



EARLY MODERN CRIME

MY FAVORITE CRIME

What's Your Favorite* Crime?



* please do not confess to any crimes



What's Your Favorite* Crime?

retail theft - impersonating a police officer - piracy (media) - piracy (ahoy) - running a cult - elaborate murder - sodomy - regicide - scamming, grifting - protesting - walking while trans - faking your own death - polygamy - drug stuff - libel - robbing a train or casino - witchcraft - cannibalism - prison break - human sacrifice - being a werewolf - plotting to blow up Parliament - storming the Capitol - whatever Jen Shah was doing - being gay in the US before 2003

Why do we *like* crime?





Why do we *like* crime?

- fun to think about taboo subjects
- we are deeply worried about being victims
- we love to identify with people doing crimes
- we *really love* identifying with the people punishing the people doing crimes

Why do we *like* crime?

A term that's going to be relevant for every text we read: **ambivalence**





Ambivalence is a literary strategy. When you're reading, ask yourself:

- Who am I identifying with, and when? The victim, the perpetrator, the cops, the bystanders, the executioner? (Usually it's a combination)
- What exactly am I enjoying? Graphic descriptions of violence? The righteousness of punishing someone I don't like? The cleverness of the scheme? Do you feel good about your pleasure?



- Who am I identifying with, and when? The victim, the perpetrator, the cops, the bystanders, the executioner? (Usually it's a combination)

- What exactly am I enjoying? Graphic descriptions of violence? The righteousness of punishing someone I don't like? The cleverness of the scheme? Do you feel good about your pleasure?

(Bonus Tip): Also ask how the text is prompting you to like / fear / hate / identify with particular characters or actions



- Who am I identifying with, and when? The victim, the perpetrator, the cops, the bystanders, the executioner? (Usually it's a combination)

- What exactly am I enjoying? Graphic descriptions of violence? The righteousness of punishing someone I don't like? The cleverness of the scheme? Do you feel good about your pleasure?

(Bonus Rant): AI is very bad at identifying this



Why do we *like* crime?

Another term that's going to be relevant for every text we read: **anxiety**



Another term that's going to be relevant for every text we read: **anxiety**

- What parts of these narratives makes you nervous? Is it a character type, a way of speaking, a situation that feels familiar?

- What would make that anxiety go away? Would you like a punishment, accountability, violence, shaming? How do you feel about wanting that?



(Bonus Analysis Tip) How does the narrative create anxiety, and what does the text do with it? Does the text relieve the anxiety it creates or does it make you linger in it? Does the text want you to feel anxious about someone or something (or maybe a group of people?)

Can the King commit a crime?





Charles I (1600 - 1649)

A tremendously unpopular king: he lived a life of extraordinary extravagance, married a French Catholic, had favorites whom everyone hated, squeezed the commoners for money, instituted steep tariffs, started a pointless and expensive war with Scotland, and he kept dissolving Parliament

James I on obeying tyrants by citing 1 Samuel (the Israelites demand that Samuel give them a king):

“It is as if scripture would say, ‘The best and noblest of your blood shall be compelled in slavish and servile offices to serve the king and he will make up a rent to his own use out of your best lands, vineyards, orchards, and store of cattle... All that ye possess shall serve his private use and inordinate appetite. And ye shall cry out at that day because of your king whom ye have chosen; and the Lord will not hear you at that day. Although you shall grudge and murmur, yet it shall not be lawful to you to cast it off, because you yourselves have chosen the king unto you, thereby renouncing forever all privileges by your willing consent out of your hands, whereby in any time hereafter ye would claim and call back unto yourselves again that power, which God shall not permit you to do.’”

The King Can't Commit A Crime / You Consented (?) / Religious Justification

“It is as if scripture would say, ‘The best and noblest of your blood shall be compelled in slavish and servile offices to serve the king and he will make up a rent to his own use out of your best lands, vineyards, orchards, and store of cattle... **All that ye possess shall serve his private use and inordinate appetite.** And ye shall cry out at that day because of your king **whom ye have chosen**; and the Lord will not hear you at that day. Although you shall grudge and murmur, yet it shall not be lawful to you to cast it off, because you yourselves have chosen the king unto you, thereby renouncing forever all privileges by **your willing consent** out of your hands, whereby in any time hereafter ye would claim and call back unto yourselves again that power, which God shall not permit you to do.’”

“By the law of nature, the king becomes a natural father to all his lieges at his coronation. And as the father of his fatherly duty is bound to care for the nourishing education, and virtuous government of his children, even so is the king bound to care for all his subjects. As the father’s wrath and correction upon any of his children that offendeth ought to be by a fatherly chastisement seasoned with pity as long as there is any hope of amendment in them, so ought the king towards any of his subjects that offend in that measure.”

“By the **law of nature**, the king becomes a **natural father** to all his lieges at his coronation. And as the father of his fatherly duty is bound to **care** for the nourishing education, and virtuous **government** of his children, even so is the king **bound to care** for all his subjects. As the father’s **wrath and correction** upon any of his **children** that offendeth ought to be by a fatherly chastisement seasoned with pity as long as there is any hope of amendment in them, so ought the king towards any of his subjects that offend in that measure.”



- The King cannot commit crimes!
- Justifications: religion, natural law, social contract
- The King is like a father and you are like his horrible children
- Any form of resistance is a crime... so actually it's sort of like patricide?



Treason Statute of 1351

Declaration of what offences shall be adjudged treason:

When a man doth compass or **imagine the death of our lord the King**; or if a man do levy war against our lord the King in his realm, or be adherent to the King's enemies in his realm; And if a man counterfeit the King's great or privy seal; and if a man bring false money into this realm, counterfeit to the money of England.

Tyrannomachia Tracts:

When is it legal to just, you know. Kill him

VINDICIAE,
CONTRA TY-
RANNOS:

SIVE,

DE PRINCIPIS IN
*Populum, Populique in Princi-
pem, legitima potestate,*

STEPHANO IVNIO
Bruto Celta, Auctore.

Trucanah

Reformation, Wars of Religion

Religious and moral
justifications for rebellion,
overthrowing the king, seizing
power

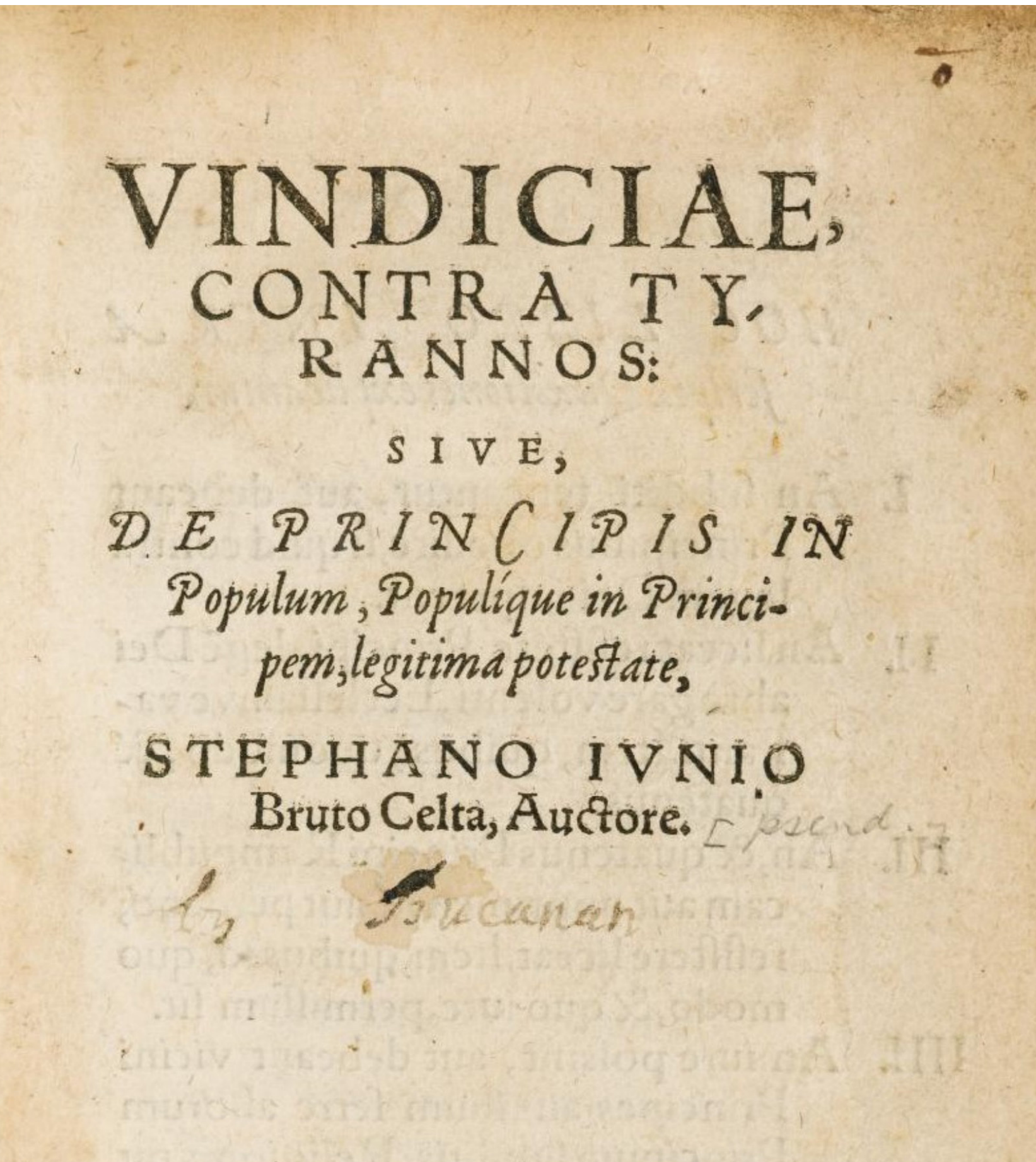
VINDICIAE,
CONTRA TY-
RANNOS:

SIVE,

DE PRINCIPIS IN
*Populum, Populique in Princi-
pem, legitima potestate,*

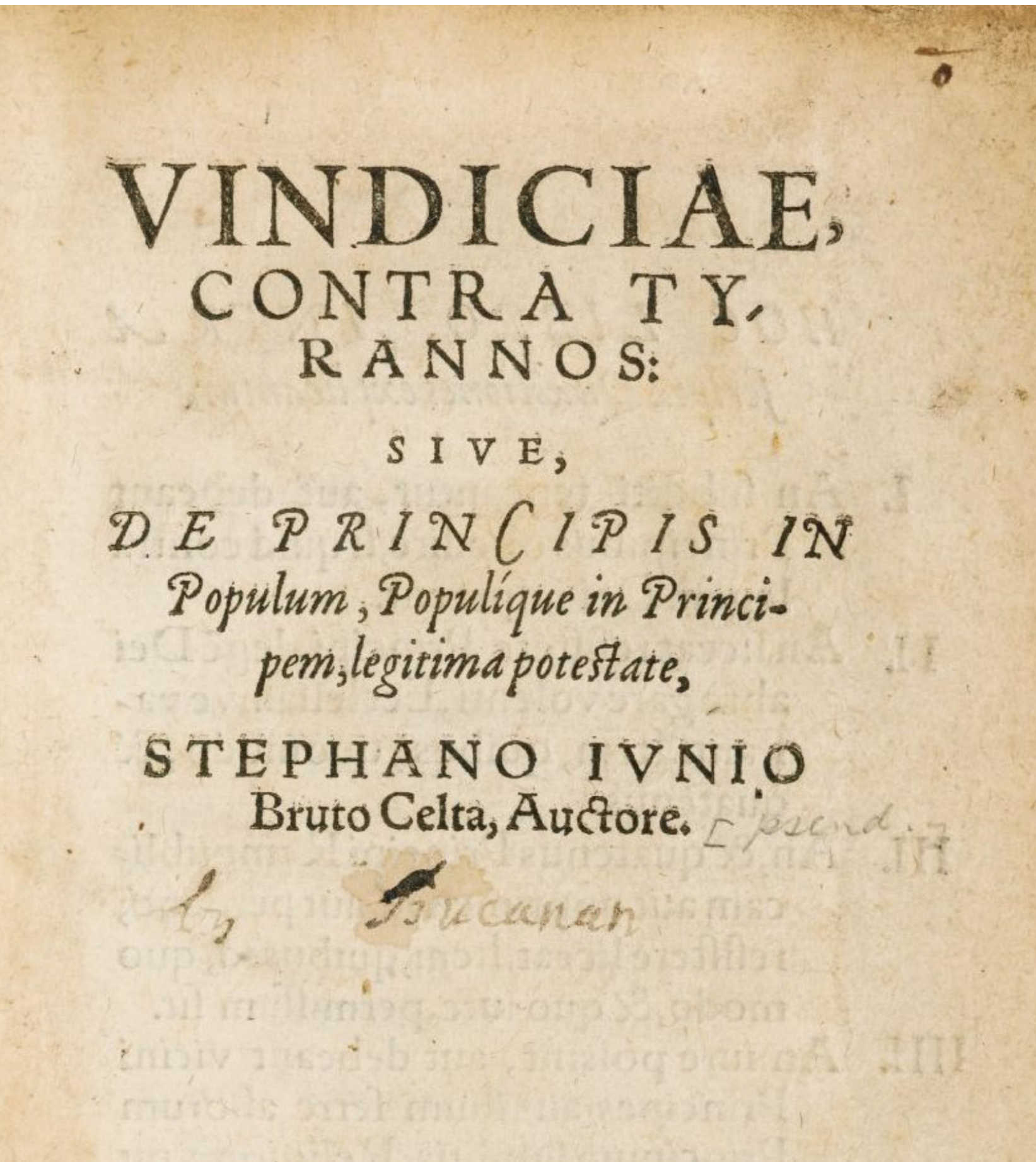
STEPHANO IVNIO
Bruto Celta, Auctore.

The King is Not Actually Your Dad?
(Also Dads Should Not Be Like That?)



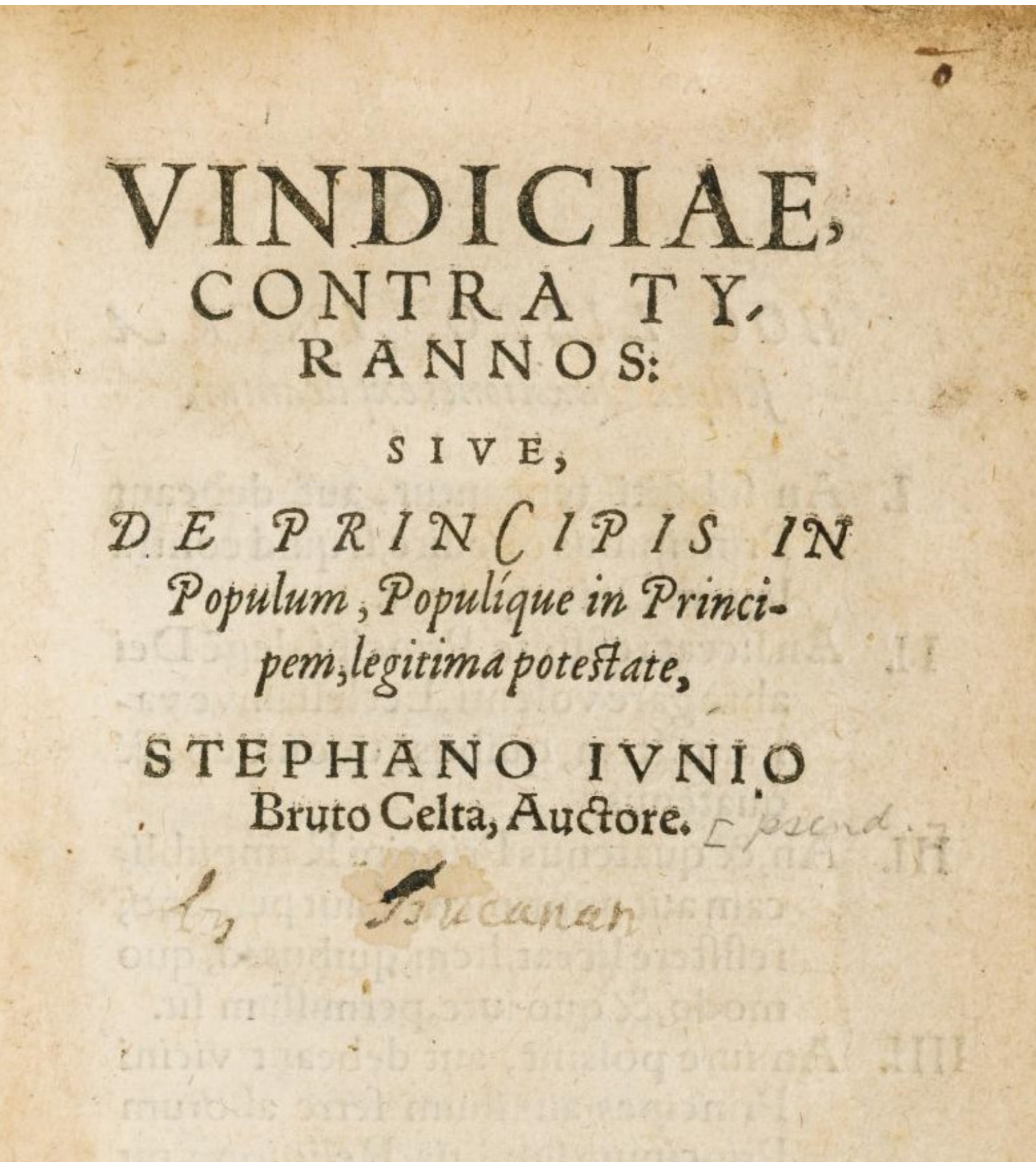
The claim that “kings command as fathers over their children, and tyrants as masters over their slaves, **does not hold** because the ancient practice by which fathers might sell, and put to death their children at their pleasure, **has no authority.**”

What if you owe allegiance to a higher power?



“What shall we do then, if the ruler command us to be idolaters, if he enjoins us to blaspheme and despise God, is there not yet more reason to disobey him, than to yield obedience to such extravagant commands?”

What if the king sucks?



“A tyrant subverts the state, pillages the people, lays stratagems to entrap their lives, breaks promise with all, scoffs at the sacred obligations of a solemn oath, and therefore is he so much more vile than the vilest of usual malefactors. If thieves and those who commit sacrilege be declared infamous; nay, if they justly suffer corporal punishment by death, can we invent any that may be worthily equivalent for so outrageous a crime?”



Charles I (1600 - 1649)

A tremendously unpopular king: he lived a life of extraordinary extravagance, married a French Catholic, had favorites whom everyone hated, squeezed the commoners for money, instituted steep tariffs, started a pointless and expensive war with Scotland, and he kept dissolving Parliament







“At the moment when the axe fell upon the King’s neck, there was such a dismal groan among the thousands of people that were within sight of it (as it were with one consent) as we had never heard before... None of the Kings, no not one, ever left the world with more sorrow: women miscarried, men fell into melancholy, some with consternations expired; men, women, and children then, and yet unborn, suffering in him and for him...”



“At the moment when the axe fell upon the King’s neck, there was such a **dismal groan** among the thousands of people that were within sight of it (as it were **with one consent**) as we had never heard before... None of the Kings, no not one, ever left the world with more sorrow: women miscarried, men fell into melancholy, some with consternations expired; men, women, and children then, and yet unborn, **suffering in him and for him...**”

The Crime of Killing The King

- Is there any ambivalence built into this crime?
- What kinds of anxieties do you detect?



- What kinds of anxieties do you detect?

What if the King is Good and the People are Bad / What if the King is actually our dad / What if we all just committed murder and liked it / What if we miss the King when he's gone / What if we like all the violent stuff he did / What if he loved us so much / What if we're punished next / Maybe we do have power and it's terrifying





Is It Still Illegal To Imagine The Death Of The King?



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

TITUS ANDRONICUS



JOHN WEBSTER

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

RICHARD III



CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

EDWARD II



THOMAS DEKKER

THE WITCH OF EDMONTON



CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

DOCTOR FAUSTUS



Grading

Grades calculated out of 100 points

4.0 95+ pts

3.7 90-94 pts

3.3 85-89 pts

3.0 80-84 pts

etc etc



How To Get Points

3 in-class exams, 50 points each (I will drop your lowest score)



Additonal Points:

Stage / record a scene, 10 points (1x max)

Memorize and recite a passage from a play
in class, 3 pts (1x max)

Memorize and recite a passage from a play
in my office, 2 pts (1x max)

Rest Activity, 1 point (2x max)



My information:

Office: English House 210

Office Hours: Tuesday 9-12 and by appt
(sign up on Calendly link on Moodle)

Email: cgordon1@brynmawr.edu

Required Texts Available in Bookstore



Next Steps For You:

Set your Moodle pic to an image of your face
(thank you)

Think about how you want to get points

Read Act 1 of *Titus Andronicus* for
Wednesday

Come to office hours and say hi! (If you want)