

Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum

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The editors of this volume situate their collection of essays in a landscape in which the interregnum as a whole is neglected territory for historians, and the royalist experience of it an unexplored substratum. Even allowing for the tendency towards polemical overstatement that marks their own contributions to this volume, their assessment is in general terms accurate. Little work has been done by historians on either the royalists' fight back or their passivity; the editors mention the works of Hardacre (1956) and Underdown (1960) as having dominated the field since they were written.⁽¹⁾ Geoffrey Smith's book of 2003, *The Cavaliers in Exile, 1640-1660* ⁽²⁾, is a fine study of the royalist experience in exile, but does not supersede Underdown on the politics of royalist plotting. The editors of this volume deal briskly with their fellow historians, pitying all those scholars who 'looked down on printed items in favour of manuscript sources' (p. 11) and students of royalism who 'traditionally either ignored print-culture or confined themselves to the study of the *Eikon Basilike*' (p. 11); historians of those who lost the civil wars who have 'remained doggedly Anglo-centric' (p. 214); and the entire undifferentiated mass of 'historians of the English civil wars' who have 'long held negative views of Charles I and have traditionally [that adjective again] displayed little interest in either the experience of Royalists or the phenomenon of royalism' (p. 227). All have been 'blind to the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of men and women in the three kingdoms who supported the Stuarts' (p. 227). To set things right, the editors have kindly provided readers with a set of essays that are 'an important milestone in the recovery of the Royalist experience of the 1650s ... a quantum leap in our understanding ...' (p. 3). The Introduction identifies seven 'broad themes' in the 11 substantive essays which follow it. The *main* themes of the volume might be reduced to three: the cultural expressions of royalism (chapters four, eight, nine, ten); religious manifestations of it (chapters two, five); and exile and royalism overseas (chapters six, seven, 11).

A very powerful and convincing essay by Lloyd Bowen, on 'Seditious speech and popular royalism, 1649–60', does not fall into any of these categories. This essay rests on a study of cases in the courts of Upper Bench, the northern circuit assizes, great sessions in Wales, quarter sessions in both eastern and western English counties and the metropolitan courts of quarter sessions for Middlesex and Westminster. As the author points out, prosecutions for seditious speech were most numerous around the time of the regicide, and other moments of crisis in the development of the fledgling republic coupled with phases of more efficient and determined crackdown produced more court cases on actionable words spoken. Against those who would see those outbursts by ordinary people against the Commonwealth which would land them in court as merely anti-authority, Bowen carefully draws attention both to the context and the similarities in the utterances. Too many individuals explicitly resorted to defiant words against Parliament, or the House of Commons, or the Lord Protector for their speech to be dismissed as the shapeless invective of the recalcitrant masses. Bowen detects a form of class criticism among the ordinary royalists he studies, which appears in the language reported of them in court. Republican officials were often marginally less exalted than the king's servants they replaced, and the salty language of their outspoken critics often exaggerated their social abasement, making them 'rogues', 'knaves' and even 'churls'. By contrast, the term 'cavalier', in the context of prosecutions of royalists for seditious words, was a badge of suffering and loyalty. Bowen has found some interesting examples of the drinking of toasts, which he analyses as 'not simply gesture politics, but rather a politics of gesture'. Most interestingly of all, the author suggests that in this language of opposition may be found the roots of popular Toryism under the later Stuarts. This is an intriguing possibility which necessarily is left for exploration elsewhere, but if the use of alcohol was an aspect of the 'oppositional discourse' of 1650s royalists, the case of John Jones, the curate of the Welsh parish of Coety in 1731 poses some interesting interpretative questions. Haled before the church court for 'cursing, swearing, fighting and quarreling', he taught fencing and fighting rather than the catechism.⁽³⁾ What in the 1730s was treated as aberrant, out-of-control behaviour would in the 1650s probably have been called cavalierism.

Bowen's article is for this reviewer the pick of the collection, but it is a pity that the potentially rich vein of popular royalism, and the culture of non-elite groups in which it was located, is accorded so little attention elsewhere in this volume. That said, the essays which focus on cultural expressions of royalism further up the social scale offer many fresh insights. In an essay entitled 'Artful ambivalence? Picturing Charles I during the Interregnum', Helen Pierce traces the waxing and waning of kingly imagery in the public domain

after 30 January 1649. She detects no urgency on the part of Parliament or its supporters to remove royal images from public view, but on the contrary considers that there was a reluctance on the part of the Rump to denigrate the king pictorially. It is remarkable that no definitely English depiction of the act of regicide seems to have been produced, or at least has survived. The death of the older Charles seems to have inhibited not only the production of new images of his demise, but also the destruction of old ones of him in his pomp, but no such self-imposed restraint applied when it came to the younger one. Derogatory images of Charles Stuart, the future Charles II, were prevalent around 1651 and the incursion by the Scots. Like Lloyd Bowen in the case of seditious speech, Helen Pierce notes a relationship between the manifestation of royalism and the hostile state. The circulation of images in print of the late king and his family was regulated in the pattern of 'peaks and troughs' of Cromwellian censorship which owed everything to matters of state security. It is clear that the impulse towards iconoclasm which targeted images in stone of Charles I included his father, in the case of St Paul's cathedral at least, but did not extend to further back in the royal line, so that in 1657 the statues of kings at the Old Exchange were even subjected lovingly to 'brushing, washing and cleansing' (p. 70).

In the climate of benign indulgence which at times marked the protectorate's approach to cultural matters but never to those affecting state security, it was possible for royalists to pursue their intellectual interests without let or hindrance. William Dugdale is a prime example of a beneficiary of the government's approach. Jan Broadway's essay on Dugdale's production of his *History of St Paul's* (1658) complements a number of other articles she has published on his antiquarian enterprises and his own self-fashioning. As against those who would doubt his commitment to the royalist cause, because of his association in literary enterprises with parliamentarians (when it suited him), Broadway insists that Dugdale was 'always a Royalist and always a supporter of the established church' (p. 202). The truth of the former is evident by the company he kept. Even though 'lovers of antiquities' could include supporters of Parliament and/or Cromwell, the range of Dugdale's correspondence locates him firmly in the camp of those who wished well to monarchy. As for his support for the established church, it is rather his loyalty to the episcopal church which is discernible in Dugdale's various projects. During the interregnum, the church was never disestablished, its official title remaining 'Church of England', and Dugdale would never have been tempted in the direction of the sects or of gathered churches. Like many, perhaps the majority, of gentry royalists he continued to attend services in parish churches, enduring whatever liturgy commanded there.

Dugdale's publishing successes in the 1650s are well known, as is his method of seeking subscribers for his antiquarian publications. The world of writing plays with allusions to kingship during the 1650s is as closed as the theatres themselves. James Loxley's subtle and complex essay on 'Royalism, theatre and the political ontology of the person in post-Regicide writing' explores the necessarily elliptical world of playwrights and their patrons, focusing on the patronage of James Compton, 3rd earl of Northampton, whose father had been killed at Hopton Heath in 1643 while fighting for the king. Loxley shows how the trope of disguise figures strongly in the texts of a number of 1650s plays, in the context both of plot development involving characters adopting disguises – including ones known to have been associated with the fleeing Charles Stuart after Worcester in 1651, for example – and the overarching concept or theme of disguised kingship. Furthermore, the prospective quality of these plays, in presenting themselves for future production, 'mimic the element of articulate political longing in post-Regicide royalism' (p. 164). Though there are scholars who have apparently detected signs that these plays were actually performed, this essay does not engage with questions of performance and confines itself to textual analysis. More public impact and public significance attached to John Quarles's extension of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, which as Marcus Nevitt shows, was packaged by the royalist poet in such a way as to enable readers not to associate Tarquin with predatory and tyrannical kingship. While playwrights such as Cosmo Maunche were surreptitiously writing the king into their work, Quarles by contrast did his best to provide for royalists 'a version of Shakespeare which might permit them to forget the recent past' (p. 189).

The theme of exile in this volume emerges in the essay by Geoffrey Smith on Daniel O'Neill, an Irish experienced soldier who acquired a post in the royal household after his management of the mission of the marquess of Antrim to Ireland in 1644. The author charts O'Neill's demeanour as he wandered around

Europe with the exiled court, and respects the swordsman's ingenuity and resourcefulness. In this essay, we are provided with the four pages on royalist plotting that the book offers. O'Neill's mesmeric preoccupation in the early months of 1653 with what Cromwell and Col. Thomas Harrison were doing, rather than with plotting to overthrow them, helps fix the reactive quality of royalist plotting and explain its limitations. The author avails himself of the essay-length biography to take us into the mind and character of a not untypical royalist exile. A major theme that emerges from the study of exile is how particular locations for the royalists overseas became appropriate for them at particular junctures, and the essay by Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, on 'Gender, geography and exile' pursues this strand more broadly, with particular reference to the Low Countries. The authors stress the 'complex matrix of interactions and intersections between the epistemological categories of gender, place and exile' (p. 143). Journeys and reunions were an important part of this story as they affected women and their families, and the qualities of resistance and defiance required of them tell a story that is distinctively gendered. The busy, ever-helpful editors acknowledge that this essay is 'important and innovative', but wonder whether 'for some readers it may raise the question of as to whether gender history in this context is merely a new way of "doing" the history of the court and the Royalist elite' (p.12). This essay is in fact very successful and delivers on its own promises; the lack of attention generally in this volume to non-elite experiences, the essay by Bowen excepted, is a problem that has to be laid at the door of the editors themselves, not at that of the contributors.

Jason McElligott's is the last of the essays to consider royalism overseas, and deals with the evidence for and against the genuineness of the Declaration from Virginia which found its way into print in London in January 1650, a year after the regicide. The Declaration in question is worth the attention the author bestows on it, because it is a sophisticated statement of royalist resistance to the Commonwealth government. The author judiciously weighs up the evidence for its authenticity, and concludes that it probably was genuine. That it could only find its way into print in *The Man in the Moon*, organ of the most scurrilous, inaccurate and dirty-minded of editors, John Crouch, shows how isolated the American royalists were in 1650, but should make historians take this particular newspaper more seriously. The Chesapeake colonies were solidly royalist, having little in common with Puritan New England further north, and it was there the protectorate developed a destination for a labour supply unwanted at home, through the mechanism of indentured servitude. This essay is not about the royalist experience in the Chesapeake, however, but about a message from Virginia that reached the London gutter press. Had it been about the politics of that colony, the interesting clause in the Declaration that acknowledges the existence there of a minority group, 'some few of the Independent party', might have deserved some attention.

The topic of religion is handled deftly in this collection by some practised historians. In an important and useful chapter, Kenneth Fincham and Stephen Taylor bring to bear the data compiled for their Clergy database project. In their essay, 'Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity, 1646–60', they show among other things, that ordinations by the remains of the episcopal hierarchy continued after the civil war, and they have evidence for 559 known ordinations between 1646 and 1660. This figure is thought to amount to no more than 16 per cent of actual ordinations. Of these, some 30 per cent of the clergy were ordained by just three bishops, and the most active bishop in this regard was the little-known Thomas Fulwar, bishop of Ardfert in Ireland, who is thought to have ordained nearly 1,000. The dominant feature of these ordinations was that they were not products of the culture of royalist exile, in Europe or further afield. They took place in England. While these ordinations show the continued vitality of the English episcopalian community, the process by which the clergy reached accommodation with the Commonwealth regime was one of negotiation and a strategy of conformity. The authors go further, suggesting in the case of Robert Skinner, bishop of Oxford, whose continued involvement in ordinations seems to have been with the tacit approval of the protectorate, that he 'had made some kind of deal with the regime' (p. 32). The kind of deal the authors have in mind would have been one by which Skinner might have been allowed quietly to continue ordaining in return for a *de facto* acceptance of the government's authority. The most important conclusion to emerge from this chapter is that the character of Anglicanism after 1660 owed much to the strategy of conformity adopted during the 1650s by many clergy, whose experiences helped shape later active obedience to the monarchy even under the rebarbative regime of James II.

The pragmatic vitality of survivalist clergy is a very useful corrective to narratives of 'sufferings of the clergy' and devotion to the martyr king, and a further vigorous challenge to received interpretation is found in Anthony Milton's essay on 'royalist criticism of Charles I's kingship', an idea which will seem to many readers like a contradiction in terms. The essay is a study of Peter Heylyn's *Observations* (1656), a critique of Charles's style of monarchy. The author shows how Heylyn developed the argument that the king had surrounded himself with subordinates who led him into disastrous policies; in so doing, Charles had 'veiled his crown', that is, doffed or removed it. Anthony Milton finds that few of Heylyn's contemporaries were prepared to go as far down the road of criticism of the late king as he was, but this essay is a useful corrective to the view that *Eikon Basilike* provided the only critique of monarchy that royalists could accept, and also challenges the view of the historian Andrew Lacey that Heylyn's purpose in writing the *Observations* was to defend the image of the saintly king against critics who were 'not sufficiently hagiographic' (p. 98).

The last chapter in the collection, by D'Maris Coffman on the earl of Southampton's oversight of the excise, is a study in administrative history, a sub-genre that is becoming rare. It illustrates the theme of continuity in matters of taxation between interregnum and the monarchical regime that followed it, and is a useful addition to a small stock of literature about the excise tax. The author argues completely convincingly that Southampton's management of the excise derived from his observations and interpretations of interregnum precedents, but these observations were not based on any privileged position or special insight into the workings of government in the 1650s. Southampton spent that decade in political purdah, and his pragmatism in the 1660s was shared by other officials of Charles II's government who profited or drew lessons from the experiences of their 1650s predecessors in managing the navy, the army and other aspects of government. Southampton's investigation into previous holders of excise posts was part of a wider drive towards bringing former officials to account, and cannot be seen as an initiative of his alone. The author notes that the auditor of the excise was John Birch, without offering the reader any hint that this was the same John Birch who had fought the king during the civil war and had become a pugnacious governor of Hereford for parliament. This chapter, valuable as it is as a study of the excise in the early 1660s, seems misplaced in this collection, and in fact has little to do with royalists and royalism during the interregnum.

Like any collection of essays, this one provides a snapshot of scholarship on its topic at a particular moment. If it is representative of current work in progress, there is a great deal of work being done on texts of various kinds, less on empirical research on the lives of provincial royalists during the interregnum or on plots and plotting, and less still on the lives of non-elites who might have considered themselves to be of the king's party. In popular imagination, the experience of royalists after 1649 is surely summed up in the painting by William Frederick Yeames, *And when Did You Last See Your Father?* of the 1870s or by Frederick Marryat's novel, *The Children of the New Forest* (1847). Even though negotiation with the Cromwellian state – which turns out to have been a permissive state – is a submerged theme in many of these chapters, the weight of that state upon ordinary people's lives during the 1650s is not a major story in this collection, Lloyd Bowen's contribution notwithstanding. It is remarkable that in the 256 pages of this book there is only one reference in the endnotes to the composition papers of royalists in The National Archives (SP 23) and not a single one to the Victorian calendar of it, *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents*, in the 20th century a main quarry for those investigating the lives of royalists. This book is well-produced and appropriately, if not lavishly, illustrated. Generally the text is edited to a high standard, although someone should have spotted the use of 'cuttlers' for cutlers (p. 47), 'borne' for born (p. 189), 'swang' for swung (p. 227) and 'grizzly' for grisly (p. 237).

Notes

1. P. H. Hardacre, *The Royalists during the Puritan Revolution* (The Hague, 1956); D. E. Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660* (New Haven, CT, 1960). [Back to \(1\)](#)
2. Geoffrey Smith, *The Cavaliers in Exile, 1640-1660* (Basingstoke, 2003). [Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Eryn M. White, 'A "Poor Benighted Church"? Church and society in mid-eighteenth-century Wales',

in *From Medieval to Modern Wales: historical essays in honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths*, ed. R. R. Davies and G. H. Jenkins (Cardiff, 2004), p. 129.[Back to \(3\)](#)

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