ABSTRACT. William III's military and political career was marked by a sustained tension between his obsessive struggle against France and the fear caused by his accession to enhanced titles of power. Crucial to William's shift from stadholderate to kingship was his assumption of emergency powers in 1672 to defend his country against French invasion. Throughout his stadholderate (1672–1702), he came to be seen by his Dutch republican opponents as a Roman dictator intent on using military power to break the harmony of the constitution, while Orangist propaganda tried to present the rule of the One as the best remedy to the recurrent danger of civil war and anarchy. Spurred by the Ryswick treaty of September 1697 and fuelled by a deeply engrained tradition of resistance to any expanded military establishment, the standing army debates of 1697–9 came as an effort to understand a major political controversy in the light of the history of republican Rome. The political theorists of the New Country Party strove to reassert the superiority of civil over military power by showing how the decay of the Roman Republic had been caused by a departure from the civic militia paradigm and a drift towards military monarchy which fostered the growth of tyranny. It was thought that England's commitment to a prolonged war effort would entail a similar process and imperil the age-old balance between king and parliament. The contention of this article is that the standing army debates of 1697–9 can be construed as an encounter between Dutch and English neo-Romanism, crystallizing in the controversial figure of William. An overall view of William's military and political career and the search for elements of continuity in his supporters' and his opponents' arguments will serve to look at the role of historicism in the construction of a late seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch ideological space.

I

This was the policy of the old Parliament of 1640 to concert these two capacities, arma et toga, the gun and the gown, in one and the same interest; till old Oliver, with a self-denying Ordinance, split them asunder and devoured them both.¹

This extract from Nathaniel Johnson's *Dear Bargain*, a Jacobite pamphlet of 1690, may be used as an introductory quote to this analysis of the strained

* I am indebted to Mark Goldie, David Hayton, Willem Frijhoff, Gillian Howarth, Franck Lessay, Cliona O'Mahony, John Miller, Claude Nicolet, David Onnekink, Robert Tombs, and Blair Worden for their help and support in preparing this article. All dates given Old Style. Year starts 1 January.

relations between political authority and military power during the three decades of William’s career as stadholder of the Dutch Republic (1672–1702) and later as king of England, Ireland, and Scotland (1689–1702). Nathaniel Johnson is referring to a famous expression of Cicero: ‘cedant arma togae’:² that the gun may yield to the gown, or, to put it more elegantly, that military power may be subordinate to civil power. Quite a lot has been written about the relation between arms-bearing and citizenship in late seventeenth-century England,³ but, within the field of this topic, very little on the use and misuse of Roman history for propaganda purposes, and nothing on the impact of Dutch political culture both on William’s attitude to the army and on the New Country Party’s arguments in favour of a reduced military apparatus in times of peace.

The aim of the present article is to try and fill this gap by taking a broader view of William’s career and by considering the standing army debates as the meeting-point of two otherwise very different republican traditions. From the point of view of the historiography, one needs to stress two points: the first is a slight tendency to cut a line between ‘Dutch William’, to use Julian Hoppit’s term,⁴ and ‘English William’, and hence to establish an implicit dichotomy between William’s career before and after the Glorious Revolution.⁵ This is not to say that the Glorious Revolution did not change the course of William’s destiny and alter his vision of national and international politics: it certainly did, but not to the point of allowing him to depart from a creed he voiced as early as 1674: ‘He was right and it was his interest’, he then told the English ambassador Gabriel Sylvius, ‘to favour the pursuit of war in order thereby to establish his authority’⁶ From this perspective, therefore, one may see William’s bitter power tussle with the Amsterdam City Council in 1683 over the size of his army as a rehearsal of the debates of 1697–9 which forced him to disband the army of the Nine Years’ War.

Moving from William to his republican opponents, a second point needs to be emphasized: it is generally agreed that, despite structural differences in terms of

⁶ ‘Il avait raison et intérêt de souhaiter la continuation de la guerre afin d’établir son autorité par ce moyen.’ William to Gabriel Sylvius, 27 Mar./6 Apr. 1674, London, The National Archives (NA), SP 84/196, fo. 48. A similar remark had been made by an anonymous Roman envoy in 1672–3: ‘Comme c’est la guerre qui l’a élevé, c’est elle seule qui le peut affirmer dans son autorité’ (Since war made him rise to power, only war can allow him to assert his authority), no date, Paris, Archives des affaires étrangères, Correspondance politique (AAECP), Hollande, 1672–3, supplément, 93, fo. 78.
ideas and language, English and Dutch Republicanism shared some common preoccupations and took root in a similar theoretical ground. Machiavelli has long been acknowledged as a binding figure between these two strands of Republicanism, but not enough has been said about Tacitus, who, though certainly no political theorist, provided English and Dutch republicans with an unequalled analysis of the mechanics of power under the Principate. Tacitism, in other words the political utilization of Tacitus, was as important as Machiavellism in framing the intellectual mould of the debates over William’s army, both in England and in the Dutch Republic. Tacitism will be considered here as the key element of a specifically neo-Roman reading seventeenth-century political theorists and pamphleteers applied to William’s military and political career. Quentin Skinner defines neo-Romanism as a broader notion than Republicanism, allowing him to single out ‘the protagonists of a particular ideology’ and ‘the members of a school of thought’. These authors, he argues, characteristically focused their attention on two themes: the liberty of the state and the opposition between liberty and slavery. Skinner’s argument will be taken further and extended to the case of Orangist propaganda which tackled the same theme but from a different angle and with the intention of contesting republican propaganda. Parallel to the ‘neo-Roman theory of free states’ developed in the Dutch Republic, a neo-Roman theory of personal rule came as an attempt to conciliate Orangism and Republicanism, and hence to project an image of the princes of Orange as true protectors of the liberty of the state.

II

Long before becoming William’s secretary-at-war, William Blathwayt began his administrative career in 1668 as secretary to Sir William Temple, who was then Charles II’s ambassador at The Hague. Blathwayt’s task involved perusing, selecting, and sending the most recent Dutch publications to the earl of Arlington. Writing to Arlington in the spring of 1669, Blathwayt noted that he was about to

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10 The Principate designates the imperial regime that was set up by Augustus in 27 BC and that was to last for five centuries.

send to England ‘a small book concerning the affair of the stadholderate’. The year before, the then eighteen-year-old William III had been appointed ‘First Noble of Zeeland’, causing considerable anxiety among the members of the States party. Having struggled to secure the exclusion of the House of Orange from the high charges of state after William II’s abortive coup d’etat of 1650, Johan de Witt’s republican allies now feared that the young prince might draw advantage from his new title to further his own interest and recover the powers his family had lost since 1650. A republican pamphlet of 1668 argued that the prince’s intended voyage to the provinces of Gelderland and Overissel was meant ‘to renew the evils of 1650’ and that ‘the wings of this young eagle must be clipped lest he overshadow the liberty of the state’. Writing at the same time as William Blathwayt, the English traveller William Fellow compared the stadholders to ‘the dictators of Rome’ because, he thought, ‘they may in fit season prevent and calm all occasions of civil commotion’. He added that the authority of the States was above the authority of the stadholder and, taking his cue from Tacitus, that ‘in him [the stadholder] lies only persuasion, in them [the States General] the power of commanding’.

This situation changed dramatically under the pressure of circumstances in the early 1670s when Louis XIV’s military policy and his supposed aspirations to ‘universal monarchy’ became more and more threatening to the Dutch Republic. Ever since the Dutch revolt against Spain, the princes of Orange had played a leading role in the defence of their country. Yet, the vivid memory of prince Maurits’s coup d’état of 1618 and of William II’s failed coup d’état of 1650 turned the stadholderate into a profoundly ambiguous function, allowing

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12 Blathwayt to Arlington, 27 Apr./7 May 1669, NA, SP 84/185, fo. 18. Blathwayt gives no clues as to what this book could be.

13 William II’s coup d’état against the province of Holland had been staged in July 1650 as a way for the stadholder to neutralize the resisting power of the City Councils that had opposed his project to maintain a strong army establishment. William II’s plan to take Amsterdam failed but the arrest of his main opponents and the purging of City Councils allowed him to tilt the balance of power in his favour. His sudden death in early November 1650 gave the regents an opportunity to regain control of the Dutch Republic, paving the way for a stadholderless period which was to last until 1672. For more details on this key moment of seventeenth-century Dutch history, see Simon Groenveld, De prins voor Amsterdam: reacties uit pamfletten op de aanslag van 1650 (Bussum, 1967); and Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, 1650: hard-won unity (Gorcum, 2005).

14 Considerations upon the speech of the prince of Orange to the States of Zeeland, NA, SP 84/184, 9/19 Sept. 1668, fo. 46. Contrary to the other provinces, and particularly to the province of Holland, Gelderland and Overissel were dominated by a nobility upholding a strong feudal tradition of allegiance to the House of Orange, reinforcing the States party’s suspicion as to the purpose of William’s trip.

15 Ibid., p. 177. William Fellow’s comment closely follows Tacitus’s analysis of the mode of government of the Germans in Germania vii, 1: ‘The authority of their kings is not unlimited nor arbitrary: their generals control the people by example (exemplo) rather than command (imperio).’ All English translations of Tacitus taken from the Loeb edition in five volumes. William Fellow’s comment also falls into line with the republican idea that ‘this prince [William III] was a Hollander’s servant and a subject of the state’. Considerations upon the speech of the prince of Orange to the States of Zeeland, NA, SP 84/184, 9/19 Sept. 1668, fo. 46.
its holder to free himself from the constitutional constraints imposed upon him as much as it allowed the country as a whole to fend off the danger of foreign invasion. The stadholderate was a double-edged sword: in terms of principle, there was no disagreement about its necessity, but in terms of practice, it had been used by the princes of Orange as an instrument of subversion of the constitution.

As he addressed the States of Zeeland in 1668, William III ‘in his speech tells them of his ancestors, as intending to follow their examples’. To a republican mind, the formulation of this project could only conjure up contradictory thoughts: on the one hand, there was the glorious memory of William the Silent, ‘father and founder of our liberty’ in the words of the great Tacitus scholar and republican writer Pieter Hooft; on the other hand, there was the dire memory of Prince Maurits and William II. Prince Maurits had used the army in 1618 to purge the City Councils, the provincial States and the local militias, hence installing his own partisans in all key state structures and transferring power from the province of Holland to the stadholderate. During his embassy in Holland, Sir Dudley Carlton had observed that Prince Maurits ‘doth not willingly adventure himself in them [the towns of Holland] without a guard of soldiers sufficient to keep the burghers in devotion’ and that he now proceeded ‘aperto Marte’. As for William II, his decision to besiege Amsterdam in late 1650 could be understood in the light of a piece of advice he had been given in 1642 by his tutor André Rivet, who had skilfully managed to detach the least republican phrase of Cicero’s works from its specific context in order to apply it to the young prince’s education: ‘Military virtue is preferable to all other virtues.’ For those who had heard or read William III’s 1668 speech to the States of Zeeland, the question was: whose example would the prince now follow, that of William the Silent or that of Prince Maurits and William II?

The French invasion of June 1672 offered a unique opportunity to answer this question, coming in fact as a seminal moment in William’s career and a watershed in the history of the stadholderate, both in terms of facts and ideology. The swiftness of Louis’s military offensive left the country on the brink of disaster within a few weeks. In the face of what the Pensionary of Amsterdam Cornelis Hop had aptly called in January 1672 ‘an extraordinary state of war both on land

17 NA, SP 84/184, 9/19 Sept. 1668, fo. 46.
18 Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, Redenen bij mijn verhaelt op de propositie van de Prins van Oranje, om altijer eenige personen vanden Raedt te verwisselen ende te veranderen, in Memorien en Adviezen, Historisch Genootschap, XVI (Utrecht, 1871), p. 348.
19 Letters from and to Sir Dudley Carlton during his embassy in Holland from January 1616 to December 1620 (London, 1757), pp. 393 and 396.
20 André Rivet, Instruction du prince chrétien (Leiden, 1642), p. 313. The phrase is taken from Cicero’s Pro Murena, ix, 22: ‘Rei militaris virtus praestat ceteris omnibus.’ Murena had been accused of electoral fraud after having become consul in 69 BC and Cicero’s speech was intended to defend him against his prosecutors. Cicero was speaking as a barrister and not as a republican theorist.
and on sea’, 21 the question of William’s precise role in the defence of the Dutch Republic came under close scrutiny. The States General had argued in January 1672 that ‘the gathering of armed men is without any effect as long as no commander is appointed’; 22 but, for obvious historical reasons, the seven provinces of the Dutch Republic disagreed as to the extent of the emergency powers William should be granted.

Driven by the de Witt faction, the province of Holland favoured an appointment ad tempus, or to use the Grand Pensionary’s own words, ‘ad expeditionem’. 23 The six remaining provinces, on the contrary, supported William in his willingness to hold the office of captain-general ad vitam and his concomitant refusal ‘to accept the mutilated office’. 24 As it appears, the real problem was not so much the function of stadholder as its practice, in other words the way the duration of a set of powers could imperil the equilibrium and the harmony of the constitution.

The second duke of Buckingham understood perfectly that the enhancing of William’s constitutional position came as an extreme remedy to an extreme situation. Comparing the revolution of 1672 to the burning of the Rump in February 1660, 25 Buckingham noted that William’s appointment as ‘stadholder and sovereign of the militie (as they call it)’ was the result of the ‘strange confusion’ which beset the country. 26 In Buckingham’s opinion, the revival of the stadholderate was a necessary answer to the collapse of order, very much as the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 had allowed England to keep away from the looming danger of civil war and anarchy. Comparisons were also drawn with the history of republican Rome, and particularly with the example of the dictatorship, an office which had been empirically created to balance out the consulate’s lack of efficiency in case of a prolonged military campaign. 27 The precedent set by Pacuvius during the Second Punic War (219–202 BC) served to shed a light on William’s own situation: 28 an interesting parallel when one recalls that Pacuvius

21 N. Japikse, ed., Notulen gehouden ter staten-vergaderingen van Holland (1671–1675) door Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien (Amsterdam, 1902), 11 Jan. 1672, p. 8. 22 Ibid., 9–19 Jan. 1672, p. 14. 23 H. Borkowski, ed., Les mémoires du Burgrave et comte Frédéric de Dohna, 1621–1688 (Königsberg, 1898), p. 258. The province of Holland had been the driving force behind the Seclusion Act of 1654 and the Perpetual Edict of 1667, which had barred William of Orange from all high charges of state. 24 Girolamo Alberti to the Doge of Venice, 12 Feb. 1672, Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1671–1672 (London, 1939), p. 165. A similar rift cropped up in early 1674 when William was appointed hereditary and perpetual stadholder. Bernatz to Pomponne, 22 Jan./1 Feb. 1674, AAEC, Hollande, 92, fo. 271. From a technical point of view, William’s appointment as captain-general in February 1672 was made under a number of conditions, among which a close supervision of his acts by the Generality’s deputies in the field. The function of these deputies was very close to that of the ‘master of cavalry’ (magister equitum) who accompanied a Roman dictator on the ground. 25 Buckingham to Arlington, 15/25 June 1672, NA, SP 84/189, fo. 48. 26 Buckingham to Arlington, 15/25 June 1672, NA, SP 84/189, fos. 105–6. 27 For this topic, see Claude Nicolet, ‘La dictature à Rome’, in Maurice Duverger, ed., Dictatures et légitimité (Paris, 1982), pp. 69–84. The dictatorship was the result of an appointment, and not of an election like the consulate. The dictatorship lapsed between 216 and 82 BC and was revived under a very different form by the Lex Valeria of 82 BC, a law which gave Sulla all powers by creating him unlimited dictator. 28 Japikse, ed., Notulen gehouden ter staten-vergaderingen van Holland, 16/26 Aug. 1672, p. 296.
was described by Livy as ‘a noble who was at the same time of the people’s party’ and who ‘entered upon a scheme to save the Senate and at the same time to make it submissive to himself and to the commons’.  

It was precisely because a dictator’s position lay on the fringes of legality that it was possible for William to turn a temporary expedient into a permanent one and hence to bypass the constitutional restrictions he was supposed to abide by. William proved shrewd enough to make the best use of his emergency powers without appearing as a covert enemy of the state. As Charles II’s representatives offered William the possibility of becoming sovereign of his country, he turned down their proposition, arguing that ‘the name of sovereign’ was ‘odious to the magistrates of the state’ and that ‘he had rather be as his ancestors were in the government of the United Provinces than be king of England and of the two other kingdoms’.  

Yet, in practice, William used his military power to exert an increasing political authority. This was true in matters of war and diplomacy but also in matters of domestic politics, especially with regard to William’s method of handling the States General and the provincial States. As a Dutch correspondent in London wrote in early August 1672, ‘he will not dance after their pipes’. Along with the army, the representative bodies of the Dutch Republic became in fact one of the channels through which William managed to increase the power of the stadholderate. A considerable number of magistrates were displaced in favour of William’s followers and, potentially at least, the army was now an instrument of power in his own hands. From this perspective, it is no surprise that the tidal change of 1672 should have stirred a sharp controversy between the defeated republican side and the emboldened Orangist one.

III

Let us examine both sides. First the republicans. As the stadholderless period of 1650–72 came to a close, the defenders of the ‘True Freedom’ inherited from a deep-rooted intellectual tradition of denial of any form of personal rule. They used their knowledge of ancient history as a mirror to understand the convulsions of their own time and they showed a deep and sustained interest in the transition from the dying Roman Republic to the nascent Principate. According to Gilbert Burnet, Johan de Witt ‘had notions of the commonwealth from the Greeks and the Romans’. This may explain why the Deduction or Declaration of the States of

30 Anonymous (Anon.) to Arlington, 4/14 Aug. 1672, NA, SP 84/191, fo. 51.
31 Anon. to Arlington, 9 Aug. 1672, NA, SP 84/191, fo. 30.
Holland and West-Friesland (1654), which had served to justify the Act of Seclusion of 1654, was sprinkled with references to the history of late republican Rome. The main point was that all the republics ‘had entrusted the power of their arms to a single person for his whole life and the many other republics which had taken the same risk for a long period thereby fell into submission and were reduced to the state of a monarchy’. Caesar’s rule appeared as the culmination of a historical trend by which all dictators whose exercise of power, by force or by necessity, exceeded its time-limit, were in fact rooting out the foundation of the constitution. The argument had been repeated in Pieter de la Court’s Interest of Holland (1662), one of the theoretical manifestoes of the ‘True freedom’: ‘It is clear from what has been said that no one can live safely in a country where a great Lord wields military power on a long-term basis.’ Following the same pattern of thought, one of the 1662 editions of Pieter de la Court’s Considerations of state opened with an engraving picturing on the one side a crowned stadholder and, on the other side, two gowned magistrates, while, over their heads, a ray of sun streaming from the clouded sky bore the following motto: *cedant arma togae.*

This strand of Republicanism did not die out with the fall of the De Witt regime. As early as 1672, a republican pamphlet argued that William’s elevation meant that ‘the Trojan horse is brought in’. Later, as William displayed increasing skills in manipulating provincial assemblies, a republican tract noted that ‘the prince is very absolute and does what he pleases’ and that ‘the States are now but *les huissiers du prince*’. Furthermore, the author remarked that ‘he alone is the cause of the continuance of the war’ and that ‘he intends to model an army after his own way, giving employment to strangers, daily rejecting the native subjects’. This last piece of criticism was perfectly coherent with the fact that Johan

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36 Ibid., p. 38.
37 Pieter de la Court, *Het Interest van Holland oftge Gronden van Hollands-Welvaarten* (Amsterdam, 1662), p. 71. A Protector was considered by Pieter de la Court as a good illustration of this rule. John Locke held a copy of a 1662 Dutch edition in his personal library. James Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The library of John Locke* (Oxford, 1971), p. 167. The first English translation of Pieter de la Court’s pamphlet dates from 1702, but a manuscript translation seems to have circulated before this date. Cambridge, Pepys Library, Magdalen College, MS 2888.
38 An obvious reference to the Roman consulate.
39 UBA, Pieter de la Court, *Consideratien van staat, ofte polityke weeg-schaal* (Amsterdam, 1662), opening page.
40 No date, NA, SP 84/191, fo. 225.
42 Some things concerning the prince of Orange worthy of great reflection, NA, Williamson papers, SP 9/202/1, fo. 220.
de Witt had been hostile to the hiring of foreign troops, believing, according to Gilbert Burnet, that ‘an army commanded by officers of their own country was both more in their power, and would serve them with more zeal’.\textsuperscript{43} From a republican point of view, the revival of the stadholderate and the continuance of war therefore entailed two major risks: first the risk of letting the sovereignty of the provincial States be whittled down and secondly the risk of letting a national army be replaced by a mercenary army.

Not surprisingly, Orangist propaganda actively sought to counter this type of argument. The main idea defended by the Orangist pamphlets published in and after 1672 was that, given the circumstances, the concentration of powers in the hands of one man was the sole remedy to the overwhelming threat of anarchy. Many observers, in fact, shared the impression that the body politic was disintegrating under the effect of civil disturbances. Edward Seymour described the scenes of disorder he witnessed in The Hague as a kind of world turned upside down: ‘The lowest mechanic’, he wrote, ‘thinks himself as an equal for the best stadholder.’\textsuperscript{44} Another observer anxiously pointed to the danger of mob-rule: ‘Every minute were passed in the danger of being plundered and murdered by the commonalty, who now take the liberty to say and do what they please without control.’\textsuperscript{45} Quite clearly, the feeling was that the liberty so dear to the States party had irretrievably turned into a form of unbridled licence and that, to quote from an Orangist pamphlet of 1672, the ‘pretext of liberty’ had facilitated the invasion of the country by Louis XIV, leading to ‘the greatest slavery in the world’\.\textsuperscript{46}

The purpose of Orangist propaganda was to present William as a providential figure of unity who had the power to restore order and liberty. A pamphlet of 1672 described republics as structurally unstable regimes, enfeebled by the lack of a figure-head and torn apart by competing factions.\textsuperscript{47} Focusing his criticism on the De Witt regime, the author touched a deeper nerve by stressing the ‘absolute decadence’ of the militia in 1672: ‘by depriving it of its head, the choice was made to turn it into a useless and lifeless body’. ‘The militia was disbanded and reduced

\textsuperscript{43} Burnet, \textit{Burnet’s history of my own time}, i, p. 394. A typical Machiavellian statement, however contradictory with the events of 1672. Machiavelli believed that the French invasion of Italy in 1494 was owed to the choice made by the Italian states to entrust their defence to mercenary troops rather than local militias. This theme assumed a theoretical form in \textit{L’arte della guerra} (1521), the first English translation of which came out in 1560. For more details on \textit{L’arte della guerra}, see Michael Mallett, ‘The theory and practice of warfare in Machiavelli’s republic’, in Quentin Skinner, ed., \textit{Machiavelli and Republicanism} (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 173–80.

\textsuperscript{44} Seymour to the earl of Ranelagh, 16/26 July 1672, NA, SP 84/189, fo. 203. Edward Seymour (1633–1708) was to become one of the leading Tory figures of the New Country Party in the 1690s.

\textsuperscript{45} Anon. to Arlington, 10/20 June 1672, NA, SP 101/35, fo. 64.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel} (1672), NA, SP 119/713, fo. 224. A classic argument of Orangist propaganda was that the members of De Witt’s faction had sold their country to the Sun King. Pieter de Groot was dubbed a ‘French slave’ (\textit{Franse slave}). Ibid., fo. 225.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Souverains antidotes contre les maux de la Hollande causés par le mauvais régime de la cabale et la faction de Loevestein} (1672), NA, SP 119/187, opening pages.
in such a way’, added the author, ‘that we were not safe inside and not feared outside’. According to the pamphlet, the intrigues of the States party had led to civil unrest, instilling a mortal disease into the body politic. The prince of Orange was ‘the vigilant physician’ the country now needed, the only one who could restore the militia to its ‘ancient order and discipline’. The whole argument of the pamphlet was summed up by a quote from Tacitus appearing on the first page: ‘The sole remedy for his distracted country was government by one man.’

Now, this reference should not be taken lightly because Tacitus constituted in fact one of the mainstays of seventeenth-century Dutch political culture. One has to admit that Tacitus’s works were immensely popular but that, at the same time, they escaped any straightforward interpretation. As most Tacitus scholars have noted, it is extremely difficult to pin down Tacitus’s attitude to the Republic and the Principate. There are at least two reasons for this: first, Tacitus was a historian with little taste for philosophical speculation and foremost an observer of men and manners. Secondly, the regime of the Principate was riddled with contradictions: on the one hand, it appeared very much like a monarchy while staunchly avoiding calling itself a monarchy, mainly because the term ‘monarchy’ (regnum) had become unpalatable to the Romans since the fall of Tarquin the Proud in 509 BC. On the other hand, the Principate ran up against the evils of the late republican period, and particularly the evil of civil war, while trying, or rather pretending, to remain faithful to the spirit of the fallen Republic. The ambivalence of Tacitus’s attitude to the Principate and to the memory of the Republic may explain why his works came to be construed in contradictory terms in the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

Around the time of the revolution of 1672, there existed two competing and opposite interpretations of Tacitus’s view of the shift from the Republic to the Principate as expressed in the opening lines of the Annals. The first was republican in tone and appeared in Hugo Grotius’s De antiquitate reipublicae Batavicae, a text first published in 1610 and translated into English in 1649 as A treatise of the antiquity of the commonwealth of the Batavers, which is now the

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48 Ibid., p. 25. Same remark by Sir William Temple: ‘The troops were without a general, and which is worse, without a heart.’ Memoirs of what passed in Christendom from 1672 to 1679, in The works (4 vols., London, 1757), ii, p. 256.

49 Ibid., p. 71. A clear reference to the way the reform of the Dutch army in the late sixteenth century had been founded on a return to the archetypal values of Roman warfare. Prince Maurits had been a student of Justus Lipsius in Leiden and the victory of Nieuwpoort (1600) was partly the result of a neo-stoic discipline imposed on the Dutch army. For this topic, see Werner Hahlweg, Die Heeresreform der Oranier und die Antiken (Osnabrück, 1987). For more details on the contribution of neo-stoicism to the Dutch military revolution, see Georg Oestreich, Neostoicism and the early modern state (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 57ff.

50 Annals I, 9, 4. Octavius took the name of Augustus on becoming emperor.

51 Syme, Tacitus, 1, pp. 547–8; and Mellor, Tacitus, p. 24.

52 Annals I, 1, 1: ‘Rome at the outset was a city state under the government of kings: liberty and the consulate were institutions of Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were always a temporary expedient. Neither Cinna not Sulla created a lasting despotism: Pompey and Crassus quickly forfeited their power to Caesar, and Lepidus and Antony their swords to Augustus, who, under the style of prince, gathered beneath his empire a world outworn by civil broils.’
Hollanders. The second and rival interpretation of Tacitus was Orangist in tone and appeared in Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn’s 1643 Latin commentary of the Annals, a copy of which was kept in the library of Matthew Prior and, more interestingly, in the library of the third earl of Shaftesbury, a pivotal figure among what Blair Worden terms the late seventeenth-century ‘Roman whigs’. Grotius’s interpretation was clear: in his eyes, Tacitus had laid his finger on the near-irreconcilable nature of liberty and monarchy and, from this axiom Grotius inferred that the ancient Batavians ‘lived under a government of the best’ and that their kings were kings ‘solely in name’. Quoting from a famous passage of Tacitus’s Germania, Grotius also noted that the kings of the Germans ‘had no limited or arbitrary power’ and that, in an assembly, they were listened to ‘for their convincing power, rather than their competence to give orders’. By contrast with Grotius, one notes the development of an Orangist vision of the relationship between liberty and personal rule. The best representative of this particular Tacitean trend was Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn, a leading albeit neglected Tacitus scholar, whose 1643 commentary of the Annals began with the following words: ‘Those who think that liberty and kingly power are brought here into opposition by Tacitus overstep the line, neither do they understand what the author actually means. For in a polity of whatever kind, even in a Principate, there is liberty as long as the latter regime keeps within its bounds.’

Boxhorn nailed his point down by picking out of Tacitus’s Agricola a justifying quote: ‘Nerva has united things long incompatible, the Principate and liberty.’ It is no accident that Boxhorn should have defended a similar argument in 1651, the year of the ‘Great Assembly’, when he published a Latin pamphlet called Political dissertations on the Roman empire. Debunking the myth of republican Rome,

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53 The influence of Grotius on English political thought has been acknowledged by many scholars. See for example David Norbrook, Writing the English Republic: poetry, rhetoric and politics, 1627–1660 (Cambridge, 1998), p. 42.
54 Ludlow, A voyce from the watch tower, p. 40. See the catalogue of Prior’s library in London, London, British Library (BL), ADD MSS 70 362, fo. 22. Prior, it should be noted, was the author of a poem entitled A new answer to an argument against a standing army (London, 1697) and briefly participated in the Court counter-propaganda campaign. For the third earl of Shaftesbury’s copy of Boxhorn’s edition of Tacitus, see NA, Shaftesbury papers, PRO 30/24/23/10, fo. 76.
56 ‘Qui statuunt libertatem et regium imperium opponi hoc loco a Tacito, excedunt, neque capiunt auctoris mentem. Nam in quovis imperio, etiam in principatu, est libertas, si quidem recte se habeat.’ Caii Cornelii Taciti quae exstant M.Z Boxhornius recensuit et animadversionibus nonnullis illustravit (Amsterdam, 1643), p. 3.
58 Called shortly after the death of William II, the ‘Great Assembly’ of 1651 was a special meeting of the seven provinces aimed at discussing the future of the Union of Utrecht (1579). Led by the province of Holland, this meeting allowed the regents to recover the powers they had lost to William II. The
Boxhorn showed that Caesar, far from being an enemy of a regime that was already dead, gave it a new outlook which, under Augustus, brought peace.\textsuperscript{59} Personal rule was seen as a source of stability and concord, and not as an emblem of tyranny. Referring to the incipit of the \textit{Annals}, Boxhorn repeated that ‘the most absolute power of princes and the liberty of the people are not by nature dissociable, nor do they come into conflict’\textsuperscript{60}

This was of course a way of responding to Grotius and of counteracting the remarks made in the Great Assembly by the deputies of Holland, who had argued that William’s princely fate was irreversibly stained with the memory of his father’s \textit{coup d'état} of 1650.\textsuperscript{61} By Boxhorn’s standards, the gun and the gown were compatible notions as long as a just balance was kept between the two. Under such conditions, it was possible to reconcile Republicanism and Orangism. Looking at the figures of Romeyn de Hooghe and Ericus Walten, Jonathan Israel has shown that the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic saw the development of a form of Orangist Republicanism, whereby monarchies and corrupt oligarchies were criticized with equal vigour.\textsuperscript{62} Boxhorn’s political thought exemplifies the symmetrical possibility of a form of republican Orangism which managed to rescue the stadholderate from the shifting sands of 1650. However contradictory it may seem, the reconciliation between Republicanism and Orangism was incipient in 1650.

IV

This distinction between a republican and an Orangist form of neo-Tacitism is of great use in reaching a better understanding of William’s career after 1672. In the same way as Augustus, in the words of Tacitus, ‘organized the state not by instituting a monarchy or a dictatorship, but by creating the title of First Citizen’,\textsuperscript{63} William was wise enough to shrink away from any suspicion of being an aspiring monarch. A correspondent of Sir Joseph Williamson noted in 1672 that the people were intent on ‘settling the prince in the full government and yielding him the diadem too’, but that he would turn down their offer, ‘prudently following the maxims of William his ancestor’.\textsuperscript{64}

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Pensionary of Holland Jacob Cats opened the debates with a speech on the immemorial superiority of republican regimes over monarchies.

\textsuperscript{59} UBA, Marcus Zuercius van Boxhorn, \textit{Dissertationes politicae de Romanorum imperio} (Amsterdam, 1651), pp. 324–5. As supporting evidence, Boxhorn quotes from \textit{Annals} 1, 9, 4.

\textsuperscript{60} ‘Neque res sunt natura sua dissociabiles, aut pugnant, absolutissimum principium imperium, et populi libertas.’ Ibid., p. 141. Boxhorn’s formulation is very close to \textit{De Agricola} \textit{III}, 1.

\textsuperscript{61} Lieuwe van Aitzema, \textit{Notable revolutions, being a true relation of what happened in the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the years 1650 and 1651} (London, 1653), p. 150.


\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Annals} 1, 9, 5.

\textsuperscript{64} Anon. to Arlington, 9/19 July 1672, NA, SP 101/55, fo. 15. A reference to William the Silent’s refusal of the title of ‘count of Holland and Zeeland’ in 1581.
For the same reason, William refused to become duke of Gelderland in early 1675, knowing how fragile his reputation would be if he bore an official title of sovereignty and how potent he could remain if he managed to stretch the function of the stadholderate to its full capacity. The fear expressed by some seamen of Zeeland that William’s accession to a title of sovereignty would incite him to resort to naval impressment as in England may have weighed on his final decision. But the prince of Orange must have been even more sensitive to the threats which seemed to weigh on the perpetuity of the Union of Utrecht (1579): ‘It was a common voice of Amsterdam’, reported Sir William Temple, ‘that they had better be under the subject of the Crown, than of an absolute sovereignty at home.’ In a similar vein, Sir Joseph Williamson noted that ‘the town of Groningen, which calls itself an ancient imperial town, might fall off and set up for itself’. As William was well aware, a republic at war could hardly take the risk of disintegrating under the effect of antagonistic sovereignties. To sum up, William’s main achievement after 1672 consisted in treading a middle path between the risk of faction strife and the evil of tyranny and in giving liberty a kind of Augustan twist which explains why the republican opposition, however nagging and troublesome it managed to be, never succeeded in making the best of his sinking popularity. Better a warrior king without a kingdom than a warrior king without an army.

However astutely William managed to steer his way through the troubled waters of Dutch politics, his task proved uneasy when his conception of the strategy to adopt against Louis XIV came to be at odds with that of his most obdurate adversaries. William’s argument in 1674 had been that the war against France could not reasonably come to an end as long as the yet unsteady southern borders of the Low Countries were not secured. Louis XIV had offered some guarantees when he signed the Nijmegen treaty of August 1678, but the implementation of his politique des réunions from 1679 to 1684 came as a violation of the promises he had made. William saw in Louis’s diplomatic duplicity the sign of an unflinching aspiration to ‘universal monarchy’. From this perspective, war appeared as the only possible response to war.

65 Anon. to Henry Coventry, 12/22 Feb. 1675, NA, SP 101/59, fo. 144. In the Dutch Republic, naval impressment was forbidden in the name of ‘True Freedom’. In England, on the contrary, it was justified in the name of royal prerogative. See for example Charles Molloy, De jure maritimo et navali, or a treatise of affairs maritime and of commerce (London, 1676), London, University of London Library, Goldsmith Library 2166, p. 62.


68 Gabriel Sylvius to Arlington, 27 Mar./6 Apr. 1674, NA, SP 84/196, fo. 48.
In practical terms, William’s strategy reposed on a robust and substantial military establishment, frustrating the Amsterdam regents’ hopes to negotiate a peace settlement with Louis XIV which, in their eyes, would reduce fiscal pressure and boost commerce, hence restoring the prosperity upon which the fortune and the glory of the Dutch Republic had always been based. As some Dutch merchants had boasted in 1667 by referring to James I’s motto (rex pacificus): ‘Blessed are the peace-makers’ (beati pacifici). The conflict between William and the Amsterdam City Council over the army reached an apex in late 1683 as both sides defended contradictory strategies to hold in check Louis’s territorial encroachments. This standing army controversy was not exactly similar to the one which had opposed the English monarchs to their parliaments since the reign of Charles I. From a Dutch point of view, standing armies were historically justified by the Eighty Years’ War against Spain and, despite William II’s attempt to subvert the constitution in 1650, they remained a weak instrument of state. The main concern of the Amsterdam regents accordingly was to cut the cost of standing armies when the diplomatic context made it possible, as in 1647–8, and not to replace them with a civic militia.

Yet, one has to agree that the Amsterdam regents’ economic and financial preoccupations were supplemented by a genuine worry over the extent of William’s military powers and the political use he could make of them. William’s observation that ‘it is far more advantageous to be strongly armed than to remain in this state of uncertainty which is bound to ruin and to destroy the Republic’ seemed justified by the taking of Courtrai in late October 1683. Led by Coenraad van Beuningen and lured by the peace offers made by Louis XIV, however, the deputies of Amsterdam continued to oppose the levying of additional troops. William made use of different means of pressure to try and cow them into compliance: he issued a letter, he sent a deputation, he made some veiled threats, and he sought to tarnish Van Beuningen’s reputation by accusing him of treachery to the French. On 6 November 1683, as the Amsterdam deputies listened to a long speech of the Grand Pensionary Caspar Fagel in the Town Hall, Thomas Chudleigh noticed that ‘they were about hundred men who continued as a guard all the time of the assembly.’

Despite this menacing atmosphere, the deputies of Amsterdam persistently stuck to their guns. They believed that William’s request to increase the size of the

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69 Curtius to Arlington, NA, SP 81/57, 21 Feb./2 Mar. 1667, fo. 214.
71 D’Avaux to Colbert de Croissy, 18/28 Oct. 1683, AAEC, Hollande, 135, fo. 98.
72 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 30 Oct./9 Nov. 1683, BL, ADD MSS 41 809, fo. 134. For William’s attitude to the Amsterdam regents in the early 1680s, see also J. E. Elias, *Geschiedenis van het Amsterdamsche Regentenpatriciaat* (The Hague, 1923), pp. 185–6. For the standard biography on Van Beuningen, see M. A. M. Franken, *Coenraad Van Beuningen’s politieke en diplomatieke activiteiten in de jaren 1667–1684* (Groningen, 1966).
73 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 6/16 Nov. 1683, BL, ADD MSS 41 809, fo. 151.
army was ‘contrary to the fundamental rules and constitution of this government’ and, more generally, that the pursuit of war against France without English naval backing would lead to disaster. But their staunch refusal was also motivated by their feeling that history was repeating itself. Probably influenced by the attitude of the deputies of Amsterdam, Thomas Chudleigh wrote on 2 November 1683 that the situation was ‘much like what happened to the prince’s father about the year 1650, a little before his death’. William’s growing anger at the town’s resistance was not taken lightly: ‘That town’, remarked Thomas Chudleigh, ‘betrays a strange apprehension by doubling the guards at all the gates and not suffering any boat to enter without being visited beforehand.’ To the deputies of Amsterdam, the spectre of 1650 loomed large. The lessons drawn from the past history of the stadholderate made it impossible for them to conform to William’s will. As Thomas Chudleigh wrote on 16 November:

Those of Amsterdam do persist on their negative and will not consent to it, for that it were unjust that the whole body of the Republic should suffer and be exposed to the dangers and caprice of a single member, who according to the dictates of reason and commonsense should conform itself to the opinion of the eighteen others, and not that the eighteen others should be obliged to follow the opinion of one alone.

Defeated by this argument and dependent on Amsterdam’s financial capacities, William had to content himself with 16,000 men. The blow was a severe one for him. As d’Avaux understood with his usual insight, the problem at stake was not so much the levying of troops as the ‘reputation of the prince’. In Joseph Bamfield’s eyes, there was some irony in thinking that ‘the communality of Amsterdam’, which had eventually rallied to the prince of Orange in 1672, ‘are now more violently against him’. According to Bamfield, this verified the saying of Tacitus: ‘The love of the people was always fleeting and unblest.’

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74 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 13/23 Nov. 1683, F. A. Middlebusch, ed., The dispatches of Thomas Plott (1681–1682) and Thomas Chudleigh (1682–1685), English envoys at The Hague (The Hague, 1926), p. 239. For the deputies of Amsterdam’s legal arguments, see NA, SP 48/218, fos. 166–8.
76 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 2/12 Nov. 1683, BL, ADD MSS 41 809, fo. 136. Comparing William II to Nero, a republican pamphlet of 1663 had drawn an audacious parallel between the siege of Amsterdam and the burning of Rome of AD 64, whose great historian was Tacitus. Emanuel van der Hoeven, Hollandse Vrijheid verdedigt tegen de Usurpatie der stadhouders (1663), Knuttel 8803, 2 vols., II, p. 6.
77 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 20/30 Nov. 1683, BL, ADD MSS 41 809, fo. 163.
78 Chudleigh to Jenkins, 16/26 Nov. 1683, BL, ADD MSS 41 809, fo. 161. The English envoy Joseph Bamfield heard that Amsterdam ‘would rather separate from the rest of the Provinces than continue under the prince of Orange’. 29 Nov./9 Dec. 1683, NA, SP 84/218, fo. 145.
79 A newsletter of 1678 reminded that, between 1673 and 1678, Amsterdam had incurred 60 per cent of the costs of war. Longleat House, Coventry papers, XXXXIII, 13/23 Sept. 1678, fo. 263. In 1666, the province of Holland had complained that its assumption of the financial burden of the war against the bishop of Munster was leading to ‘a headlong rush towards slavery’ (ruere in servitium). NA, SP 101/48, 27 Mar./6 Apr. 1666, fo. 206. The Latin quote is taken from Tacitus, Annals I, 1, 7.
81 Bamfield to Jenkins, 23 Dec. 1683/2 Jan. 1684, NA, SP 84/218, fo. 162.
82 Ibid., fo. 162. Bamfield is quoting from Annals II, 41, 3.
In 1684, as the French troops occupied Luxemburg, Joseph Bamfield noted that ‘men speak most insolently and devilishly against him [William] and that if he could be gotten into England they would cut off his head’. William did cross over to England four years later, not to emulate his great uncle Charles I, but to become the leader of an international confederacy against Louis XIV. This was made possible by the rallying of the Amsterdam regents to William’s invasion project in the summer of 1688. Alarmed by the damaging effects of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and the resumption of Louis’s tariff war in 1687, the Amsterdam City Council temporarily gave up its obstruction policy to espouse William’s grand European strategy. This new shift in William’s position did not escape the attention of an anonymous letter-writer, who remarked in October 1688 that ‘the prince of Orange, in whom the States General have reposed a great confidence, acts like an old Roman dictator’.

V

More interesting than the remarkable success of William’s military enterprise is the way his entry into London on 18 December 1688 filled the power vacuum left by James II’s sudden departure a few days earlier. To William, the general ‘confusion’ (confusie) which pervaded the City in December 1688 must have been somewhat reminiscent of the Disaster Year of 1672: in both cases, albeit on a very different scale, his first mission was to restore order by force of arms. Conscious of the fragility of a revolution settlement that still needed to be defined, William was keen on toning down the contribution of his army to the events of 1688–9. On 18 December 1688, as the elections to the Convention Parliament were approaching and at a time when the City of London was busy with one election every seven weeks, he ordered his army to be ‘restrained and to be kept within certain limits so far from London as to cause all apprehensions to cease’. This, apparently, was not enough to win the confidence of the Convention Parliament of 1689, which bitterly argued over the nature of the title William

83 Bamfield to Jenkins, 5/15 June 1684, NA, SP 84/218, fo. 240. According to the marquis de Grana, governor general of the Spanish Netherlands, there were reports that the Amsterdam City Council aimed to wrest from William his control of the army’s marches and quarters. Grana to William III, 13/23 July 1684, Brussels, Archives générales du royaume (AGR), T100/298, fo. 97.


85 Anon. to Edward Norton, 4 Oct. 1688, BL, ADD MSS 34 487, fo. 30. The clearest expression of the extent of William’s new powers was his ability to raise funds without the prior formal approval of the States General, which, according to the Dutch ambassador Arnold Van Citters, he tried to use ‘merely as auxiliaries.’ Van Citters to the States General, 8 Oct. 1688, BL, ADD MSS 34 512, fo. 14.

86 Van Citters to the States General, 24 Dec. 1688, BL, ADD MSS 17 677 HH, fo. 543.

87 Gary de Krey, A fractured society: the politics of London in the first age of party, 1668–1715 (Oxford, 1983), p. 47. There had been no elections since the rescinding of London’s charter in 1683.

88 Journaal van Constantijn Huygens, den zoon, van 21 oktober 1688 tot 2 september 1696 (Utrecht, 1876), p. 39.
should be granted. On 30 December 1688, shortly before the first session of the Convention Parliament, William complained to Halifax that ‘the commonwealth party was the strongest in England’, and that ‘at the best they would have a duke of Venice’. William’s impression was shared by the Florentine envoy Francesco Teresi who believed that the republicans, though ‘potent enough to diminish and degrade the power of the monarchy, were yet not strong enough to destroy and erase it’. This is why, according to Teresi, the English republicans rallied to the compromise idea of a mixed government headed by a Doge-like figure. Their suggestion must have wakened painful memories in William’s mind. The Convention Parliament included four London representatives, three of whom, noted Teresi, ‘had always been opposed to the interests of the monarchy’, contributing to the whip idea of turning the Corporation of London into what Gary de Grey aptly calls ‘a participatory civic commonwealth’. The combination of mercantile interest with a radical and potentially anti-monarchical form of Republicanism was probably enough for William to consider the City of London MPs and their whig allies as the spiritual brethren of the Amsterdam regents. He may even have suspected Dutch republican ideas of nurturing the language of popular politics, as in this ballad of 1688:

The prince of Orange he is come to this land
Who does in defiance of popery stand
He does not desire supreme to reign
But our laws and liberties to maintain.

During the debates of the Convention Parliament, some MPs moved that ‘the thanks of the House’ should ‘be given to the army by the prince of Orange’. Thomas Wharton stood up to oppose this motion, arguing that ‘the general officers of the army’ were best suited to perform this task and asking his fellow MPs with a touch of irony: ‘Is he your servant?’ No servant of the States

93 Teresi to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, 11 Jan. 1689, BL, ADD MSS 25 377, fo. 265. All four of them had been firm exclusionists which, by Teresi’s standards, probably sufficed to consider them as enemies of the monarchy. For want of a precise indication, it is difficult to guess which of the four he saw as the softest republican.
95 Harvard University Library, *The prince of Orange’s welcome to London to the tune of two English travellers* (London, 1688), single sheet.
97 Ibid.
General, no servant of the Convention Parliament, the ‘old Roman dictator’ of 1688 had come to England to pursue his struggle against Louis XIV on a European scale. As a consequence of the Glorious Revolution, the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland were engulfed in the war against France. The Nine Years’ War (1688–97) ended with the Ryswick treaties of September–October 1697, a compromise peace which, in addition to its territorial clauses, allowed William to be acknowledged by Louis as king of England, Scotland, and Ireland and, theoretically at least, to secure the end of French support to the Jacobite cause. Drawing from his past experience of diplomacy and remembering how easily the Nijmegen treaties of 1678–9 had been breached by Louis, William had little confidence in the Sun King’s good faith. To the stadholder-king, the fragile health of Charles II of Spain made it all the more imperative to keep the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland on a war footing. Yet, a fraction of the English nation stubbornly opposed his strategy, arguing that the peace conditions provided by the Ryswick treaties and the choice of a blue-water policy were enough to justify the reduction of England’s military establishment to its 1680 level of 10,000 men.

VI

The standing army debates of 1697–9 constituted one of the key moments of William’s reign, ending with a bitter defeat for the stadholder-king, who was forced to endorse the Disbanding Act of 1699 and to dismiss the 4,000 men of his Dutch guards. Looking at the parliamentary debates of December 1697 – July 1698 and August 1698 – May 1699 and at the massive pamphlet literature which circulated inside and outside parliament, one can only be struck by the number of references made to Roman history. Much of this phenomenon, of course, was due to the predominance of classical humanities in any cultured man’s intellectual background. Yet, it would be a simplistic view to consider the language and ideas of the standing army debates as the mere product of sophisticated minds bred in classical culture. As in the Dutch Republic, Roman history played an exemplary role, allowing people to understand the events of the present through the examples of the past. Moreover, many Country whigs shared the opinion of Walter Moyle and John Trenchard that ‘what happened yesterday will come to pass again and the same causes will produce the same effects in all ages’, hence

98 Walter Moyle and John Trenchard, An argument showing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government and absolutely destructive to the constitution of the English monarchy (1697), afterwards abbreviated into An argument against a standing army (Exeter, reprint 1971), p. 5. The pamphlet was published in October 1697, less than two months before the opening of the parliamentary session of December 1697 – July 1698. On 27 November 1697, Robert Harley wrote to Sir Edward Harley that ‘The Argument against a standing army hath raised a great heat in the town’ and that ‘there is little prospects of moderate councils’. BL, ADD MSS 70 018, fo. 246. William’s supporters disagreed with this notion of similitudo temporum. Moyle and Trenchard were accused by an anonymous pamphleteer of ‘putting new wines in old bottles’. A Letter to A.B.C.D concerning their argument about a standing army (London, 1698), p. 4.
adhering to a mechanistic conception of historical progress. From this perspective, the force of specific circumstances was abolished by the power of quasi-universal precedents.

Among the precedents derived from Roman history, the one which exerted the greatest impact on the standing army debates of 1697–9 was the idea of an opposition between liberty and personal rule. Julian Hoppit has argued that William ‘was easier to love as an idea than as a man’. His aloof and secretive nature, in other terms, was balanced by his providential role as a defender of religion and liberty. It may be interesting to delve deeper into this tension between the private and the public man by showing how a number of Country whigs came to present William as a potential enemy of liberty, twisting the invasion motto of 1688 pro religione et libertate into something like pro religione contra libertatem. Despite the fact that William’s army was relatively small and that it was fighting outside English territory, a number of Country whigs expressed the fear that it remained a major threat to English liberties: ‘The constitution must either break the army or the army will break the constitution’, wrote Walter Moyle and John Trenchard. Such radical arguments were drawn from a particular understanding of the decline and fall of republican Rome. Applying their knowledge of Roman history to their time, the Country whigs established a close and exact parallel between the rise of standing armies in late republican Rome and in late Stuart England.

Nowhere was the functioning of the Roman military system more clearly defined than in John Toland’s Militia reformed, a pamphlet of 1698 probably written at the request of Robert Harley:

The Romans, who understood the Art of War beyond all the world, did not make soldiery a refuge to poverty and idleness; for none but men of property, whose private interest firmly engaged them to the public good, had the honour of serving in the armies. Nay, so far were they from employing the poor and servile sort, that unless a man was worth a certain sum appointed by law, he was excluded from military duties, which in that government was thought no reputable privilege.

Originally, then, the Roman army was not a professional but a civic and national army made of neatly defined classes of freeholders. The Country whigs believed that the choice of a civic militia implied a rejection of the alternative model of a mercenary army, where soldiers fought for their personal advantage

100 For this topic, see Tony Claydon, William III and the Godly Reformation (Cambridge, 1996).
101 According to the figures given by John Childs, there were roughly 60,000 soldiers serving in Flanders, 10,000 soldiers stationed in England, and 12,000 in Ireland. John Childs, The British army of William III, 1689–1702 (Manchester, 1987), pp. 191 and 268. The 1699 Disbanding Act reduced the army establishment in England to 7,000 men.
102 Moyle and Trenchard, An argument against a standing army, p. 4.
and advancement and not ‘for their altars and their hearths’ (pro aris et focis). As the army officer John Coke nicely summed up: ‘The English soldiers cannot be mercenary, though English ministers and statesmen are.’ This military paradigm came directly from Machiavelli and Harrington, who had both contributed to the idealization of the Roman civic militia in early modern political thought. Quoting from Machiavelli’s *Prince*, John Evelyn recorded in his *loci communes* that ‘the principal foundation that any state hath are reduced to two: good laws and good arms: nor can there be good laws where there is not a good militia: but if it be mercenary, nothing more dangerous’.

As for Harrington, the neo-Roman bias of the military constitution of his *Oceana* constituted a source of renewed inspiration for the Country whigs. In his *Essay upon the Roman constitution and government of the Roman state* (1726), which circulated in manuscript form during the parliamentary debates, Walter Moyle pointed out that ‘without freedom and property, the Romans found it impossible to compose a brave and numerous militia; both of which are the roots of a commonwealth’. Moyle was making here a typically Harringtonian statement: land is the basis of arms and arms the touchstone of citizenship. Moreover, the Country whigs thought that the Roman commonwealth had been undermined by the necessary transformation of its military system. The progressive dismantling of the early republican military organization started during the Second Punic War (219–202 BC), a long war of attrition which Rome nearly lost and which forced Scipio Africanus to call on a proletarian class which had been hitherto excluded from military duties. Under the effect of circumstances, the myth of the citizen-soldier began to fade away. More than a century later, in 107 BC, came a major reform of the army. Having to cope with the persisting danger of Jugurtha in North Africa, the plebeian consul Marius was given leave by the Senate to open up the ranks of the army to people who were at the bottom of the social ladder. According to the Country whigs of the late 1690s, the effect of this reform was to debase the constitutional foundation of Roman liberties, entailing a

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104 Moyle and Trenchard, *An argument against a standing army*, p. 7.
105 *Speech concerning the establishment of the army* (1700?), BL, ADD MSS, 69 953, fo. 91.
107 There is hardly any doubt that the *Reflections upon the Roman Commonwealth* kept in the Shaftesbury papers (NA, PRO 30/24/47/4) were a preparatory work for the *Essay upon the Roman constitution and government of the Roman state* and not, as Fox Bourne once thought, a Lockean manuscript. For an update on this dying controversy, see J. R. Milton, ‘Lockean political apocrypha’, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 4 (1996), pp. 260–1.
drift towards military monarchy which culminated under Caesar’s rule. In their eyes, Williamite England was now incurring a similar danger.

Despite the seemingly anachronistic comparisons they were drawing between the army of late republican Rome and the army of William III, the Country whigs were as influential as they were politically well connected. On 17 December 1697, a bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Sir Richard Onslow to try and beef up the militia and offer an alternative to the military forces William was asked to disband. The committee in charge of drafting the bill was made up of a medley of Court and Country whigs and of tories with Country sympathies such as Sir Chistopher Musgrave. Nearly all of them could be labelled as ‘country gentlemen’ who, in the words of James Sloane, ‘cannot bear the thought of a standing army’. Their main task consisted in reforming the Militia Act of 1662 and in making up for the poor showing of the militia since 1660. As a matter of fact, no one could forget how conspicuously inefficient the militia had been during the Medway disaster of 1667 and, again, during Monmouth’s invasion of 1685. Considering the recurrent invasion scares which beset the southern coast of England after 1689, the militia desperately needed to be saved from its amateurish reputation and to be turned into a properly functioning defence army. From this perspective, the manuscript copy of the militia bill of December 1697 has a two-fold interest: first the marginal notes left by an unidentifiable hand point to a strong connection between the formulation of the bill and its ideological background. At one point, the bill reads in the following way: ‘Lord Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants shall issue out warrants to all constables and other officers requiring them to give notice to the freeholders to meet at the most public place in the parish within days after to choose among themselves [margin: freeholders are only to be chosen and to make the choice].’

This short extract is perfectly in keeping with the ideal of the Centuriate assemblies, that is a body of freeholders on whom depended the safety of the nation, of course, but also the election of magistrates and hence the functioning of the Roman constitution. Toland himself had made the point that the forces of every hundred should gather four times a year, ‘both for public exercise and to dispute games and prizes’, and take after the model of the Centuriate assemblies. This particular line of the 1697 militia bill may have been a transposition of his scheme


House of Commons Journal, XII, 17 Dec. 1697, p. 12. The second attempt to introduce a militia bill on 7 Feb. 1699 proved as unsuccessful as the first one. Sir Richard Onslow had been appointed one of the commissioners of the Admiralty in 1690 and, as the originator of a marine regiment, he could boast of a genuine expertise in naval and military matters. A Court supporter of unflinching whiggish principles, the debates over the disbandment bill brought him to the side of the Harley-Foley group. For a complete biography of Onslow, see Eveline Cruckshanks, Stuart Handler, and David Hayton, eds., *The House of Commons, 1690–1715* (5 vols., Cambridge, 2002), v, pp. 24–37.

for a reformed militia. The second point of interest with regard to this bill is that, unlike the failed militia bill of 1689, and of the Militia Act of 1662, it stressed the crucial importance of discipline: ‘That no person shall be a lieutenant in any county or city or place but of knowledge and experience in military discipline.’

This line is unique in the history of late Stuart military legislation and could be considered as a kind of neo-Roman interpolation. The idea, of course, was to make up for the waning frequency of musters by training the militia properly. But the emphasis on the experience of action may also have been intended to pre-empt court criticism while at the same time avoiding to rule out those who had served in the militia or had a limited experience of military life.

On paper this project was certainly a good one but, in practice, the reading of the militia bill was marred by poorly attended sittings in the Committee of the Whole and some disagreements on the way to frame the intended reform. Yet, this was not enough to soothe William’s anger at his parliament’s factiousness. The arguments of the Country whigs did not remain unanswered, not least because William considered that the standing army debates, in the form they assumed, called into question the very essence of kingly prerogative. In January 1698, he complained to Heinsius about ‘the people here who only busy themselves about a fanciful liberty’, and, in December of the same year, when asked to dismiss his Dutch guards, he expressed deep dismay: ‘I foresee that I shall be obliged to come to resolutions of extremity, and that I shall see you in Holland sooner than I thought.’ A number of pamphleteers were paid by the Court to run the counter-attack, among whom John Somers, the leader of the whig Junto, Daniel Defoe, Richard Kingston, and Matthew Prior. Their argument was two-fold: first, a war cannot reasonably be won with an under-trained army of citizens and, secondly, the Country view of the fall of the Roman Republic was warped. Daniel Defoe made his point quite clear: ‘In former times, says our author, there was no difference between the citizens, the soldier and the husband-man; but ’tis otherwise now, Sir, war has become a science. How did the Romans preserve their frontiers and plant colonies? That was not done by citizens of Rome but by legionary troops.’

117 BL, ADD MSS 42 593, fo. 80.
118 I owe this idea to David Hayton.
121 William III to Heinsius, 30 Dec. 1698, ibid., ii, p. 220. Compare this with Abel Boyer’s comment: ‘But what touched His Majesty to the very quick was the necessity he was under of sending away his Dutch guards; a regiment who had faithfully attended his person from his cradle.’ Abel Boyer, The history of the reign of King William the third (3 vols., London, 1703), iii, p. 373.
122 Daniel Defoe, Reflections on a pamphlet lately published, entitled An argument against a standing army (London, 1697), p. 16.
John Somers responded to Moyle and Trenchard in similar terms, saying that he was not in favour of a standing army, but that, considering the circumstances, there was no other choice.\textsuperscript{123} England is open to invasion, he noted, and the failed Spanish landing of 1588 was a stroke of luck which had not put the militia’s ability to the test.\textsuperscript{124} He also recalled that ‘the Roman republic was a military republic’, not only because all citizens were trained for war, but also because military offices were often a prerequisite to major civil offices.\textsuperscript{125} Even more biting was the remark made by Matthew Prior about William’s opponents in a poem of 1697:

\begin{quote}
Would they discreetly break that sword,
By which their freedom was restored,
And put their trust in Louis’s word? \textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

One recognizes in these ironic lines a classic theme of Orangist propaganda. Very much like their Dutch counterparts in 1672 and in 1683, the English republicans and their whig allies were accused of sacrificing the interest of the nation to some hazy ideal or, even worse, of fostering the victory of Louis XIV at a time when the Jacobites were deemed to be ‘full of expectations of some great matter’.\textsuperscript{127}

\section*{VII}
Looking deeper into the pamphlet literature and the parliamentary debates of 1697–9, one realizes that the row over William’s army was part-and-parcel of a more general worry over the way England’s commitment to a sustained war effort was altering political and social behaviour. The fear of standing armies went hand-in-hand with the fear of a corruption of the body politic. This phenomenon needs to be understood against the backdrop of the financial revolution. Running against Machiavelli’s contention that ‘not gold, but good soldiers, are the sinews of war’,\textsuperscript{128} Charles Davenant observed in 1695 that ‘war is quite changed from what it was in the time of our fore-fathers’. ‘Now’, he added, ‘the whole art of war is in a manner reduced to money; and nowadays that prince who can best find money to feed, clothe and pay his army, not he that has the most valiant troops, is surest of success and conquest.’\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{123} John Somers, \textit{A letter balancing the necessity of keeping a land-force in times of peace} (London, 1697), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 10. Cato the Elder, for example, had started his career as military tribune.
\textsuperscript{126} Matthew Prior, \textit{A new answer to an argument against a standing army} (London, 1697), single page.
\textsuperscript{129} Charles Davenant, \textit{An essay upon the ways and means of supplying the war} (London, 1695), p. 27. John Somers held a copy of this pamphlet in his personal library. BL, ADD MSS 40 754, fo. 171. Returned to parliament at the 1698 election, Charles Davenant was one of the leading intellectual figures of the New Country Party.
Machiavellism, in other words, was of little use to grasp the complexity of a rapidly changing economy. As the ‘monied interest’ was gaining ground on the landed interest, a fraction of the squirearchy became increasingly worried that this shift in the structure of wealth and property might result in a loss of moral valour and a concomitant dwindling of liberties. In December 1693, John Hungerford told the House of Commons that ‘corruption is digging the grave of our English liberties’. His preoccupation assumed a distinctive Tacitean colouring in Charles Davenant’s Essay upon public virtue, a pamphlet probably written in the mid-1690s. As Davenant was well aware, one of the leading threads of Tacitus’s works was the idea of a correlation between the extinction of liberty and the decline of virtue. Hence Tacitus’s admiration for Stoic figures such as Cato the Elder and his disparaging vision of the senatorial oligarchy who, in his eyes, had forsaken the cult of pristine liberties to fawn on corrupt emperors. As he summed up in his Agricola: ‘So harsh was the spirit of the age, so cynical towards virtue. Following a similar idea, Davenant stressed the difficulty of finding ‘persons whose characters are entirely without a blemish’. He spoke of the 1690s as ‘a corrupt age’ governed by a lawless ambition which had made the English people oblivious of their ‘ancient worth’. Making a clear distinction between the virtue of William and the vice of a ‘corrupt ministry’, Davenant came to a typical Tacitean conclusion: ‘When any Empire is destined to be undone, or lose its freedom, the seeds of this ruin are to be seen first in the corruption of its manners.’ His view was strikingly similar to that of Algernon Sidney, who thought that the decay of ‘virtue and discipline’ had caused the Roman armies ‘to turn their victorious swords into their bowels’: a way of implying that the former guardians of Roman liberties had become their worst enemy in the final decades of the Republic. Like Sidney, Davenant used his understanding of Roman history and his knowledge of Tacitus to gauge the moral shortcomings of his age and the defects of the political usages that had grown out of the Glorious Revolution settlement.

Referring to the three place bills of 1692–4, Davenant compared the handling of parliamentary business to a market where ‘all is bought and sold’, an idea which was echoed in John Toland’s pamphlet of 1698 on the The danger of mercenary

130 Grey, Debates of the House of Commons, x, 7 Dec. 1693, p. 354.
131 BL, Harleian 1223, An essay upon public virtue.
133 A figure mentioned by Charles Davenant. BL, Harleian 1223, An essay upon public virtue, fo. 10.
134 John Trenchard used to call himself ‘Cato’ and he argued in one of his letters that ‘the Roman virtue and the Roman liberty expired together. Tyranny and corruption came upon almost hand in hand.’ Cato’s letters (4 vols., London, 1724), i, p. 208. Trenchard acknowledged his debt to Tacitus, claiming that ‘no author [was] so fit to be read by a free people.’ Ibid., i, preface, p. 34.
135 Mellor, Tacitus, p. 228.
136 BL, Harleian 1223, An essay upon public virtue, fo. 9.
137 Ibid., fo. 10.
138 Ibid., fo. 11.
139 Ibid., fo. 12.
140 Sidney, Discourses concerning government, p. 115.
141 Ibid., fo. 12.
parliaments. Just as Tacitus reproached the senatorial oligarchy for having prostituted republican values to the service of tyrannical princes, Davenant lambasted the gentry’s base and servile attitude to the Court: ‘No small proportion of our gentry have neglected and lost their country interest by hawking at preferments at Court.’ The 1698 Jacobite-inspired translation of Tacitus’s works followed a similar trend. Steven Zwicker has noted that Tacitus’s phrase ‘the nobility receives honours and riches (pecunia) for their loyalty’ became in Dryden’s translation ‘the nobility receives honours and preferments’. Although from a different point of view, this was also a way of insisting on the ancillary spirit of some members of the gentry. Another facet of corruption which came under the fire of the Country whigs was the corruption of language, which is in fact the leading theme of Tacitus’s Dialogue on oratory. ‘Wherever our liberty is subverted and our constitution changed’, remarked Davenant, ‘the mischief will come from the mercenary temper of such persons as first speak well, to gain a good opinion, and then do ill, to get good places’. The people he probably had in mind were the ministerial whigs, whom the tory and whig members of the New Country Party accused of moral and political apostasy. A good example would be that of John Somers, who was mocked by Sir Richard Blackmore for ‘his more than Roman eloquence’.

Similar Tacitean preoccupations pervaded the standing army debates in parliament. On 4 January 1699, as the House of Commons was reading the disbanding bill, Robert Harley made the following remark: ‘Caesar enslaved Rome by his army, to be precarious as to your liberties is slavery … an army will choose members of Parliament.’ A soldier by training and an opponent of the disbanding bill, John Cutts argued on the contrary that ‘Caesar did it not by an army but by bribing senators.’ Cutts’s point was that Caesar’s tyranny had been based on his capacity to buy the confidence of the senatorial oligarchy, and not so much to force it into submission. In a typical Tacitean vein, Cutts further argued on 30 January that the Roman people willingly yielded to the rule of the One to avoid being exposed to the reign of competing factions. There was more to fear,

145 BL, Harleian 1223, An essay upon public virtue, fo. 29.
148 Ibid., p. 381. Cutts was referring to Caesar’s remarkable ability, like Sulla before him, to pack the Roman Senate with a string of followers, many of whom were war veterans from lowly social origins, and hence to circumvent the traditional powers of the senatorial oligarchy. For this topic, see John Dickinson, Death of a republic: politics and political thought at Rome, 59–44 BC (London, 1963), pp. 344–5.
149 L’Hermitage to the States General, 30 Jan./9 Feb. 1699, BL, ADD MSS 17 677 TT, fo. 73.
in other words, from a corrupt and factious parliament than from William’s hypothetical leaning towards tyranny.

From whichever side it came, the comparison between William and Caesar was the result of a relentless effort to understand the facts of the king-stadholder’s life in terms of historical imagery. One of the striking aspects of the standing army debates of 1697–9 is the relative dearth of references to Cromwell, as if the memory of Caesar more or less eclipsed that of the Lord Protector. Robert Harley’s statement that ‘an army will choose members of Parliament’ may well have been taken as allusion to Pride’s Purge of December 1648 and to the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in April 1653, but the example put forward is that of Caesar’s, and not of Cromwell’s. The only clear reference to Cromwell in the parliamentary debates came from Sir Richard Cocks in a speech which sounded like a direct paraphrase of the 1698 whig edition of Ludlow’s Memoirs: ‘Whatever country or government is fain to support itself by a standing army may observe the revolutions that happened to us, may remember from Oliver Cromwell not to trust a general too long or with too much power.’

One notes a similar reluctance to dwell on the precedent set by Cromwell in the pamphlet literature of 1697–9. To take a single example, Moyle and Trenchard’s Argument against a standing army contained only three references to Cromwell and the Lord Protector seems to attract no more attention than the Stuarts. It would be going too far to say that the memory of Cromwell carried some kind of taboo but there is no doubt that it remained too ticklish an issue to be used by the Country whigs as a systematic tool of opposition against William. Robert Molesworth was not entirely wrong in saying in the early 1710s that the memory of the 1640s and 1650s had long been too painfully felt to make the term ‘commonwealthman’ an acceptable one and that, in this sense, the notion of ‘commonwealth’ had lost the non-partisan meaning it used to have before the Interregnum.

This phenomenon may be explained both in terms of facts and ideas. The Lord Protector had been a man of deeds more than a man of thoughts, and his speeches are desperately empty of any effort to question the nature of the Protectorate regime. Harking back to the 1650s, the English republicans of the 1690s and their whig allies had little choice but to look at the facts: the regicide of 1649 had come as an act of war against the English monarchy and the Act of Seclusion of 1654 as an act of war against the House of Orange, involving Cromwell twice in a row. Now that the English monarchy and the House of Orange were welded together

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151 David Hayton, ed., The parliamentary diary of Sir Richard Cocks (Oxford, 1996), p. 31. Sir Richard Cocks (1659–1726) was born into a family of Puritan background and was elected for Gloucestershire in 1698. He was related to Henry Neville, the author of Plato redivivus (1680), through his wife Frances. He delivered his first speech in parliament on 4 Jan. 1699 to support the disbanding bill.
152 Moyle and Trenchard, An argument against a standing army, p. 10 in particular.
in the person of William, it was hardly a good idea for the Country whigs to appear as the followers of Cromwell. The time had gone when, following Sidney, English republicans could speak of ‘the two detested families of Stuart and Orange, who, like serpents, as soon they recover a little vigour, tear out the bowel of them that cherished them’. It was one thing to defend the English constitution, it was another to attack the stadholder-king.

In this sense, the English republicans of the late seventeenth century did not take the same view of the balance of the constitution as the ‘whigs of Holland’, to call Dutch republicans after Shaftesbury’s own words. Shaftesbury reminded his reader in a letter written between 1700 and 1701 that ‘there is hardly any man of sense who means any other commonwealth or thinks any other to be practicable in England besides that of king, Lord and Commons’. His remark can be contrasted with the fear expressed by Dutch republicans in 1689 that William might draw advantage from his situation to establish a fourth kingdom in the United Provinces. In terms of political theory, English and Dutch republicans shared a common appetite for historical reflection, from which sprang a similar veneration of liberty and a similar vilification of tyranny. In terms of political practice, however, they came to very different conclusions: Dutch Republicanism discarded the monarchical element of the traditional Polybian constitution whereas English Republicanism embedded the same monarchical element in a tightly regulated system of checks and balances.

Turning from facts to ideas, it is clear that the comparison between Cromwell and William must have been a tricky one for the Country whigs to handle. They could not be unaware that this comparison was a favourite theme of Jacobite propaganda, which equated William’s advent on the throne of England in 1689 with Cromwell’s assumption of power in 1649. ‘So let O.P [Oliver Protector] or P.O [The prince of Orange] be king/Or anyone else, it is the same thing’, quipped an anonymous poet in *The weasel uncased* (1690).

The same Jacobites contributed in 1689 to a reedition of Edward Sexby’s *Killing no murder* (1657), defending the idea that ‘almost all tyrants have been first captains and generals for the people, under pretences of vindicating or defending their liberties’ and

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156 NA, Shaftesbury papers, PRO 20/24/21, fo. 336. Same in Henry Neville’s *Plato redivicus* (1680), which was reprinted in 1698. Robbins, ed., *Two English republican tracts*, p. 119.


quoting from Tacitus, that ‘to subvert the present government, they pretend liberty for the people, when the government is down, they invade that liberty themselves’. Tyrannicide was justified on the grounds that William, like Caesar and Cromwell before him, had enslaved his people under the false pretence of liberty.

Here lay the crux of the matter: the New Country Party included some Tory members, like Sir Edward Seymour and Sir Christopher Musgrave, who had refused to sign the Association Oath of 1696 after a failed murder attempt against William and who, unsurprisingly, were suspected of Jacobite sympathies. Their political legitimacy now hinged on their ability to stick to a language of opposition while moving away from the phraseology of Jacobite propaganda. As for the Country whigs, they could not lose sight of the fact that some Jacobite propagandists, such as Robert Ferguson, came from a whig background and that ‘roundhead reputations’, to echo Blair Worden, were exposed to the vagaries of circumstances and the fluctuations of individual itineraries. The more shifting whiggism was, the more impracticable it proved for the New Country Party to rally around a common understanding of Cromwell’s legacy. Hence the Country whigs’s preference for a comparison between William and Caesar, which had the strategic advantage of leaving so little room for controversy that the New Country Party could stand united against the Court Party. The same reasoning could be applied to the theme of imperial usurpation. Anxious as they were to restore James II to this throne, the Jacobites drew their inspiration from Tacitus to picture William’s kingship as a form of imperial usurpation. The 1698 Jacobite-inspired translation of Tacitus included a commentary of the opening pages of the Annals which left no room for doubt as to its ideological purpose: ‘Nothing is so weak and so obnoxious to a reverse of fortune, as a power, which hath neither right nor reason for its foundation.’

One should remember that this theme was a favourite one of English Republicanism. Reedited in 1692, Milton’s Pro populo anglicano defensio (1651) quoted abundantly from Tacitus, claiming in particular that ‘what you call the right of the Roman emperors was no right, however, but downright force, a power gained through no laws but that of arms’, a formula which was echoed in Henry Neville’s Plato redivivus (1680): ‘The Roman empire was not a natural but a violent government.’ In 1697–9, the republicans of the New Country Party must have been faced with a dilemma: rehearsing the case of imperial usurpation against William would have been no break from the intellectual legacy of the 1650s, but, in the late 1690s, this particular field of ideas

160 Sexby, Killing no murder, p. 10.
happened to be occupied by the Jacobites. One could hardly claim to be republican while appearing to borrow from Jacobite propaganda. For reasons of practical politics, the argument of imperial usurpation had to be silenced by republican pamphlet literature in the late 1690s.

VIII

One may conclude by saying that the main reason for the New Country Party’s hostility to William came from his inability to espouse the spirit of English institutions. As Paul Foley argued during the parliamentary session of November 1693 – April 1694: ‘The king tells us he has a great regard to our constitution, but it appears not that he understands our constitution.’ One should remember that William spent nearly five years of his reign fighting in Flanders, giving the impression of an absent monarch, and not just of a distant one. Heedless of Sir James Montgomery’s advice of 1696 to ‘quit his stadholdership in Holland’, William stuck to his title of stadholder-king in the name of his warring mission against the Sun King. His ‘Dutchness’, however, seemed to prevail over an ‘Englishness’ he never quite managed to acquire. As an example, the way he kept English army and navy officers out of the allied command of his fighting forces was deeply resented. All in all, it was William’s failure to grasp the specificity of his English subjects’s Country culture which left him with an army of less than 10,000 men in 1699.

Taking a final look at William’s republican opponents, this article aims to have demonstrated how essential it was to reconnect English and Dutch components of a discussion of issues and events that transcended national borders. In terms of political practice, it is true, English and Dutch Republicanism had little in common, simply because the English monarchy and the Dutch Republic were different kinds of polities. In terms of political ideas, however, one may see English and Dutch Republicanism as mutually enriching patterns of thought, particularly when it came to understanding the most recent events in the light of ancient history and classical sources. There is no doubt that Machiavelli served as a linking figure between past and present for seventeenth-century English and Dutch republicans, but Tacitus proved as powerfully influential and one cannot agree with the shared view that the tradition of his political use more or less died out after 1660. Quite the contrary, Tacitus’s relentless effort to reconcile an ideally uncorrupted imperial system with ideally unblemished republican values made him particularly relevant to the way English and Dutch republicans interpreted the shifts of William’s military and political career and the changes of his princely titles. As a warrior prince, the stadholder-king was faced with the

165 Hoppit, A land of liberty?, p. 150.
permanent risk of appearing as an enemy of domestic liberties while trying to defend them from foreign invasion. This contradiction English and Dutch republicans attempted to solve by a common belief in the moderating and guiding role of virtue.