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‘The Loyal Address: Prose Panegyric, 1658-1715’

Mark Knights

The succession in 1658 of Richard Cromwell to his father’s Protectorate, a transfer of power that smacked of kingship, prompted a novel form of ‘gift’ to the new ruler: the address of thanks.¹ 94 prose addresses were sent to the new Protector, all professing loyalty and a willingness to stand by him.² Whilst petitioning the monarch for redress of a grievance or for a favour was far from being novel in 1658, and much panegyric poetry had been written to celebrate earlier accessions (as other contributions to this volume make clear), the new genre of panegyric address fused subscriptional activity and acclamation so successfully that it remained an enduring part of political culture. The later monarchical use of the genre is perhaps surprising given that its origins lay with the propagandist journalism of republican writer Marchmont Nedham and republican secretary of state, John Thurloe, who were credited with its invention, and that the addresses to Richard Cromwell were attacked by royalists as well as republicans for the way in which they described him as the providential, ‘rightful’, ‘undoubted’, ‘lawfully nominated’ successor.³ Yet after 1658, and throughout the rest of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, adherents of the later Stuarts promoted such addresses, so that participating in the national culture of textual gifts came to be seen as an essential act of loyalty to the monarchy and beyond that, to the established Church and State.

¹ For the uncertainties surrounding Richard’s succession and the perceived need to rally support behind it see Jonathan Fitzgibbons, “‘Not in any doubtful dispute’? Reassessing the Nomination of Richard Cromwell’, *Historical Research* 83 (2010), 281-300; Fitzgibbons, ‘Hereditary Succession and the Cromwellian Protectorate: The Offer of the Crown Reconsidered’, *English Historical Review* 128 (2013), 1095-1128.

² A collection of the addresses, compiled by a devotee of the ‘good old cause’ who may well have been Vavasor Powell, described them as ‘blasphemous, lying, flattering addresses’ [*A True catalogue, or an account of the several places ... where ... Richard Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector* [1659], quotation from the title. I am grateful to Ted Vallance for pointing out Powell’s probable authorship.

³ Sir George Wharton, *A second narrative of the late Parliament* (1658), 26. The royalist Wharton attacked the ‘blasphemous, lying, flattering, cycophant Addressours’.

The loyal address was adopted and exploited by royalists after 1658 because it offered something innovative, adapting earlier panegyric forms into a prose format that could stand as collective representations of a locality's loyalty. Expressed through legitimated voices of incorporated borough councils, or county representatives such as assize grand juries, such addresses embodied civic duty and pride. Even more significantly, the addresses could be printed: either separately as pamphlets, or collected together for maximum impact, in bumper editions of periodicals. Indeed, the proliferation of print may well have been a necessary precondition for the emergence of the address. Printing addresses had several implications (which echo the ways in which David Zaret found that print transformed the allied genre of petitions in the mid-seventeenth century⁴): print gave them a public as well as a royal audience; it meant that an accession, or other event worthy of thanks-giving, was given a national profile, since local groups could send addresses to London; and it meant that each locality could see the expressions of other addressers, thereby creating a competition to praisemore extravagantly, a national culture of prose panegyric. But the desire to emulate others meant that the nuances of criticism that were possible in panegyric could become threatened by the desire to appear more loyal than others and the genre was vulnerable to the criticism, also levelled at verse panegyric, that its effusive expressions of loyalty were of little enduring value.

This chapter examines the genre of the loyal address, which has received very little attention from either historians or literary critics. The focus will be on the period from the 1680s to the Hanoverian accession in 1714, an end point that allows consideration of the effects of the height of party conflict in Queen Anne's reign on prose panegyric and brief comments about its history in the Georgian era. Addresses were presented to every monarch at their accession during that period and so provide a valuable insight into the way in which this very public and participatory form of panegyric worked. But they are also a way of tracking larger tensions and developments that were affecting how the literature around and about succession was written, disseminated and consumed. They force us to question what we mean by succession literature; they demand analysis of the rhetorical conventions of panegyric that they deployed; they enable us to reconstruct different, partisan and increasingly Euro-centric narratives of the threats facing the monarchy; and hostility to them requires us to explain the contradictions and ambiguities which rendered the genre suspect.

⁴ David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Historians have tended to think less in terms of genres than literary critics, and this may explain the relative neglect of this type of political and literary text. Yet there are good reasons why both groups of scholars should be interested in them. Whereas attention was once very focused on challenges to, and defiance of, later Stuart authority, in recent years we have learned a good deal more about the construction of popular loyalty to church and state across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ The effect has been that we now appreciate

⁵ For adherence to the Church of England and popular royalism in the seventeenth century see John Morrill, 'The Religious Context of the English Civil War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984), 155-178; Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* eds. Tim Harris, Paul Seward and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; 2nd ed. 2000); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Grant Tapsell, *The Personal Rule of Charles II, 1681-1685* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007); Lloyd Bowen, 'Seditious Speech and popular royalism 1649-60' in Jason McElligott and David L. Smith, eds., *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Charles W. A. Prior, Glenn Burgess, eds., *England's Wars of Religion, Revisited* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). For the importance of popular loyalism in the eighteenth century see Geoffrey Holmes, 'The Sacheverell Riots: the Crowd and the Church in early 18th-century London' in Paul Slack, ed., *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Holmes, *The Trial of Dr Sacheverell* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973); Harry Dickinson, 'Popular loyalism in Britain in the 1790s' in Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', *English Historical Review* (1995) CX (435): 42-69; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996); Mark Knights ed. *Faction Displayed: Reconsidering the Impeachment of Dr Henry Sacheverell* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012). Popular royalism could become disloyal, of course, when it meant adherence to the Stuart dynasty after 1688 and for popular Jacobitism see Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

that loyalty was not something simply inculcated from the top down, but was often a widely shared sentiment that was articulated with vigour when opposed or challenged. This revision of the nature and strength of loyalism has in turn helped to explain why the divergence of King and Church was so traumatic during the reigns of Charles II and more especially James II, and why the political culture of the later Stuart period was so contested. Similarly, work on loyal associations – subscriptional texts which bound communities to stand together, often for military reasons - has indicated that loyal addresses could mobilize large numbers of subscribers as well as provoking opposition.⁶ First deployed in 1584, associations were promoted in 1688, in 1696 after an attempt to assassinate William III, in 1715-16 in the wake of Jacobite rioting against the accession of George I, and in 1722-3, after the successful prosecution of Jacobite plotters.

We are also beginning to know more about how satire and panegyric functioned to puncture or support political and religious loyalty. For example, satire (both graphic and textual) was deployed by both loyalists and their critics, produced in responsive dialogue with one another.⁷ The essays in this volume, especially those by Andrew McRae, Richard McCabe and Joseph Hone, also contribute to an emerging appreciation of the role played by satire's opposite, panegyric, in the later Stuart period.⁸ Elsewhere, Abigail Williams has

⁶ Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chapter 3; Ted Vallance, "From the Hearts of the People" : Loyalty, Addresses and the Public Sphere in the Exclusion Crisis' in Tony Claydon and Thomas N. Corns, eds., *Religion, Culture and National Community in the 1670s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Vallance, 'Loyal or Rebellious? Protestant Associations in England 1584-1696', *Seventeenth Century* 17:1 (2002), 1-23.

⁷ Helen Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures : Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale, 2008); Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England, 1658-1770* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Howard Weinbrot, *Literature, Religion and the Evolution of Culture 1660-1780* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Roger Lund, *Ridicule, Religion and the Politics of wit in Augustan England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Conal Condren, *Satire, Lies and Politics : the Case of Dr. Arbuthnot* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 1997).

⁸ For discussions see O. Hardison, *The Enduring Monnument: A study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Theory and Practice* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962); James D. Garrison, *Dryden and the Tradition of Panegyric* (Berkeley, 1975); Arthur Williams, 'Panegyric

shown how panegyric was appropriated by the Whigs to celebrate military victories over the French; and Kevin Sharpe has charted how kingship was desacralized by the revolution of 1688.⁹ We are thus well placed to bring historical and literary concerns together through a study of succession and other loyal addresses which reveal significant shifts in practice and in the politics of rhetoric over the seventeenth century.

The genre of a loyal address

It is necessary to say a little more about the essential characteristics of a loyal address and what differentiated it from the petition, a form of subscriptional text to which it was closely related. A petition was a humble request for something to be done; whereas an address was a profession of loyalty or thanks for actions or events that had already taken place. The mass of mid-century petitioning activity no doubt stimulated the innovation of the loyal address in 1658; but the latter was distinguished by its acclamatory and panegyric text, ostensibly aimed at the Protector or monarch as the chief recipient. Loyal addresses usually gave thanks – for a smooth succession but also for military victories – or expressed loyalty at a time of crisis (in response to threats from abroad, for example, or, as we shall see, to internal threats). Whilst there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ address, since they were all crafted to meet particular occasions (such as an accession, royal death, military victory) and were mostly drafted locally to ensure individuality of expression, analysis of one address helps to highlight the essential characteristics of the genre.

On 9 February 1685 James II was proclaimed king, following the death of his brother Charles II. The proclamation was published in the Court’s own periodical, the *London*

decorum in the Reigns of William III and Anne', *Journal of British Studies* 21 (1981), 56-67; D. DeLuna, "'Modern Panegyric' and Defoe's 'Dunciad'", *Studies in English Literature* 35 no. 3 (1995), 419-35; C.A. Moore, 'Whig panegyric verse 1700-1760', *PMLA* 41 (1926), 362-401; R. Horn, *Marlborough: a survey. Panegyrics, satires and biographical writings 1688-1788* (Folkeston: Dawson, 1975); Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), 277-86.

⁹ Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture 1680-1715* (Oxford@ Oxford University Press, 2004); Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy 1660-1714* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Gazette,¹⁰ and the very next item was an address from Portsmouth to the new King. It was slightly unusual for a provincial city to be given the pre-eminent role – London often led the way with addressing campaigns – but the importance of the navy to both the town and the new monarch may explain this. The address came from the ‘Loyal Subjects and Officers within your Garrison of Portsmouth’, reflecting how addresses sought the support of a corporate body in order to confer legitimacy: they regularly came from, loyal militias, town corporations, groups of clerics, trading companies, and even colonial assemblies. The text was addressed to the king, but by virtue of being published was also implicitly intended for public consumption, both of other loyalists in the same or adjacent localities, or further afield, or sought to persuade or intimidate those who thought differently. As has already been noted, addresses were usually – though not always – published in the *Gazette* and the periodical became so stuffed with them that it had to expand the number of its pages.¹¹ The addresses, intended for both the royal audience and the wider public, could in turn become part of a wider printed debate about their merits or, more often, why they were considered to be deceptive or manipulative.

The Portsmouth text tells us nothing about how many people signed it. In an ideal world, promoters of addresses sought unanimous backing for their texts, but sometimes a simple majority was all that could be mustered and this was usually stated in the text, an indication of tensions within the group. In addition to corporate backing, addresses often also sought subscriptions from individuals and the number of signatories was often boasted about.¹² In this case, however, the number of signatures mattered less than swiftness of response. The Portsmouth address was dated 11 February, just two days after the king’s succession, an incredibly quick piece of work; other addresses congratulating James were still coming to Court as late as June. The Portsmouth garrison was signalling its zeal for the new

¹⁰ *London Gazette* 2007 (9-12 Feb. 1685). The periodical began in 1665, initially as the *Oxford Gazette*, since the Court had moved out of London because of the Plague. In 1699 the *Edinburgh Gazette* first appeared and the *Dublin Gazette* in 1706. Editions of all three periodicals are freely available via <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>.

¹¹ On occasion, when they flew in the face of the government, the addresses were not printed in the *Gazette*, as in 1710 when they were gathered as *A Collection of all the Addresses that have been presented to her Majesty*, published by the fervent Tory publisher John Morphew.

¹² In 1701 Sir Charles Hotham thought that ‘the greater number of hands’ to an address ‘will make it more valuable’ (*HMC Various Collections*, viii. 84-5).

King, a bold statement of the military muscle he commanded which would shortly be tested during the rebellion of the duke of Monmouth, who disputed James's succession and claimed it for himself. As Andrew McRae notes in his chapter, panegyric often operated to constrain uncertain alternatives and the accession of James II offered precisely such an occasion. The Portsmouth garrison declared that they

think it our duty to Congratulate your Peaceable Succession to the Crown and to assure your Majesty that as we never had a thought to obstruct it, as some would have done by a bill of Exclusion; so we will always firmly adhere to your Majesties Interest, and spend the last Drop of our Blood in the Defence of Your Majesties Person and in the maintenance of your Royal Prerogatives. And shall daily Pray for your Majesties long and Prosperous Reign over us.

This militaristic response was in some ways a hybrid of the address and the association, which formally bound loyalists together with an oath or commitment to express their devotion to the monarch through armed action, if need be.

The Portsmouth address was a good deal shorter than most presented in 1685 or at other times; several paragraphs was more usual and some were even longer. The wording of the Portsmouth text is also, befitting its military origins, quite blunt; other texts waxed lyrical and sought to package their loyalty in more extravagant panegyric. But the assertion of loyalty, offer of service and prayers were characteristic of the genre and the pointed reference to the attempts between 1679 and 1681 to exclude James from the throne was also symptomatic of the ways in which texts could be used to make short ideological statements.¹³ The text was thus a political intervention, signalling support for the contentious succession and furthermore for the king's prerogative powers, which had so often been attacked over the previous five years.

We do not know precisely who drafted the Portsmouth address but we might suspect the influence of the garrison's governor, Baptist Noel, Viscount Campden, who was closely tied by marriage to the fiercely loyal Bertie and Fanshawe families. If so, such pressure was not uncommon; but there were plenty of other addresses where the initiative was taken at a more local level, by loyalists within a corporate body. Deciding how far the texts were representative of 'public opinion' could, as we shall see, nevertheless be a fraught exercise.¹⁴

¹³ For the succession crisis see my *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-1681* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ For the way in which a corporation could be encouraged to address by an MP see Herts. Record Office, Verulam mss IX.A 268A, Sir Harbottle Grimston to mayor of St Albans, 7

The wording of the vast majority of addresses – and there were 361 sent to James after his succession – was different, the aim being individuality of expression and emphasis within a common rhetorical framework. Once drafted, and support secured, addresses were sent or presented to the monarch, a process that often involved loyalists travelling to Whitehall, a formal ceremonial moment which was in many cases brokered by a courtier, who introduced the address, and which could also result in an honour – usually a knighthood – being conferred on the presenter.¹⁵ Royal pleasure (and occasionally displeasure) could also be further indicated by short speeches or remarks. In Portsmouth's case, the very short time between the royal proclamation and the text reaching London probably precluded the possibility of a presentation party; in this instance, the honour of presenting was displaced by the honour of being first to be presented and to call the opening shot of what became a national campaign of adulation.

Portsmouth's text was just one of hundreds promoted in the 1685 campaign, and of thousands across the later Stuart period. Addresses were promoted on a national and increasingly imperial scale: they came from across the country and the colonies, and, published separately and in collections designed to highlight both their number and their carefully crafted texts, they were intended for a national, and at times international, audience.¹⁶ Their high profile, and their very public attempts to procure signatures and

July 1683; Thomas Bush's reply to Grimston, 13 July 1683. There is occasional evidence of some copy-cat drafting: Charles Hedges told under-secretary of state John Ellis in August 1704 that 'our burroughs here talk of addressing upon ye victory & success &c if you find any coming from other parts, send me two, different in terms, for my two boroughs, of ye like strain as others, fairly written & ready to sign' [BL, Add. MS 28895, f.336 31 Aug. 1704]. *The High Church Mask Pull'd off or modern addresses anatomized. Designed chiefly for the information of the common people* (1710), 3, claimed that 'Copies [of addresses] have been transmitted from London to several Parts of the Land; to others, Particular Heads only, to be modified by such whose abilities and zeal they could confide in'.

¹⁵ If the monarch was not available, a proxy could accept the address on his or her behalf.

¹⁶ For a map showing the geography of addressing in 1701-2 see Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 146-7. The addresses were also reported in French language periodicals such as the *Nouvelles Ordinaires de Divers Endroits* in the mid seventeenth century and *Mercure historique et politique contenant l'état présent de l'Europe*, from 1686, a point I owe to Ted Vallance.

widespread endorsement, meant a widespread dissemination of the issues they discussed to a large number of people, both endorsers and readers. This meant that they were also susceptible to the partisan conflicts of the age; but they were also simultaneously given a generic legitimacy by the recognition in the Bill of Rights in 1689 of a right to address the monarch.¹⁷ The combination of right, zeal and partisanship made the address a perfect vehicle for articulating sentiments in a political culture that prized public discourse.

The scale and pattern of addressing

Since the address played a notable part in every succession after 1658 it is worth briefly charting the waves of prose panegyric that showered the monarchy. Addresses played a part in showing support for a free Parliament – which paved the way for the restoration of monarchy – or gave thanks for the restoration of the king in 1660¹⁸ but they were revived on a larger scale during the succession crisis of 1679-1681, when fear of disorder once again prompted loyalist efforts. This revival was related to the *issue* of the succession, but addresses were not limited to the *occasion* of a succession. Over 200 were prompted by a declaration issued by Charles II in April 1681 setting out why he had dissolved the Parliament that had sat in Oxford for just a week and had tried, for the third time, to alter the course of the succession by excluding James duke of York from the throne. Almost the same number was triggered the following year in response to an association allegedly drafted by the first earl of Shaftesbury to create an armed ‘firm and loyal Society’ committed to excluding James.¹⁹ The succession was again the focal issue in 1683, when an alleged plot – the so-called Rye House Plot – was discovered to assassinate the king and his brother, resulting in over 320 loyal addresses. So although, as we saw earlier, addresses flooded in

¹⁷ This was asserted by Brackley (*L[ondon] G[azette]* 3757, 25-28 Aug. 1701. I sketch the development of the right to petition and address in ‘The Lowest Degree of Freedom’: The Right to Petition 1640-1800’ in Richard Huzzey (ed.), *Pressure and Parliament: From Civil War to Civil Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell, forthcoming).

¹⁸ See for example, *The humble Address of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of Your Majesties city of Bath in the County of Somersett* (1660), drafted by William Prynne; *The Loyal Adresse of the Gentry of Gloucestershire. To the Kings most Excellent Majesty* (1660)

¹⁹ *The History of the Association* (1682).

after James II's accession in 1685, they did so in the wake of a series of addressing campaigns over the previous four years that had sought to mobilize loyalty in a very public way. It was thus a reflection of the nervousness surrounding the succession after James II that just 43 addresses greeted the birth of his son, whose legitimacy was disputed, in 1688.²⁰

It was the succession, too, that was the key concern of over 200 addresses in 1694 on the death of Queen Mary, since William's title to the Crown now rested solely on the controversial transfer of power achieved in 1689. And when in 1701 Louis XIV of France recognized the 'Pretender', the disputed son of James II, as the lawful king, William's title and Anne's future succession were thrown into jeopardy, eliciting 344 addresses rejecting the French king's attempt to determine the English succession and explicitly renouncing the Pretender. Barely a few months after that campaign, Anne's accession was greeted with a further 400 addresses, many of which again formally abjured the Pretender. The war that resumed against France was a war of succession – both of England and of Spain, since in the former France recognized the right of the Pretender and in the latter sought to appropriate the Spanish throne. The military victories achieved by allied forces were thus in a very real sense achievements to secure a protestant succession and the addresses celebrating them – 265 in 1704, 303 in 1706 and 98 in 1708 – could also be seen as succession-related not least because they frequently mentioned the need to guarantee a protestant succession. The Union with Scotland in 1707 had also been necessary to secure the protestant succession north of the border and this aspect was explicitly recognized in many of the 213 addresses which the Union prompted. Moreover, addresses promoted against Jacobite plots were directly concerned with the succession. 338 addresses condemned a Jacobite invasion attempt in 1708 and 320 more followed the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. The 443 addresses congratulating George I on his accession were thus the fruit of a well-oiled machine and illustrated how a Stuart genre was adapted for use in the Georgian era. In short, thousands of addresses relating to the succession were promoted in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and to these we should add more, such as those in 1710 after the trial of Dr Sacheverell, at which Whig principles about the succession were vigorously debated.

²⁰ *A Collection of the several addresses in the late King James's time concerning the conception and birth of the pretended Prince of Wales* (1700). The Chetham library copy has 'pretended' deleted, rendering what might be read as evidence of the fickleness of the people into a celebration of the pretender's birth.

One indication of the significance accorded addresses is a commonplace book belonging to William Holgate, a member of the non-parliamentary borough of Saffron Walden in Essex, who thought them sufficiently noteworthy to fill its pages with the addresses that his locality and the county as a whole presented throughout Anne's reign.²¹

The frequency of addressing campaigns over and beyond those timed to celebrate a royal accession nevertheless raises questions about the category, employed throughout this volume, of 'succession literature'. In this period the succession was not so much an event as an on-going debate that generated a great deal of literature; indeed, so much, so often, that vast swathes of print might legitimately be included in the category. It might be more precise, at least for the later Stuart period, to distinguish between *accession* and *succession* literature: the former marking the beginning of a reign (the material on which this volume is principally focused), the latter charting the public debate about the succession that swirled and often raged for much of the rest of the time. The plots and conspiracies against the Stuarts, and then the Hanoverians, ensured that succession literature was part of an almost continuous drama played out over several generations. It certainly extended far beyond the immediate replacement of one monarch with another. The early seventeenth century had enjoyed an unusual, and short, period in which the succession appeared secure. But after 1649 the succession, and at times the very survival, of the monarchy was almost permanently uncertain. Indeed, the popularity of the panegyric loyal address was in part due to its adaptability to both a moment of accession *and* a debate about succession. Clearly many felt a need for royalist panegyric beyond the moment of succession.

The panegyric of the address

The loyalist addresses also raise questions about their status as 'literature', since they were ephemeral texts whose authorship is often uncertain and stylistically their prose can appear dull and repetitive. Yet they exploited a literary genre – panegyric – to create a new form of public acclamation that was carefully crafted. Panegyric is usually considered in relation to poetry, which developed under the first Stuart king and was closely associated with the succession.²² The OED gives the first use of the anglicized noun 'panegyric' as Samuel

²¹ Essex RO, T/A 98, ff.149, 151, 152, 179, 259-60

²² Oldmixon thought that in addresses 'the poetica licentia is as warrantable as in a poem' [*The History of Addresses ...Part Two* (1711), 230].

Daniel's poem on the Stuart succession in 1603.²³ Although the later Stuart addresses were *prose* panegyrics they fit the rules of panegyric very well, as they were set out by classical and Renaissance rhetoricians. Indeed, the rhetorical work being done by the texts is worth setting out.

In 1685, in the immediate wake of James II's accession and during the wave of loyalist addresses that followed it, the cleric White Kennett offered a translation of Pliny's panegyric to the Emperor Trajan, under the title *An Address of Thanks to a Good Prince*.²⁴ Kennett, who thought the Roman 'seem'd to invite a parallel' with his own day, looked to Pliny for guidance about the art of panegyric and the reader of his work could derive three important conclusions which can be applied to the later Stuart addresses.²⁵ The first is that Pliny spent time contrasting past and present, setting out how the virtuous Trajan had overcome rebellion to usher in a new era of loyalty. The second was that Pliny created an idealisation of the best of princes, deliberately listing the virtues that he claimed Trajan possessed, so that they might be emulated by his people. The third was that, as Kennett pointed out in his preface, this idealisation also served to instruct the prince in how he ought to continue to act. Kennett called this 'a kind of winning Lecture to future Princes (not by way of assertory instructions)' but through the lure of 'imitation'. These rhetorical ploys were all present in the later Stuart addresses.

The first feature of Plinian panegyric, then, was the contrast between past and present, the result of a struggle between evil and good in which the latter proved triumphant. This can readily be seen in the loyalist addresses of the 1680s, which told the story of a dangerous threat from a group of dissenting and atheistical republicans who conspired to pervert the course of the succession. The addresses of 1681 (after the king's decisive break with Parliament), 1682 (after the 'discovery' of an allegedly seditious association against the king), and 1683 (in the wake of the Rye House Plot) constructed a version of loyalty that

²³ This was in fact the first use of the term in a title, though EBO has earlier occurrences used in the body of texts. John Gordon also wrote a *A panegyrique of congratulation in 1603*.

²⁴ The preface is dated 1 Nov. 84 but with a postscript dated 3 Mar. 1685 which explicitly refers to Charles II's death a month earlier and James's accession. The pamphlet was later used against Kennett when his identification with the Whigs was more obvious and hence when his earlier writing was construed as embarrassing [*White against Kennett; or Dr Kennett's Panegyrick upon the Late King James* (1704)].

²⁵ Kennett, *An Address*, viii.

rested on the depiction of the first Whigs as seditious fanatics, who used religion as a veneer to hide political ambition and republican sentiments. Thus Portsmouth in 1682 alleged that dissenting conventicles were 'trumpets of sedition and rebellion'.²⁶ In 1683 address after address rushed to abhor the triumvirate of 'fanatical, atheistic and republican principles'. Dissenters were attacked for promoting sedition and disloyalty to the Crown. Addresses attacked the 'fanatical frenzy' of the dissenters and their 'implacable rage and malice'.²⁷ Leeds attacked the 'bloodthirsty men whose religion is rebellion and their loyalty witchcraft'.²⁸ The addressers were keen to deny their opponents any legitimate religious belief. Religion was, in their eyes, simply being used as a mask or cloak for political designs. The addressers attacked the plotters as impious, atheistic hypocrites, 'true-protestant-atheists' as Dorset's address put it.²⁹ The rebels were 'as far from being true Protestants as they are from being true subjects'.³⁰ These rhetorical ploys went a stage further by suggesting that opponents of James's succession were motivated by republicanism, an emotive term calculated to invoke powerful feelings of revulsion. In 1683 Eye condemned its 'men of republican principles' and Northampton observed that corporations had 'degenerated by degrees from their allegiance to an imperial power into the corruptions of a commonwealth'.³¹

The charge of republicanism allowed the addressers to link the recent past with the older but still emotive past of the civil wars and interregnum. The Dorset grand jury that started the addressing campaign of 1682 thus saw the Shaftesburian association as 'the obstinate remains of the late horrid rebellion' and many of the addresses took up the parallel between the association allegedly prepared by Shaftesbury with that of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, which, as the address from Wiltshire's grand jury put it, 'produced a rebellious, inhumane, and bloody war in this kingdom; and also that most execrable and horrid murder of our late sovereign and blessed martyr Charles the first'.³² Gloucestershire's

²⁶ *LG* 1710, 6-18 Apr. 1682.

²⁷ *LG* 1855, 27-30 Aug. 1683; *LG* 1850, 9-13 Aug. 1683.

²⁸ *LG* 1860, 13-17 Sept. 1683.

²⁹ *LG* 1846, 26-30 July 1683.

³⁰ *LG* 1858, 6-10 Sept. 1683.

³¹ *LG* 1852, 16-20 Aug. 1683; *LG* 1857, 3-6 Sept. 1683.

³² *LG* 1692, 2-6 Feb. 1681. The parallel was also made in *The Two Associations* (1681) which printed them side by side.

addressers thought they might have been enslaved 'to a handful of men, another monstrous Rump of a Parliament, and our Property exposed to rapine and violence, as it was by men of like principles in the late dreadful rebellion'.³³ The inhabitants of Brewton, in Somerset, were driven to profess their loyalty since 'we have been ourselves or Fathers sequester'd, imprison'd, persecuted, undone; and for no other crime but our loyalty to your majesties blessed father and self, in whose service every individual man almost of us may to his glory remember some near relation that honestly lost his life'.³⁴ New Woodstock's address remarked that the memory of Charles I 'is daily before our eyes; and we too plainly see the restless endeavours of the Fanaticks and men of commonwealth principles to play their accursed (yet beloved) game of rebellion over again'.³⁵ The Shaftesburian association, Pembroke's address alleged, 'has awakened us to reflect more deliberately upon that bloody history of the late rebellion, carried on by Ambition and Enthusiasm, in which many well-meaning, unwary men, infatuated by the canting declarations and gilded promises of those times, were unfortunately involved in the ruine of the best of kings, the purest of churches and the most equal of governments'.³⁶

The historical struggle of good over evil, already rehearsed in the early 1680s addresses, was thus available to the addressers of 1685 acclaiming their new king. Many duly went out of their way to congratulate the new monarch on his successful overcoming of the obstacles to his accession, notably in the form of the exclusion bill, as we saw earlier with the Portsmouth address, and the Rye House Plot. The Middlesex address, for example, thought that James had been delivered by God from the 'Villanous designs which the race of Regicides and Excluders (who Murder'd the Royal Martyr your father) have contriv'd not only to destroy your Sacred Person but to exterminate the Monarchy it self'.³⁷ Similarly Westbury's address condemned the 'wicked strivings and malicious endeavours of Anti-monarchical men, to deprive your Royal Person of your undoubted Inheritance'.³⁸ Address after address condemned the attempts to pass the exclusion bill, which was described as a

³³ *LG* 1706, 23-27 Mar. 1682.

³⁴ *LG* 1699, 27 Feb.-2 Mar. 1681.

³⁵ *LG* 1706, 23-27 Mar. 1682.

³⁶ *LG* 1728, 8-12 June 1682.

³⁷ *LG* 2010, 19-23 Feb. 1685.

³⁸ *LG* 2014, 5-9 Mar. 1685.

‘Monstrous’,³⁹ ‘Hellish’,⁴⁰ ‘diabolical and unjust’ bill,⁴¹ endeavoured by ‘Blood-thirsty villains’.⁴² Many addressers thus saw James’s accession as providential. Southampton’s text, amongst many others, talked of the sacred nature of the king and the providential nature of his accession.⁴³

Pliny’s second lesson, that the people should learn from the virtues of their prince, was also not lost on the addressers of 1685. The key message, of course, was about the virtue of loyalty. The steadfastness and courage shown by James in overcoming his enemies was, the addressers insisted, to be emulated by his people who should remain steadfast in their loyalty and courageously ready to defend him. Carnarvonshire promised that it would ‘never err from an unalterable Loyalty to our King’ and Norwich addressers threw themselves ‘intirely at your Royal Feet, in the Protestation of a most firm and unalterable Allegiance to your Majesty while we live’.⁴⁴ This prompted some high-blown rhetoric about almost unlimited loyalty. The lawyers of the Middle Temple argued that ‘Your Majesties high prerogative is the greatest Security of the Liberty and Property of the Subject’ and the city of Oxford thought they owed ‘all our Privileges to the bounty of your Royal Predecessors’.⁴⁵ James might well have been forgiven, it seems, for thinking that he had the unwavering support of his people.

Yet if that was the lesson James drew – and it might well have been – it was because he had forgotten the third insight of Pliny’s panegyric: that embedded within the compliment was an implicit lesson, Kennett’s ‘wining Lecture’, for the monarch. Panegyric praised but it also instructed the monarch as well as the wider audience listening to it.⁴⁶ In 1685 this instruction concerned the strength of allegiance to the Church as well as to the king. Indeed, it was apparent that many addresses focused as much on the king’s declaration to Privy Council that he would uphold and maintain the Church of England as they did on the king’s accession, evidence perhaps of genuine relief that he did not intend a catholicising policy but

³⁹ Wigan’s address, *LG* 2015, 9-12 Mar. 1685.

⁴⁰ Dartmouth’s address, *LG* 2016, 12-16 Mar. 1685

⁴¹ Cinque Ports address, *LG* 2025, 13-16 Apr. 1685.

⁴² Gloucester’s address, *LG* 2011, 23-26 Feb. 1685.

⁴³ *LG* 2017, 10-16 Mar. 1685.

⁴⁴ *LG* 2020, 26-30 Mar. 1685; *LG* 2019, 23-26 Mar. 1685.

⁴⁵ *LG* 2019, 23-26 Mar. 1685; *LG* 2015, 9-12 Mar. 1685.

⁴⁶ Garrison, *Dryden and the Tradition of Panegyric*, 59-62.

also a series of gilded warnings seeking to hold him to that line for the future. Warwickshire thus gave thanks, ‘not doubting but that the Church of England shall flourish in all her Legal Priviledges and Establishments’.⁴⁷ Indeed some corporations saw a sort of implicit deal on the table. Newark’s addressers refused to ‘doubt your Defending the Establish’d Religion’ and they would ‘*reciprocally* endeavour the maintenance of your Royal Prerogatives’.⁴⁸ Addressers from Garstang in Lancashire also made this reciprocity quite explicit, albeit wrapped in soft language: ‘as the Church is the rule to us of a pure and unspotted Loyalty, so it is not possible we should lose the one [ie loyalty], since your Majesty is so graciously pleased to preserve the other [ie the church]’.⁴⁹ Several addresses went so far as to stress that the king’s word to protect the church should be inviolable. Berkshire addressers thanked the king for his declaration ‘upon which we build our Confidence as on a Rock, the Truth of your Royal Word having ever been as undoubted as your Courage in the greatest dangers has been undented’.⁵⁰ Hertfordshire adopted a similar rhetorical ploy, linking praise of the king’s steadfastness in battle and support of the Church: James was, they said, a prince of courage and ‘Firmness to your Word’.⁵¹ Wiltshire protested, perhaps a little too much, that ‘the security of your Royal Word hath left us no pretence for distrust’.⁵² Hereford offered thanks for his declaration to defend the church which, ominously for James’s future policy, they protested was ‘far dearer to us than our lives’.⁵³ Embedded in the panegyric, therefore, there was a good deal of coded warning to the new king not to deviate from the public commitment he had made to the national Church. James, arguably, failed to understand the rules of the genre or chose to ignore the carefully packaged advice he was given.

Addressing Europe and the wider world

The addresses presented after 1689 were increasingly concerned to place the British succession in a wider framework of European conflict. The narrative constructed in the

⁴⁷ *LG* 2021, 30 Mar.-2 Apr. 1685.

⁴⁸ *LG* 2014, 5-9 Mar. 1685. Cf. Brackley’s address, *LG* 2015, 9-12 Mar. 1685.

⁴⁹ *LG* 2016, 12-16 Mar. 1685.

⁵⁰ *LG* 2022, 2-6 Apr. 1685.

⁵¹ *LG* 2017, 10-16 Mar. 1685.

⁵² *LG* 2017, 10-16 Mar. 1685.

⁵³ *LG* 2018, 19-23 Mar. 1685.

1680s, of a design by dissenting republicans to alter the succession and constitution of church and state, sat uneasily with the post-revolution world of religious toleration and a parliamentary transfer of the crown. The panegyrical necessity of retaining a contrast between good and evil was nevertheless fulfilled not so much by reference to internal threats but by the evil threat to England emanating from Louis XIV, albeit aided by Jacobite sympathisers at home, thereby in the process constructing a new narrative about the ideal of a constitutionally limited monarchy that offered a shining example for Europe to follow.

Thus in 1701, after France's recognition of the Pretender, many addresses denounced the French king's attempts to alter the succession. Recognising William's title as 'just and lawful', a phrase that a decade earlier had proved so controversial because it offended Tory sensibilities, many addresses also invoked the people's consent as a key factor. Thus Chester addressers thought the king's title was 'begun by the Free Consent and Affectionate Desires of your People' and Brackley's thought the king had been called 'by the divine appointment and call of the People' to rescue them in 1688.⁵⁴ Similarly Southwark's asserted that the king's title was 'agreeable to our Laws, Begun by the Consent and Continued without the Oppression of your People'.⁵⁵ Parliament's role in determining the succession – exemplified in the 1701 Act guaranteeing the Protestant line - now seemed to have far greater acceptance. Nottingham's addressers thought Louis XIV had clearly 'purposed to defeat those Excellent Acts of Parliament made for the Succession of your Majesty's Crown in a Protestant Line, which is the Chief Prop and Dependence of our Posterity' and New Windsor promised to defend 'the Succession to the Crown as it is lately establish'd by Act of Parliament'.⁵⁶ Cornwall resented the French king's ambition to 'Alter and Destroy the Succession of the Crown, which is so Wisely settled by Parliament'.⁵⁷ Even when acclaiming Anne's Stuart blood, addressers coupled her lineage with parliamentary sanction, a reflection of the integration of 'revolution principles' into the Queen's coronation, noted by Joseph Hone in this volume. Thus the city of Oxford thought her title to be rightful and lawful 'as well by a Lineal Descent as by the several Acts of Parliament for settling the Succession'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *LG* 3754, 30 Oct.-3 Nov. 1701; *LG* 3757, 11-14 Nov. 1701.

⁵⁵ *LG* 3747, 6-9 Oct. 1701.

⁵⁶ *LG* 3749, 13-16 Oct. 1701.

⁵⁷ *LG* 3751, 20-23 Oct. 1701.

⁵⁸ *LG* 3794, 19-23 Mar. 1701/2. The phrase was repeated by Westbury's address, *LG* 3798, 2-6 Apr. 1702.

The 1701 and 1702 addresses also saw the succession as a key part of a wider, European balance of power that Louis XIV had upset. Indeed, Queen Anne's accession speech to Parliament specifically recognized their European outlook when she told MPs, 'I am very glad to find in your several Addresses, so unanimous a Concurrence in the same Opinion with me, that too much cannot be done for the Encouragement of our Allies, to reduce the exorbitant Power of France'.⁵⁹ The new concept of a 'balance' of power was explicitly articulated in these addresses and in the ones congratulating the Queen on her accession. Coventry's address was an informed lesson in European politics. It hoped for 'due balance' in Europe against the restless ambition of France, explaining how the French king had added Spanish dominions to his own 'and has seized on the Spanish Netherlands, the only Barrier between France and a nation so nearly ally'd to us in Religion and Interest.'⁶⁰ Derbyshire sought to 'preserve the Balance of Power in Europe' and Honiton hoped the Queen would always 'hold the Ballance of Europe for the Common Safety of Yourself and your Allies'.⁶¹

Indeed, the addresses developed the notion that in fighting its war of succession, Britain was also fighting for European liberty. The new rhetoric thus played on an older discourse about the danger of popery and arbitrary government. France, said Warwick's addressers in 1702, was 'zealously Propagating the Poverty, Slavery and Superstition of her own Subjects amongst the Nations round about'.⁶² New Romney hoped that England and its allies would reduce the 'exorbitant power of France ... to such a Ballance as may consist with the Publick Peace and Liberties of Europe'.⁶³ Deal believed that the Queen and her allies were engaged in 'the Common Cause for the Liberty of Europe'.⁶⁴ Such sentiments were more pronounced in 1704 and again when the succession was secured through union with Scotland. Britain, East Retford boasted, was the 'Throne of Liberty, the Sanctuary of the Oppressed and the Arbiter of Europe whose Power (contrary to that of those Tyrants who have long infested and distressed the World) will be exercized only in doing Good'.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons* (vol. 3, 1695-1706, 1742), 197.

⁶⁰ *LG* 3751, 20-23 Oct. 1701.

⁶¹ *LG* 3795, 23-26 Mar. 1702; *LG* 3796 26-30 Mar. 1702.

⁶² *LG* 3796, 26-30 Mar. 1702.

⁶³ *LG* 3796 26-30 Mar. 1702.

⁶⁴ *LG* 3796, 26-30 Mar. 1702.

⁶⁵ *LG* 4324, 17-21 Apr. 1707.

Leominster's addressers thought that the Queen's triumphs were 'of a Nature different from the Heroes of former Times; Theirs in the Ruin and Conquest of Mankind; Yours is the Reduction of Tyranny and the Delivery of Oppressed Princes and Nations'.⁶⁶ The contrast between British and French systems of government became ever starker. Thus in 1708 Plymouth hoped that 'all the rest of your Subjects, as well as ourselves, will have so much common Sense as to weigh the Difference between a Rightful Queen and an Invading Usurper; between a Government ruling by just and good Laws and a despotick Dominion, exerting itself only according to the Arbitrary Will of a blind Zealot and a licentious Tyrant; between the pure Primitive Christian Religion and the same corrupted and debauched to that Degree as in some Respects to be worse than none'.⁶⁷ The idealisation inherent in panegyric was now as much about the happy constitution in its European framework as about the monarch.

The Address at the close of the Stuart era

The loyal addresses of the later Stuart period were rhetorical, emotively-charged, richly textured lessons in political theory, the result of a two-way process of instruction, both for monarchs and for the wider public, in which national issues were brought close to local political cultures. The resulting addresses achieved a remarkable degree of participation and dissemination across England, Wales, Scotland, and the colonies, and made statements about Britain's place in Europe. Through the addresses, as through the wider print culture of which they were part, rival rhetorical narratives were constructed. These contrasting narratives increasingly mapped on to divisions between Whigs and Tories; indeed, most later Stuart addressing campaigns fed directly into electoral campaigns, timed to influence the polls so that the panegyric had real purpose. The political nature of the address thus exposed the inner tension inherent within panegyric, between inclusivity and exclusivity, between a desire for unity through general acclamation and a desire to divide between the loyal and the disloyal. The address frequently became a party tool.

This was all too apparent in the final years of Anne's reign. The shift of rhetoric after the Revolution, to highlight the threat from Catholic France and declare loyalty to the war

⁶⁶ *LG* 4332, 15-19 May 1707.

⁶⁷ *LG* 4427, 12-15 Apr. 1708. Cf. Williams, *Poetry*, chapters 3 and 4 on Whig defences of the war, its aims and its victories. Williams develops a notion of 'martial panegyric' (136).

effort against it, made the return in 1710 to High Church Tory discourse which lambasted domestic republican, dissenting or atheistical ‘rebels’, deeply shocking to the Whigs. This divergence led to a significant contest between rival groups of addresses, each speaking very different political languages. A few quotations from the 1710 High Church addresses are enough to give the flavour of the rest. The address from St Albans abhorred ‘Schismatical, Antimonarchical and Republican Principles’ and promised to ‘curb and suppress all Irreligious, Immoral, Seditious and Rebellious Tenets’.⁶⁸ Minehead condemned ‘how the Republican Principle of Resistance is of late openly taught’, a notion that was ‘inconsistent with Reason and Scripture, [even] tho in Cases of Tyranny and Oppression’.⁶⁹ Brecon corporation argued that although factious men asserted that their allegiance was curtailed by ‘Certain Conditions’ *their* loyalty ‘admits of no Restrictions or Limitations’.⁷⁰ Denbighshire’s attacked the ‘traiterous and damnable positions which assert the Legality of deposing or resisting Princes’.⁷¹ Hindon’s referred to ‘Antimonarchical Principles in every corner of this Kingdom’.⁷² Fowey’s attacked those who derived the Queen’s title ‘from the sole Gift of the People’.⁷³ The address from Essex attacked the usual trilogy of anti-monarchical, atheistical and republican principles and men who tried ‘to render the Imperial Crown of these Realms precarious by insinuating that when your Majesty or your Successors shall do what they shall construe to be a Breach of an Imaginary Contract, the Subjects are discharg’d from their Allegiance’.⁷⁴

All this, as well as the neglect or rejection of the war against France, flew in the face of the public discourse constructed by the recent addresses and caused a heated round of pamphlet exchanges, with Whigs rounding on the High Church rhetoric as dangerous and misleading. Although classical panegyric was ideally intended to effect unity and harmony, to bring people and monarch together, the later Stuart period’s panegyric addresses often achieved the reverse, dividing the nation with heightened rhetoric that fed into, and indeed helped to construct, partisan differences. Panegyric, as McRae has shown for the early

⁶⁸ Oldmixon, *The History of Addresses ...part Two*, 155-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 176.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 184.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 202.

⁷² *Ibid*, 243.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 245.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 254.

seventeenth century, always contained within it the possibility of dividing;⁷⁵ later Stuart addresses, promoted in a partisan context, were especially vulnerable to this charge.

Differences over time between addresses, in tone and content, especially when they came from the same place, thus led to the critique that the form had become meaningless verbiage. John Oldmixon's whiggish *History of Addresses ... Part Two* (1711) made the point repeatedly that the Sacheverellite addresses of 1710 were often of a very different stamp from those presented earlier and hence that they signified little. Similarly, in 1710 Defoe thought that either people should 'leave off addressing as a thing of no signification ... a vain, empty, fruitless folly' or 'restore addressing to its usual vertue and signification', so that monarchs could 'believe their subjects when they speak to them'.⁷⁶

Arguably the Whigs won the struggle of addresses, wresting public discourse back away from the High Church Tories with the accession of George I, but it was initially at a price. Just as verse panegyric was increasingly associated with dullness and involuntary satire (even comic inversion), so the profusion of contradictory addresses in the later Stuart period helped to undermine the form's credibility and emasculate its capacity to instruct the monarch. As both Andrew McRae and Joseph Hone note in other chapters, partisanship compromised panegyric; it certainly helped to devalue the address of thanks, subverting part of its original intention of unified acclamation. Partisan panegyric was consequently vulnerable to satire and ridicule. The addresses presented to George II at his accession in 1727 were formulaic and bland eulogies, little more than the fawning flattery that was associated with a debased form of verse panegyric.

In the longer run, however, the address still had an important part to play, especially in the 1760s, when an appeal to the monarch seemed necessary to prevent Parliament oppressing popular rights, and in the 1790s, during renewed war with republican France, as a way of trying to rise above partisan division and to create a sense of British identity that placed the monarchy at its centre.⁷⁷ The genre of the address endured throughout the

⁷⁵ Andrew McRae, 'Satire and Sycophancy: Richard Corbett and Early Stuart Royalism', *The Review of English Studies* New Series, Vol. 54, No. 215 (2003), 336-364.

⁷⁶ Defoe, *A New Test of the Sence [sic] of the Nation* (1710), 88.

⁷⁷ Andrew McRae suggests in this volume that panegyric failed to survive in any credible form in the eighteenth century but see Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820', *Past & Present* 102 No.1, (1984): 94-129.

eighteenth century and its capacity to deliver a 'winning Lecture' as well as compliment thus re-emerged rather dramatically in the conflicts that erupted in the early years of George III. The Cromwellians had ironically invented an adaptable genre that long outlived its republican roots.