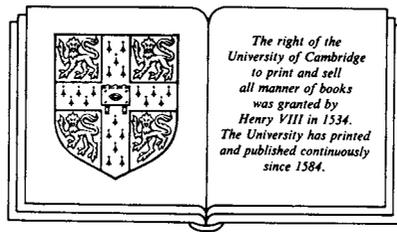


ALGERNON SIDNEY
AND THE
RESTORATION CRISIS,
1677–1683

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The shape of the future

Everyone agrees that the Whigs possessed an impressive political organisation . . . Yet on the level of detailed information as to the operations of this organisation, the evidence remains scanty.

Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, p. 172

Of course, this organisation did not appear on the surface. Attempting to preserve an impression of spontaneity the Whig press was intentionally vague.

J.R. Jones, *The First Whigs* (1961), p. 168

The Restoration crisis, from 1678 to 1683, was the second of seventeenth-century England's three crises of popery and arbitrary government. It was therefore, from the perspective of the historian, linked to both its predecessor of 1638–42 and its successor of 1687–9. What follows is not an attempt to deny any *historical* links with the latter. Indeed seventeenth-century England's 'troubles' cannot be understood without considering all three crises, and the relationship between them. What will be attempted in the following chapters is the recovery of the perspective on this crisis of contemporaries themselves. *Contemporaries*, obviously, could not predict the future. They did not hinge their political interpretations upon prophecy. But they could, and they did, remember the past. In the Restoration period they could not forget it. They could be, and to some extent they were, the prisoners of memory.

Historians, on the other hand, have been more interested in linking the crisis of 1678–83 with the shape of the future: the future exclusion of James from the throne; the future birth of parties. In the process they have, it will be argued, lost touch with the contemporary crisis itself. They have also gone well beyond what the surviving evidence will allow. It was contemporary perceptions which made the crisis what it was, whatever historians would later like to make of them. Those perceptions were provoked by the present, and the reappearance in the present of the most terrible spectres of the past.

1.1 THE RESTORATION

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of the Restoration period (1660–88), and particularly of its first decade (1660–9), is now changing. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the rootedness of the Restoration Settlement itself, and of the period to which it gave issue, in contemporary preoccupation with the past.¹ In many ways the point is an obvious one. Yet it remains true, particularly for the period 1670–88, that Restoration historiography as a whole has long exhibited two striking, and contrary, characteristics. These have ironically been intertwined.

The first is the division of the century, for the purposes of professional study, at the boundary line of 1660. Thus when Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote that it was ‘broken in the middle, irreparably broken, and at the end of it, after the revolutions, men can hardly recognise the beginning’,² he was accurately describing seventeenth-century historiography, if not history. It remains true that historians working on what may be very loosely termed the first and second halves of the seventeenth-century experience have continued to do so separately; at a different pace, in different style, reaching different conclusions. Historians of the early Stuarts remain linked, professionally and in their historical vision, to the preceding Tudor period. Historians of the Restoration period continue to link it to, and see it as ushering in, something called the ‘long eighteenth century’.

From this arises the second notable feature of Restoration historiography. This is the extent to which the period has been studied less in its own right than in terms of its capacity to give birth to, or at least display the origins of, the political structures and sensibilities of the eighteenth century.³ These two characteristics are linked, and they are of very long standing: as old, indeed, as the study of the seventeenth century itself. To see how, the problem may be stated differently. For much of their existence, both early and later Stuart historiography have been divided by separate but parallel historical imperatives: the quest for the origins of their respective ‘revolutions’ – 1640–9, and 1688–9.

¹ Pre-eminent in this respect is Paul Seaward’s superb *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime 1661–1667* (Cambridge 1989). See also Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration* (Oxford 1986); Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge 1987); and J. Miller, *Restoration England: The Reign of Charles II* (1985). For an earlier statement of the following arguments see Scott, ‘Radicalism and Restoration: The Shape of the Stuart Experience’, *Historical Journal*, 31:2 (1988), and ‘England’s Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot’ in M. Goldie, T. Harris and P. Seaward (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford 1990).

² Quoted in M. Finlayson, *Historians, Puritanism and the English Revolution* (Toronto 1984) and Scott, ‘Radicalism and Restoration’, p. 458.

³ Scott, ‘Radicalism and Restoration’.

For generations, not only the Restoration, but the entire Stuart period was harnessed to the quest for the origins of 'the' English Revolution of 1688, and so of the eighteenth-century world which it created.⁴ This is what first established the forward-looking character of Restoration historiography – the quest for the origins of the 'long eighteenth century'.⁵ More recently however, and particularly over the last century, early Stuart historians have been no less preoccupied by the search for the origins of 'their' revolution, of the 1640s. The impact of this latter enterprise on historical perceptions of the early Stuart period is now well understood. The word 'revisionism' describes the efforts of the latest generation of historians to correct it. But this impact did not stop there. It also established, and reinforced, the modern historiographical boundary-line of 1660. It is hard to imagine that division persisting as it does if S.R. Gardiner, C.H. Firth, and Godfrey Davies had not ended their accounts in 1660.⁶ It is above all the twentieth-century assumption of mid- (rather than late-) century revolution, and of 'revolution' as implying discontinuity, that has underwritten the division of the century into two halves. This universal modern assumption has served as common currency for Hugh Trevor-Roper and Christopher Hill alike.⁷

Finally then, this truncation of the century has simply reinforced the already-established focus of Restoration historiography on the shape of the future. It is for this reason that the Restoration period has continued to be studied as the birthplace of a new era, of the long eighteenth century, rather than as what it was: the second half of the seventeenth century, and a second half peculiarly in the grip of the first. It is thus this layering of two historiographical imperatives, one from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, and the other from the nineteenth to the twentieth, that have given us the two chief problems of Restoration historiography: of a period artificially wedded to its future, and artificially severed from its past.

That these should be obstacles to the understanding of any period is understandable enough. In the case of the Restoration period they are fatal.

⁴ See, for instance, T.B. Macaulay, *The History of England during the Reigns of King William, Queen Anne, and King George I, with an introductory review of the reigns of the Royal brothers Charles and James; in which are to be found the Seeds of the Revolution*, 2 vols. (1844–6); J. McPherson, *A History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover* (1775); G.M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution 1688–9* (1939).

⁵ It is rehearsed again recently by W. Speck's *Reluctant Revolutionaries* (1988); for the discussion of the historiography of the crisis of 1678–83 see below.

⁶ I would like to thank Lucie Halberstam, of Victoria University of Wellington, for this point.

⁷ See footnote 3 above. Angus MacInnes ('When was the English Revolution?', *History*, 63:221 (1982), 377–8) holds Christopher Hill particularly responsible for establishing the idea of mid-century as a decisive break. While not disagreeing, this argument would suggest that Hill's view formed only one influential contribution to a wider, and older, set of assumptions.

For the political history of the Restoration is the history of a generation living uniquely under the shadow of its past. It appears to be only historians who remain dramatically separated by the interregnum; and only this can account for the remarkable persistence in Restoration histories of claims to uniqueness for events, structures, and issues in the reign of Charles II which are almost xerox copies of events, structures and issues of the early Stuart period.⁸ The fact of this historical repetition is hardly surprising; the re-establishment of these features was precisely the purpose of the Restoration settlement itself. Indeed dividing the century at 1660, historians have not only failed to reflect contemporary experience but have ironically inverted it. For it was precisely the shattering impact of the mid-century experience that set contemporaries on their fateful Restoration course; a course not only of continuity, but of repetition.

HISTORY

The Restoration was a deliberate attempt to restore the atmosphere and structures of early Stuart government before they became poisoned by the divisions of Charles I's reign. If the account by the key minister concerned (Clarendon) of those troubles themselves began at 1625, it is hardly surprising that this meant in particular the relatively harmonious reign of James I – by now a halcyon memory. Thus historians who continue to describe the relatively easy-going moral and fiscal laxity of Charles II's court as if it were something unique – in particular uniquely lacking in structure ('a Hobbesian state of nature' is the phrase of one textbook)⁹ – exhibit a much shorter memory of Stuart history than that of contemporaries themselves.

The problem is again primarily one of professional boundaries. One historian of the 'long eighteenth century' sees no structure to the Restoration period at all until the 'exclusion crisis' gives birth to the (party) structures of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ But contemporaries did not see themselves as living in a structureless state of chaos. They thought they were living under the restored structures of the Stuart monarchy, and it was inevitable following a major upheaval that they should turn for their models of reconstruction to the past.

The intention behind the Restoration was therefore – like the meaning of the word itself – fundamentally conservative. The lesson of Charles II's reign seems to have been that in giving vent to this psychological impulse the

⁸ See Finlayson, *English Revolution*, p. 35 and ch. 2 in general.

⁹ J.R. Jones, *Country and Court: England 1658–1714* (1978), p. 3. 'It is quite inappropriate to talk of a structure of politics in Restoration England', p. 1.

¹⁰ This was the thesis of J.R. Jones, *The First Whigs* (1961) and is repeated in his *Country and Court*, see for instance, p. 198.

makers of the Restoration period succeeded rather too completely for their own good. For if Charles' court was, to begin with, similar in atmosphere to that of his grandfather, when the honeymoon ended and the (fundamentally negative) Restoration consensus collapsed, the crisis the government endured from 1678–83 was a repeat screening of the crisis of the reign of Charles I. It was fundamentally the same in its causes, its issues, its structures and its course; the only important difference was in its final outcome, a difference which resulted specifically from contemporary recognition of these similarities themselves.

It was the second Stuart crisis of popery and arbitrary government and it began, like the first (1638–42), with mounting concern on these same grounds over royal policy in the same three areas: parliamentary management, foreign policy, and religion. It proceeded via the resurrection of the first popish plot,¹¹ and an impeachment of the King's first minister (Danby) deliberately modelled on that of the earl of Strafford,¹² and it even called forth a second Scots rebellion before eventually subsiding in the face of a unified chorus of '41 again'. Throughout its duration it was accompanied by a full-scale resurrection of the political literature of the earlier crisis, from republished descriptions of the Irish Massacre of 1641¹³ to the republication of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, possibly written as early as 1628.¹⁴ It was indeed this latter work (and not 'exclusion') which became the focal point for the political thought of the crisis as a whole. The Filmerian gauntlet was taken up by both the ablest writers of this period, John Locke and Algernon Sidney, because both well understood the centrality of this resurrected Caroline theory to what was a resurrected Caroline crisis. Both made this quite explicit. In the words of Sidney: 'No authors . . . have had impudence enough . . . to publish doctrines so contrary to common sense, virtue and humanity, till these times. The production of Laud, Manwaring, Sibthorp . . . Filmer, and Heylin, seems to have been reserved as an additional curse to complete the . . . misery of our age and country.'¹⁵ Locke echoed the point: 'By whom this doctrine came at first to be broach'd . . . and what sad effects it gave rise to, I leave it to Historians to relate, or to the Memory of those who were Contemporaries with Sibthorp and Manwaring to recollect.'¹⁶

¹¹ On this theme see Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (North Carolina 1983), esp. pp. 9–10; W. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (1979), pp. 77, 82–3, 106–7, 330–2.

¹² Antichell Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons 1667–94* (1763), vol. VII, pp. 200–3.

¹³ *An Account of the Bloody Massacre in Ireland* (December 1678), reprinted in W. Scott (ed.), *Tracts . . . of the Late Lord Somers* (1808–15), vol. VIII, pp. 89–96, was based on Sir John Temple's *Account of the Irish Rebellion* (1646).

¹⁴ See chapter 10, footnote 11.

¹⁵ Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government in Works* (1772), p. 5.

¹⁶ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, First Treatise, para. 5, ed. P. Laslett (Cam-

The 'exclusion crisis' was not, therefore, it will be suggested, principally about 'exclusion' at all. The real exclusion crisis was in 1688, and ever since then its victors have been redefining the history of the seventeenth century in general, and the Restoration period in particular, in order to give premature birth to themselves. The crisis of 1678–83 was about the rebirth, in the reign of Charles II, of those ugly sisters Popery and Arbitrary Government, as Andrew Marvell's *The Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* (1677) pointed out. This piece of Caroline repetition entailed another: the whole battery of public memories and fears which were to paralyse the government of the country for another five years; from 1678 to 1682.

The Restoration, then, succeeded too well, for it restored not only the structures of early Stuart government, but subsequently its fears, divisions and crises. The most important of these fears – because the most politically destructive – was religious, and it is the problem of popery which gives the seventeenth-century English experience its essential unity. This is because, far from being 'broken in the middle', the seventeenth century in Europe as a whole was the century of the victories of the Counter-Reformation. It was a century of disaster for European protestantism, which was reduced in its course to the fringes of the continent, and from 50 per cent to under 20 per cent of its total area.¹⁷

This was the accomplishment of the two catholic superpowers, Spain in the first half of the century and France in the second. That England and Scotland did not feel themselves peripheral to this process, but actually surrounded by it, owed much to the geographical position of catholic Ireland. It is clear that the anxieties generated by this situation lay at the heart of both Caroline crises, from 1638–42, and 1678–83. In both cases the religious and foreign policies of the crown not only seemed to be failing to stem this disastrous process but actually allying themselves to it. It is striking to find, as late as 1681, a member of the English parliament giving a tearful speech about the fate of Bohemia;¹⁸ and John Miller has remarked on the pervasiveness throughout the 'exclusion crisis' of 'anachronistic' references to events like the Massacre of Paris of 1572, the Gunpowder plot of 1605, and the Irish rebellion of 1641.¹⁹ Needless to say, however, it is not for historians to tell contemporaries what is anachronistic, but rather the other way around. The problem to which these references pointed remained

bridge, 2nd edn, 1967), p. 161. Note also the similarity of the placing of the point in Sidney's and Locke's respective works.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis 1598–1648* (1979), p. 50 (and ch. 2); Scott, 'England's Troubles', pp. 113–15. See J. Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660–1688* (Cambridge 1973).

¹⁸ Grey, *Debates*, vol. VIII, p. 328.

¹⁹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 89.

not only relevant to, but at the centre of, the contemporary crisis. The problem was the Counter-Reformation advance.²⁰

The interregnum was indeed to introduce new anxieties into Restoration politics to accompany the old – arbitrary government now meant not only tampering with parliament but keeping a standing army too. But it was above all simply the shattering nature of the experience that underlay the mechanism for repetition. The full course of events, beginning (as the Restoration clergy explained) with the first sin of political disobedience and culminating in the ultimate blasphemy of regicide, had involved far too comprehensive a loss of paradise to be lightly forgotten. It was in vain that one contemporary ‘wish[ed] . . . that the years between 1640 and 60 could be raz’d out of the Book of Time, and the memory of this Age’.²¹ It fell to the second half of the century to become comprehensively haunted by the first. It was the magnitude of what it had experienced that drove the nation first to seek exit in repetition; and then back into the arms of the same fears again. In short the Restoration is not a ‘normal’ period, for we are dealing in it with a traumatised patient. Like a road accident victim the nation remained susceptible both to nostalgia on the one hand, and nightmares on the other. The Restoration settlement was an act of nostalgia. By 1678 the nightmare had come.

1.2 THE ‘EXCLUSION CRISIS’

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The modern historiography of the ‘exclusion crisis’ has not entirely ignored its longer-term historical context. The parallel with the crisis of Charles I’s reign – the first crisis of popery and arbitrary government – was so universally remarked upon by contemporaries that to ignore it entirely would be impossible.²² Indeed it was Betty Behrens who remarked, in what remains the best short survey of the pamphlet literature of this period, that ‘the similarities between the two situations were so obvious and so consistently proclaimed that the differences were overlooked’.²³ Contemporaries had, in

²⁰ This is why the Earl of Halifax remarked in 1678 that Titus Oates’ story ‘must be handled as if it were true, whether it were so or no . . . [though it were] vain to hope that it will ever be confessed by those that say still there never was any such thing as the Massacre of Paris, or the Gunpowder Treason in England.’ Quoted in F.S. Ronalds, *The Attempted Whig Revolution of 1678–81* (Urbana 1937), p. 18.

²¹ *The Loyal Protestants Vindication . . . By a Queen Elizabeth Protestant* (1681), p. 1.

²² Speck’s *Reluctant Revolutionaries* notes this fact about the context for contemporary perceptions (pp. 25–6) but then begins its account at 1660 anyway because this is more ‘manageable’.

²³ B. Behrens, ‘The Whig Theory of the Constitution in the Reign of Charles II’, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 7:1 (1941), 44.

other words, the utmost difficulty disentangling their present from their past.

What was so obvious to contemporaries, however, and to Behrens, has proved less obvious to historians in general. In most standard accounts the contemporary vision of this crisis has been supplanted by the assumptions, and the interests, of a later age. In religion this has meant the replacement of the genuine crisis situation of the seventeenth century with the incomprehension and distaste for enthusiasm of the eighteenth.²⁴ The popish plot scare of 1678–81, though in reality, like its predecessor of 1640, at the very heart of the crisis, has thus been portrayed as the baseless effect of credulous hysteria, sustained over the period only by the political impetus and manipulations of the exclusion campaign. This is to mistake cause for effect; the campaign for exclusion, among others, resulted from the much more deeply seated and longer lasting religious crisis, not the other way around.

Politically, ever since the eighteenth century, and still today, two things have interested historians most about the crisis of 1678–83. The first is the dispute it threw up over the succession to the crown: this, reduced in the historiography to 'exclusion', now names the whole crisis. The second is the major historical role it apparently performed in giving rise to the first 'parties' in modern history: the whig and tory parties. These remain the two features of the crisis which every schoolchild can identify. They came together most seminally in J.R. Jones' *The First Whigs* (1961), entrenching an interpretation of the crisis which has never been seriously challenged.²⁵

On one level, this double interest in exclusion (the issue) and party formation (the structure), is not surprising. There was, after all, a bill passed by the Commons (though not the Lords), to exclude the Duke of York from the succession. This entered the House of Commons in 1679, was carried to the Lords by its successor in 1680, and lay at the centre of a final deadlock between Charles and his last parliament in 1681. As for the parties, the

²⁴ Scott, 'England's Troubles'.

²⁵ Accounts of the crisis have, of course, varied enormously in depth and sophistication. To some, most notably Ken Haley's *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (1968) this author owes a major debt. Almost all, however, have operated within the contours of the traditional interpretation of the crisis established in the eighteenth century, with its focus on Shaftesbury, exclusion, and party formation. In a study of Shaftesbury himself, or Locke, this is to some extent inevitable. Exclusion was certainly a central concern for Shaftesbury, if not for the country as a whole. Other major studies, (including Miller's *Popery and Politics*, Plumb's *The Growth of Political Stability*, Harris's *London Crowds* and Speck's *Reluctant Revolutionaries*) treat the crisis in relation to broader themes rather than in its own right. There are, however, at least partial alternatives to this perspective: two are mentioned in note 81 below. And the recently completed doctoral study by Mark Knights ('Politics and Opinion during the Exclusion Crisis 1678–81' Oxford D.Phil. 1989) suggests that a more general change of emphasis may now be taking place. Dr Knights also finds a more limited role for exclusion than has traditionally been assumed. I am grateful to him for letting me see his thesis a few weeks before this book went to press.

labels 'whig' and 'tory' did indeed become attached to groups on the English political scene in the last phase of this crisis (1681–3), and have been with us ever since. The crisis also gave rise to a period of sharp polarisation, in 1680–1, between 'petitioners' and 'abhorers'. Nevertheless the existence of an exclusion bill does not, without evident demonstration, entitle us to hinge upon it our explanation of the crisis. The appearance, in its last stage, of the words 'whig' and 'tory' do not, without equivalent demonstration, entitle us to assume the appearance of the parties they later named. What is extraordinary is that such demonstration – on both counts – has never been thought necessary, and it has never been provided.²⁶

What is clear, instead, is that it is precisely these two features, however peripheral they may have been to the crisis of 1678–83, that serve to link it with the future: with the Glorious Revolution, and the political structures of the eighteenth century which it helped to make possible. In 1688–9 James was indeed excluded from the throne. During the reign of his successor the political structures of British politics were fundamentally changed. One of the most important changes, predicated in turn upon others like the achievement of annual parliaments (from 1689), and triennial elections (from 1694), was the development of the structures of party politics. Before 1689 the preconditions for such a development did not exist. Indeed the subsequent development of English party structures represented the institutionalisation, and so domestication, of precisely those forces of ideology, both religious and political, which the bloody seventeenth century had so conspicuously failed to bring under control. These momentous achievements of William III's reign depended in turn upon others. The most important were a change in the relationship between the British crown and the rest of Europe following from a change in both the national and the religious identity of its wearer. These alterations were not made possible by a domestic 'revolution', since it is not clear that the nation had any greater capacity to solve its troubles domestically in 1688–9 than it had had in 1638–42, or 1678–83. They were the consequence of a successful European invasion, effected by a Dutch Armada five times the size of its Spanish predecessor of a century before.²⁷

The crisis of 1678–83 came about precisely because of the inability of the existing domestic structures of politics to cope with the problems at its heart. As such it followed the pattern of its Caroline predecessor. Future chapters will need to call repeated attention to the fact that its participants, in every dimension, had to grapple with *seventeenth-*, not eighteenth-century political realities. Some time ago Geoffrey Holmes, noting the fluid and incomplete process of party formation during the reign of William III,

²⁶ See pp. 12–25 below.

²⁷ See Jonathan Israel's essay in Israel (ed.), *The Anglo-Dutch Moment* (Cambridge 1991).

concluded that by 1702 'the line separating Tory from Whig had once more become firm and sharp'.²⁸ The suggestion of this book is that it had become firm and sharp *for the first time*.

'Everyone agrees' then about the existence of the first whig party, though the evidence for such an organisation 'remains scanty'.²⁹ Under these circumstances what becomes significant is the survival – indeed the robust good health – of the assumption itself. For in fact both key assumptions, concerning the formation of party, and the centrality of exclusion, have always existed independently of historical demonstration. This is because both form part of a mythology of eighteenth-century origins. They compose a retrospective view of what later generations considered significant about the crisis. In the reign of Anne, Robert Harley looked back to these years for the origins of the parties of his own day (though he significantly did not hinge their struggle upon exclusion).³⁰ Not long after, Henry St John excused Sidney from the (perfectly correct) calumny of republicanism, explaining that he was merely a partisan for that moderate and prophetic bill of exclusion.³¹ In fact Harley's retrospective view is not supported by the contemporary evidence; and Bolingbroke's statement of Sidney's position is contradicted by Sidney's own, echoed by Henry Neville, that he could not be an enthusiast for a measure that would simply replace one monarch with another.³² Yet the structures and causes of 1678–83 were transmuted into those of the eighteenth century with very little protest. And this subsumation of the history of a seventeenth-century crisis to one of eighteenth-century origins has continued unbroken to the present day.

The modern view of the 'exclusion crisis' was arrived at, not through any investigation of the crisis in its own right, but as one contribution to the greatest modern debate about *eighteenth-century* (party) political structures. This debate centred on the work of Sir Lewis Namier. When the Namierite Robert Walcott challenged the notion of party in the reign of Queen Anne, it was natural, within the historiographical framework of 'the long eighteenth century', to show the 'origins' of his alternative 'interest groups' in the reign of Charles II. Walcott's work called forth a hail of criticism, and two of the finest works of the period in J.H. Plumb's *The Growth of Political Stability in England* and Geoffrey Holmes' *British Politics in the age of Anne*. The consensus that Walcott's conclusions for Anne's reign were unsound, combined with the same historiographical

²⁸ G. Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (revised edn 1987), p. 47.

²⁹ See the quotes at the head of this chapter.

³⁰ Robert Harley, quoted in Holmes, *British Politics*, p. 53.

³¹ Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, vol. II (1967), pp. 55–6.

³² G. Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1823), vol. I, p. 343; Caroline Robbins (ed.), *Two English Republican Tracts* (Cambridge 1969), p. 9.

parameters, invited J.R. Jones to sweep him out of the reign of Charles II as well. The result was Jones' *The First Whigs*, the function of which was not so much to describe the crisis of 1678–83, as to refute Walcott, by proving the birth of the party in it.³³

Yet, it is fair to say that *The First Whigs* 'proved' relatively little. It contained a series of assertions about 'the first whigs', about Shaftesbury, and about exclusion, which are not adequately documented and which this author believes the contemporary evidence calls into question.³⁴ To begin with Jones was cautious: '[The] nineteenth century assumed uncritically that the first whigs and tories were parties, indeed the ancestors of those of their own time. Of course, such a view cannot be seriously maintained today.'³⁵ Inexplicably, however, this caution was abandoned on the same page: 'The first Whigs were, and had to be, a party.'³⁶ They were drawn together as such by one leader (Shaftesbury), and around one issue (exclusion). It was Shaftesbury who 'made' exclusion the centre of the whole crisis. He did so by manipulating public concern about popery, and by managing his own wide following, both in and outside parliament. According to Jones, 'This concentration on the one issue was a principal reason for (Shaftesbury's) . . . greatness and success . . . Exclusion appealed to a very large proportion of the nation; almost every section with serious grievances saw in the bill the means to achieving their removal or remedy.'³⁷ By these means, 'Shaftesbury created the first whigs, the earliest recognisable party. By doing so he divided the nation and called into existence as a counterweight the first tories. Both whigs and tories were unmistakably parties, units far more coherent, disciplined, organised and united than mere aggregates of groups and interests.' In short this 'crisis produced not statutes but parties'.³⁸

This author does not wish to prolong this debate here. The suggestion is that it has been historically inappropriate for this crisis to have been treated in the context of it. The debate was about eighteenth-, not seventeenth-century political structures. This is why what is missing from both Jones' and Walcott's accounts of the Restoration crisis is the same thing. It is the moving force behind seventeenth- rather than eighteenth-century political behaviour. It is precisely the destructive force that the later development of party structures was able to bring under control. It is what caused this crisis

³³ R. Walcott, *Eighteenth Century British Politics* (1959); Plumb's work is an extended attack on Walcott's; Professor Jones makes the relationship between his own thesis and that of Walcott clear in both *The First Whigs* and *Country and Court*.

³⁴ See chapter 3.

³⁵ Jones, *The First Whigs*, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

³⁸ Jones, *Country and Court*, p. 198.

as it had its predecessor. This was the force, not of party organisation, but of public religious and political belief.

It was this, not Shaftesbury's party organisation, which lay behind the political upheaval of 1678 to 1683. In the face of this hurricane, numerous individuals and groups made what political running they could. Among these Shaftesbury was far from the most successful, or important. It was the progress of this belief which underlay all of the successive stages of this crisis (see chapters 2–3 below). The result was not parties but ideology. The Restoration crisis crystallised political belief. This crystallisation took place through the lens of the past, the lens of history. It gave rise to a debate about politics, and religion, which produced some of the most influential political writing in English history. When the words 'whig' and 'tory' appeared, they were coined to identify not 'parties' but polarities of belief; and belief not only about the present, but about that present illuminated through the experience of the past.³⁹ Both Jones and Walcott share an eighteenth-century high political view of the springs of political action. The debate over parties and interest groups was conducted in these terms. *The First Whigs* in particular notoriously dismissed the entire ideological dimension of this crisis as insubstantial and second rate – a judgement upon which the subsequent relocation of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* in this context has been sufficient commentary.⁴⁰ In fact it is precisely the lack of attention paid to the ideological dimension of the crisis⁴¹ that has permitted such a profound misunderstanding of its character to persist for so long. It is this which has permitted the non-issue of exclusion to stand, for some centuries, in place of the genuine issues; about which some thousands of books and pamphlets were, and are, most eloquent.

The work that has done most recently to repair this neglect is Richard Ashcraft's *Revolutionary Politics and John Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (1986).⁴² It was Ashcraft who first pointed out that, contrary

³⁹ See chapter 2, section 5.

⁴⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Laslett, introduction, pp. 33–7 and part 3; Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics and John Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton 1986).

⁴¹ The works of Behrens and Ashcraft, already mentioned, are among the most important exceptions to this generalisation. See also J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton 1975); Pocock (ed.), *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge 1977) introduction, ch. 7; *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge 1987), esp. Retrospect ch. 3; and 'The Varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform' in Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge 1985). O.W. Furley's Oxford B.Litt. thesis, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Whig Party, with special reference to Shaftesbury and Locke' (1953), summarised its conclusions in 'The Whig Exclusionists: Pamphlet Literature in the Exclusion Campaign 1679–81', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 13:1 (1957), 19–36.

⁴² Ashcraft's book was preceded by two important essays: 'Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government: Radicalism and Lockean Political Thought', *Political Theory*, 8:4 (1980); and 'The Two Treatises and the Exclusion Crisis; The Problem of