Loyalty, Memory and Public Opinion in England, 1658-1727

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Studies on loyalty and memory in early modern England have garnered much attention over the last two decades, particularly those on the late seventeenth century, when the post-effects of Civil War and Republicanism saw the monarchy, MPs, and the general public reassess the power of mass petitioning and political engagement. In recent years, Matthew Neufeld has considered how the public remembered the Civil Wars after the Restoration in 1660, while Edward Legon has further contributed to this field with his study of seditious memories after the Civil War.(1) Likewise, Tim Harris' and Mark Knights' studies on political culture in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain has demonstrated how the public's interaction with politics advanced on a massive scale in this period.(2) Loyalty and memory continue to be important subjects in early modern historical studies, and the book reviewed has brought together these strands of historical interrogation for assessment.

Edward Vallance's book, *Loyalty, memory and public opinion in England, 1658-1727,* is a study on mass loyal addresses that emerged from the Cromwellian regime in 1658 to the end of the reign of George I in 1727. He accomplishes this feat by focusing on when mass loyal addresses were sent to Parliament and the monarchs as a reaction to certain political moments, including the death of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector; the Exclusion Crisis; and at the turn of the eighteenth century, when warring political factions—the Whigs and the Tories—came to the fore. Vallance provides thematic chapters, which identify the different groups of addressers across this period; the performance ritual of presenting loyal addresses; and how the language of loyalty evolved across nearly a century. The book builds upon Vallance's previous work, which examined the significance of oath-swearing during the English Civil War and across the seventeenth century. Most notably, his 2005 book, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682*, analysed how oath-swearing was used to secure the loyalty of citizens—and to protect English liberties and the Protestant religion—at key pivotal moments from the reign of Mary I until after the Exclusion Crisis. More recently, his work on mass petitioning and political thought has brought attention to how they influenced events in late seventeenth century England.(3)

Loyalty, memory and public opinion in England examines how loyal addresses evolved across this period by analysing how these addresses represented 'public opinion' and the public's engagement with English politics. Addresses were a way for the public to express their thanks or loyalty to the country's leaders,

which included Oliver Cromwell and his son Richard; Charles II; the Dutch king William III; and later Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch. As described in his introduction, Vallance argues that public opinion 'as represented in loyal addresses, was utilised to legitimate the actions and ideals of the political centre' (p. 2). This was because addresses were, in effect, a 'reciprocal relationship between addresser and addressee', with those submitting these addresses using them as a means to voice criticism over certain matters and place demands upon authority. He argues that loyal addresses encouraged people to develop an 'awareness of a political public', and suggests that, compared to localised petitioning activity, addressing campaigns were normally on a national and international platform, which connected 'local communities to a broader national narrative' (pp. 2-3). The seven chapters in *Loyalty, memory and public opinion* all deal with loyal addresses across of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The chapters focus on key political incidents, events, and themes, which triggered a large spate of mass loyal addresses to show their support on specific matters.

Vallance uses a rich assortment of manuscript and printed material in *Loyalty, memory and public opinion in England* to scrutinise the evolution of public addresses to the political and monarchical establishments. Printed addresses are used more heavily throughout the book, although attention is given to surviving manuscript copies of addresses. Vallance also focusses closely on the contemporary reaction to these mass petitioning and addresses by scrutinising the diaries of seventeenth century politicians and influential figures, including Sir John Reresby, John Thurloe, and Thomas Burton. He has carried out extensive research on printed and manuscript loyal addresses that came from across the country, and he also showcases how the influence of these addresses had a domestic and international impact in the early modern world. Vallance demonstrates that printed addresses were publicised as positive pieces of propaganda in government-supported newsbooks. He points out in Chapter Two that newsbooks, including *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*, as well as the Protectorate's French-language newsbook *Nouvelles Ordinaires de Londres,* shows how the Protectorate regime projected positive success stories about the English Commonwealth across England and Europe (p. 40). For instance, he argues that the Protectorate made a special effort to translate these addresses into the newsbook *Nouvelles Ordinaires de Londres* as MPs wanted 'to demonstrate public support for the Protectorate internationally as well as domestically' (p. 47).

The first chapter of Vallance's book provides the readers with context about how mass petitioning played a role in the development of loyal addresses. He describes how addresses emerged as a product of the English Civil Wars in the 1640s. Vallance argues that to understand loyal addresses, we should consider how mass oath-swearing contributed to their evolution. He points out that loyal addresses shared many features with other subscriptional texts of the time: for instance, many loyal addresses were subscribed to in very large numbers, akin to petitions; and mass subscriptions were consequently used as proof that these texts 'were representative of public opinion'. He adds that, during the Civil Wars, print played an important role in this process for both petitions and addresses, as it produced collections of catalogues and compendia 'directed at delivering the sense of national public opinion at particular moments' (pp. 21-22). Vallance's concentration on the importance of print in the development of loyal addresses builds upon the work of Jason Peacey and Joad Raymond, who have published extensively on Civil War print and newsbooks.(4) Vallance shows that print was used by addressers as a way to publicise their loyalty, and that addresses developed as a political form during the 1650s and were 'notable for conveying public affection, thanks and congratulations' as they acknowledged authority. Moreover, he argues that, unlike petitions in this period, which were normally triggered by a grievance that needed to be resolved by authority, addresses were also a means to gain political access and influence with those who wielded power and authority—in this case Parliament and the Lord Protector (p. 31). Vallance asserts, therefore, that 'addressing activity accentuated the legitimating effect of petitioning by making a public display of loyalty and submission critical to securing the greatest benefit from addressing' for both individual addressers and their communities (p. 33).

Having provided the political background to mass subscriptions and petitioning, in Chapter Two, Vallance looks further into the origins of loyal addresses for the late 1650s, when England was a Republic and led by Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. Vallance points out that it was Cromwell's accession as Lord Protector

in the early 1650s which started loyal addressing as a political activity. Addressing, he argues, emerged 'as a means of supporting, legitimating and endorsing the authority of the Protectoral regime' against those who supported the 'Good Old Cause'; that is, Royalists who continued to offer support to the exiled Stuarts (p. 40). This was particularly crucial when Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658, and his son Richard succeeded him as Lord Protector. As there was disagreement over whether Richard was named as his father's successor, this, in turn, was reflected in public addresses created for Richard in late 1658 and early 1659. Vallance persuasively shows that, because there was public doubt about whether Richard Cromwell's appointment as Lord Protector was legitimate, the addresses were veiled in religious language, saying that Cromwell's succession was divine providence. He notes that, in addresses sent to Richard Cromwell, 'the near universal reference to divine providence in these texts was not matched by a similarly ubiquitous recognition of Richard's title as lawful under the terms of the Humble Petition and Advice' (p. 46). Vallance reveals that some addresses alluded to Oliver Cromwell as Moses and Joshua, while Richard was referenced as the prophet Elijah, and his succession described as being as natural as when James VI and I acceded the English throne in 1603 (pp. 44-46).

In Chapter Four, Vallance shows that a similar scenario arose for William III. Here, he highlights that there were problems surrounding William III's right to the throne, especially after the death of his wife Mary II in 1694. Although William had a claim to the throne as he was a nephew, as well as son-in-law, of James II, his position was tenuous. Consequently, Vallance reveals that some addresses presented to William at the turn of the eighteenth century affirmed that his title of king was established by popular consent, not by law or hereditary right. This, he argues, was rather surprising because, in 1696, 'in the largest act of mass oath-taking in British history', the public swore that William was their rightful and lawful king in the Bond of Association, which was sworn after a failed Jacobite plot to assassinate him (p. 100). Furthermore, he asserts that, by the early eighteenth century, addressing activity became 'closely connected to the dynastic struggles between the houses of Bourbon, Habsburg, Orange and Stuart', which shows that this was not isolated to England, but was experienced by the big European powerhouses. This was especially so as addresses had a large international audience, being circulated in manuscript form and appearing in European newsbooks (p. 122).

Throughout *Loyalty, memory and opinion in England*, Vallance proves how certain political crises prompted these mass addresses. In Chapter Three, he examines the effect of subscriptional culture and memory in the 1680s, which saw the intense petitioning and addressing activity in reaction to the Exclusion Crisis and the accession of the last Catholic king of England, James II. In the chapter, Vallance draws attention to how the recent memories of the Civil War spurred on mass petitions and addresses being sent to King Charles II. This included the House of Commons address in 1678, which overstepped the royal prerogative by requesting that Charles remove certain ministers, declare war on France, and remove Catholics from all the royal households (p. 69). Consequently, Vallance shows that amidst the Exclusion Crisis—in which Charles was pressured to remove his brother James, Duke of York, from the line of succession because of his Catholic conversion—popular petitioning grew between the warring political factions; the Whigs and the Tories. He points out that, for the Tories and loyalists, 'popular petitioning was one more indication that Whigs and their dissenting allies were intent on resurrecting the strategies of the 1640s to achieve similar ends as the Parliamentarians of the civil war'. On the other side of the coin, the Whigs believed that the loyal addresses gave them the opportunity to fight for the rights of subjects to petition for redress of grievances and arbitrary rule (p. 69). Vallance describes how under these pressures, Charles II prorogued and dissolved Parliament in quick succession, and issued a Declaration which criticised popular petitioning. He also shows that, because of the spate of popular petitioning, in 1680, Parliament took action against 'anti-petitioners' and 'abhorrers'. He notes that the Commons treated the king's Declaration surrounding the right to petition, and addresses condemning mass petitions, as an affront on the right to petition, which saw the tide turn against those who had challenged petitioning activity, including Tory propagandist Sir Roger L'Estrange, who fled the country (p. 70).

The dispute over popular petitioning continued later in the seventeenth century. In Chapter Four, Vallance explores how addresses were used in the first decade of the eighteenth century, during the reigns of William

III and Queen Anne. In this chapter, Vallance focuses on two controversial petitioning moments: the case of the Kentish Petitioners in 1701; and Henry Sacheverell's conviction for 'High Crimes and Misdemeanours'. In the Kentish Petitioners case, he described how five gentlemen in Kent petitioned Parliament to listen to the voice of the people and to remember their own promises in their loyal addresses to William III. This included passing bills of supply to help the king raise a large standing army to protect the realm from the threat of Jacobites, who supported the exiled James II. However, Vallance points out that, because the House of Commons was directed by the Tory party, they deemed this petition seditious, which led to the arrest and imprisonment of the petitioners until the end of the parliamentary session. Vallance reveals that this led to publications, like Daniel Defoe's *Legion's Memorial* and the anonymously penned *Jura Populi Anglicani,* starting a public debate on the legality of petitioning. He shows that both publications defended the Kentish petitioners' right to petition, in accordance with the 1661 'Act against the Tumults and Disorders upon Pretence of Preparing or Presenting publick Peticions' (pp. 95-97). The act is first discussed in Chapter Two, in which Vallance shows that the act associated popular petitioning with the triggering of the Civil War, and from henceforth instructed that petitions subscribed to by more than twenty petitioners had to be approved by at least three justices or a majority of the grand jury (p. 52). Vallance additionally shows that the work and sermons of Henry Sacheverell on the rise of dissent as a reaction against the Whig government later in the same decade, reflects the impact of loyal addresses within public opinion. He shows, for example, that in this incident—in which Sacheverell managed to evade severe punishment for his work criticising the government—Tory-supporting newspapers printed loyal addresses in full, while Whig newspapers generally provided commentaries only (pp. 101-110). Addresses were a tool to demonstrate loyalty to Queen Anne, and they were also a means to showcase the loyalty of those of a certain political persuasion.

One of the main topics Vallance focuses on throughout *Loyalty, memory and opinion in England* is the instability which surrounded subscribing to loyal addresses. He shows, in Chapter Three, for instance, that the 'reprisals and counter-attacks against petitioners and addressers illustrate the political risks involved in subscriptional activity, notably that the record of such activity provided evidence that could be used by opponents once circumstances had changed' (p. 71). Compellingly, Vallance argues that because the public possessed a strong memory of past addressing activity during the Cromwellian protectorate, these recollections gave the Whigs a means to employ its recent history against their opponents. This naturally led to a spate of pamphlets being published, and Vallance shows that these pamphlet wars caused writers, like Sir Roger L'Estrange, to reprint earlier works which traced the origins of the Civil War, including L'Estrange's *A Memento* (pp. 72-73). Moreover, Vallance reveals that, in publications like *An Impartial Account*, attributed to the Earl of Shaftesbury, addressing campaigns allegedly 'threatened legitimate forms of political expression, namely petitioning and voting' (p. 74). However, he adds that 'repeated demands over the 1680s for communities to issue loyal addresses to the Crown caused greater problems as the Court moved from religious policy designed to appease Tory/Anglican opinion to one which sought toleration for both Protestant dissenters and Catholics' (p. 75).

Similarly, in Chapter Five, Vallance analyses different types of addressers in early modern England and the potential risk which surrounded those who subscribed their names to the addresses. He argues persuasively that persons who subscribed their names to addresses did so at their own risk, as printed addresses and petitions could later be used by future leading political factions or monarchs. For example, he notes that the Leicestershire Address to Richard Cromwell, which was drafted during his short tenure as Lord Protector, recorded the names of potential political dissidents as well as loyalists. However, the address lacked the subscribed names of local political figures, including Sir Arthur Hesilrige and the regicide Peter Temple, who—while both being leading 'Commonswealthmen' during the Civil War and Interregnum—were vocal opponents of the Protectorate. Interestingly, he shows that those who did sign addresses supporting Richard Cromwell included Royalists such as Thomas Brudenell—whose cousin Thomas, Lord Brudenell was sent to the Tower—which suggests that there was strategic subscribing going on during this turbulent period (pp. 124-133).

Vallance demonstrates that while addresses were a written document which publicised the loyalty of its subscribed addressers, they were, in effect, theatrical performances as well. In Chapter Six, Vallance

showcases how important loyal addresses were as visual propaganda tools for the public. He describes the creation of a loyal address as a three-stage process, with addresses first drafted at the behest of local powerbrokers or by request from the central power; then subscribed to by local officeholders and important community figures; before the address was finally delivered to Court by nominated presenters (p. 162). Vallance points out that these performances were as beneficial for addressers as for the monarch, as 'the Crown was a recipient as well as distributor of loyal bounty' (p. 168). This is especially in the case for Charles II, who not only received loyal addresses congratulating him on his return to the throne in 1660, but benefitted from the opportunity for communities or individuals to offer gifts of money and the relinquishing of fee-farm income which had been acquired during the Interregnum 'partly intended to make amends for past disloyalty'. These gifts and addresses, Vallance argues, were also ways for local figures to preserve their communities with the choice of 'persons of quality' chosen to present these addresses, which gave opportunities for advancement of a communities cause, like that of the Cutlers' Company, as well as social prestige for the chosen presenter (pp. 168-169).

What is interesting about *Loyalty, memory and opinion in England* is how Vallance depicts the evolution of the language of loyalty across the early modern period. Vallance shows not just how the addresses changed across the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries due to different circumstances, which triggered these addresses to be manufactured, but also how the language of loyalty advanced. He reasons that carefully-crafted language used in addresses exposes the mood of the public. For instance, in Chapter Two, Vallance describes how, when Richard Cromwell succeeded his father as Lord Protector in September 1658, the addresses to him exposed the confessional struggles between the two dominant political factions—the Independents, to which Oliver Cromwell belonged, and the Presbyterians. Innovatively, in Chapter Seven, Vallance combines modern software technology to discern how the language of loyalty evolved within collections of addresses between 1659 and 1756. In the chapter, he provides an explanation on the various types of software he has used, including Optical Character Recognition (OCR), Early English Books Online (EEBO) N-gram browser, and Text Creation Partnership (TCP), among others, to map out how the vocabulary professing loyalty shifted across this period, as well as to see how often words like 'loyalty' appeared in printed addresses (pp. 185-188). He found that, while the terminology did not appear in great numbers in the Interregnum period, after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, there was a massive spike in the use of the terms 'loyal' and 'loyalty'. Vallance suggests that this was so because 'emotionally laden understandings of loyalty came to be closely associated with Jacobitism' (p. 186). Moreover, he argues that that while the words 'loyal' and 'loyalty' continued to be associated with fidelity to the monarchy, 'loyalty as a concept had shifted in its associations' by also becoming associated with institutions like Parliament and concepts of the state and nation (p. 193). Technology and word-recognition software will play a far greater role in future studies of early modern print, and Vallance's application of it to aid understanding of the language of loyalty makes this an standout chapter.

Loyalty, memory and opinion in England is a richly detailed study on the influence of loyal addresses in early modern political culture. Vallance strongly argues throughout his book that, across a century, addresses were able to invoke a sense of loyalty and identity from the general public, such as had originally emerged from mass petitions. He has demonstrated that addresses had a political function for the monarchy, Parliament, and the general public, as they allowed people to demonstrate loyalty, rather than express grievances. He has shown how print was utilised to great effect by contemporaries, and how memories of the past triggered the production of these addresses. Moreover, he has shown that loyal addresses also had a public and performative function, and this is important to consider when we try to understand the reception of early modern print productions. It would have been fascinating to see how these addresses altered upon the accession of George I as the first Hanoverian king of Britain in 1714, and whether the failed Jacobite Rebellion in 1715, and the Atterbury Plot in 1721, saw a spate of loyal addresses to George or to the 'Pretender', James Stuart. Nevertheless, this is a densely detailed study about how early modern memory and public opinion can be understood through the language of loyalty and mass subscribed addresses. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of early modern print, politics, and memory studies.

Notes

1. Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013); Edward Legon, *Remembering Revolution: Seditious Memories after the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, 2019).Back to (1)
2. Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Politics and Propaganda from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987); Tim Harris, *Politics under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society, 1660-1715* (London, 1993); Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-1681* (Oxford, 1994); Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005).Back to (2)
3. Edward Vallance, '"From the hearts of the people": loyalty, addresses and the public sphere in the exclusion crisis', in *Religion, Culture and National Community in the 1670s*, eds. Tony Claydon and Thomas N. Corns (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 127-147; Edward Vallance, 'Harrington, Petitioning and the Construction of Public Opinion', in *Perspectives on English Revolutionary Republicanism*, eds. D. Wiemann and G. Mahlberg (Oxford, 2014), pp. 119-32; Edward Vallance, 'Political Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Michael Braddick (Oxford, 2015), pp. 430-66. Back to (3)
4. Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Oxford, 2004); Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003); Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 2005).Back to (4)

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