction with the commonly held belief that to control the English Church required policing the clergy's education. Government interference under the Tudors and Stuarts was therefore far from unusual.¹¹

However, the necessity of controlling the clergy became especially prevalent during the Civil Wars. Parliament's deconstruction of the Caroline Church and subsequent attempts to create a new order made control of the clergy especially important as any changes would then need to be promulgated from the pulpit.¹² From the beginning of the Civil Wars, Parliament had stated its desire to purify England's

⁹This is seen by how historians attribute the state of science and learning in the universities almost entirely to internal dynamics set largely before the Civil Wars began. For example, M. Feingold, *The Mathematician's Apprenticeship* (Cambridge, 1984); N. Tyacke, 'Science and Religion at Oxford before the Civil War,' in D. Pennington K. Thomas (eds), *Puritans and Revolutionaries, Essays in Seventeenth Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), 73-93. For a negative interpretation of the universities which follows the same premise of internal dynamics see Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, 3-65, 268-81.

¹⁰L. Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640,' *Past and Present*, no. 28 (July, 1964), 41-80.

¹¹M. Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1558-1642* (Oxford, 1959), especially 41-53.

¹²C. Cross, 'The Church in England, 1646-1660,' in G. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), 99-120; A. Hughes, 'The Public Profession of these Nations': the National Church in Interregnum England,' in C. Durston J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 93-114; J. Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642-9,' in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649* (London, 1982), 89-114.

clergy through supervision of learning.¹³ The zeal for this reform was shown in the thorough visitations and purges of royalist fellows in the universities. Cambridge suffered a visitation in the first half of the 1640s and thereafter was closely governed by the state; Oxford faced a similar level of involvement after the city surrendered to Parliament in 1646 with a vigorous round of expulsions in 1648.¹⁴

It is largely assumed that when the Rump Parliament was established in December 1648, Parliament's actions became words and that the *status quo* then reached continued. The argument runs that the republican regime was fragile and lacked a concrete church program.¹⁵ Due to these weaknesses they did not have the time, energy, or coherency to reconstruct the educational system or a new curriculum. However, this is to forget the limited aims of parliamentary educational reform: to control places of teaching and inculcate loyalty for the government in the young men who would go on to fill pulpits or local office. The parliamentary Provost of Eton, Francis Rous, explained in 1644 that seeing the 'fayling of schollers both in schools and universities, I thought it an especial service to ye church to find out, and encourage yong schollers' through a pedagogical role.¹⁶ Curriculum reforms were important but not the yardstick for success or failure. Once this is accepted, understandings of educational reform can be substantially revised.

The new government was not content to leave matters as they found them and launched an ambitious program to gain complete control over the major schools and universities. This zeal was reified in the Committee for the Reformation of the Universities, established in spring 1649, and tasked with regulating the universities, Winchester, and, later, Eton.¹⁷ This streamlining of administration was an important act, signaling a commitment to effectively visiting and controlling educational institutions. The Committee, chaired by Francis Rous, was unafraid of throwing its weight around, removing Oxford's Vice-Chancellor, Edward Reynolds, and the Professor of Divinity, Francis Cheynell, in 1650 for refusing to take the Engagement.¹⁸ It was also given a significant budget earmarked from the sale of Dean and Chapter

¹³ CJ, ii, 121-2, 126, 167, 233; S.R. Gardiner (ed.), *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1906), 210; Webster, *Hartlib*, 22-38.

¹⁴ For the universities, see T. Reinhart, *The Parliamentary Visitation of Oxford University, 1646-1652* (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1984); J. Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625-1688* (Cambridge, 1990); B. Worden, 'Politics, Piety, and Learning: Cromwellian Oxford', in his *God's Instruments, Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford, 2012), 91-193.

¹⁵ See for an overview, B. Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648-53* (Cambridge, 1973); D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971).

¹⁶ Eton College Records [hereafter, ECR], Coll P17/2.

¹⁷ CJ, vi, 200-1, 219.

¹⁸ Bodl., MS J. Walker C. 8, 247v; for removal of Cheynell, St John's College (Oxford) Archive, Register III 1624-1667, 431r. He was replaced so speedily that the college (Lincoln) of his replacement, Thankful Owen, was taken by surprise. They peevishly complained to the London Committee about how

Lands and was later granted control over the Trustees for the Maintenance for Ministers.¹⁹ This money was put to use rewarding loyal, and poor, college heads in university colleges.²⁰

The government's control was not limited to universities. Efforts were soon made to bring three major schools, Winchester, Eton, and Westminster — which acted as feeders for the universities — under control. Education was perceived as a pyramid of institutions, and schools were treated as foundation stones of similar importance to their more famous cousins. This is a point forgotten by historians who have hardly looked into the major schools of this period. In September of 1649, a board of governors was named for Westminster College, replacing an existing parliamentary committee.²¹ The new board largely consisted of members of the Committee for the Universities. This group, headed by John Fielder (or Feilder), Humphrey Salwey, and Luke Hodges was extremely industrious. From documents in the Westminster Abbey Library, we can calculate that they met on at least sixty-six separate occasions between April 1649 and November 1653.²² At the same time, Eton was a model of parliamentary discipline under Francis Rous: its account books reveal that in this period it painted the Commonwealth's arms in the chapel and symbolically bought two suits of arms and weapons for the army.²³

The visitation of Winchester was therefore part of these wider series of reforming actions. The school's sister foundation, New College, had been one of the last Oxford corporations to suffer expulsions of fellows and members in January 1649, leading to the introduction of a new master, George Marshall.²⁴ It had remained unsettled into late March, when the visitors of Oxford reported the need 'to proceede to the speedy settling' of the College in order to shore up college numbers and proceedings.²⁵ Thoughts naturally turned to Winchester and an order for the vis-

'suddenly' Owen had left even 'though the statutes of the Coll[ege] allow him halfe a yeare after any preferment,' Lincoln College Archives, Register, 91r.

¹⁹CJ, vi, 189-190; C.H. Firth R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-60* (3 vols, London, 1911), ii, 81-104, 142-8, 152-5, 200-5; Lambeth Palace Library [hereafter LPL], MS 1104, 27-8.

²⁰For the list of payments to Oxford colleges see, LPL, COMM 6A/2, 32, 493-504.

²¹Firth Rait, *A&O*, ii, 256-277.

²²There has been little secondary work done on the governors or the committee which preceded it, though Julia Merritt briefly describes them in her *Westminster 1640-60: A Royal City in a Time of Revolution* (Manchester, 2013), 107-109. I am currently creating a calendar of documents relating to these bodies and the school for the years 1649-53. For some examples of their efforts, see Westminster Abbey Muniments, 32463, 42682, 42831, 42835, 43150.

²³ECR, 62/63 [Draft Audit Book 1650-51].

²⁴M. Burrows (ed.), *The Register of the Visitors of the University of Oxford, from A.D. 1647 to A.D. 1658*, Camden Society, cxxxiii (London, 1881), 231; see for New College, H. Rashdale R. Rait, *University of Oxford College Histories: New College* (London, 1901).

²⁵Burrows, *Register*, 226.

itation subsequently came in May 1649. Sixteen visitors were named in August and December, mostly Hampshire MPs and dignitaries though also included were Fielder and Marshall.²⁶ The occasion was to take place in the Epiphany Quarter Sessions of 1649/50 in the Election Chamber of the school. The warden and fellows were to appear with the statutes and records of the corporation and give 'particular' answers to the questions of the visitors, including a list of charges against Harris.²⁷ As this section has shown, the ordering of this event was in keeping with the wave of intervention launched by a committed reforming government in 1649 keen to secure loyalty to church and state.

III

The actions and reputation of Winchester's head, John Harris, ought to have led to his dismissal; that he retained his place is only explicable when we uncover the role of his school in the local community, the status of county grandee it afforded him, and his ability to exploit this part of his identity. As this section demonstrates, Harris was in real danger from the visitation. However, within Hampshire he was not just a member of England's pedagogical community but a well-connected figure. Similarly, Parliament's commissioners were not just state servants but the warden's neighbors and friends. The common local identity of Harris and the visitors was crucial in protecting him from danger and providing him with a voice in Westminster. Even though the desire to reform existed, Harris's exoneration shows how complicated such visitations could be in practice as a canny operator, like the warden, emphasized the most useful parts of his multifaceted identity. The warden needed all his wits since the list of charges against him was extensive and damaging. It also came at a dangerous time to be considered an opponent of the republican regime. In winter 1649/50, the threat of a Scottish invasion in support of Charles II was growing while the English government, obsessed with security, tried to impose a promise of loyalty on the people of England, the Engagement.²⁸

²⁶For the commissioners see, Burrows, *Register*, 231; CJ, vi, 200-1, 219; Kirby, *Annals*, 336-7; WCA, 397.

²⁷WCA, 396, 399.

²⁸There are a vast number of texts on the Engagement Controversy. I found the following especially helpful, G. Burgess, 'Usurpation, Obligation and Obedience in the Thought of the Engagement Controversy', *HJ*, 29.3 (Sep., 1986), 515-536; Q. Skinner, 'Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy', in G. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), 79-98; A. Tubb, 'The Engagement Controversy: a Victory for the English Republic', *Historical Research*, 89.243 (February, 2016), 42-61; E. Vallance, 'Oaths, Casuistry, and Equivocation: Anglican Responses to the Engagement Controversy', *HJ*, 44.1 (2001), 59-77; J. M. Wallace, 'The Engagement controversy 1649-16 52: an annotated list of pamphlets', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, lxxviii (1964), 584-405, Worden, *Rump Parliament*, 211-237.

The accusations were therefore threatening. He was charged with range of crimes that were said to demonstrate adherence to the king; loyalty to the Arminian Church policies of Archbishop Laud; and a long-standing hatred of the Parliament.²⁹ The danger Harris was in may be evidenced by a comparison with the fate of John Greaves, the Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford.³⁰ Greaves was hauled before the visitors of Oxford in July 1649 for financially aiding the king during the wars, adhering to a faulty religion as demonstrated by warm familiarity with the Queen's Catholic confessors, and generally opposing Parliament. Greaves had been expelled, and the similar nature of the accusations exhibited against Harris highlights the danger the warden faced. The charges against Winchester's head ranged from the broad — 'desiring the destruction of those who were risen up against the King'; 'he hath served only the times' — to the precise: 'it hath been credibly reported that he would not suffer the good gentlewoman his wife to keep a good book.'³¹ Many of the charges referenced the warden's own words in sermons, some dating back to the 1630s, such as the charge that he had 'shortly after execution of that unjust censure in the Starre Chamber' on the Puritans Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne in 1637 'used (in his sermons) many expressions reflecting' on [i.e. affirming] the justness of their punishment. The impression is of a serious and thorough set of accusations.

The warden's reputation would have counted against him, for Harris was a notorious royalist sympathizer with strong links to Laudian Oxford. He was remembered as a man whose 'loyalty to the King' during the Civil Wars had been proved when 'he gave considerable summes of money to the King and his owne plate.'³² According to a colourful anonymous biography written by a contemporary on the backs of the warden's letters, he eventually drove himself to an early death in his endeavours to prevent his royalist school from being 'infected with the vermine of the times.'³³ He was far from alone in his royalist sympathies. The school's headmaster, John Potenger, was remembered by his son as often discoursing 'about the unhappy times, and lament[ing] the church's, and king's misfortune.'³⁴ He had taken several ejected fellows from New College into his own establishment, a dangerous game to play when the man who had ejected them, George Marshall, was part of the new visitation. An example is Thomas Grent, a relative of Harris who had been removed by the visitors of Oxford in 1648 from his New College fellowship. He was practically adopted by the warden, becoming a valued member of the warden's family and was

²⁹For the charges against Harris see WCA, 399.

³⁰Burrows, *Register*, 252-3.

³¹WCA, 399.

³²WCA, 427.

³³WCA, 447.

³⁴J. Potenger, *Private Memoirs Never Before Published of John Potenger* (London, 1841), 26.

eventually 'made Physician to the Colledge.'³⁵ Grent stood as witness to the warden's will, appointed one of Harris's sons as an executor of his own, and was remembered in the familial sections of the warden's sister, Phoebe, and son, John.³⁶ Harris had played a dangerous game, and, as the visitation was drawn up and prepared, it must have seemed that he had played it badly.

Harris's lack of punishment can only be explained when we consider the role institutions of education played within local networks of patronage and communication as well as the consequent gravitas afforded to the schoolmaster. Political classes in the counties were bound together by familial and commercial ties, and there were such connections among the mainly Hampshire-residing commissioners for the visitation.³⁷ Schools, like any local corporation, participated in this world and benefited from principles of community solidarity and respect.³⁸ An association with such an institution bestowed an important status on the schoolmaster and fellows who were already respected figures in the community, something that helps explain their ability to garner support during the visitation. Harris used his wealth to acquire a significant property in Silkstead, south of Winchester, which made him close neighbours to Richard Cromwell, and allowed them to develop a relationship warm enough for the future Lord Protector to send game to the school as a gift in 1654.³⁹ One of the fellows, William Wither, was connected to the influential Wither family of Manydown and Hall.⁴⁰ The paterfamilias, William Wither senior of Manydown, was an influential committee member for Parliament in Hampshire and father-in-

³⁵Burrows, *Register*, 528; J. Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714* (4 vols, Oxford, 1892), ii, 604b; WCA, 424. For Grent's restoration to New College in 1660 see NCA, 9655, 43r. Sadly, he did not long enjoy his restored position: his memorial in Winchester College Chantry reveals he died in August of the following year.

³⁶Hampshire Record Office [hereafter HRO], 1660 P/1 [Will of Phoebe Harris]; 1661 PC 2 [Will of Thomas Grent]; 1661 PC 4 [Will of John Harris of Silkstead]; 'Will of Dr John Harris', TNA, PROB 11/280/411.

³⁷To pick one example, Sir Thomas Jervoise and Robert Wallop, acting in unison, had profited mightily from the sequestered lands of the Marquess of Winchester. See HRO, 54M98/F3; 44M69/F5/4/3; 44M69/D2/4/2-3; 44M69/E6/161-2, 169; CJ, vi, 288, 290, 294, 295, 296; SP 46/95, 168-83.

³⁸They also often enjoyed patronage. For example, Winchester possessed the protection of the influential Fiennes family, themselves founder's kin, which Harris attempted to keep engaged throughout this period, WCA, 415, 429, 430 (b), 449.

³⁹WCA, Bursars' Book, 1644-1671, 1653-4 [no pagination]. '[Mr] Web pro feodo afferentis ferinam a D[omino]. Cromwell'. Mr Web/ Webb was minister of Hursley (where Cromwell lived) in these years, LPL, COMM 6A/2, 589.

⁴⁰The large Wither family was based around Deane, west of Basingstoke. There is a work on the family, R. Bigg-Wither, *Materials for a History of the Wither Family* (Winchester, 1907). The relevant wills in the HRO give a sense of the ties and wealth of the family. See, HRO, 312M87/E10/6 [Will of William Wither, Fellow of Winchester College]; 1667A/124 [Will of George Wither of Hall]; 1676B54/1 [Will of Gilbert Wither] and below.

law to Winchester College's headmaster, John Pottenger.⁴¹ Another member of the family, George Wither of Winchester, married Nicholas Love's sister-in-law, Katherine Chester, in 1657.⁴² Such was the tapestry of local relationships and interests into which a school like Winchester was woven, and from which it proved difficult for the commissioners to untangle themselves.

Harris was immunised against danger as a result of the school's value in this regional space and the local roles he and the parliament-men enacted in Hampshire. Harris was able to exploit his county standing to his advantage and was aided by several white knights, the most resplendent of whom was Nicholas Love, a Winchester MP and a commissioner on the visitation. Residing in Love – like many of his fellow commissioners – were conflicting values relating to his position as a high-flying MP and his role in Winchester society. To Harris's benefit, the latter identity often proved more valuable in a regional context than the former. Love is important in the story of Harris, remembered by John Nicholas, a scholar of Winchester during these years, as doing 'one good act, [which was] to use the great power he had here, to the protection of this Society.'⁴³ Love was a crucial intermediary between the various strands of life in which the school operated, acting as both a county grandee and as a national politician.⁴⁴ He was the son of a former warden, had been baptised only 100 yards from the College, and became a regicide and fervent parliamentarian. He had continued to serve under the republic, gaining a reputation as a 'constant and contumacious Rumper' sitting on multiple committees, including that for the universities, and helping to design the new mace and coins of the government.⁴⁵ However, he was a close friend of Harris and felt a filial loyalty to the school, often helping the institution to the financial detriment of his political masters. In the 1640s he had tried to help the college secure exemptions from various taxes, using his influence to lean on commissioners of the excise and coordinate action in the Commons with the representatives of Cambridge and Eton.⁴⁶

⁴¹HRO, 102A17/D/1/1/1 [Will of William Wither senior]; TOP351/3/2 [Manuscript note concerning marriage of John Pottenger to Anne, daughter of William Wither]; 19M61/1605 [Order of the Commissioners of Parliament].

⁴²See, Bigg-Wither, *Wither Family*, 31-35; HRO, 102A17/D/1/5 [Marriage settlement of George Wither and Katherine Chester]; 312M87/E10/7 [Will of George Wither of Winchester].

⁴³Bodl., MS J. Walker C.2, 138r. The anonymous biography of the warden credits Love with the same, WCA, 445.

⁴⁴J. Peacey, *Nicholas Love*, The History of Parliament Trust, unpublished article for the 1640-1660 section. I am grateful to the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft.

⁴⁵Anon., *The True Characters* (London, 1661), 2.

⁴⁶WCA, 455. For Love's interventions regarding the excise see WCA, 421, 422, 455.

Love's value was as a bridge between school and state, giving Harris the information to gauge the mood of the Parliament.⁴⁷ His aid continued into the 1640s and was crucial in allowing the warden to coordinate an effective round of bribery and petitioning. As danger approached in 1649, Love wrote to Harris '[so] that your peace may be more secured for the Future I will advise you at the assizes to apply to one Msr Hill a Parliament man and a lawyer' who had spoken in favour of preserving the colleges and to offer an annuity for legal advice.⁴⁸ From the account books, we can see that Harris took this advice: in late summer 1649 and again in 1650, one Mr Hill is indeed listed as receiving money — £5-8-9 and then £5 — in legal fees.⁴⁹ In the late 1640s, schools faced increased scrutiny and potential financial problems from the sale of dean and chapter lands. Knowing who to bribe in Parliament was therefore important information. Eton College, for example, was aided by dint of their provost being a MP: in 1649, one trip to London 'to procure from the Parlient the sence of the house' cost a staggering £57-0-4, most of which presumably was spent canvassing useful MPs.⁵⁰ Evidence from Winchester's audit books suggests similarly lavish trips to Westminster in the late 1640s. Between 1646-8, the college spent roughly £2 in total on such expeditions to London; between 1649-50, the total was £27-10-3, with a further £15-3-8 for fees 'in coll. negotiis.'⁵¹ Strong local ties could be useful on a larger stage, giving these provincial institutions a route into the Commons and allowing them to spread their influence in an effective and coordinated manner.

Harris was able to manoeuvre in the world of Parliament because of the provincial security he enjoyed, a security maintained through the tending of local relationships. This can be detailed through the sudden explosion of sweet gifts sent out by his institution.⁵² Starting in 1649, the college began to send sugarloaves to judiciary figures, the first one costing £0-19-8. This was an innovation, and it instigated a trend wherein the school spent a large outlay on these offerings to local figures, including the justices. In 1650-1, a £2 sugarloaf was sent to the mayor of Winchester and two loaves, costing a combined £1.12.9, to justices. In 1651-2, the mayor, the

⁴⁷For similar examples of this phenomenon see, L. Bowen, "So Much Environ'd with Ill Neighbouring Counties": Isolation and Political Connection in Civil War Pembrokeshire, 1640-9' (unpublished paper, delivered October 29, 2019, Britain in Revolution, 1637-1660 Seminar, University of Oxford); D. Scott, "Particular Businesses' in the Long Parliament: The Hull Letters, 1644-8', in C. Kyle (ed.), *Parliament, Politics, and Elections, 1604-1648* (Cambridge, 2001), 273-341.

⁴⁸WCA, 446. This refers to Mr Roger Hill, MP for Bridport.

⁴⁹WCA, Bursars' Book, 1644-1671, 1648-9, 1649-50.

⁵⁰ECR, 62/10 [Audit Book 1638-1653], 1649-50. N.b. In the draft audit book [ECR, 62/61] it is erroneously listed as 57sh 4d.

⁵¹WCA, Bursars' Book, 1644-1671, relevant years.

⁵²For this, and all figures in this paragraph, WCA, Bursars' Book, 1644-1671, relevant years.

justices, and Nicholas Love received sugarloaves with a combined cost of £4-6-0. In 1652-3, the mayor was excluded, and the outlay dropped to £3-3-0. In 1653-4, when the school seemed to be in a position of greater security, the loaves appear to have shrunk as the three sweets sent out (to the mayor and justices) came only to £2-12-0. The generosity did not end then but continued for the next few years, with the justices receiving these treats. Such gift-giving reveals the county ties the school wished to maintain and improve, complementing the bribery being utilised at the higher national level. These gifts were a conscious investment in cultivating relationships and friendships with local figures and, considering his survival, Harris may have viewed them as sweeteners well sent.

Faced with extreme danger, Harris exploited his local standing to engineer an effective round of canvassing and gift-giving in Westminster and the county. Even in a fairly straightforward government reforming initiative, the plural identities of schoolmasters and statesmen proved a complication. An acquittal was at no point certain and Harris had to exercise all his influence to survive the Commonwealth spotlight on education. As the Hampshire commissioners found their various roles conflicting with one another, Harris worked zealously to benefit from this weakness by using Love as a bridge to Westminster. His success is found both in his exoneration and the warm relationships he would enjoy with many of the commissioners in the 1650s.⁵³ A sign of the community's solidarity came in 1654 with subscriptions for repairing Winchester Cathedral. Here Harris, who donated £5, was joined by four of the visitors of the school in a relatively small joint initiative reliant on mutual trust.⁵⁴ Performing a group activity in a civic setting showed that the members were comfortable being associated, happy to be seen as a unit. Educational institutions such as Winchester rose and fell depending on the ability of their members to dance to the varying fiddles of nation and locality. Harris had quick feet.

IV

Harris, in his answers to the list of charges against him, showed that he was aware of the conflicting national and local identities within the visitation and carefully self-fashioned his image to satisfy both. His answers have survived in heavily revised draft

⁵³For example, in 1652 and 1653, Love would help secure books from the collection of Winchester Cathedral for the school, WCA, Bursars' Book, 1644-1671, 1654-5; W. Stephens F. Madge (eds), *Documents Relating to the History of the Cathedral Church of Winchester in the Seventeenth Century* (Winchester, 1897), 73-4.

⁵⁴HRO, DC/E3/1/1. The visitors among the co-subscribers were Sir Thomas Jervoise, Nicholas Love, Sir Robert Reynolds, and Robert Wallop.

form and were drawn up with obvious care.⁵⁵ They reveal how he understood that the commissioners wished to hear different things in their different roles and reconstructed his image accordingly. Playing to their concerns as government servants, the warden engaged with the Commonwealth's (or, at least, those of a prominent minority within it) own ideas of *de facto* authority, stressing that he would follow whoever held power. However, this image of Heep-like servility was counterbalanced by a far more bullish self-representation as an enemy of heterodoxy, a concern in Hampshire at the time common to both commissioner and warden. Harris's answers to religious questions were frequently problematic and reveal, alongside his self-fashioning, some of the limitations in Parliament's reform, specifically the failure to create a coherent church program, which allowed him to escape punishment.

Harris's answers are explicable in the context of 1649-50, a time when the Rump struggled with security and notions of obedience. This was crystallized in, but not confined to, the Engagement Controversy, the test of loyalty the Rump imposed on the country. As the Parliament sought to justify subscription to the document, they sparked a wider debate about what type of obedience was owed by subjects to a ruling authority. A prominent defence of subscription, as developed by Commonwealth apologists such as Anthony Ascham and Francis Rous, was a *de facto justification* 'that although the change of government were believed not to be lawfull, yet it may lawfully be obeyed.'⁵⁶ Although disliked by the most ardent republicans, such thoughts proved potent. It was argued that power has its roots in God and that loyalty is therefore owed to the power inherent in authority, regardless of the holder's legitimacy. The subject was urged to consider that the Rump had gained the kingdom through conquest and that some form of government outweighed total chaos.⁵⁷ Fundamentally though, the subject was not to meddle in matters above their station: as the Rump defender John Dury wrote, 'do not take upon you to define matters whereof you are no competent judge.'⁵⁸ Such justifications sought to persuade the people of England to acknowledge and accept the government if not to warmly embrace it.

The warden played to this theory of *de factoism* in order to protect himself from criticism on many points. Much of Harris's defence counterintuitively agreed with one of the primary accusations against him: that '[h]e hath onely serv'd the times.'⁵⁹ Harris accounted this no fault, stressing that he embraced Laudian ceremonialism not because he believed it righteous but since 'while the Canons (whereby those ceremonies are enjoyed) stood established as I thought by law; for then I thought it

⁵⁵WCA, 418.

⁵⁶F. Rous, *The Lawfulness of Obeying the Present Government...* (London, 1649).

⁵⁷See, Skinner, *Conquest and Consent*, 79-98.

⁵⁸J. Dury, *Considerations touching the present Engagement* (London, 1649), 16.

⁵⁹WCA, 399.

my duetie as occasione forced to declare the lawfulness of them.’⁶⁰ The warden’s answers stress that all subjects were obligated to follow the orders of those in power: for example, he claimed that his compliance in the railing of the communion table and bowing to the altar was because he was ‘enjoynd so to do in the Arch[bisho]ps [Laud’s] visitation [in the 1630s].’⁶¹ Harris’s answers depict a world in which the origin of authority is far less important than the fact of possessing it. As the subject is forbidden to intervene in matters of governance and should suffer in silent endurance instead, the implication was that Harris would comply with the Commonwealth. He was attempting to please the visitors in their capacity as government agents and indicate his willingness to continue in his role under the new regime.

Harris was able to show a more bullish side when touching on issues that had a more immediate relationship to Hampshire. These were mainly the religious charges against him, and his answers were designed to play on the fears of his interrogators in their local capacity. The county had been rocked by a heterodox *cause célèbre* in late 1649, which occurred almost simultaneously with the Winchester visitation. William Franklin, a rope-maker from London supported by his devoted follower Mary Gadbury, had declared himself Christ near Andover and attracted followers.⁶² Franklin and Gadbury were dragged before the courts in the first months of 1650. At the time, there was no blasphemy act with which to charge Franklin (he was instead imprisoned for vagrancy), and he was acting in a country rocked by religious radicalism. Heresy had grown exponentially in the 1640s as England underwent social and ecclesiastical tumult.⁶³ As with the Diggers and Ranters, Franklin was perceived to be both a religious and social threat. He had renounced the morality of the day, leaving his wife for the married Gadbury, who began to refer to herself as ‘the spouse of Christ.’⁶⁴ It was a story that undermined the social values of early modern England, sparked fears in a nation without a settled Church, and was of immediate concern to the visitors of Winchester.

⁶⁰Ibid, 418.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²See, A.M. Coleby, *Central Government and the Localities: Hampshire 1649-1689* (Cambridge, 1987), 56-60; H. Ellis, *Pseudochristus, A True and Faithful Relation of the Impostures acted by William Frankelin and Mary Gadbury* (London, 1650).

⁶³See, J. Coffey, ‘The Toleration Controversy during the English Revolution’, in C. Durston J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 42-68; C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1991); J.C. Davis, ‘Living with the Living God, Radical Religion and the English Revolution’, in Durston Maltby, *Religion in Revolutionary England*, 19-41; A. Hughes, ‘Diggers, True Levellers and the Crisis of the English Revolution’, in P. Baker E. Vernon (eds), *The Agreements of the People: the Levellers and the Constitutional Crisis of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2012), 218-238; J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth Century Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁶⁴Ellis, *Pseudochristus*, 16.

The events would be thoroughly covered in the May 1650 pamphlet *Pseudochristus*, written by the Winchester minister and witness to events, Humphrey Ellis. Before publication, Ellis had witnessed the various trials and hearings and had interviewed those associated with the case. We may safely assume that Ellis was also known and favoured by many of the commissioners for Winchester. He was receiving an augmentation from the Committee for the Universities and was almost certainly in favour with the county hierarchy.⁶⁵ As he states in *Pseudochristus*, he decided to write his account 'by reason of my acquaintance...with the Justices, and with divers other persons abroad in the Country.'⁶⁶ Given that the news, hearings, and trials of Franklin and Gadbury at the Quarter Sessions in Winchester raged alongside the visitation, they must have been present in the mind of Harris's interrogators. When faced with the devil of religious innovation, often believed to have serious social implications, the hierarchy of the county would have been incentivized to protect the ruling order, which included an incorporated figure such as Harris.

Such softness would have been doubly likely given the lack of a coherent parliamentary religious program with which to compare the warden's answers. Hopes in Parliament for a unified strategy in the years following the regicide grew increasingly unlikely as a theological Babel emerged, with the Puritan mainstream splintering and fragmenting in the search for an alternative to episcopacy. Those sympathetic to the school much preferred a trusted community member to an intruding zealot who would upset the delicate balance of the region, as George Marshall had done at New College. This attitude of leniency developed due to the significant confusion over religious issues within the Parliament and in relation to fears of heresy. As a result, Harris was able to get away with giving potentially dangerous answers. We may see this in his blunt candour regarding ordination. Elaborating on the role of the clergy, Harris argued that, due to apostolic succession, 'the Church had always used imposition [of] hands upon ministers ordained.'⁶⁷ The blatant defence of ordination by the laying on of hands was extraordinary given that episcopacy had been abolished, meaning that such practices were clandestine. However, Harris could be confident of escaping punishment given, as Fincham and Taylor have elaborated in an important recent essay, the complete confusion over the issue of ordination.⁶⁸ Lacking a yardstick with which to beat him, the commissioners found they had entered the fray empty handed.

⁶⁵LPL, COMM 6A/2, 587.

⁶⁶Ellis, *Pseudochristus*, 5.

⁶⁷WCA, 418.

⁶⁸K. Fincham S. Taylor, 'Vital Statistics: Episcopal Ordination and Ordinands in England, 1646-60,' *English Historical Review*, 126.519 (April 2011), 319-344.

Another example of Harris's boldness came in response to the charge that he supported the wearing of 'habitus clericalis.'⁶⁹ This was a serious accusation as the wearing of such garments was outlawed and often invited violence to the unfortunate garment-wearer. Francis Mansell, the ejected master of Jesus College Oxford, discovered this to his shock when he was assaulted and had his clothes torn off by soldiers when caught wearing a 'Canonicall Habit' in Glamorgan in 1651.⁷⁰ However, Harris answered cannily by defending the clerical garments as useful for retaining a 'distinction betwixt ministers and others' no matter what 'any Sectarian of this time now denied.'⁷¹ Harris read his audience and knew that, with the spectre of the rope-making Christ prevalent in their minds, the image of a stern figure of authority and local hierarchy defending respectful behaviour and discipline would be more compelling than pedantic doubt over his problematic positions. As Harris's exoneration shows, he had crafted a potent image which also revealed the limitations of a reforming agenda lacking a clear religious credo.

V

Later in the 1650s, Harris would dismiss the articles of investigation he had suffered as being 'grounded only on some snatches of sermo(n)s that I had formerly preached taken by ignorant men and misalleged against me.'⁷² However, in unravelling how he survived his tribulations, this piece has highlighted key conclusions for historians of schools, education, and domestic reform in the English Revolution. Harris's experience helps highlight how educational reform of any kind would involve complex interactions between state, institution, and persons inhabiting a variety of roles and the consequent impact of these issues on the process of reform. The Winchester case study has illustrated how important and malleable the various identities of Harris and the commissioners were in determining the course of the visitation, and how important the nature of his school as both a local and national institution was in determining these identities.

From this case study we are able to draw conclusions about the ambitions and limits of republican domestic reform. We have seen how the Commonwealth began a large, and largely overlooked, wave of educational reform inspired by a desire to control England's clergy and population through places of teaching. It is crucial to ask what role the government perceived schools and universities as fulfilling and to judge them on their own terms; to do otherwise is to fall into the unhelpful standards of

⁶⁹WCA, 418.

⁷⁰L. Jenkins, *The Life of Francis Mansell* (London, 1854), 16-20.

⁷¹WCA, 418.

⁷²WCA, 430.

extra-parliamentary figures. The failure to create a new curriculum should not blind us to the commitment of the republican regime to this reformation. Instead, we have argued that Harris's case is illustrative of the difficulties these reformers faced due to both the complexities of protean and malleable identities in early modern England and the absence of an ecclesiastical and theological replacement for the Caroline Church.

Harris survived because he exploited and emphasized his local standing, not simply because it was a part of his role. Although the lack of a concrete program for church reform proved a handicap for the commissioners, their conflict of local and state interests was arguably more important to Harris's escape. Sympathetic MPs like Love acted as intermediaries to Westminster and it was to common ideas of locality and local order that Harris appealed, especially with the specter of William Franklin casting an unsettling shadow over the investigation. Ultimately, Harris survived because he understood the various roles he and his accusers were playing and fashioned his potent image of servile bullishness accordingly. 🌻

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