

Chapter 7

Remembering – and Forgetting – Regicide: The Commemoration of the ^{30th} of ~~January~~ January, 1649-1660

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In January 1649 Charles I, King of England, was found guilty of treason against his own people, and, on the ^{30th} of that month, executed at Whitehall. Upon the scaffold, he turned to his companion, Dr William Juxon, and uttered the word “Remember”.¹ He was not, however, the only figure who perceived the importance of framing the memory this momentous event. In the precarious political climate of the new republican state, interpretations of the turbulent recent past had a direct bearing on the politics of the present, and, almost as soon as the axe fell, both supporters and opponents of the Commonwealth regime attempted to present the King’s death, and the bloody events that had preceded it, in a politically favourable light. As the Commonwealth historian Thomas May wrote, it was necessary “to put some Englishmen in minde of what hath passed heretofore, such Englishmen as in all these time of trouble, have had (to the great mis-fortune of the Common-wealth) very treacherous memories”.²

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In this context, the anniversary of the King’s death became not just another date in the calendar, but an opportunity – and a challenge. For in seventeenth century England, the dates of events

¹ Anon, *King Charls his speech made upon the scaffold at Whitehall-Gate, immediately before his execution, on Tuesday the 30 of Jan. 1648* (London, 1649), p. 13.

² [Thomas May], *The changeable Covenant. Shewing in a brief series of relation, how the Scots from time to time have imposed upon England, by their false glosses, and perverse interpretations of the Covenant* (London, 1650), p. 1.

that were considered to be of particular national importance, such as the gunpowder treason and the accession of the monarch, were commemorated annually, while almanac calendars often included “notable events” from previous years that had occurred on a particular day; and the execution of the monarch was nothing if not notable.³ However, unlike the defeat of the Spanish armada or the foiling of the gunpowder plot, [events](#) which broadly conformed to a unifying, Protestant, display of English national identity, the execution of the King was clearly highly divisive. This chapter explores the struggle that occurred in Interregnum England over the commemoration of that most difficult of anniversaries, the 30th of January.

In the year of the 350th anniversary of Charles I’s death, Jason Peacey noted that the trial and execution of England’s monarch remained an “inexplicably under-studied subject”.⁴ Renewed scholarly interest in the regicide over the last two decades means that this lament is rather less applicable [as the 370th anniversary comes into view](#)~~as the 370th anniversary comes into view~~. In recent years, historians have explored – and, in some cases, fiercely debated – topics as diverse as the motivations of the regicides, the staging of the trial, European reactions to the King’s execution, and the production of printed material in its immediate aftermath.⁵

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³ David Cressy, ‘The Protestant Calendar and the Voice of Celebration in Early Modern England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 29.1 (1990), 31-52.

⁴ Jason Peacey, ‘Introduction’, in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. by Jason Peacey (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 1-13 (p.1).

⁵ For debates over the motivations of the regicides, and particularly the significance of the Remonstrance, see Clive Holmes, ‘The Trial and Execution of Charles I’, *The Historical Journal*, 53.2 (2002), 289-316; Sean Kelsey, ‘The Death of Charles I’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 727-754; Philip Baker, ‘The Regicide’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. by Michael Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.

Studies of the commemoration of the regicide, however, have generally taken one of two approaches: an exploration of the period after 1660, and particularly the Restoration regime's decision to establish an annual day of fasting and humiliation on the anniversary of the King's death; or a study of the martyrological tradition that dominated pro-Stuart print in the early 1650s and beyond.⁶

While both shed important light on the mental afterlife of this extraordinary event, less attention has been given to the significance and treatment of the date of the execution itself prior to 1660. This chapter seeks redress this imbalance, and, using the 30th of January as a lens, reveal the ways in which the Interregnum governments attempted to control the memory of Charles' death, the extent to which these representations were accepted, subverted, and

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154-169; Mark Kishlansky, 'Mission Impossible: Charles I, Oliver Cromwell and the Regicide', *English Historical Review*, 125.515 (2010), 844-874. For discussions of staging, European reactions, and print, ~~respectively, respectively~~, see Sean Kelsey, 'Staging the Trial of Charles I', in *The Regicides*, ed. by Peacey, pp. 71-93; Richard Bonney, 'The European Reaction to the Trial and Execution of Charles I', in *The Regicides*, ed. by Peacey, pp. 247-279; Amos Tubb, 'Printing the Regicide of Charles I', *History*, 89.296 (2004), 500-524.

⁶ Helen W. Randall, 'The Rise and Fall of a Martyrology: Sermons on Charles I', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 10.2 (1947), 135-167; Byron Stewart, 'The Cult of the Royal Martyr', *Church History*, 38 (1969), 175-187; Lois Potter, 'The Royal Martyr in the Restoration', in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. by Thomas Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 240-262; Kevin Sharpe, "'So Hard a Text?'" Images of Charles I, 1612-1700' *The Historical Journal*, 43.2 (2000), 383-405; Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), esp. pp. 129-171.

resisted, and, in so doing, illuminate some of the challenges that the memory of the King's execution and the recent revolution posed for the fledgling state more broadly.

On the day of the King's execution, Bulstrode Whitelocke stayed at home. Though he was one of the 38 committee men who had drawn up the charges against the King, Whitelocke had spoken out against the trial, and, in his diary entry for the 30th of January, he noted that he was "troubled at the death of the King this day, and praying to God to keepe his judgements from us".⁷ He was not alone in his distress. Ten days later, the loyalist and future archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, penned a letter to his father in which he reported that "The black act is done, which all the world wonders at, and which an age cannot expiate [...] now we have nothing left".⁸ Even the Puritan minister Ralph Josselin, a supporter of both the Parliamentary cause and the republican state, expressed some unease. He noted in his diary that he was "much troubled with the blacke providence of putting the King to death", though he went on to articulate the hope that the Lord "in mercy, doe us good by the same".⁹

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In addition to these personal reflections, in the days and weeks following the execution there was an outpouring of printed material that sought either to defend or attack the King's fate. The legal case that the High Court of Justice had brought against Charles turned on his having broken a fundamental bond of trust with his people. According to the charges, the King had "a *limited Power*, to Govern by, and according to the Laws of the Land, and not otherwise",

⁷ Ruth Spalding (ed.), *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke, 1605-1675* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 229.

⁸ George D'Oyley, *The Life of William Sancroft* (London: Printed by John W. Parker, 1821), vol. i, p. 432.

⁹ Alan Macfarlane, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 155.

a contract that been breached when he had “Trayterously and maliciously levyed war” against the Parliament and the English people.¹⁰ To illustrate this point, the charges went on to enumerate the main transactions of the conflict and Charles’ other “*wicked Designes, Wars, and evill practises*”, all of which helped to evidence his guilt.¹¹ This legal framing set the tone for accounts of the recent past produced by the government’s supporters more generally, which tended to focus on rehearsing the tyrannous and warlike actions that the late King was purported to have performed during his reign.¹²

However, the King’s stoical performance at his trial, and particularly his refusal to acknowledge the court or enter a plea, complicated the Commonwealth’s attempts to frame this event. Not only did the King’s restraint cast doubt on the legitimacy of the legal process; his patient fortitude at the hands of his captors assisted Royalist attempts to portray the King not as a tyrant, but as a martyr for his church and country, pursued by an aggressive and hostile Parliament.¹³ Following the King’s conviction and his actual translation from an earthly to a

¹⁰ Anon, *The charge of the Commons of England, against Charls Stuart, King of England, of high treason, and other high crimes* (London, 1649), pp. 3-4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹² See, for example, Anon, *A Declaration of the Parliament of England, expressing the grounds of their late proceedings, and of settling the present government in a way of a free state* (London, 1649); Anon, *The none-such Charles his character extracted* (London, 1651); Anon, *The life and reigne of King Charles or, the pseudo-martyr discovered* (London, 1651; Thomason); John Vicars, *A brief review of the most material Parliamentary proceedings of this present Parliament, and their armies* (London, 1652).

¹³ Jason Peacey, ‘Reporting a Revolution: a Failed Propaganda Campaign?’, in *The Regicides*, ed. by Peacey, pp. 161-181 (pp. 170-173).

heavenly crown there was an explosion of printed material that proffered variations on this theme, from epitaphs and elegies to biographies and poetry.

In these texts, the date of the King's execution ~~waseould-be~~ used to reinforce his martyrology. The second lesson that the book of Common Prayer appointed for this day was the 27th chapter of St Matthew, the passion of the Christ, a concurrence that helped to strengthen the parallels which the King's supporters drew between the martyrdom of Charles I and the death of Jesus. In a sermon printed in the summer of 1649, the bishop of Down, Henry Leslie, highlighted this coincidence, along with a raft of other apparent similarities between Charles I, King of England, and Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.¹⁴ These included the fact that both had been rejected by their own people, apprehended at night, spat upon by soldiers, and had died the same hour. Leslie concluded that Charles was "a most lively image of Christ, so lively an image of him, that amongst all the Martyrs, who followed Christ ~~u~~into heaven bearing his crosse, ~~there was never~~ was there any, who expressed so great ~~a~~ conformity with our Saviour ~~ien~~ his sufferings, as he did".¹⁵ He argued that the date of the regicide was "a day for ever to be noted with a black coale", a reference to the Roman practice of marking lucky days on the calendar with white stone or chalk and "black *and* ominous" days with charcoal.¹⁶ For Leslie, the 30th of January was not only a day that should be eternally remembered; it was a date that possessed ongoing power, ~~-~~when the horrors of the past might reverberate in the present. In the autumn of the same year, the Anglican clergyman Thomas Fuller published a sermon in which

¹⁴ Henry Leslie, *The martyrdome of King Charles, or His conformity with Christ in his sufferings* (The Hague, 1649), p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12; Nathaniel Hardy, *A loud call to great mourning in a sermon preached on the 30th of January 1661* (London, 1662), sig. A2r.

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he wrestled with the question of why God might allow a righteous man to perish while the wicked continued to prosper. The text did not explicitly mention the late King, but readers would have been in little doubt that he was one possible referent, with Fuller exhorting his readers that “as in the case of *Josiah* his death” they should “let there be an *Anniversarie of Mourning* kept in remembrance thereof”.¹⁷

When the first anniversary of the regicide did come around, and in spite of the strictures of censorship legislation, which had been significantly tightened in the autumn of 1649, the Royalist press made a concerted effort to mark the occasion.¹⁸ The republication of John Birkenhead’s elegy to Charles I, *Loyalties Tears*, first printed in 1649, corresponded with the anniversary of the King’s death, and, in this context, the verses’ call to “Come, come, *Amazement*, and attend this Day” took on a renewed resonance.¹⁹ The Royalist newsbook *The Man in the Moon* referred to the occasion as, variously, “Saint *Regicides* d^day”, “the *Regicides Holliday*”, and “St. *Traytors* Day”, and printed imaginary accounts of the ways the government

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¹⁷ Thomas Fuller, *The just mans funeral* (London, 1649), p. 23.

¹⁸ ‘September 1649: An Act Against Unlicensed and Scandalous Books and Pamphlets’, in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. by C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait (London: [Wyman and sons](#), 1911), vol. ii, pp. 245-254. This act aimed to suppress printed material produced “by the Malignant party at home and abroad”. Its provisions included severe fines or jail terms for the authors, printers, and vendors of offending material and orders that all books and pamphlets be licensed by the Stationer’s Company.

¹⁹ [John Birkenhead], *Loyalties tears flowing after the bloud of the royall sufferer Charles I* (Unknown, 1650), p. 1.

chose to commemorate the date.²⁰ This apparently included a request that “every 30 of *January* may be printed in red Letters in the Devils Calendar, and observed the highest Holy-Day in the Yeare” and that the authorities had “full power to adjourne, and cease from their *workes of wickednesse* a whole Weeke after, to solemnize that *bloody festivall*, and sing *infernall Dirges* to King *Oliver* [i.e. Oliver Cromwell] the Devils *God Sonne*”.²¹ The inscribing of red letters in a calendar referred to the practice of printing holy days and other notable dates in almanacs in red ink. Here, however, this tradition took on more sinister connotations, and, along with other established festival practices such as breaks from work and singing, was used to imply that the government had celebrated the anniversary of their wicked deed alongside Satan.

Much was also made of the death of the MP Thomas Hoyle who, rather unfortunately from the point of view of Commonwealth PR, chose the anniversary of the regicide to commit suicide. The coincidence was irresistible, and, according to the pamphlet *The Rebels warning-piece* Hoyle’s actions were a direct result of the guilt he felt at “laying violent hands on upon the sacred Person of my KING”.²² On the night in question, Hoyle had apparently dreamt that Charles, along with his fellow execution victims, the Earl of Strafford and Lord Capel, came by his bed bearing psalms in their hands and singing. Hoyle was so alarmed that when he awoke he used his bed-cord to hang himself, though not before he had “given his Sonne twenty shillings to buy Powder to make Crackers to solemnize that Saint *Regicides* day” – another

²⁰ *The Man in the Moon*, 30 January-6 February 1650 (London, 1650), p. 323, p-327; *The Man in the Moon*, 6-14 February 1650 (London, 1650), p. 330.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

²² Anon, *The rebels warning-piece; being certaine rules and instructions left by Alderman Hoyle* (London, 1650), p. 3.

fictitious celebration.²³ In fact, Hoyle had withdrawn from the House at the time of Pride's Purge and he had played no part in the King's trial. Claire Crosse has suggested that his death was more likely to have been motivated by a series of personal tragedies than political despair.²⁴ Nevertheless, the shared date lent the story significant propaganda potential. The ongoing influence of the Royalist account is reflected in the fact that when, 19 years later, the Yorkshire woman Alice Thornton described Hoyle's death she did so in strikingly similar terms. According to Thornton, "after that horid murder, he [Hoyle] being one of the deepest in his actions and consent [...] was never quiet night or day, but still cried out "He saw the King follow him without a head" [...] ~~And~~, ~~as~~ we were credibly informed, did afterwards hang himself, out of consciousness of his crime he was guilty of against that innocent martyr".²⁵

In spite of their opponent's colourful characterisations, the Commonwealth government had in fact made no formal effort to mark the first anniversary of the King's execution. Given the widespread unease over the regicide even among the state's supporters this decision may seem unsurprising. Indeed, it may at first glance appear that our story ends here, and that institutional silence remained the default treatment of this date until the creation of the day of fasting and humiliation after the Restoration: except that, the following year, the

²³ Ibid., pp. 3-6; *The Man in the Moon*, 30 January-6 February 1650, p. 323.

²⁴ Claire Cross, 'A Man of Conscience in Seventeenth-Century Urban Politics: Alderman Hoyle of York', in *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 205-224.

²⁵ Charles Jackson (ed.), *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton, of East Newton, co. York* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1873), p. 212.

Commonwealth state set aside the 30th of~~th~~ January as a day of thanksgiving.²⁶ The orders for this day, however, were telling. They stated that the 30th of~~th~~ January should be kept as a day of “publique Thanksgiving and holy Rejoycing” for the “wonderful Mercies and signal Salvations” of the previous year, particularly the recent victories at Ayre and Edinburgh, and for the successes enjoyed by General Blake’s fleet at sea.²⁷ In this enumeration, the King’s death was conspicuous only by its absence. As with other thanksgiving days, citizens were required to mark the occasion by “duly and diligently [...] attending upon the Publique Worship of God solemnly to be performed upon that Day”, and ministers were expected to deliver an appropriate sermon.²⁸

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The desire to give thanks for military victories formed part of a broader providential belief that the army’s martial successes were signs of God’s favour, and that this posed a corresponding onus on their recipients to remember them. During the Civil Wars, both sides had allocated particular days as special occasions to give thanks to the Lord for His assistance in military engagements, and the Commonwealth state continued this practice after the King’s execution.²⁹ Between 1649 and 1660 the various regimes ordered 25 thanksgivings, including days for the victory over Charles II and the Scots at Worcester, their military successes against

²⁶ *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. vi, pp. 516-517.

²⁷ Anon, *An act for setting apart Thursday the thirtieth day of January, 1650. for a day of publique thanksgiving* (London, 1651), pp. 1272-1273.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1273.

²⁹ For further discussion of thanksgiving days during this period see Christopher Durston “‘For the Better Humiliation of the People’: Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving During the English Revolution”, *The Seventeenth Century*, 7.2 (1992), 129-149.

the Dutch, and the thwarting of several Royalist plots.³⁰ The choice of the 30th of January as the date for this particular thanksgiving, however, is intriguing, and seems unlikely to have been entirely coincidental.

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The Commonwealth poet George Wither certainly did not think so, and, in the foreword to a series of hymns produced to celebrate the day, he noted that “*The Supreme Authority hath enacted a publike Thanksgiving throughout this Common wealth, on the thirtieth of this January (being the last day of the late King’s life, as also the first of Englands resuming her long lost Liberty) a Day, which may by good reason be made an everlasting Anniversary, in remembrance of that, and other great Deliverances*”.³¹ Here, Wither suggested that it was because the anniversary of the regicide was, in effect, also the anniversary of the birth of the republic that it was worthy of memorialisation, just as the anniversary of a monarch’s ascendance was inevitably – though somewhat less controversially – also the date of their predecessor’s death.

Wither expressed similar sentiments in his commemorative poem, *The British Appeals*, which had also been composed to mark the 30th of January thanksgiving. In the verses’ opening dedication, Wither stated that his purpose was to “offer, here, a brief commem’rative / Of those

³⁰ This figure has been calculated using data from Lucy-Ann Bates, ‘Nationwide Fast and Thanksgiving Days in England, 1640-1660’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2012).

³¹ George Wither, *Three grains of spirituall frankincense infused into three hymnes of praise, and humbly offered toward the publike thanksgiving, commanded by authority of Parliament to be celebrated throughout the Commonwealth of England, the 30 of this present January* (London, 1651), sig. A2r.

things, for which, *Thanks*, this day we give”.³² However, in the text that followed Wither went far beyond the narrow remit prescribed by the government orders for the day, providing a narrative of the recent past that spanned from the reign of Charles I right through to the present. Along the way, Wither offered a lengthy recital of the King’s mismanagement of the kingdom, relating the “multitude of wayes” that England had been oppressed and concluding that the nation had cause

to sing Gods *Praise*, this day,

For taking of our *Slaveries* away:

And in the *first place*, for removing *Him*,

Who, wore, *unworthily*, the *Diadem*,

Of *Supreme Government*. But, least, some, yet,

May our *fore-past-condition* so forget,

As to believe, we might have been secur’d,

From that, which under *Kingship* we endur’d,

By regulating it (which, I once thought,

Till, I by *Providence*, was better taught) ³³

³² George Wither, *The British appeals, with Gods mercifull replies on behalf of the Commonwealth of England contained in a brief commemorative poem* (London, 1651), sig. A3r.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 20, p. 27.

That is, this should be a day to recall the mercy that God had shown to the English people by removing their tyrannous King, and to remind citizens of the hardships that they had endured prior to this fortunate providence. The 30th of~~th~~ January was, Wither concluded, worthy of keeping as “an *Everlasting Holyday*”, for “this is the *Day*, whereon our *Yoke / Of Norman Bondage*, first was broke / And, *England* from her chains made free”.³⁴ Though England had not, technically, been declared a Commonwealth until May 1649, for Wither the date of the regicide represented the moment when the tyranny of the line of Norman king’s descended from William I had been lifted and England had become a free state.³⁵ As such, it was the ideal time to remember ~~both~~ the King’s evil deeds, the mercy of his death, and all the other favours that God had granted to the Parliament and Commonwealth. In his verses, Wither had co-opted the 30th of~~th~~ January thanksgiving far beyond its original purpose – though the fact the House of Commons Speaker, William Lenthall, ordered that *The British Appeals* should be printed suggests that the Parliament did not disapprove of his interpretation.

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From the point of view of the government, the choice of date was probably less an attempt to establish the notion of a “republic day” than it was an effort to eclipse the imagined, devilish celebrations that had been pedalled in the Royalist press the previous year with a genuine occasion: one that was appropriate, Godly, and which dwelt on the victories of the entire English Commonwealth over their foreign foes. By focusing on recent successes against external enemies, the orders attempted to transform a day of potential domestic division into a show of unity, perhaps in the hope that nationalistic sentiment might unite all Englishmen together in celebrating the defeat of their long-standing rivals, the Scots.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 38, p. 49.

³⁵ ‘May 1649: An Act Declaring and Constituting the People of England to be a Commonwealth and Free-State’, in *Acts and Ordinances*, ed. Firth and Rait, vol. ii, p. 122.

In some places, at least, the occasion appears to have been enthusiastically observed. At Trinity College, Cambridge a “thanksgiving fire” was lit, and Corpus Christi College also held a day of thanksgiving on this date.³⁶ The wardens’ accounts of the London guilds show that several-most associations recorded expenses for the occasion. Both the carpenters and the masons noted that their companies had attended St Paul’s, and the curriers spent £1 9s 5d, it ‘being thancks gyveinge day As by Bill’.³⁷ The cordwainers paid £7 11s 8d for a ‘dynner on the 30th of Januarie 1650 [i.e. 1651] being a day of thankgiving and Livery present allowed’, while the vintners held a dinner at the three tonnes in Newgate Market, which, at a cost of £5 1s, was among their most lavish of the year.³⁸ The founders, meanwhile, paid £5 9s for ‘a Thansgaiveinge day at the Cardinals Cap’, an area of London known for its pubs and brothels.³⁹ Both bonfires and feasting were part of the vocabulary of celebration, and their use suggests that reflective sermons were accompanied by a degree of joyous revelling – though it is also

³⁶ John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1990), p. 163.

³⁷ [London, Guildhall Library, CLC/L/CC/D/002/MS4326/10, f. 81v;](#)
[CLC/L/MB/D/001/MS05303/001, f. 190v; CLC/L/CK/D/001/MS14346/002, unfoliated.](#)

³⁸ [London, Guildhall Library, CLC/L/CJ/D/001/MS07351/002, f. 164v;](#)
[CLC/L/VA/D/002/MS15333/004, unfoliated.](#)

³⁹ [London, Guildhall, CLC/L/FG/D/001/MS06330/002, f. 263r.](#) Other companies that recorded expenditure on this date included the blacksmiths and the plumbers. See [London, Guildhall Library, CLC/L/BD/D/001/MS02883/005, f. 80v; CLC/L/PH/D/002/MS02210/001, f. 245v.](#)

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possible to read the Company of Founders' trip to the less salubrious parts of a London as a deliberate affront to the religious tone of the day.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), pp. 83-84.

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Overt subversion was certainly in evidence elsewhere in the country. George Holdroyd, the minister for Foston in Derbyshire, was reported to the authorities by several different members of his congregation for having said, variously, that: "it [the 30th of January] was rather a day of mourninge"; that "there was nothinge now, but cuttinge of throates"; and that the "slaughteringe and killinge one another of our [bre]thren [...] was no cause of rejoycinge, alledginge some chapters and verses to prove the same as [...] how David mourned and fasted for Saul, Jonathan and Abner when they were slayne".⁴⁴ By reminding his audience of the story of David and Saul, Holdroyd drew uncomfortable parallels between the biblical King's distress at the death of his enemies, and the present authorities' apparent "rejoycinge" on the day that they had killed their King.⁴⁵ Similarly, in February 1651 one William Farthing gave evidence against his local minister, Mr Loullurd, claiming that he had made the 30th of January "A day of unthankfulnes or of disorder [...] by Goeing about to make it Apeare by [...] Expressions That there was noe such Ackaysion [...] as was pretended".⁴⁶ Loullard had also apparently said that the current government

Exersisse nothing but Opression and Tiarranny [...] and order [...]but nothing but disorder nothing but Butchering and routing [...] continuing raging for the space of A our [i.e. an hour] and upwards In These and such like Expressions to the disonner of our Government And to the dishartining of those that did desire to be thankful And to the Incourraging of there Ennemis.⁴⁷

In these cases, ministers directly contested the official meaning of the day, using it as an opportunity to express their disapprobation for the present government, rather than give thanks for its recent success.

Ultimately, Wither's suggestion that the 30th of January should be made an "everlasting Anniversary" was not heeded, and the 1651 thanksgiving was both the first and the last official commemorative event to be held on this day until after the Restoration. When, in September 1651, a motion was brought before Parliament to establish a permanent memorial day celebrating the outcome of the wars, the date that was posited was the 3rd of September, the anniversary of the Commonwealth's victories over the Scots at Dunbar and Worcester, though even this proposal was eventually abandoned.⁴⁸ Both John Morrill and Kevin Sharpe have criticised the Commonwealth regime for this decision.⁴⁹ Sharpe, in particular, has argued that the government's reluctance formed part of their wider failure to overthrow the symbols of

⁴⁸ *House of Commons Journals*, vol. vii, p. 13.

⁴⁹ [John Morrill, 'The Church in England', in *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649*, ed. by John Morrill \(New York: St Martin's Press, 1982\), pp. 89-114 \(pp. 113-114\); Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth Century Politics* \(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000\), p. 234; Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* \(Yale: Yale University Press, 2010\), p. 417. For a more upbeat account of the Commonwealth's efforts to enshrine a distinct political culture see Sean Kelsey, *Inventing a Republic: The Political Culture of the English Commonwealth, 1649-1653* \(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997\).](#)

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monarchy and create a distinct, republican culture.⁵⁰ However, when viewed in light of the rather mixed response to the 30th of January thanksgiving held earlier that year, such reticence seems entirely explicable. To create an annual day of commemoration – whether on the anniversary of the regicide, or any other significant date – would have been to establish an occasion that was fraught with the potential for subversion and provide the state’s opponents with a clear locus for resistance. Nor would it have conformed to the government’s professed desire, that, following their victory over Charles II and the Scots, all “Rancour and Evill Will occasioned by the late Differences may be buried in perpetual Oblivion”.⁵¹ Constrained by these twin pressures of resistance and reconciliation, the Commonwealth and Protectorate governments shied away from establishing an annual day that marked the execution of the King, the establishment of the republic, or their God-given victory in the Civil Wars for the duration of the 1650s. The only exception was Cromwell’s order, in August 1657, that the 3rd of September be kept as a day of thanksgiving for the victories at Dunbar and Worcester – and, even then, this was a one-off attempt to harness nationalist sentiment in support of the Protectorate by celebrating the successes that the English had enjoyed over the Scots.⁵²

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Of course, official public acts of commemoration ~~were~~ not the only form of memorialisation available, and the absence of an “Everlasting Holyday” on ~~the 30th~~ January 30th did not mean that the significance of this date was simply forgotten. Almanac compilers added the regicide to the lists of notable dates printed in their calendars, and, in so doing, they provided their readers with a yearly reminder of the import of the day. While some of these records were purely factual – “K. C. beheaded 1648”, “K. Ch. beheaded at White-hall, 1648” – other writers gave their references a more partisan gloss.⁵³ The Royalist George Wharton recorded that on this day “*he [Charles I] had Sentence of Death pronounced against Him, by that bold Traytour Bradshaw*”, while Richard Fitzsmith borrowed a phrase from Lamentations: “*The breath of our Nostrils, the anointed of the Lord was taken*”.⁵⁴ In 1653, the

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anonymous author of a satirical pamphlet, *Bibliotheca Parlamenti*, asked their readers to consider “Whether we ought not to lament on the 30 of *January*, as well as to give thanks on the 5 of *November*”.⁵⁵ According to the Church of England divine William Lloyd, “many devout People of the Church of *England*” had done exactly that, keeping a “true Fast on this day, for many Years before there was any Law to Authorize it”.⁵⁶ William Juxon, William Sanderson, and other Royalist Anglicans were alleged to have “met privately every 30th January” throughout the 1650s, even going so far as to compile their own “private form of service for the day”.⁵⁷ Similarly, Nathaniel Hardy claimed that prior to the Restoration he had “adventured to become a remembrancer” to the people of that “bloody fact” of regicide – an event which, “though it is not to be mentioned without abhorrency, yet cannot be forgotten without stupidity.”⁵⁸ While some of these reports may have been subject to the embellishment of hindsight – all were recorded after 1660 – contemporaneous sources also suggest that the anniversary of the regicide inspired both personal reflection and private commemoration.

⁵⁵ Anon, *Bibliotheca Parlamenti, libri theologici, politici, historici, qui prostant voenales in vico vulgò vocato Little-Britain* (London, 1653), p. 6.

⁵⁶ William Lloyd, *A sermon preach'd before the House of Lords at the Abbey-Church of St. Peter's-Westminster, on Saturday the 30th of January, 1696/7 being the anniversary of the death of King Charles I of Glorious Memory* (London, 1697), p. 23.

⁵⁷ Edward Ward, *The Secret History of the Calves-Head Club: or, the Republican Unmask'd* (London, n. B. Bragge, 1709), p. 17.

⁵⁸ Hardy, *A loud call to great mourning*, sig. A2v.

In 1659, a book of prayers written by the committed Royalist and Anglican, John Hewitt, were printed posthumously.⁵⁹ Aimed at those “*who Mourn in Secret for the Publick Calamities of this Nation*”, it included “*A proper Prayer for the Thirtieth of January, the Anniversary of England’s Captivity, and Tyrant-s Liberty*”.⁶⁰ In the text that followed, Hewitt reminded his readers of the “amazing Judgment, which as this Day befell us, in thy permitting cruel Men, Sons of *Belial* [i.e. the devil] to execute their fury of their Rebellions upon Our late Gracious Sovereign”.⁶¹ He called on the people of England to offer repentance for their own part in this tragedy, in the hope that God might “forgive our great and manifold Transgressions” and “deliver this Nation from Bloodguiltiness, that of this Day especially”.⁶² For Hewitt, the regicide was a punishment from God, one for which all England bore a degree of responsibility, and the anniversary offered the ideal occasion on which to remember this offence, seek forgiveness, and implore the Lord to show mercy on the English people by thwarting the current authorities. While it is impossible to know how many people actually used Hewitt’s prayer, that this devotion was expected to be of sufficient popularity as to warrant a spot on the collection’s titlepage suggests [that](#) there was a perceived consumer demand for such material. The Surrey gentleman John Evelyn did not explicitly mention prayer, but he recorded in his diary that news of the King’s death had struck him “with such horror that I kept the day of his

⁵⁹ Hewitt had been executed the previous year on suspicion of fomenting a plot against the state; like the King before him, he steadfastly refused to enter a plea.

⁶⁰ [John Huit](#) [i.e. ~~John~~ Hewitt], *Prayers of intercession for their use who mourn in secret for the publick calamities of this nation*, ([London, 1659](#)), p. 3, ~~p~~-51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

martyrdom a fast”.⁶³ Rather more idiosyncratic was the response of [the](#) doctor Robert Ashton, who claimed to be able to heal the king’s evil (scrofula) and memorialised the day of the King’s death not just every year but every month “in a long white garment, with other ceremonies”.⁶⁴ Devotional jewellery produced to commemorate the royal martyr often featured an inscription that denoted the date of his death, tying the memory of the King to a particular day in the calendar. A mourning ring made [in or around](#) 1649 featured an image of a skull, flanked by two crowns and the initials “C.R.”, while the border bore the words “IA: the 30/1648”.⁶⁵ Commemoration was not solely a top down process, and, even in the absence of a formal occasion, some people lent significance to, and continued to mark, the date itself.

After the Restoration, the authorities made a concerted attempt to harness the anniversary of the regicide in support of the new regime. On January 30th 1661, Oliver Cromwell and his fellow regicides, John Bradshaw and Henry Ireton, were exhumed and posthumously executed, their heads displayed on a spike at Westminster Hall.⁶⁶ The same year, a royal proclamation established the 30th [of](#) January as an annual day of fasting and humiliation that would serve as “a lasting Monument” to the “villainous and abominable Fact” of regicide.⁶⁷

⁶³ Austin Dobson, (ed.), *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London: Macmillan, 1906), vol. ii, p. 8.

⁶⁴ James Raine (ed.), *Depositions from the Castle of York, Relating to Offences Committed in the Northern Counties in the Seventeenth Century*, [vol. xl \(Durham: Surtees Society, 1861\)](#), [\(Durham: Surtees Society, 1861\)](#), p. 37.

⁶⁵ London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Mourning Ring, [c. 1649](#), [engraved and](#) enamelled gold, ref. M 274-1962.

⁶⁶ *Kingdomes Intelligencer*, 4 February-11 February 1661 (London, 1661), n.p.

⁶⁷ [Anon.](#) *A proclamation for observation of the thirtieth day of January as a day of Fast and Humiliation according to the late Act for that purpose* (London, 1661).

By creating a day of national humiliation, the Restoration ~~statestate~~ attempted to control the public memory of the recent past – but, in so doing, they also created a potential flashpoint for dissent. In 1664, the newsbook the *Intelligencer* complained that those who had supported the regicide “Usher’d [in] and Enterteyn’d [the day] with seditious Practices against his most Sacred and Merciful Majesty”.⁶⁸ In Weymouth, there were reports that local residents refused to observe the occasion and “in derision kept open there shoppes and would not goe to church”.⁶⁹ A party of horse was dispatched to assist the mayor in enforcing conformity, but, even then, four men – a mercer, a shoemaker, a glover, and a wool draper who had “bin formerly a Rump [Parliament] Officer” – refused to comply.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the Somerset man Francis Griffin chose to spend the day, not in church, but in an alehouse where he sang Parliamentary songs and declared that Oliver Cromwell was as “Good a man as the King”.⁷¹

As the years wore on, the day became increasingly politicised even among those who did observe it. During the exclusion crisis, 30th of January sermons were co-opted both by those who sought to remove James, Duke of York, from the royal succession and his defenders.⁷²

⁶⁸ [Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People, 1 February 1664](#)

(London, 1664), [February 1](#), n.p.

⁶⁹ London, The National Archives, SP 29/111, f. 163.

⁷⁰ [Ibid.](#)

⁷¹ Taunton, Somerset Record Office, Q/SR/105/35.

⁷² [Stewart, ‘The Cult of the Royal Martyr’, pp. 175-187; Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the*](#)

[Martyr](#), pp. 129-171, 179-211; Tony Claydon, ‘The Sermon Culture of the Glorious

[Revolution: Williamite Preaching and Jacobite Anti-Preaching, 1685-1702’, in *The Oxford*](#)

[Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon](#), ed. by Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlinton, and

[Emma Rhatigan \(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011\), pp. 480-496 \(esp. pp. 483-486\).](#)

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In 1681, Samuel Crossman used the occasion as an opportunity to remind his Bristol congregation, that, to atone for their actions against Charles I, they should “take all faithful care” to “repay a double Loyalty” and the “utmost Allegiance and Duty” to Charles II.⁷³ For the exclusionist Gilbert Burnet, by contrast, the main lesson to be learned from the regicide was the threat posed by popery, from whose doctrines the rebels had “borrowed”, and, by implication, the young James Stuart.⁷⁴ In this climate of adversarial preaching, it is perhaps understandable that the ~~Presbyterian minister~~ ~~clergyman~~ Philip Henry should conclude that, though he abhorred the act of regicide, he “like[d] not ye annual commemoration of it”.⁷⁵

However, as this chapter has sought to emphasise, debates over the appropriate commemoration of the regicide had a lengthy pedigree even prior to the creation of a formal annual occasion in 1661. The “Anniversary of England’s Captivity”,² the “Regicides Holliday”,² an “everlasting Holyday”,² throughout the 1650s, the 30th of January was

[For a similar discussion of the changing use and meaning of sermons delivered on the 29th of May, the anniversary of Charles II’s Restoration, see Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* \(Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013\), pp. 203-241.](#)

⁷³ [Samuel Crossman, *Two sermons preached in the cathedral-church of Bristol, January the 30th 1679/80 and January the 31th 1680/81 being the days of publick humiliation for the execrable murder of King Charles the first* \(London, 1681\), p. 39.](#)

⁷⁴ [Gilbert Burnet, *A sermon preached before the Aldermen of the city of London, at St. Lawrence-church, Jan 30. 1680* \(London, 1681\), p. 15. For further discussion of both Crossman and Burnet’s sermons see Sharpe, ‘So Hard a Text?’, pp. 396-397.](#)

⁷⁵ [Matthew Henry Lee \(ed.\), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry of Broad Oak, Flintshire, 1631-1696* \(London, 1882\), p. 284.](#)

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subject to diverse interpretations that reflected deeper divisions over the political settlement and [the](#) formation of a republican state. Though, ultimately, successive Interregnum regimes chose not to memorialise the date, this decision was less the result of institutional incompetence than it was a conscious response to the twin pressures of resistance and reconciliation. As the experience of the 1651 thanksgiving had shown, national commemorative occasions were easily misappropriated both by the state's supporters and their opponents, re-inflaming tensions over the meaning of the recent past. In light of this formal forgetting, the fact that some English citizens continued to mark the 30th [of](#) January shows that early modern commemoration was not necessarily the product of top-down forces. People were aware of the import of this date, and many chose to imbue it with ongoing significance, whether as the day of England's freedom, her captivity, or the heinous sin of regicide.

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