

A Shoulder to Cry On:

The Consumption of Royalist
Literature as a Mourning
Ritual in Seventeenth-
Century England

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On 30 January 1649 Charles I was beheaded, having been convicted at a trial convened by Parliament of being the sole cause of the English Civil War (1642–51) and guilty of ‘all the treasons, murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damages and mischiefs to the nation’.¹ It was a watershed moment in English history for with the execution of Charles I the monarchy had been eliminated. Or so Parliament had hoped. Despite their military and legal victories over the king and his followers, they were defeated in 1660 with the restoration of the monarchy. Yet this time, Parliament was defeated, not by cavalry charges and musket fire but by words. Words which transformed Charles from a tyrant into a martyr. The *Eikon Basilike* and Royalist texts such as John Arnway’s *The Tablet or Moderation of Charles the First, Martyr* and Henry Leslie’s *The martyrdom of King Charles, or his conformity with Christ in his suffering* (1649) achieved what six years of military campaigning could not.² The question remains why.

The English people were no strangers to being manipulated by words and images intended to persuade them of the righteousness of a particular cause. Charles I himself was devoted to the act of image construction. When faced with such subversive literature as the *Eikon Basilike* and similar Royalist texts, Parliament responded not only with censorship, but also with their own propaganda campaign exposing the idolatry that defined the cult of the martyr king. What gave Royalist texts the advantage against alternate forms of propaganda in the seventeenth century was the essentially violent nature of the regicide. For it not only allowed Charles’s supporters to

¹ Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors: The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 212.

² Both texts were first published in the Netherlands in 1649 and again in London in 1660.

reconstruct him as a glorious martyr bravely meeting his death but also affected his subjects who were witnesses to such a traumatic event to the extent that they would embrace this vision of Charles as martyr because it assuaged their grief. It is this relationship that these texts cultivated with their audiences and the extent to which they responded to those audiences' emotional needs which determined their influence.

This article explores how the authors of three Royalist texts—*Eikon Basilike*, *The Tablet or Moderation of Charles the First, Martyr* and *The martyrdom of King Charles*—constructed the image of Charles as martyr, by utilising the English people's existing admiration of martyr figures and then elevating Charles above all other martyrs in respect of his piety and righteousness through comparison with Christ. It will then demonstrate the persuasiveness of Royalist texts by comparing their influence to alternate forms of propaganda produced in the same period, including the court masques staged by Charles I and John Milton's book *Eikonoklastes* (1649), which sought to undermine the eloquent rhetoric of the *Eikon Basilike* through a rational critique of its arguments. The article concludes with an examination of the anthropology of the processes of grief and mourning rituals and how they apply to the reactions of the English people in the aftermath of the regicide. It demonstrates that because Royalist texts provided closure to a grieving nation, they had far more political influence as a result.

I. I AM A MARTYR TO MY PEOPLE

Charles as Christ in Royalist Literature

Charles made a far better martyr than king, being more sincerely venerated in death than he ever was in life. Charles's conduct on the scaffold greatly contributed to his status as a martyr, meeting his death with considerable courage and a strong sense of purpose. He proclaimed in his final speech, 'a subject and a sovereign are clean different things', defending to the end the role of the monarch as the undisputed ruler and protector of his subjects.³ These twin qualities of freedom from fear and absolute conviction are, L.B. Smith argues, the defining qualities of the martyr.⁴ Yet Royalist texts published after his death significantly aided Charles's transformation from tyrant to martyr, as is evident in an analysis of the *Eikon Basilike*, *The Tablet or Moderation* and *The martyrdom of King Charles*. In texts elevating Charles to the status of martyr, there are few references to the violent nature of his death. Instead, Henry Leslie, John Arnway and the anonymous author of the *Eikon Basilike* examined Charles's death through symbolic references to Christ's passion.⁵ Such a comparison was invoked not to avoid examination of this violent and unprecedented event, but rather to emphasise the heroic nature of his death and to identify him with a figure who was universally venerated by his subjects. In doing so, they could achieve their aim of restoring Charles's reputation. Conversely, gruesome descriptions of Charles's decapitation had little propaganda value.

3 'King Charles His Speech Made Upon The Scaffold at Whitehall Gate (1650)' in *Eikon Basilike*, eds Jim Daems and Holly Faith Nelson, (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Editions, 2006), 322.

4 Smith, 10, 13-15.

5 The authorship of the *Eikon Basilike* has been frequently disputed. The majority of early modern readers accepted that Charles I was the author, as the text was written in first person. Around 1690 it was suggested that the text was actually composed by Dr John Gauden. While contemporary historical opinion is in no doubt of Gauden's involvement 'it is difficult to determine the extent to which he can be viewed as its author'. *Eikon Basilike*, 17-19.

The extent to which Royalist texts relied on comparisons of Charles I to Christ in exonerating the king and promoting the righteousness of their cause varies considerably, from the elegantly subtle to the blatantly obvious. Henry Leslie's sermon represents the clearest comparison as evident from the title *The martyrdom of King Charles, or his conformity with Christ in his suffering*. Leslie went so far as to prove that every event, person and location in the story of Christ's passion has its parallel in the capture, imprisonment, trial, and execution of Charles I. Just as Christ was God's representative on Earth, so was Charles; just as Christ was driven out of Jerusalem, Charles was driven out of London; and just as Christ was called a blasphemer by the Pharisees (an orthodox Jewish sect), so too was Charles called a blasphemer by the Puritans, an equally strict Christian sect.⁶ Leslie concludes his comparison, which forms the crux of his argument, by noting that Charles, like Christ, died to redeem the sins of his people, in this case referring to the act of rebellion against the monarchy and regicide itself.⁷ Leslie's comparison was not merely descriptive. His connection of the Puritans with the Pharisees effectively undermined the Puritans' claims to fight for a Godly cause. Like the Puritans, the Pharisees imagined themselves to be more devout than Christ, but were also proud and devoid of love.⁸ These were two qualities Christ did not possess, and neither did Charles, at least in the eyes of his followers.

While Henry Leslie's sermon represents the boldest comparison, other forms of Royalist literature were more elegant in their use of Christ imagery. Rather than drawing comparisons between every detail in the deaths of Charles I and Christ, John Arnway and the author of the *Eikon Basilike* selected a few pertinent references which conveyed the same idea. Arnway avoided metaphor, as is evident in his description of Charles's final moments on the scaffold, 'In all which he was ... a king unconquered...a partaker of divine nature, transform'd into God, whose might is invincible, and Glory incommunicable'.⁹ Within the *Eikon Basilike*, the composition of the frontispiece by William Marshall depicted Charles having discarded his earthly crown to take up a crown of thorns, an item donned by Christ during the crucifixion. The metaphor was repeated within the text when Charles claimed 'I will rather wear my crown of thorns' than become a constitutional monarch, which he believed would be a betrayal of his duty.¹⁰

In addition to direct references, both authors used the following techniques to equate Charles with Christ. Firstly, both described Charles as exceeding the Old Testament kings and prophets in leading a life of Godly virtue. John Arnway invoked such a comparison in exalting Charles's fidelity to his wife Henrietta Maria, as opposed to Solomon and David's infidelities. Although Charles in the *Eikon Basilike* exclaimed that 'I have come far short of David's piety' the text's representation of Charles's 'sins' achieved the opposite effect.¹¹ For example, the *Eikon Basilike* represented Charles's greatest sin as allowing himself to be manipulated by the machinations of Parliament and consequently ordering the execution of the Earl of Strafford for treason in 1641. Though a sin in itself, the decision had the effect of incriminating Charles' enemies more than

6 Henry Leslie, *The martyrdom of King Charls I. Or His conformity with Christ in his sufferings. In a sermon preached at Bredah, before his sacred Majesty King Charls the Second, and the Princess of Orange. By the Bishop of Downe.* (Hague, 1649; London 1660), 14-16.

7 *Ibid.*, 12-13, 18.

8 *Ibid.*, 22.

9 John Arnway, *The Tablet, or, Moderation of Charles the I. Martyr, with an alarum to the subjects of England.* (Hague, 1649), 36-37.

10 *Eikon Basilike*, 72.

11 *Eikon Basilike*, 176.

himself.¹² In being more virtuous than the Old Testament kings, and sacrificing his life in the service of God, Charles rendered himself as being second only to Christ. Secondly both texts represented Charles martyring himself to redeem the sins of his subjects, as Christ in his death became the saviour of all Christians. In the *Eikon Basilike*, Charles prayed that ‘as I hope my own sins are so remitted... so I desire God to pardon their sins, who are most guilty of my destruction’.¹³ This theme is repeated throughout the text, and also iterated in *The Tablet or Moderation*, where Arnway wrote of Charles that ‘His Christian charity forgiving those who though to merit by Patricide...and would not (many of them) forgive themselves, had they asked God of Him pardon’.¹⁴

Finally, Royalist writers sought to compare Charles to Christ by representing the self-destruction of the Republican Commonwealth as an imminent inevitability. Through its annihilation would come the resurrection of the monarchy in the person of Charles’s son, just as Christ was resurrected three days after his death. The *Eikon Basilike* concluded with a chapter addressing the Princes of Wales, with Charles advising his son and successor of the duties of kingship and expressions of hope on Charles’s part. ‘Happy times, I hope attend you wherein your subjects (by their miseries) will have learned...I pray God bless you and establish you kingdom in righteousness’.¹⁵ The *Tablet or Moderation* similarly addressed Charles II. In the first instance, Arnway, referring to Charles Stuart by his title as King negated the legitimacy and even the existence of the Republic, ‘which God in short times will unmake with marks of horror’. He hoped his words would ‘revive his [Charles I] blessed memory, recovering...and raising him from the dead’.¹⁶ Thus, through his son, Charles I would do as his Royalist supporters had hoped, and become the saviour and redeemer of the English, the Irish and the Scots.

By reconstructing Charles as a martyr, Royalist writers equated the late king with the venerated Protestant martyrs burned by Mary I (1553–58), and commemorated by John Foxe in *Acts and Monuments*, popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*. Foxe’s text was enormously influential, being frequently placed alongside the Bible in public places to be read freely.¹⁷ Consequently the men and women depicted in the *Book of Martyrs* came to be regarded as protectors of English sovereignty and identity by giving their lives rather than surrender to Catholic domination, which by the sixteenth century had come to mean ‘foreign’ and ‘alien’.¹⁸ By constructing Charles’s sacrifice as comparable to Christ’s passion, these Royalist texts elevated the late King above these celebrated men and women in regards to their virtue and piety. Charles was not just a martyr, he became *the* martyr and the saviour of the nation, as the Marian martyrs were the saviours of the Church of England.

Charles could be so easily transformed into a martyr though in part because his personality was perfectly suited to the role. As L.B. Smith argues, martyrs are defined by an unwavering devotion to their cause and consequently do not compromise through collusion with any authority, whether

12 *Ibid.*, 53-57; ‘Elegies and Commemorative Verse in Honour of Charles the Martyr’, in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. Jason Peacey, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 237-38.

13 *Eikon Basilike*, 202.

14 Arnway, 3-4.

15 *Eikon Basilike*, 183-95.

16 Arnway, 3-4.

17 John N. King, *Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’ and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 272-78.

18 John Knott, *Discourse of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 106-108.

it be religious, social or political.¹⁹ Charles was such a person, and regarded his own ideological inflexibility as a virtue, though it did not suit his role as king.²⁰ Indeed his steadfast belief in the divine right of kings and unwillingness to compromise with Parliament precipitated the outbreak of civil war.

The Royalists' transformation of Charles from traitor into martyr also exploited existing doubts about the legality and the righteousness of executing the king. Charles's Parliamentary judges had intended his trial and execution as a traitor to demonstrate that the monarch was not above the law and the monarchy was not a divine institution. Yet Charles's judges were extremely reluctant to execute him, a reluctance his subjects shared.²¹ Royalist writers played into this guilt over the regicide through continual references to the execution, defining it as the 'national sin' from which the English people had to be delivered, just as Christ's death delivered all Christians from their original sin.²² Thus, the Royalists' interpretation of Charles as a martyr, whose sacrifice was in the service of a higher cause, provided an explanation for the reason as to his death and the promise that like Christ he would be resurrected in the person of his son, Charles II. It gave his subjects a sense of closure.

II. A CIVIL KIND OF IDOLATRY

Propaganda in the Seventeenth Century

The success of Royalist literature in transforming the image of Charles I from tyrant to martyr was emphasised by the inability of other forms of seventeenth-century political propaganda to effect the same level of influence. Yet by examining the ideas and techniques used by Charles to promote his image during his reign or in John Milton's republican *Eikonoklastes* it is possible to understand what factors contributed to the immense success of the *Eikon Basilike*, *The Tablet or Moderation* and *The martyrdom of King Charles* in influencing popular perceptions of the late King Charles.

Charles I was obsessed with images. He reproduced himself in paintings and prints, on medals and coins, and through performances of court masques. Through such mediums Charles advertised the majesty of kingship, conveyed by such visual motifs as the warrior sitting astride his horse, the paterfamilias as head of his family and of his country, and the divinely appointed sovereign as God's representative and protector of the Church of England.²³ The role of the king, as envisioned by Charles, was that of protector, endeavouring to promote prosperity, stability and harmony within his three kingdoms. In order to achieve these aims, Charles needed to be in control of government, taking not giving orders and when his authority was not respected he would resort to 'extraordinary means' to restore the status quo. Royal propagandists defended such acts as necessary, because the opposite of Charles's rule was thought to be political anarchy.²⁴ Such sentiments, which asserted and justified his authority, were frequently expressed in the court

¹⁹ Smith, 6, 14-15

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 214-15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 211-13; Sean Kelsey, 'The Trial of Charles I', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 118, (2003), 586, 589-93.

²² Kevin Sharpe, "'So Hard a Text?' Images of Charles I, 1612-1700", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, no. 2, (2000), 392-93.

²³ John Peacock, 'The Visual Image of Charles I' in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas N. Corns, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202, 225.

²⁴ J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 124-28; Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 188-89.

masques produced between 1635 and 1640: *The Temple of Love*, *Britannia Triumphant*, and *Salmacida Spolia*.²⁵ Yet Charles's use of images to highlight the mystery and majesty of kingship served only to reinforce his negative qualities, chiefly his abstruseness as well as his inability to build consensus and negotiate with his opponents in Parliament. As forms of propaganda they were severely flawed compared to the *Eikon Basilike* and other forms of post-regicide Royalist literature, as evidenced in his failure to persuade Parliament to accept his absolute authority or avoid the turmoil of civil war.²⁶ Yet Charles's almost exclusive use of images in advertising the beneficence of his rule also meant that, when his supporters turned to text in constructing Charles as a martyr, the use of a different medium allowed them to reveal an image of him as a man readers could empathise with in contrast to the alien figure they had known as king.²⁷

Republican propaganda was similarly ineffective, evident in the fact that the Republic failed to establish its legitimacy and was replaced by a restored monarchy in 1660. The early Republic sought to counter the popularity of the *Eikon Basilike* and other Royalist texts through the production of its own propaganda. John Milton's *Eikonoklastes* represents the pinnacle of those attacks on the cult of King Charles as the martyr. The title, translated from the Greek, means 'image-breaker' and the text sought to demolish the image of Charles as a royal martyr, through a chapter-by-chapter refutation of all the claims made in the *Eikon Basilike*.²⁸ At the heart of Milton's text lay the assertion that Charles Stuart was a hypocrite, that he and his supporters had no right to promote him as a martyr. Martyrdom, for Milton, was death in the service of promoting and defending the truth, as early Christian martyrs died in promoting and defending Christianity against the Romans, and the Marian martyrs died in promoting and defending the Church of England. The *Eikon Basilike* instead formed a carefully constructed image of Charles as pious, defenceless and humble, but was preoccupied with the wrongs done to its author, whom Milton believed to be Charles Stuart. Milton succinctly argued that 'Martyrs bear witness to the truth, not to themselves'. Evidence of Charles Stuart's hypocrisy was illustrated by Milton in disputing Charles's claim that by the end of the Civil Wars, 'the chiefest armes left him were only those which ancient Christians were wont to use against their persecutors, prayer and tears'. Milton countered that the Parliamentarians' armies were instead often faced with well-equipped military forces, armed with Dutch weapons purchased with funds acquired from the sale of the Crown Jewels.²⁹ Instead of simply lecturing his readers, Milton encouraged them to use their own critical faculties, comparing their memories of past events with accounts produced in the *Eikon Basilike*. He countered rhetoric with reason, confident that it would lead readers to the same conclusions as presented in *Eikonoklastes*.³⁰

Yet therein lay Milton's problem. He sought to use reason to argue the Republic's case, but the English people were in no condition to listen to reason. As Robert Wilcher noted of the public mood immediately following the king's execution, people who are tired, frustrated and frightened desire myths that restore their confidence and when constructing those myths they are rarely concerned

25 Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 330-34.

26 Joad Raymond, 'Popular Representations of Charles I' in *The Royal Image*, 51-54; Butler, 349-51.

27 Raymond, 60-62; Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 335.

28 Sharon Achinstein, 'Milton and King Charles' in *The Royal Image*, 153; Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism, 1628-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 292.

29 Knott, 160-64.

30 Barbara K. Lewalski, 'Milton and Idolatry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2003), 221, 229-30; Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 291-92; Achinstein, 154.

with their accuracy.³¹ What *Eikonoklastes* did not do was reassure people who were grieving. Charles' own attempts at image construction were similarly marred by a failure to comprehend their audience's needs, which was not helped by either the king's fear and distrust of his own people or royal propaganda promoting the view that the king's only enemies were the ignorant and vulgar.³² Thus in comparing the influence of Royalist literature, not only with the texts produced by the Republic, but those produced by the king during his reign, it becomes clear that success depended on maintaining a reciprocal relationship between audience and author. That need is only magnified when the texts are concerned with such a violent and traumatic event as the regicide.

III. THEY WEPT BITTERLY

Mourning the Regicide

In comparing the political influence of Royalist writings, particularly the *Eikon Basilike*, with alternate forms of seventeenth-century propaganda, what sets the former apart is its ability to empathise with and respond to the needs of its audience. John Milton's *Eikonoklastes* and Charles I's prints, portraits, and court masques attempted to direct their audience in what or how to think, with varying degrees of sophistication. Charles I sought to blind skeptics with the spectacular majesty of his image, while Milton encouraged readers to utilise their own critical faculties, confident that they would share his conclusions. Royalist authors however, though they advanced their own cause of restoring the monarchy, nevertheless provided an emotional outlet for a grieving nation. Despite all of Charles's actions leading up to and during the Civil Wars, his enemies retained an innate respect for the monarchy, evident in the intense reluctance of Charles's judges to execute him, fearing it to be a grievous sin, and also fearful of future accusations of treason. As the cult of Charles the martyr demonstrated, the English people used Royalist literature for their own purposes as much as Royalists sought to cultivate popular support to advance their cause.

Gail Holts-Warhaft described mourning as an 'almost universal art', being the controlled expression of the other uncontrollable emotions engendered by the death of another human being to whom individuals feel connected. We have a profound need to see grief performed in order to be able to continue with our daily lives.³³ If grief is suppressed for ulterior reasons, particularly politically motivated ones, it may be transformed into anger and consequently represent a considerable threat to the status quo. The power of unexpressed grief can be nurtured and prolonged by marginalised groups as a means of promoting social destabilisation.³⁴ This occurred in Republican England, for while Charles had no a personal connection with the vast majority of his subjects, he was nonetheless regarded as the father of his three kingdoms, responsible for their welfare and protection. It was a sense of grief based on a shared membership of a community of which the king was leader. Yet despite the profound sense of loss accompanying the king's death, the Republican regime provided no means by which the people could express their grief.³⁵ Charles Stuart had been executed as a traitor, so to mourn him as king would only have undermined both the legitimacy of

³¹ Wilcher, 292.

³² Raymond, 53-54.

³³ Gail Holts-Warhaft, *The Cue for Passion: Grief and its Political Uses* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

³⁵ Lois Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration' in Thomas N. Corns (ed), *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 241.

their guilty verdict and the government that had tried and convicted him. The longer expressions of grief were encouraged by the Royalists, the further it promoted their cause by cultivating sympathy for the late king.

The process of directing expressions of grief in the service of political causes was facilitated by a shift in how individuals remembered events during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Peter Sherlock argues, during this period Europe experienced a 'reformation of memory'. In the Middle Ages, a virtue was made out of committing texts to memory, in part because books were not easily accessible. The development of printing and the subsequent increase in book production meant that the amount of information available became more than one person could conceivably remember. Such a conceptual shift from medieval perceptions of memory as a store of information to modern understandings of memory was completed when philosophers such as Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes argued that the mind had the capacity to forget as much as it remembered and was both unreliable and extremely amenable to persuasion.³⁶ The results of such a 'reformation' were most enthusiastically embraced within Protestant nations, which sought to construct their own national identities in opposition to Catholic cultural and political domination. In England, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* did much to reconfigure English identity against an alien Catholicism and in doing so demonstrated how the printed book could dictate how the past was remembered by future generations.³⁷ This was the context in which Royalist writers operated and defined their attempts to restore the late king's reputation. They possessed an audience ready and willing to listen, and the means by which to control the people's recollections of the regicide so as to advance the Royalist agenda.

Denied any opportunity to publicly perform mourning rituals which might have made the regicide 'emotionally bearable', Charles's former subjects sought comfort in private acts of mourning.³⁸ Indeed the private nature of mourning for the late king was reflected in the reactions of the people during the Restoration who combined their immense joy with bitter lamentations. Such behaviour was evident in the recollections of the Reverend William Hampton, who had long wished 'in my secret prayers' to express his grief 'in publick'.³⁹ In performing acts of private mourning, reading was the perfect tool by which individuals could conceptualise and experience their profound sense of loss.⁴⁰ Apart from the private act of reading, individuals would also gather in each other's houses to read aloud from Royalist pamphlets and verses, particularly the *Eikon Basilike*. Small editions of the *Eikon Basilike* were also produced which could be easily carried and concealed from the authorities.⁴¹ The influence of written texts on public opinion and its subversive potential was also enhanced by the increasing literacy rates over the course of the seventeenth century.⁴² The success of Royalist writers in achieving their initial aim of restoring the late king's memory was dependent on their work satisfying the emotional needs of the populace by comforting them in their grief following their traumatic experience of the king's death. As a result, Charles's reputation would

36 Peter Sherlock, 'The Reformation of Memory in Early Modern Europe' in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, eds Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 30-32.

37 *Ibid.*, 33, 38-39.

38 Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169.

39 Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration', 240.

40 Peter Gray and Oliver Kendrick (eds.), *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 4-5.

41 Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration', 241-42.

42 Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print, and Politics in Britain, 1590-1660* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 23-39.

never again be called into doubt. Instead Charles I would be remembered as the martyred king, even when the monarchy shifted away from the model he had imagined.⁴³

Yet as the execution of Charles I receded further into the past, devotion to his memory became increasingly lacklustre. Nowhere was this shift more evident than during the annual commemorations of the king's death on January 30, established in 1661 as a day of fasting and prayer.⁴⁴ In 1664 Samuel Pepys recalled that he and his wife had fasted only because the shops were all closed and they had forgotten to buy food in advance. Attendance at anniversary sermons appeared to be in perpetual decline, as evidenced by preachers' frequent complaints about low attendance at services and speculation that individuals were more likely to be feasting than fasting on 30 January. By the 1690s, pamphleteer William Baldwin, despite conceding that Charles's execution was indeed a most 'horrid murder', asserted that he was only a mortal, and that after forty-five years the period for mourning had passed.⁴⁵ Editions of the *Eikon Basilike* continued to be published, including one in 1687 which was perhaps intended to encourage support for Charles I's second son, now James II, but never again would it go through thirty-five editions as it had done in 1649.⁴⁶ The absence of devotion to the memory of Charles I, whether in the 1660s or 1690s, was due to the same reason—it had ceased to be relevant to people's everyday lives. As Edward Casey argues, participation in any mourning ritual is dependent on that rite satisfying an emotional need.⁴⁷ Thus what was the purpose for Samuel Pepys or William Baldwin in mourning a dead king, when the unjust act that had deprived Charles of his throne and his life, had since been rectified. Charles could never be resurrected, but his memory was finally honoured, his son had reclaimed the Crown, and those who had ordered the king's death were executed, or if already dead like Oliver Cromwell, their remains were desecrated.⁴⁸ In seeing justice to be done, the Royalist writers had achieved their purpose.

Collective memories such as of the execution of Charles I are never guaranteed a permanent presence. They are subject to a continual reassessment of their relevance to those still living, and accuracy in representing past events.⁴⁹ The memory of Charles I was subject to such revisions throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, for as public observance of the anniversary on 30 January declined in popularity, contrary voices emerged disputing the image of Charles as the 'martyr'd king'. Indeed the memory of the Civil Wars and the role of the king in that conflict had always been contested, even if opposition voices had been subdued. In the years immediately following the conflict it was popularly referred to as 'The Troubles', a politically neutral term which acknowledged the great suffering the English people experienced. This attempt at fostering unity was absolutely necessary in the 1650s, because communities once divided between Parliamentary and Royalist factions needed to be able to live together again.⁵⁰ While any opposition to the monarchy had been subdued during the Restoration, which seemed to represent a new period of stability after the political upheavals of the previous 20 years, dissent re-emerged with a vengeance

43 Kevin Sharpe, "So Hard a Text?", 393-94.

44 Raymond, 65.

45 Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration', 247-48.

46 Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (ed.), *Religion, Literature and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 139.

47 Edward S. Casey 'Public Memory in Place and Time' in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips, (Tuscaloosa : University of Alabama Press, 2004), 29.

48 Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration', 244.

49 Casey, 29.

50 Gray and Kendrick (eds.), *The Memory of Catastrophe*, 22.

in the 1680s when it was believed the monarchy was exceeding its authority. Firstly during the Exclusion Crisis (1678–81) when Parliament sought to prevent Charles II from naming his brother James, Duke of York as his heir because of his Catholicism, and again in 1688 when James II was expelled following his attempts at Catholic emancipation. In both cases, Parliament directly challenged the absolute authority of the monarchy which Charles I and his Royalist supporters had so explicitly supported before and after his death.⁵¹ The Royalists who composed and published the *Eikon Basilike*, *The Tablet or Moderation* and *The martyrdom of King Charles* had won the battle, but lost the war.

The Royalist literature produced following the execution of Charles and its consumption by his subjects represented a form of mourning ritual; a method by which the people could comfort themselves in their trauma following the regicide, an event many had previously thought inexplicable. Whether or not it was the intention of Royalist writers and publishers, it is clear that their texts responded to the needs of their audience far better than other forms of propaganda in this period. Yet as the status quo had been restored and subsequent Stuart monarchs failed to live up to the model of kingship articulated by Charles and his supporters, the needs of the English people had also shifted and the veneration of a dead king could not satisfy them as it once did. It was a reciprocal relationship which had served its purpose.

CONCLUSION

Charles I was not the only Stuart king to be deprived of his throne. Forty years after his execution, his son James II was deposed by his own son-in-law and daughter, William and Mary, who were crowned in 1689 as joint sovereigns. History called it a 'Glorious Revolution' and James II was never to be exonerated like his father. While there are many reasons for this (James's Catholicism did nothing to promote him in the eyes of the Protestant majority) one of the major factors was that James fled from his homeland and sought asylum in France, rather than courageously sacrificing his life for a cause he believed in as his father had done. The English in the seventeenth century loved a martyr and Charles had been transformed into one by his execution. The trauma engendered by the regicide created an audience who needed a method by which to express their grief and provide a vision of stability and peace in a rapidly changing political environment. *Eikon Basilike*, *The Tablet or Moderation of Charles the First, Martyr*, and *The martyrdom of King Charles, or his conformity with Christ in his suffering* provided for those needs, by representing Charles as being among his subjects in spirit if not in person, and the promise that there would be a return to normalcy with the Restoration of Charles's son to the throne. Quite simply, martyrdom was the best thing that ever happened to Charles Stuart. It saved his reputation.

⁵¹ Sharpe, "So Hard a Text?", 395-98.
