Part I

1: PROLOGUE

> But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucifie him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucifie your King? The chiefe Priests answered, Wee have no king but Caesar.[1]

'Non habemus Regem, nisi Caesarem': a pregnant text for a Royalist divine, preaching before the exiled heir at The Hague in 1649, shortly after the execution of that '*deuterot Christos*', as he calls him, that 'second Christ', his father, Charles I.

> A false colour they have readie at hand to cover their shame, *Habemus Caesarem*, *they* good men *have Caesar for their King*[2] –

the 'they' by this time having come to embrace not only Caiaphas and his 'chiefe Priests' but also Cromwell and his: son-in-law Ireton, Bradshaw with his bullet-proof hat, and the rest. The sermon's published title invites such parallels:

> *Regicidium Judaicum, or a Discourse about the Jewes Crucifying Christ, with an Appendix or Supplement upon the late Murder of our Blessed Soveraigne, Charles the First*.

'Blessed Soveraigne' and 'blessed Saviour' sound very much the same sort of thing.

Richard Watson, author of the piece in question, sometime (see DNB.) Fellow of Gonville and Caius College and headmaster of the Perse Grammer School in Cambridge (he was ejected from both posts because of his uncompromising anti-Presbyterianism and thereupon withdrew in high dudgeon to France) – Richard Watson will figure in what is to follow primarily as chief contributor to a pamphlet published a decade after his *Regicidium* in 1659:

> *The Panegyrike and the Storme, Two Poëtike Libells by Ed. Waller, Vassa'll to the Usurper, Answered by more Faythfull Subjects of his Sacred Majesty Charles ye Second*.[3]

For if, in 1649, there had been 'chief Priests' aplenty, but no obvious counterpart to Caesar, the continuing rise of Cromwell was soon to supply one, and Edmund Waller (the opportunity offering) had not been slow to lift up his voice in the '*Habemus Caesarem*' chorus, leaving any more 'sacred' or (to cull a term from E.H. Kantorowicz's classic *The King's Two Bodies*)[4] 'christomimetic' majesty, in the mendicant shape of Charles II, to shift for itself.

True, 1643 had caught him plotting on behalf of 'CHARLES the First, and CHRIST the second' (as Owen Felltham, in Watsonian vein, calls him in 'An

Epitaph' to his 'Eternal Memory')'[5] but, on being discovered, he had availed himself to the full of his 'RIGHT OF NATURE': namely, according to his acquaintance Thomas Hobbes, that

> Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his Judgement and Reason, hee shall conceave to be the aptest means thereunto.[6]

Two of his accomplices, Tomkins (his brother-in-law) and Chaloner, went quickly to the gallows; but he, after initial evasions, turned Pym's evidence and, when brought 'with intent to dismember him' to the Bar of the Commons,[7] delivered a most contrite speech, pleading that, on top of the trouble he had already caused, he would not wish as well to be turned into a precedent for Members of that House being tried by 'Counsell of Warre',[8] and praying that they might, for their own future sakes, go a more parliamentary (and thus, of course, long-winded) way to work with him.

> Where upon being bid to withdraw [,] the house had some debate of the matter, but did not then conclude of anything touching his tryall but gave order hee should bee returned back to Prison and appointed to take the same into further consideration the next day.[9]

'Next day' was July the fifth. Tomkins and Chaloner were hanged; Waller's case subjected to 'further consideration'.

Time was of the essence. Waller was winning it. Membership of the Commons (he had been an M.P., more on than off, reputedly since the tender age of 16) was his trump card. He played it astutely. Moreover, earlier reports of his 'distracted condition' which had caused a concerned House to dispatch 'two Godly Devines' to minister to his vexed conscience and offer 'wholesome Councell',[10] tended to bear out his eloquent professions of penitence. Furthermore, having decided on second thoughts to make a clean breast of it, he had implicated two or three of the Lords (Portland, Conway and, less seriously, Northumberland), and their cases remained to be looked into, which necessitated keeping him alive to testify. But the speech was his *pièce de résistance*. He was to be 'dismembered', inevitably (on July the fourteenth), but never, finally, in so painfully physical a fashion as he had had, at the outset, too much reason to fear; and, thought Lord Clarendon,

> He does as much owe the Keeping of his Head to that Oration, as *Catiline* did the Loss of His to those of *Tully*.[11]

Disabled from ever again sitting in the Commons (he was, of course, to be re-elected after the Restoration), Waller remained for a year, and over a year, in prison. *A Perfect Diurnall*, in its entry for the fifth of September, 1644 (a fast day, kept 'to implore directions and a blessing from Heaven on the good proceedings of the Court-Martiall') is still encouraging its readers with the promise that

> No convenient time will be protracted for the tryall of Mr *Waller*, Sir *John Hotham* and his Sonne, with such others, which for want of Judgement executed against them, we may have cause to feare, is one great cause why the Land mournes.[12]

Of late, affairs had not been running Parliament's way. There was a casting about for explanations. Ominous as this sounds – and was for the Hothams, who went, both of them, to the block – for Waller 'proceedings' were to prove as propitious as he had any right to expect. The commissioners seemed disposed to believe his claim that he had never intended an armed uprising in the City and knew little or nothing about the damning Commission of Array which had been discovered in Chaloner's house.[13] The air was growing milder. Nicely on cue, he petitioned the Commons to accept £10,000 out of his estate by way of fine. He had been setting his affairs in order and could ensure prompt payment. The offer was accepted. Parliament was in dire need of ready money, the sum not one to be sneezed at. By the eleventh of October '9000 pound of Mr. *Wallers* 10000, which was full pay for a moneths advance',[14] had been disbursed upon Sir James Harrington's new City Brigade, which was ordered to march 'forthwith'. As Edmund Calamy (second segment of the infamous and insectile Smectymnuus) had commented, sermonizing on the discovery of the 1643 plot,

> *Riches* without righteousness is . . . like an *Unicorns horne*, which while it is upon the head of the Unicorne is hurtfull and deadly, but when it is taken off, it is very useful and medecinall.[15]

Meantime the unicorn whose docility under duress had helped make such expedition possible found himself sentenced to banishment.

Waller, as befitted a disciple of Hobbes, had saved his own life, rather than losing it for Christ's or King Charles's sake. For, as 'the chiefest of natural evils', according to Hobbes, is death, so it follows, in the earlier *De Cive* (which an admiring Waller had once offered to English) as in the *Leviathan*, that

> It is therefore neither absurd, nor reprehensible; neither against the dictates of true reason for a man to use all his endeavours to preserve and defend his Body, and the Members thereof from death and sorrowes; but that which is not contrary to right reason, that all men account to be done justly, and with right.[16]

And if Waller had 'done justly, and with right' in 1643 and 1644 – done, at least, all that could be expected of a man given Hobbes's somewhat reductive interpretation of human nature – why, then he was to continue the good work in 1651/2 when he negotiated a pardon and returned to England.

A letter to him from Hobbes, dated August the eighth, 1645, which refers to his 'inclination to put a booke Called de Cive into English', also indicates that he was thinking, from early on in his exile, of repatriation. P.R. Wikelund rightly notes that 'ample justification for a decision to accept the new régime' at home was to be found in the work in which he was displaying so much interest[17]. Late in 1651 Hobbes, anticipating Waller, returned home himself. In 1662 he published *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners & Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmsbury* to vindicate his having done so and also defend his printing (in 1651) of the *Leviathan*, which had been attacked as pro-Cromwellian. Hobbes denied that it was. 'What Title then of *Oliver's* could he pretend to justifie?' he protests.[18] Undeniably, however, his

ideas had been pressed into service in the middle fifties by writers like John Hall of Richmond and Thomas White, to encourage Cromwell to consolidate his position and the country to acquiesce. '*Habemus Caesarem, they* good men [had] *Caesar for their King.*'

It was at this juncture, too, that Waller chimed in with his *Panegyrick*, a poem which, as will be seen, makes telling play with Caesarean themes. Cromwell and Caesar (Julius or Augustus) could, in many respects, be regarded most profitably as type and antitype, as Hall of Richmond was likewise well enough aware. But this is to anticipate. Suffice it to say here that works like Hall's *Of Government and Obedience* (1654) and his *True Cavalier Examined by his Principles* (1656), and White's *The Grounds of Obedience and Government* (1655) can usefully assist in the construction of a context for Waller's contemporaneous poeticizing, although this, needless to say, is not to suggest that he wrote out of any specific study of them. He knew and admired Hobbes (whom he seems too have employed as tutor to his son, Robert). They adapted Hobbist ideas to suit the situation in which they (and Waller) found themselves. It would be surprising if the drift of their thoughts had not been, now and then, concurrent. Waller, indeed, might have supplied Hall with a subspecies of his 'True Cavalier', though Richard Watson for one would have sneered bitterly at the talk of 'Principles' in such an instance.

His own *Anti-Panegyrike*, which constitutes the first part of *The Panegyrike and the Storme*, is straightforward Royalist polemic: an attempt to wrest the poetic instrument from Waller's renegade hands and beat him about the head and body with it. The results of this exercise are rough and ready. As Dryden was afterwards to observe in his *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*,

> There is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place.[19]

Even a slovenly butchering, however, can be anatomically revealing, and Watson's hacking and mangling (for he lays about him with a will, if not finesse) does help to expose nerves and ligaments which might otherwise have gone unnoticed. He allows himself six lines of refutation to every four of panegyric, printing the original quatrains and his own answering sestets alternately. This verse 'descant' is reinforced by sixteen '*prosaïke glosses*', forming the body of a subsequent 'Solemn & Serious Advertisement to the Reader' which, William Haller suggests,[20] is 'by a different writer'. Whoever is responsible, however, claims the 'descant', that is the *Anti-Panegyrike* itself, for his own, and Watson himself may reasonably be supposed to have felt the urge to make assurance double sure.

The other half of *The Panegyrike and the Storme* comprises a somewhat similar operation directed this time against Waller's *Upon the late Storme and of the Death of his Highness Ensuing the Same* (1659); a poem which provoked reaction from a very different political quarter in the shape of the puritanical George Wither's *Salt upon Salt.*

'We look for such a Government as shall / Make way for *Christ*', Wither had announced in a slightly earlier (and, despite its title, very long-winded) piece, *A Suddain Flash* (1657), though he poured scorn on any ideas of a 'fantastical / *Fifth Monarchie'* and condemned attempts to raise 'an *Earthly Throne'* for Christ by means of 'Carnal Weapons'[21] (which, incidentally, had not stopped him from raising, in 1642, a troop of horse to fight for Parliament). His work, too, like that of Watson,[22] will serve as a revealing foil to Waller's, whose own leanings were all towards New Romes rather than New Jerusalems – appropriately enough given his reputation as a founding-father of English 'Augustanism'.

Against the background supplied by writers such as these, Waller's political poetry begins to live and move and have a being more vivid than might otherwise have been suspected. Even so, he may seem a writer too inherently second-rate to warrant more than passing acknowledgement, though whole books (one or two of them) have, it goes without saying, already been devoted to him: Warren L. Chernaik's *The Poetry of Limitation*, for instance, and A.W. Allison's *Toward an Augustan Poetic*. Never 'great' Waller is, nevertheless, often accomplished and indubitably 'significant'. His work affords a vantage-point which can be all the more revealing because not so thickly overgrown by the sort of scholarship and speculation which ramps so richly over a Milton, Marvell, or Dryden. Moreover, surveying these writers from such a vantage-point can discover things which might never have become so apparent working, as it were, from the inside out. Coming to Marvell's *First Anniversary*, for example, from Waller's coeval *Panegyrick* sharpens perceptions of the purport and purpose of each, and Dryden's manoeuvrings in *Absalom and Achitophel* (where faith in God's creative and sustaining Logos is weighed in the balance against the Hobbist axioim that 'Words are wise mens counters, they do but reckon by them; but they are the mony of fooles'[23] and found anything but wanting) – Dryden's manoeuvrings, here and elsewhere, compare illuminatingly with Waller's tactics in his poems addressed to Cromwell on the one hand and those addressed to the restored Charles on the other.

Waller, it is to be surmised, would have sided in the end with Hobbes. At least, the *Panegyrick* contains some brilliantly prestidigitatory verbal reckoning: language and wit most knowingly manipulated. It is as if the poet were appealing to a circle of fellow *adepti*, sophisticates who recognized the force of Hobbes's dictum and were consequently in a position to appreciate a book neatly cooked on their and their country's behalf at the expense of more conscientiously clodhopping wits or, come to that, non-English speaking nations in general.