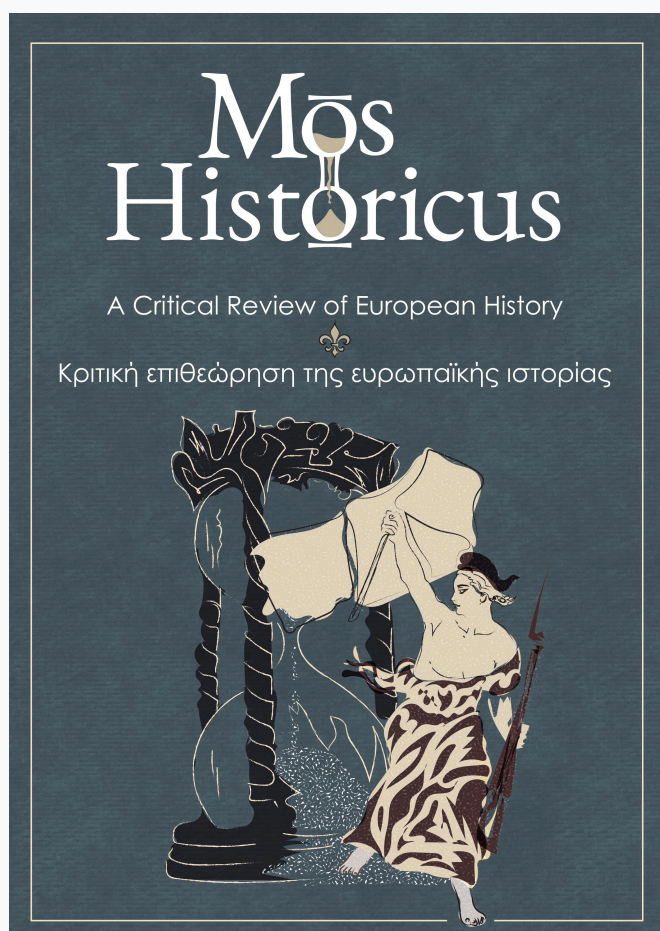


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“Il fier tiranno”

Fabio Battista

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“Il fier tiranno”:
Divine Right and *ragion di stato* in Girolamo Graziani’s
Il Cromuele

«Il fier tiranno»:
Ελέω Θεού βασιλεία και *ragion di stato* στο έργο του
Girolamo Graziani, *Il Cromuele*

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ABSTRACT: The execution of King Charles I in 1649 sparked outrage across Europe: after years of civil war, the anointed sovereign of England, Scotland, and Ireland was to die by parliamentary order. While conspicuous attention was devoted to this event in 17th-century Italian historiography, author Girolamo Graziani repurposed it as the subject for his five-act tragedy *Il Cromuele* (1671). Built around the dichotomy between the king and his rival, the tyrant Cromuele (Oliver Cromwell), Graziani’s work –which is dedicated to King Louis XIV of France– blurs ideological lines and points to an evident fascination for the political novelty embodied by the leader of the parliamentarians against the backdrop of *ancien régime*. This tragedy, I argue, highlights at once the crisis of divine right and contrasts it with the emergence of a new type of political leader, influenced by the post-Machiavellian theory of *ragion di stato*.

Keywords: Reason of state, English Civil Wars, Oliver Cromwell, Tragedy, Divine right, Anglo-Italian relations

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Ο Δρ. Fabio Batista είναι Επίκουρος Καθηγητής Ιταλικών και Διευθυντής του Προγράμματος Ιταλικής Γλώσσας στο Πανεπιστήμιο της Αλαμπάμα. Κατέχει διδακτορικό τίτλο στη Συγκριτική Λογοτεχνία από το πανεπιστήμιο City της Νέας Υόρκης (CUNY). Τα ερευνητικά του ενδιαφέροντα εστιάζονται, μεταξύ άλλων, σε θέματα σχετικά με τον πολιτισμό της Πρώιμης Νεότερης Ευρώπης και τις μεταφραστικές σπουδές. Αυτό το διάστημα, συγγράφει το πρώτο του βιβλίο, με τον προσωρινό τίτλο *Παρουσιάζοντας τα αγγλικά γεγονότα στην πρώιμη νεότερη Ιταλία: Ιστορία, πολιτική και θέατρο*, στο οποίο μελετά τη διάδοση της γνώσης και τη μυθιστοριοποίηση των γεγονότων στην Ευρώπη, με έμφαση στις περιπτώσεις της Αγγλίας και της Ιταλίας. e-mail: fbattista@ua.edu

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ: Η εκτέλεση του Καρόλου Α΄ της Αγγλίας το 1649 επέφερε ένα κύμα κατακραυγής σε ολόκληρη την Ευρώπη, καθώς μετά τον αγγλικό εμφύλιο το ελέω Θεού βασίλειο της Αγγλίας, της Σκωτίας και της Ιρλανδίας θα χανόταν με κοινοβουλευτική εντολή. Τα γεγονότα αυτά απασχόλησαν ιδιαίτερα την ιταλική ιστοριογραφία του 17ου αιώνα, ενώ ο συγγραφέας Girolamo Graziani εμπνεύστηκε από αυτά για τη συγγραφή της τραγωδίας πέντε πράξεων, *Il Cromuele* (1671). Βασισμένο στη διαμάχη μεταξύ του βασιλιά και του αντιπάλου του, τύραννο Cromuele (Όλιβερ Κρόμγουελ), το έργο του Graziani -το οποίο αφιέρωσε στον γάλλο βασιλιά Λουδοβίκο 14ο- δεν διακρίνει με σαφήνεια τις ιδεολογικές γραμμές, αλλά παρουσιάζει το ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον που προξένησε οι πολιτικές καινοτομίες τις οποίες εισήγαγε ο αρχηγός των Κοινοβουλευτικών ενάντια στο παλαιό καθεστώς (*ancien régime*) και οι οποίες ταυτίστηκαν με το πρόσωπό του. Στο άρθρο μου υποστηρίζω ότι αυτή η τραγωδία αναδεικνύει την κρίση που βίωνε η ελέω Θεού βασιλεία και ταυτόχρονα την αντιπαραβάλλει με την εμφάνιση ενός νέου τύπου πολιτικού αρχηγού, ο οποίος έχει επηρεαστεί από τη μετα-μακιαβελιανή θεωρία του *ragion di stato*.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Reason of State, αγγλικός εμφύλιος, Όλιβερ Κρόμγουελ, τραγωδία, ελέω θεού βασιλεία, Αγγλο-ιταλικές σχέσεις



On January 30, 1649, Charles I, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, was brought to a scaffold outside Whitehall Palace to be executed. Marking the culmination of the violent Civil Wars that had begun around 1642, the death sentence was ratified by the High Court of Justice established by the Rump Parliament.¹ As historian Clive Holmes writes, “only eighty [of the one hundred and thirty-five commissioners] ever sat, and twenty-five of these failed to sign the death warrant”:² though not unprecedented, declaring a king guilty of high treason

¹ The Rump Parliament was made up by the members of the House of Commons who had kept their seats after the military *coup d'état* known as Pride's Purge (December 6 and 7, 1648). See Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648-1653*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1974.

² Clive Holmes, *Why Was Charles I Executed?*, Hambledon Continuum, London 2006, p. 94; Michael B. Young claims that “at the end of the trial 67 voted for the death sentence, but only 59 signed the death warrant”, *Charles*

and sentencing him to the highest punishment was itself uncommon. In the past, the English Parliament had intervened in the destiny of kings,³ but the case of Charles I was different, both in spirit and in outcome. That the consequences of the king's death were likely to be almost as intense in popular opinion as they would be in the political scene appeared clear from the start: on the day of the execution, after he had been brought to the scaffold, the last words reportedly pronounced by the king presented the impending act as the sacrifice of a martyr.⁴ Charles I's rhetoric reinstated the clear-cut difference between the sacred figure of the king and that of his subjects.⁵ If the king was a monarch by divine right,⁶ as Charles I almost incessantly reminded the accusers during his trial, then his execution could not be ascribed to the administration of the law; sixty-two years earlier, the same argument had been used by the king's grandmother, Mary Queen of Scots, when she refused to accept the authority of her examiners.⁷ The sentence was thus portrayed as a perversion of God's will, in whose name the condemned sovereign felt forced to embrace his fate: an *imitatio Christi* that was visually emphasized by the king's stretching out of his arms and hands while waiting for the blow that would sever his head from his body.⁸

I, MacMillan, London 1997, p. 167. For a detailed reconstruction and analysis of the events, see C.V. Wedgwood, *A Coffin for King Charles: The Trial and Execution of Charles I*, Macmillan, New York 1964.

³ For instance, the Parliament asked for the abdication of Edward II in 1327 and accepted the resignation of Richard II in 1399.

⁴ Accounts of the king's last words were soon published in at least four editions of the pamphlet entitled *King Charls his speech made upon the scaffold at Whitehall Gate, immediately before his execution*, Peter Cole, London 1649, and later re-published as part of the pamphlet *King Charles his trial*. After an episode so richly imbued with sacred symbolism, the publication of a work that would enjoy an enormous popularity canonized the figure of the king as that of a Christian martyr; the *Eikon Basilike: the Portraiture of His Sacred Majestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings*, 1649, probably authored by John Gauden, bishop of Worcester, was passed off as an autobiographical narrative written by Charles himself in the very hours before his death. The noun *Eikōn* (Eikon) employed in the work's title broadly translates as "image" or "portrait", but its immediate etymological connection to "icon" was responsible for the aspect that stirred the greatest controversy, because of its direct reference to the sacred sphere. Charles I, who would be proclaimed a saint by the Church of England during the Restoration, was portrayed as the icon of a sacred power that had been subjected to a blasphemous interruption perpetrated by men that were, first and foremost, his subjects. And it is specifically to the work's ostensible rendering of the dead king as an icon of Christianity that the most famous of its responses, John Milton's *Eikonoklastes*, 1649, addressed its reprimand.

⁵ "Sirs, it was for this [the liberty of the people] that now I am come here. If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword, I needed not to have come here; and therefore I tell you (and I pray God it be not laid to your charge) that *I am the martyr of the people*", *King Charls his speech*, *ibid.*, p. 6; my emphasis.

⁶ The classic reference study on the subject of divine right is still Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1957.

⁷ As Young writes, "of course Charles was powerless to change the verdict of the court, but in a broader sense he could profoundly affect the outcome of the trial. He did not cower with fear, make lame excuses, or try to weasel out. Instead, he defended himself with trenchant arguments and genuine eloquence, and when these were of no further avail, he faced death with dignity and courage. His devoted followers were inspired by his example and compared him to Christ", Young, *Charles I*, *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁸ According to the reconstruction of a sixteen-year-old eyewitness named Philip Henry, the sound that arose from the people watching the execution after the axe had fallen was "such a groan as [he] never heard before"

In this essay, I investigate the aftermath of this momentous event –which symbolized the effective interruption of monarchical rule in the three kingdoms– by concentrating on the pervasive reception of the English Revolution and, more pointedly, its undoubted protagonist, Oliver Cromwell, in 17th-century Italian culture.⁹ The focus of my analysis will be Girolamo Graziani's five-act tragedy *Il Cromuele* (1671), which I contextualize within the panorama of the Italian writings that had favored an image of Cromwell as the ideal opposite of the anointed king.¹⁰ Graziani's depictions of both the revolutionary leader and Charles I offer several opportunities for ambiguity concerning his professed royalist stance, particularly regarding the contrast between divine right and the ubiquitous notion of *ragion di stato*, which scholar Friedrich Meinecke defined as the “knowledge of the means suitable for founding, maintaining, and enlarging a State”.¹¹ Outlining a concept already introduced by Niccolò Machiavelli, this phrase –which was used and abused throughout the 17th-century and beyond– was coined by Giovanni Botero in his eponymous treatise *Della ragion di stato* (1589), which was construed as a Catholic, Counter-Reformation response to Machiavelli's earlier elaborations on the duties of an effective ruler; this very notion and its consequences, as we will see, are at the core of Cromuele's outlook and actions during the tragedy.

In *Le glorie degli Incogniti* (1647), his gallery of illustrious members of the Venetian Accademia degli Incogniti, Giovan Francesco Loredan wrote a short, but highly celebratory entry on Girolamo Graziani (1604-1675). The author is presented as living proof that a small, little-known homeland –in his case, Pergola, in the Duchy of Urbino– may still beget great minds.¹² Born of a notable family, Graziani discovered his calling for poetry very early: at the age of twelve, Loredan claims, he was already writing in diverse genres and at sixteen he published a *canzoniere*.¹³ By the time of this short biographical entry, Graziani had also published the poem *La Cleopatra* (1633), whose frontispiece bears a dedication to Francesco I d'Este enclosed by full-body portraits of Ludovico Ariosto and Torquato Tasso, obviously

and that he wished he “may never hear again”, N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s*, Blackwell, Oxford 2002, p. 36.

⁹ A concise, yet insightful, examination of the historiographical production is Stefano Villani, “The English Civil Wars and the Interregnum in Italian Historiography in the 17th Century”, in *Cromwells Virtual Seminars: Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries)*, (2006-2007).

¹⁰ In 2011 *Il Cromuele*, edited by Maurizio Fasce and Carlo Alberto Girotto, was published as part of Clizia Carminati and Stefano Villani (eds.), *Storie inglesi: L'Inghilterra vista dall'Italia tra storia e romanzo (XVII sec.)*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2011. All quotes are from this edition. All translations are mine.

¹¹ Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'état and Its Place in Modern History*, Westview, Boulder and London 1984, p. 67. On the evolution of the theories of the state, see Maurizio Viroli, *Dalla politica alla ragion di stato: La scienza del governo tra XIII e XVII secolo*, Donzelli, Rome 1994.

¹² Giovan Francesco Loredan, *Le glorie degli Incogniti*, Francesco Valvasense, Venice 1647, p. 273.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 273-274.

implying an artistic and political continuity between the most famed of the Este poets and this promising young man. *La Cleopatra*, however, hardly matched the success of the *Orlando furioso* and the *Jerusalem Delivered*. In fact, the most notable of Graziani's literary accomplishments had not yet seen the light by 1647: the 26-canto epic poem *Il conquisto di Granata* (1650), on the final stages of the siege of Granada, which marked the last defeat of Spanish Muslims (1492), was by far his most important and well-known piece of literature, boasting nine editions and inspiring Giacomo Leopardi for his *Consalvo* almost two centuries later. By the mid-1660s, however, Graziani appeared to be concerned with an entirely different project, one that signals a definite shift—both in terms of genre and subject matter—from his previous efforts. With *Il Cromuele* (1671),¹⁴ the author abandoned his well-practiced engagement with the genre of post-Tasso heroic poem and turned to a five-act tragedy in verse to dramatize an event of very recent history, namely the execution of Charles I.

Although *Il Cromuele* was Graziani's only dramatic work, the author's interest for and expertise in matters of foreign policy was attested by his successful career in the Duchy of Modena, governed by the Este family. In 1652 he was appointed Secretary of State and in the 1660s and early 1670s he showed an active diplomatic agenda, strengthening ties with the French court and brokering the marriage (1673) between Duke Alfonso IV's daughter, Maria Beatrice d' Este (later known as Mary of Modena), and the second surviving son of Charles I, the future king James II.¹⁵ The traces of this betrothal—no doubt Graziani's most remarkable diplomatic accomplishment—can be found in *Il Cromuele*, where James' first wife, Anne Hyde, is prominently and generously portrayed in the early stages of her love for the young prince. Despite not being directly involved with the events of the English Civil Wars, it is nonetheless clear that Graziani nurtured a profound fascination for some of its main actors and, more broadly, its political implications, seizing on the opportunity for his life as a civil servant to inform and inspire his literary endeavor.

In line with other, previous re-workings of English affairs in Italian drama, Graziani's tragedy combines historical fact with audacious romance-like elements, where the political machine is entwined with the labyrinths of love, greed, and desire.¹⁶ However, the author's

¹⁴ According to the correspondence between Graziani and French author Jean Chapelain, the writing of the tragedy appears to have started (and repeatedly interrupted) by 1666. After the 1671 edition, the work was reprinted one more time in 1673. For a textual history of the work, see the very detailed note to the text by Carlo Alberto Girotto and Maurizio Fasce in Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, *ibid.*, pp. 305-324.

¹⁵ He succeeded his older brother, Charles II, in 1685 and was deposed in late 1688, during what came to be known as the Glorious Revolution.

¹⁶ Starting from the late 16th-century and throughout the 17th, Italian authors wrote a conspicuous number of dramas based on English affairs. Of particular interest were tragic figures such as Sir Thomas More, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Earl of Essex. Graziani's *Il Cromuele* was conceived and published at the height of this Italian

ideological commitment to the cause of *ancien régime*, which is highlighted by the work's dedication to the French king Louis XIV, complicates the tragedy's argumentative and dramatic choices, specifically relating to the dichotomy between Charles I and Cromwell.¹⁷ Reminiscent of the attitude demonstrated by Italian analysts of the Revolution –whose works, as we will see, substantially informed Graziani–, the author's ambiguity, I argue, casts a shadow over the ideological coherence of the tragedy and betrays a somber acceptance of the irrefutable crisis of divine right.

Il Cromuele is set in London, between Whitehall Palace –now the residence of the tyrant Cromuele– and the Tower, where Re Carlo (Charles I) is kept prisoner, on the eve of his death sentence. Two men, Henrico and Edmondo, have just arrived in the capital, where they have been welcomed and hosted by crypto-Royalist supporters Odoardo Hide (Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon) and his daughter Anna (Anne Hyde, Duchess of York and Albany). The men are in fact none other than Henrichetta (Queen Henrietta Maria), Carlo's exiled wife, and her recently met Irish lady-in-waiting Delmira. After fleeing England, the queen had been trying to rally support for her husband's cause, but to no avail. As she was sailing to France to ask for her nephew Louis XIV's help, her ship had wrecked and the lifeboat that had saved her and Delmira was driven up the Thames and into London. At the time of their arrival, Cromuele is organizing a sumptuous feast at Whitehall, while pondering upon the imprisoned king's destiny. His wife Elisabetta (Elizabeth, née Bouchier), secretly in love with Carlo, had persuaded Cromuele to postpone the death sentence to get a chance to save his life. Elisabetta's confidante Orinda, an elderly widow, manages to arrange a meeting between the two, thanks to the help of her son Arturo, the Governor of the Tower. Orinda also brings Henrico/Henrichetta and Edmondo/Delmira (with whom she is in love, unaware that she is actually a young woman) inside the Tower. When faced with Elisabetta, Carlo refuses her: he is ready to die, but he will never betray his wife. Elisabetta is heartbroken, so she leaves the Tower. The time is now ripe for the king and queen's encounter and *anagnorisis*: Henrico/Henrichetta tries to persuade Carlo to take advantage of her love rival Elisabetta's help, but in vain; so, with the help of Odoardo and Anna Hide, they try to arrange for the king's flight. But notice of the plot is given to Cromuele, who finally decides

anglomaniya but is the only tragedy that deals with Cromwell and the Revolution rather than with Tudor subjects. On formal matters in Graziani's tragedy specifically, see Emilio Bertana, "L'irregolarità del teatro profano: il *Cromuele* di Girolamo Graziani", in *Storia dei generi letterari italiani: La Tragedia*, Vallardi, Milan 1905.

¹⁷ *Il Cromuele* was not Graziani's only work dedicated to Louis XIV: he also authored two panegyrics entitled *Ercole gallico alle glorie della sacratissima maestà del re cristianissimo Luigi XIV* (1663) and *Applauso profetico alle glorie del re cristianissimo Luigi XIV* (1673). Graziani earned pensions from the French king for his literary endeavors. See Fabio Tarzia, "Girolamo Graziani", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, (2002).

to issue the death warrant. The following day, the king is beheaded¹⁸ and Cromuele's sleep is tormented by the apparition of Maria Stuarda (Mary Queen of Scots), a forewarning of the bloody end awaiting him. Edmondo, found out as responsible for the plot, is also murdered by Arturo; but once dead, he is identified as a woman. Orinda, who had been in love with him/her, is desperate, but her sorrow is destined to grow more terrible: through complex twists and turns, it becomes apparent that the young Edmondo was Orinda's own daughter, whom she had sent to Ireland fifteen years earlier to save her life. But the story becomes even more sensational when it is found out that the child was not Orinda's, but indeed Cromuele and Elisabetta's daughter, whom they wrongly believed to have died right after birth. On a note of despair, the tragedy closes: the tyrant understands that his daughter's death is a punishment for his impious royal murder.¹⁹

The inventiveness of the plot is self-evident. The baroque penchant for the unexpected is found in the numerous revelations, abrupt discontinuities, *anagorises*, and *coups de théâtre* that are responsible for a substantial part of the work's appearance. The story that Graziani relates is only very loosely tied to the events of January 1649, yet, as customary in historical fiction, most of the *dramatis personae* are historically grounded, with the notable exceptions of the elderly Orinda²⁰ and of Edmondo/Delmira, for whose character, Maurizio Fasce argues, Graziani may have taken inspiration from the story of the premature death of Cromwell's beloved daughter.²¹

One of two opening paratexts, the *Lettera dedicatoria*, is influenced by the author's epistolary exchanges with French intellectual Jean Chapelain and provides a skillful exercise in flattery for the work's dedicatee, Louis XIV.²² Aside from its conventional rhetoric, the letter contains important details. Towards the end of the paratext, after the long list of the

¹⁸ In accordance with custom, the execution takes place off scene and is reported by Odoardo Hyde.

¹⁹ Many of the central themes of *Il Cromuele* (*ragion di stato*, a tyrannical father, the death of a daughter) are already present in one of the most important and influential tragedies of the century, the *Aristodemo* (1657) by Carlo de' Dottori (1618-1686).

²⁰ The source for the name and, to some extent, the character of Orinda is intriguing and reinforces the triangular dimension of Graziani's project: England (and Ireland), France, Italy. The name derives from the *nom de plume* of English poet Katherine Philips (1632-1664), who was known as "the Matchless Orinda". Graziani's playing with the name reflects in the character's portrayal as well: Philips, who belonged to the Neoplatonic Society of Friendship (whose ideas had been introduced in England by Queen Henrietta Maria herself), wrote love poems to women, while Orinda actually fell in love with a woman disguised as a man.

²¹ Cromwell's second-born daughter, Elizabeth (married Claypole) died on August 6, 1658. On the popular legacy of her death, see Fasce's introduction in Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, *ibid.*, p. 301.

²² See Giulio Bertoni, "Girolamo Graziani e Jean Chapelain", in *Archivum Romanicum*, 20 (1936); see also Rosa Galli Pellegrini, "La tragédie italienne à l'école du classicisme français: le rôle de Chapelain dans la genèse du *Cromuele* de Graziani", in *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere Moderne, Università di Genova*, 2 (1987), pp. 35-57.

French king's accomplishments, qualities, and innate virtues, the author directly touches upon the compositional choices and royal dedication of his tragedy. As he writes,

[...] sì come Vostra Maestà in questo gran Teatro dell'Universo è nelle di lei ammirabili qualità la vera Idea di un perfetto Heroe, da celebrarsi con una Epopeia per esemplare d'imitatione a quei Monarchi che aspirano di poggiare all'Immortalità per le vie dell'Honore, così questa mia Tragedia [...] impetria me privilegio di eternità, e serva a tutti altri per iscorta di quel che si ha da fuggire per non incorrere nella colpa e nell'ignominia che n'è risultata al nome del parricida Cromuele.

([...] just as Your Majesty is, in this great Theater of the Universe, the very idea of a perfect hero, who should be celebrated in an Epic poem as an example to those monarchs who wish to be immortal by means of Honor, so this Tragedy of mine [...] may give me the privilege of eternity, and may be useful to everyone else as a demonstration of what they are to avoid in order not to equal the guilt and ignominy associated with the name of the patricide Cromwell.)²³

In terms of artistic creation, he reinstates a hierarchy that was already well established: if the grandeur of a “perfetto Heroe” (“perfect hero”) like Louis XIV deserves the highest of literary genres, that is epic, Cromwell's baseness has to necessarily become the matter of tragedy, where, according to Aristotle's *Poetics*,²⁴ the actions of less than exemplary characters could be displayed.²⁵ But alongside a justification for his chosen genre, Graziani adds an explanation for the subject matter: History's role as *magistra vitae*, especially for princes. The Cromuele created by Graziani is depicted as a tyrant who murders a king (and it is meaningful that the author calls him a “parricida”, a patricide) because of his thirst for power and, not least, because of his wife's decisive intervention. The ideological frame in which the tragedy is enclosed allows the author to avoid speaking of the English Revolution, of its reasons, and of Charles I's many faults, thus portraying the execution of the king as the mere result of one man's murderous decision, rather than engaging the socio-political and religious contexts that had led to the king's imprisonment and sentencing. This tragedy – which Fasce defines “civile e laica” (“civil and secular”)²⁶ – thus highlights the duel between the hero and anti-hero, bypassing many of the broader implications that had been transmitted to him by Italian chroniclers and historians of the Revolution, including two of his fellow

²³ Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, ibid., p. 336.

²⁴ The knowledge of Aristotle's *Poetics* had been greatly enhanced in Italy starting in 1570, with the publication (in Vienna, by Gaspar Stainhofer) of Lodovico Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotile vulgarizzata, et sposta*, a work that thoroughly affected the Italian literary panorama.

²⁵ But the point is controversial, because Aristotle does also speak of the virtuousness of the tragic hero. However, in Chapter XIII, he states that the tragic hero may be someone “who is not eminently good and just, whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty”, Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Samuel H. Butcher, Dover Press, Mineola, NY 1997, p. 45.

²⁶ Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, ibid., p. 302.

Incogniti members, Maiolino Bisaccioni (1582-1663) and Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato (1606-1678).²⁷ For instance, in his *Historia della Guerra Civile d'Inghilterra* (1652),²⁸ Bisaccioni identified problems with the very institution of the Parliament, which proved to be an ultimate failure for princes because it had gathered such great power that “hanno formata una specie di Republica, ch'ha preteso autorità sopra i Regi” (“they formed a sort of Republic, which claimed authority over kings”).²⁹ The analyst emphasizes the rising power of religious radicals, such as the Puritans, who reached a point of complete opposition to Charles I. Rather than blaming them, however, Bisaccioni is very critical of the king's attitude, which he deems pusillanimous because he yielded too much to their growing requests. The king also appeared to have lost his grasp on the importance of the royal performance, that is of behaving publicly in such a way that would become an anointed sovereign. In Book II, as a matter of fact, Bisaccioni finds capital blame in Charles's having shown affection towards his subjects, which translated into a general impression of weakness that ultimately fueled the Parliamentarians even more: the strength of Bisaccioni's argument, as we can see, resides almost entirely in the realm of human behaviors and emotions.³⁰ This point specifically employs an argument made popular by Machiavelli in Chapter XVII of *The Prince* according to which affection and weakness in the sovereign are in opposition to the cultivation of a sentiment of fear in the people:

E li uomini hanno meno rispetto ad offendere uno che si facci amare, che uno che si facci temere; perché l'amore è tenuto da uno vincolo di obbligo, il quale, per essere li uomini tristi, da ogni occasione di propria utilità è rotto; ma il timore è tenuto da una paura di pena che non abbandona mai.

(Men are less reluctant to cause trouble for someone who makes himself loved than for someone who makes himself feared. For love is supported by a bond of obligation which, since men are evil, they break on any occasion when it is useful for them to do so; but fear is supported by a dread of retribution which can always be counted on.)³¹

Charles, Bisaccioni argues with his Machiavellian mindset, had failed in this respect.

²⁷ On the involvement of these Venetian intellectuals with English affairs, see Stefano Villani, “Gli Incogniti e l'Inghilterra”, in Davide Conrieri (ed.), *Gli Incogniti e l'Europa*, Emil di Odoya, Bologna 2011, pp. 233-276.

²⁸ This is the first and longest section in his *Historia delle guerre civili di questi ultimi tempi*, Storti, Venice 1652. The other political bodies that Bisaccioni treats in his work are Catalonia, Portugal, Palermo, Naples, Fermo, Rome, Poland, and France.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53; my translation.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, ed. Luigi Firpo, Einaudi, Turin 1972, p. 82; the translation is Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. and trans. James B. Atkinson, Hackett, Indianapolis and Cambridge 1976, p. 273.

In Volume II of his *Dell'Historie* (1641), Gualdo Priorato also supported the view that, already in 1639, Charles I was not popular among his subjects.³² What is most interesting here is that the historian attributes the people's reluctance to appreciate their king also to his perceived pro-Catholic policies, spurred by his French wife Henrietta Maria of Bourbon (1609-1669). His marriage with a Catholic princess was perceived as an unfortunate decision on the king's part, an early symptom of the very weakness that Bisaccioni highlights in later years, here articulated by his yielding to the requests of his foreign wife. In fact, Gualdo Priorato pushes his argument further by seizing this opportunity to make a broader point and lament the nefarious influence of women upon men, especially those in positions of power. This brief but very powerful misogynistic tirade –among other things, he claims that women's tears are like water that drowns men's virility³³– bears witness to the latest developments in the *querelle des femmes*, in which several of the Incogniti were actively involved.³⁴ With different protagonists, a similar argument against women and their influence over the administration of power emerges strongly in *Il Cromuele*; borrowing scholar Pietro Messina's words, this also points to an underlying conservative interpretation of history as a theater of human passions, where reasons and causes are looked for in the personal dynamics of emotions.³⁵ Besides this misogynistic sidetrack, Gualdo Priorato displays great interest in the Puritan phenomenon as an added threat to the stability of a kingdom: the analyst's perspective combines the shortcomings of Charles I as a flawed ruler with the emergence of a socio-religious movement whose dangerousness for the welfare of the state he understands with clarity. As Messina argues, rather than theological, the interest in Puritanism shown by Gualdo Priorato and other historians is fundamentally rooted in political reasoning: to quote the scholar, "religion for them, whether it was that of the King, the Presbyterians or the Independents, was always and only *figmentum*".³⁶ As is well known, the instrumentality of religion as a means for keeping the state was among the ideas popularized by Machiavelli and sanctioned by Giovanni Botero in his Counter-Reformation response treatise *Della*

³² Gualdo Priorato writes about the Revolution also in volumes III and IV of his monumental work.

³³ Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, *Dell'istorie. Volume II*, Pietro Anbert, Geneva 1641, p. 73.

³⁴ Incogniti Ferrante Pallavicino and Giovan Francesco Loredan, for instance, engaged in heated exchanges with sister Arcangela Tarabotti about the rights and dignity of women. See Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2003, p. 65 and Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2008, p. 194.

³⁵ Pietro Messina, "Santi e libertini. Gli storici italiani del Seicento e la 'rivoluzione puritana'", in Carminati and Villani, *Storie inglesi*, *ibid.*, p. 117.

³⁶ Pietro Messina, "The Italian libertine historians and the English Revolution", in *Cromohs Virtual Seminars: Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries)*, (2006-2007).

ragion di stato.³⁷ Going back to Bisaccioni, it is clear that he saw Puritans as the bearers of dangerous ideas, such as that of the Republic.³⁸ The popular Republic, guided by a Parliament rather than by a single powerful leader, was perceived as the gravest of dangers, in direct contrast to an authoritarian conception of government that goes back to Machiavelli and French intellectual Gabriel Naudé, among others.³⁹

Rather than politics, however, *Il Cromuele* appears on the surface as a tragedy about unrequited love. The only character who seems to be concerned with the state is, unsurprisingly, Cromuele himself. But if we exclude him from the picture, we are left with a host of exasperating characters whose sole aim is to satisfy their amorous needs in the middle of a war. We see the widow Orinda unashamedly wooing the young Edmondo, without knowing that he is in fact Delmira; Anna Hide harboring a deep, noble love for Re Carlo's son Giacomo (who never appears on the scene);⁴⁰ and, finally, the triangle made up by the king, his wife Henrichetta, and Cromuele's wife Elisabetta. This love situation is the most interesting, mainly because it elevates Re Carlo to the rank of tragic hero, paints Elisabetta as the unhappy wife of a bloodthirsty tyrant, madly in love with her husband's worst enemy,

³⁷ In Book I, Chapter XII of the *Discourses on Livy*, for instance, Niccolò Machiavelli argued that “quelli principi o quelle repubbliche le quali si vogliono mantenere incorrotte hanno sopra ogni altra cosa a mantenere incorrotte le cerimonie della loro religione, e tenerle sempre nella loro venerazione; perché nessuno maggiore in dizio si puote avere della rovina d'una provincia, che vedere dispregiato il culto divino”, Machiavelli, *Discorsi sulla prima deca di Tito Livio*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, Einaudi, Turin 2000, p. 40 (“Those princes or those republics that wish to maintain themselves uncorrupt have above everything else to maintain the ceremonies of their religion uncorrupt and hold them always in veneration; for one can have no greater indication of the ruin of a province than to see the divine cult dismantled”, Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, ed. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1996, p. 36). As a result of the spiritual reformation brought about by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the latter years of the century began to witness a tendency to “catholicize” Machiavelli's ideas, or at least to offer alternatives to the Florentine secretary's perceived “cynicism and anti-clericalism”, as well as to his “oblique” republicanism (see Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, *ibid.*, p. 67). On the reception of Machiavelli, see Maria Cristina Figorilli, *Lettori di Machiavelli fra Cinque e Seicento: Botero, Boccalini, Malvezzi*, Pàtron, Bologna 2018.

³⁸ Bisaccioni writes: “Queste sono le forme con le quali tratta il Calvinista quel Principe, sotto il cui imperio ei vive. Questi sono i concetti, ch'ei forma dell'attioni de' Cattolici, e questi sono l'argomenti, ch'egli adopera per vilipendere il dominio Monarchico, a fine poi d'introdurre la Republica popolare”, Bisaccioni, *Historia della Guerra Civile*, *ibid.*, p. 30 (“These are the forms with which Calvinists treat with their Prince, under whose power they live. These are the ideas that they have about the actions of Catholics, and these are the arguments that they employ to vilify the Monarchical rule, in the aim to introduce a popular Republic”, my translation). Further in the text, the author also adds that: “il fine del Parlamento, e del popolo minimo, [...] era l'abolitione dell'autorità Regia, e ridursi a una Republica popolare”, *ibid.*, p. 113 (“the end goal of Parliament and of the lowest people [...] was the abolition of Royal authority and the embracing of a popular Republic”, my translation).

³⁹ Naudé (1600-1653) famously discussed this issue in his *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'état*, Rome 1639. As the French intellectual argued, princes should be ready and able to carry out “affaires difficiles et comme désespérées, contre le droit commun, sans garder même aucun ordre ni forme de justice, hasardant l'intérêt du particulier, pour le bien du public”, Naudé, *Considérations politiques*, *ibid.*, p. 65 (“difficult, even desperate business, contravening the law, with no order or form of justice, risking the interest of the individual for the sake of the public's”, my translation), essentially advocating the necessity of authoritarianism in the appropriate circumstances.

⁴⁰ The historical Anne Hyde would indeed end up becoming the first wife of the Catholic James II (1622-1701).

and showcases the author's ingrained misogyny. When disclosing her feelings for the king to her confidante Orinda, Cromuele's wife –by far the most eloquent orator in the play– explicitly connects his present imprisonment to nothing short of a love revenge. While remarking that war was already dividing the kingdom, she credits the decision to act upon the king's fate to her own intercession with Cromuele:

Se n'accorse il crudele, io ne son certa,
 ma in vece di rimedio o di pietate
 corrispose al mio amor con un disprezzo.
 Sdegno sorse in quel punto, e contro Amore
 impiegò l'Armi sue, ma sempre in vano.
 [...] Brama di vendicare amor schernito
 fé ch'io stimoli aggiunti a i sensi alteri
 [...] Così a gara movemmo
 a l'eccidio del Re l'armi e i consigli,
 e la Fortuna a i nostri volti arrise.

(The cruel one noticed it, I am sure, / but instead of pity / he answered my love with scorn. / Disdain rose in me at that point, and against Love / took arms, but always in vain. / [...] A desire to avenge my scorned love / made me add action to my spiteful feelings / [...] and so we set our minds / on the murder of the King / and Fortune smiled at us.)⁴¹

Elisabetta is portrayed as a tragic heroine who is in a constant struggle with love; but, far from being confined to her own emotions, this aspect sheds an unexpected light on both the imprisonment and the regicide. The prominent role played by Elisabetta, as I remarked, draws attention to a definite misogynistic stance, especially insofar as it involves female intervention in the matters of the state: although the germ of the necessity of regicide is already planted in Cromuele's mind, it is the 'woman scorned' who determines the course of action.

It is somewhat baffling that the character who provides the title for Graziani's tragedy appears comparatively few times on the scene. Of course, in a play that uses love as the motor of the action, the tyrant Cromuele, with his evident lack of interest in the matter, does not have too many occasions to come to the fore. It is, however, undeniable that when Cromuele speaks, he does so in a pervasive manner, articulating his reasoning according to principles that are not always subjected to the negative image that Graziani might have wanted to portray. The craft of statesmanship and the *fil rouge* of authoritarianism are the keys to

⁴¹ Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, *ibid.*, p. 359.

accessing the ambiguity of the reception of Oliver Cromwell –the object of repulsion and fascination at the same time– in 17th-century Italy, one that, as Stefano Villani and others have amply demonstrated, garnered a significant amount of attention:⁴² Italian analysts displayed a layered attitude when confronted with the unprecedented phenomenon of a self-made man who determined the demise of an anointed sovereign and then gathered political power in his own hands.

Cromuele denounces the problem posed by the king's situation already in his very first appearance in the tragedy, when he discusses his concerns with Lamberto and Harissone.⁴³ Wrapped up in a speech that immediately evokes the figure of a tyrant, Graziani manages to insert a reflection that has little to do with Cromuele's personal power but that, on the contrary, is mainly devoted to the welfare of the state. With articulate metaphorical language, he describes the risks connected to the king's staying alive as those of lighted sparks in the ashes:

Vive nel cuor di molti
verso il nome real l'antico affetto,
e benché la paura entro il più cupo
de l'animo il respinga e lo nasconda
pur vive, e come spesso il cener serba
in piccole faville occulto foco,
che da i soffi eccitato
risorge e cresce, e in vasto incendio avvampa,
così quel pertinace occulto senso,
[...] risorgerà più vivo
e accenderà più fiero a l'Anglia in seno
de la guerra civil la fiamma infausta
che sarebbe per noi tanto peggiore
quanto è peggio del mal la recidiva.

(Old affection still lives / in the hearts of many for the royal name / and even though fear pushes it / back into the deepest recesses of the soul and denies it, / yet it lives, and as often the ashes keep / a hidden fire alive in small sparks, / which, stirred by winds, / again comes to life and grows, and turns into a large fire, / so that unyielding, hidden feeling / [...] will come back to life / and will light England's bosom /

⁴² See Stefano Villani, "La prima rivoluzione inglese nel giudizio delle diplomazie veneziana e genovese", in Elena Fasano Guarini, Renzo Sabbatini, and Marco Natalizi (eds.), *Repubblicanesimo e repubbliche nell'Europa di antico regime*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2007, pp. 105-132.

⁴³ Lamberto is modeled after general John Lambert (1619-1684), while Harissone is inspired by general Thomas Harrison (1606-1660), both very close to Cromwell (as they are to Cromuele in Graziani's tragedy).

with the unhappy flame of civil war / which will be worse for us / as a relapse is always worse than the illness.)⁴⁴

In a rare moment of factual accuracy, the danger perceived by Cromuele is derived from the latent possibility that a new civil war might again tear England apart if Carlo is not executed. This problem was indeed felt by the Parliamentarians at the end of 1648, given the still sizable support enjoyed by the king both in Parliament and among civilians.⁴⁵ And Graziani's Cromuele is well aware of such danger: not only would another civil war destroy the still unstable political settlement recently achieved ("per noi", for the new political body), but it would also ravage the country, making it necessary to go back to armed fighting. Executing the now deposed king is therefore seen as an indispensable move in the ongoing effort to keep the State stable, so that the new government may also maintain its position. This passage is the first explicit instance of Graziani's underlying conception of Cromwell, one that is inherently structured according to the principles of the Machiavellian prince favored by Bisaccioni and Gualdo Priorato's interpretations and spurred by that very Edward Hyde whom the author inserted in the play under the Italianized name of Odoardo Hide.⁴⁶ As Messina has convincingly argued, their assessments failed to profoundly grasp the real import of the Revolution because they essentially remained anchored to the analytical instruments of Renaissance political historiography:

[...] il brutale interesse, l'ambizione, la cupidigia sono i soli motori delle azioni umane, con il loro necessario seguito di trame, intrighi, sotterfugi, inganni: ecco il filo conduttore anche delle vicende inglesi, dove si può trovare un certo senso di continuità nella lotta per il potere, per difenderlo, per conquistarlo o usurparlo, e che vedrà prevalere il più astuto, il più ambizioso, il più abile manipolatore di simulazione e artifici: Cromwell.

(Brutal interest, ambition, greed are the only motors in human actions, with their necessary consequences of plots, subterfuge, deception; this is the thread also in the English events, where one can find a certain sense of continuity in the struggle for power, to defend it, to conquer, or usurp it, and that will witness the victory of the most astute, the most ambitious, the most cunning manipulator of simulation and artifice: Cromwell.)⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, *ibid.*, pp. 346-347.

⁴⁵ See Barry Coward, *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, Blackwell, Oxford 2003, pp. 332-333.

⁴⁶ An eyewitness of the Revolution, the Earl of Clarendon can be regarded as the most authoritative 17th-century historian of the Civil Wars and Interregnum, mostly biased by an anti-Cromwellian position (see Roger C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution*, Methuen, London 1977, pp. 28-30). His monumental *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, begun in the year 1641* was first published in 1702-1704. However, it is possible that the work had previously circulated in manuscript form, as actually did his *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in Ireland*, an addendum to the major work.

⁴⁷ Messina, "Santi e libertini", *ibid.*, pp. 116-117; my translation.

The passage quoted above bears outstanding similarities to Graziani's depiction of Cromuele in terms of a kind of Shakespearean Macbeth, guided by greed and desire for personal affirmation. But, as I suggested earlier, Cromuele is also a ruler who, despite having gained power illegitimately, has a clear sense of what needs to be done for the sake of keeping the State, unlike Macbeth. In fact, the Machiavellian logic that thoroughly informs Graziani's creation is not only that of unscrupulous ambition; it is also that of pragmatic behavior, like the Cesare Borgia, who impressively eliminated Remirro de Orco once he understood he could be a danger for his ultimate power settlement in the newly conquered Romagna region.⁴⁸ On a similar note, Cromuele's awareness of the necessity to put Carlo to death responds to the mindset of a ruler who, like those discussed in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII of *The Prince*,⁴⁹ still dwells in a situation of inherent instability, no matter how more or less legitimately they gained power. The threat that arises from Re Carlo's life generates profound fear in Cromuele; but this is a kind of fear that is both connected to his ambitious designs to keep power, and to his desire to put an end to the chapter of civil war in England. In other words, the figure of Cromuele is that of a tyrant both in the modern sense of cruel, hegemonic ruler and in the earliest sense of someone who, by concentrating power in his hands, can rescue an endangered country, especially after a war. It is precisely in this conjunction that the Machiavellian ideal embodied by Cromwell is best manifested: what needs to be done has to be done no matter what the external conditions might be, setting aside any moral restraints.⁵⁰ The echo of this Machiavellian interpretation is very clearly heard in the soliloquy in which Cromuele voices his plans:

Ha vrei molte difese a quest'accusa [to the illegitimacy of judging a king],
ma sarà la miglior che la sentenza
sostenuta da l'armi

⁴⁸ Machiavelli, *Il principe*, *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁹ All of the chapters deal with what the prince must do and must avoid doing if he wishes to keep his principality; especially infamous is Chapter VIII, on the use of cruelty in maintaining illegitimately gained principalities.

⁵⁰ It is also interesting to note that the first Italian-language biography of Cromwell, *Il Cromuele* by Alfonso Paioli, often uses Graziani's tragedy as one of his sources, referencing the work explicitly (see, specifically, Alfonso Paioli, *Il Cromuele*, Francesco Valvasense, Venice 1675, pp. 138-139). Unsurprisingly, Paioli also considers Cromwell to be the very embodiment of Machiavelli's prince: "Chiaro esempio di questo ne somministra Oliviero Cromuele, che il secolo presente ha veduto con la scorta d'un esecrabile parricidio, stabilire un durevole fondamento a una portentosa tirannide su le rouine del Regno della Gran Bretagna. Un sì famoso usurpatore assai più che Silla merita il celebre titolo di Primogenito della Fortuna, e se il pernizioso Politico Fiorentino fosse vissuto à nostri giorni, ha vrebbe assolutamente scielto questo Soggetto in vece del Valentino per idea del suo malvagio Principe", *ibid.*, p. 10 ("A clear example of this is provided by Oliver Cromwell, whom the current century has seen, on the basis of an abominable patricide, establish a stable foundation to a portentous tyranny on the ruins of the Kingdom of Great Britain. A usurper so famous that he deserves the title of Fortune's First Born more than Silla; and if the pernicious Florentine Politician had lived in our days, he would have certainly chosen this Subject instead of Duke Valentino for his idea of the evil Prince", my translation).

concederne il vantaggio a l'incertezza:
 il fervido bollor di fresca offesa
 che il cor accende e a la vendetta infiamma,
 mitigato dal tempo intiepidisce.

(ELISABETTA: And yet, one day the king's scorn / will be soothed with longed-for peace. / CROMUELE: It's true, but that needs time, / and time usually changes interests and feelings. / ELISABETTA: Therefore, you have plenty of time to sentence Carlo to death. / CROMUELE: This is the time, and I must not / give away a advantage to uncertainty: / the fervent heat of recent insult / that the heart a lights and vengeance sets on fire, / grows cooler if it is mitigated by time).⁵⁴

The role of time is so important in the tragedy that the whole action could be regarded as an interlude caused by Cromuele's hesitation. As we already know, the tyrant hesitates in ultimately sentencing Carlo to death because of his wife, who tries to gain time in order to trade the king's love for his possible freedom. But in the very moment when Henrigo and Delmira's plot is found out, Cromuele decides that it is time for him to proclaim the fatal sentence. This point is particularly impactful in the economy of the tragedy because it represents the tyrant's definite taking charge of the responsibilities of his political role: Graziani himself underlines its importance by means of telling rather than showing. The narration of the king's death, much awaited and evoked since the start of the tragedy, is indeed entrusted to Odoardo, who, like the real Edward Hyde, acts as some kind of historian:

Arse d'ira in quel punto il fier Tiranno
 e, torvo il guardo et horrido il sembiante,
 commise altrui che fosse preso Edmondo
 ch'era poco lontano; aggiunse a questi
 altri comandi ai nostri danni e impose
 che l'ingiusta e sacrilega sentenza
 contra il Re prigionier fosse eseguita
 tosto che l'ombra al nuovo Sol cedesse.

(At that moment the proud Tyrant burned with rage / and, with surly gaze and horrid looks, / ordered someone to take Edmondo / who was not far; and to this / he added more orders for our misfortune and imposed / that the unjust and sacrilegious sentence / be executed against the king / as soon as the darkness would yield to the new Sun).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Graziani, *Il Cromuele*, *ibid.*, p. 354.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

Graziani's imaginative re-writing of the events connected to the (only provisional) end of the English monarchy is a complex operation that contributes directly to the political discussion of *racion di stato*, while still ultimately showcasing the nefarious actions of an ambitious man. But *Il Cromuele* also reveals the ways in which a modern ruler works, free from the sacredness of the royal mission, far from the untouchable morality of the anointed king. By employing the historical positions of early commentators of the English Revolution, with their insistence on the Machiavellian character of Oliver Cromwell, Graziani gave a portrait of a pragmatic, clear-minded, unscrupulous ruler, contrasted by an inept, romance-like king, whose end marks the ultimate violence against divine right. The authoritative Cromuele ultimately qualifies as a character that, in the manner of a skillful governor, manages to reconcile his thirst for personal affirmation with a watchful eye on the welfare of his usurped dominion.

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