

the literary response to the Restoration, this work has much to offer.

Jason Peacey, ed. *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001. x + 294 pp. \$72.00. Review by MICHAEL ROGERS, NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY.

This excellent collection of eleven essays originated in a 1999 conference held at the Institute of Historical Research in London. Although the political and diplomatic context of the events of December 1648 and January 1649 are prominent, the authors examine so many other facets of the Regicide (religious, literary, legal, and iconographic among them) that scholars of literature and culture will also find much of interest. This is due in no small part to Jason Peacey's fine introduction, which notes that the subject remains "inexplicably understudied," especially considering the abundance of primary sources and the explosion of writing on the 1640s and 1650s. Peacey also provides a historiographical overview, summarizes each contributor's thesis, and identifies the book's main themes. In so doing, he reminds readers that the approaches and methodologies generally affecting seventeenth-century studies—revisionism, the problem of governing multiple kingdoms, and the civil wars as "wars of religion"—have relevance for a new understanding of the Regicide itself.

Perhaps the book's most important theme is the practical as well as ideological reasons to bring Charles to justice, to delay his trial, or to oppose entirely any legal proceedings against him. The longest chapter, John Adamson's "The Frightened Junto: Perceptions of Ireland, and the Last Attempts at Settlement with Charles I," is representative of four essays that explore motive. Adamson focuses on the "Denbigh mission," an Army proposal for a political settlement that the Earl of Denbigh conveyed to the king. Prior to Charles's rebuff of Denbigh in mid-December 1648 there was

very little support for a trial among the grandees and MPs, but the royalist resurgence in Ireland beginning in the winter of 1648 spurred the Army to action. It is this Irish context and the very real possibility of a third civil war, Adamson asserts, that explains the decision to try and execute the king in January of 1649; Charles had been defeated as king of England and Scotland, but definitely not as king of Ireland. Adamson thus explicitly embraces a “three kingdom” explanation for the Regicide, stressing clear and present dangers rather than desire to punish the king primarily for his past crimes. The only way to end the continuing threat of the anti-parliamentary alliance in Ireland was therefore to execute the king. John Morrill and Philip Baker’s “Oliver Cromwell, the Regicide, and the Sons of Zeruiah,” complements Adamson’s portrait of reluctant regicides. Employing a close reading of letters, speeches, and the Putney Debates among other sources, Morrill and Baker chart the evolution of Cromwell’s decision to try Charles, focusing on the weeks from late November to the last days of January. In line with Morrill’s emphasis on religion as the key motivation for the English Revolution, they find that intensive Bible reading, particularly of the Old Testament, pervaded Cromwell’s understanding of events. Although earlier persuaded on scriptural grounds of Charles’s primary “blood guilt” for the civil wars, Cromwell showed no desire prior to 25 November 1648 to abolish monarchy or execute the king; there was simply too much opposition to regicide and a republic. In fact, the authors argue, he originally planned new elections and a constitution prior to any trial of the king. But uncertainties unleashed by Pride’s Purge and Charles’s rejection of Denbigh’s proposal pushed Cromwell reluctantly towards regicide as the only way to confront the Army’s many enemies.

David Scott offers a regional perspective on motivation in his fascinating, if speculative, “Motives for King Killing.” Noting that a relatively high percentage of signatories to the king’s death warrant were men from northern counties, Scott suggests that a “British perspective” may explain their strong desire to see justice executed upon Charles. After examining the careers of the eight northern regicides, the author reviews the devastation wrought by three

Scottish occupations of the North between 1639 and in 1648. Logically, these northern counties had special reasons to fear the king's continuing Irish and Scots alliances; thus, the regicides may have concluded that only the king's execution could prevent a fourth invasion if the Scots chose to fight for Charles again.

The last essays dealing with motivation examine why two very different groups opposed to the king's execution. Andrew Sharp's "The Levellers and the End of Charles I," begins by demonstrating how leaders such as Walwyn, Overton, and above all John Lilburne radically and consistently critiqued monarchy from 1646 to late 1648. In a close reading of key texts, Sharp convincingly demonstrates that Leveller attacks on the Regicide from February to August 1649 did not originate in an opportunistic conversion to royalism. Rather, as a result of their experiences with the grandees and parliamentary Independents late in 1648, Lilburne and company realized that the Regicide was a cynical exercise of arbitrary power. Thus their proposed restoration of monarchy was aimed at creating a counterweight to Army and parliamentary tyranny. Moreover, the Levellers' terms for a restored monarchy were so limiting and subject to popular approval that no royalist could ever have accepted them. So, Sharp's essay is an excellent and fully contextualized reassertion of the Levellers' principled radicalism. The other study of motives for opposing the king's trial is Elliot Vernon's "The Quarrel of the Covenant: the London Presbyterians and the Regicide." Taking his cue from Milton's pillorying of the Sion College Conclave of Presbyterian ministers in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Vernon seeks to recover the political theology behind the clergymen's published opposition to the death of a king they had reviled in the early 1640s. He finds the key to their thinking in the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643; the ministers viewed it as a "first engagement," a sacred agreement that bound Ireland, England, and Scotland together as covenanted people in support of liberty, public safety, and—most importantly—monarchy. Thus the parliamentary coalition abrogated a sacred religious obligation when it permitted the king's death.

The remaining chapters apply similar methodologies to several different facets of the Regicide. Sean Kelsey and Alan Orr analyze the trial itself and its vocabulary. Kelsey's "Staging the Trial of Charles I," studies the iconographic vocabulary of the trial (regalia, coats of arms, etc.) for clues about divisions within the Army over issues such as the very fate of the king, republicanism, and England's monarchical past. Alan Orr, in "The Juristic Foundations of Regicide" clearly analyzes the legal vocabulary of the High Court of Justice's treason charge against Charles, and demonstrates how that vocabulary blended English with Roman law concepts. Again we see the regicides as hesitant and anxious to maintain some continuity between past and present rather than single-mindedly pursuing a completely revolutionary regime.

Three authors study some of the reactions to the trial both at home and abroad. In "Reporting a Revolution," Peacey explores the propaganda aims of the Court's official coverage of the trial and discovers royalists successfully adapting those accounts to their own ends. Andrew Lacey's "Elegies and Commemorative Verse in Honour of Charles I, 1649-1660," examines fifty royalist poems and how they helped construct the cult of the "martyred Charles." Like Vernon, his main interest is in political theology, particularly what this poetry tells us about royalists' explained their "lost cause." Richard Bonney's "The European Reaction to the Trial and Execution of Charles I" takes up the European response not only to the king's execution but also to the Commonwealth and Protectorate. He finds that "reason of state" and practical concerns rather than ideology guided Spanish, French, and Dutch diplomacy.

All in all, these essays constitute a well-integrated and remarkably cohesive collection, with extensive cross-references in the very useful endnotes. And the authors' approaches and methodologies certainly overlap. One can see the influence of revisionism in the downplaying of ideology, the close reading of texts that cover limited periods, and in the portrayal of the regicides as hesitant and reluctant. The book also well illustrates the fruits of applying cultural history and (particularly) a "three kingdoms" approach to

a fuller understanding of the trial and execution of “that man of blood.”

Alan Wharam. *Murder in the Tower and Other Tales from the State Trials*. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2001. x + 286 pp. + 12 b&w illus. \$84.95. Review by ELLEN J. JENKINS, ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY.

The twists and turns of criminal misdeeds, murder mysteries, and court trials continue to fascinate and intrigue us, a phenomenon that explains the considerable increase over the past few years of cable and network television series based upon examples of such social turmoil. In *Murder in the Tower and Other Tales from the State Trials*, Alan Wharam has selected fifteen court cases from a collection of State Trials compiled and published in 1730, unearthing a substantial amount of social history while demonstrating that present-day society has no monopoly on nefarious deeds or pernicious and arbitrary application of the law. Among the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century trials included in *Murder in the Tower* are “The Impoisonment of Sir Thomas Overbury;” an extensive section on those connected to “The Rye House Plot,” along with the subsequent investigation into the murder of the Earl of Essex in the Tower of London in 1683; and a absorbing but lesser-known case, entitled by Wharam, “Scratching a Witch.”

In 1613, the poet Sir Thomas Overbury died after several weeks of illness while in custody in the Tower of London. Two years later, evidence came to light that Overbury had been poisoned at the direction of the Frances, Countess of Essex, who was, at the time of the murder, the married mistress of Overbury’s former friend and patron, Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester, (Earl of Somerset from 1614). Overbury, who disliked the Countess, had made threats of blackmail against Rochester, trying to convince him to have nothing to do with her. Lady Essex became enraged and convinced Rochester that Overbury must be eliminated. After using their influence to engineer Overbury’s arrest and incarcera-