Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembering in late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 284 pp., ISBN: 9781843838159, £60.00

In spite of an increasing interest amongst historians in memories of war, contemporary remembrance of the English Civil Wars is a question that has received significantly less attention from historians.[1] Until 2013 the only full length study on this topic was Blair Worden's Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity (2001), which focuses on the political co-option of Civil War figures in three pieces of literature: Ludlow's memoirs (1698 – 9); Thomas Carlyle's edition of Oliver Cromwell's letters and speeches (1845); and S. R. Gardiners histories (1893). Through the use of a similar, if broader, range of source materials (mostly memoirs and printed histories) Matthew Neufeld seeks to illuminate the ways by which the conflict was remembered in the period following the Restoration. He explicitly states that his concern is not with the ways these works were received by contemporaries, but with the forces that shaped their production [p.19]. His approach to memory most closely resembles a 'presentist' perspective, whereby memory of the past is constructed and reconstructed to suit the current interests of ruling elites.[2]

The crux of Neufeld's argument is that commemoration of the wars after 1660 was largely a means of commending and justifying, or contesting and attacking, the Restoration settlements. In particular, he argues that the need to justify and contest the exclusion of dissenters (a multifarious group he refers to collectively as 'the puritan impulse') from religious and political life lay at the heart of public memories of the wars up to 1715. Neufeld claims that while in the immediate aftermath of Restoration remembrance was used to justify the exclusion of the 'puritan impulse' from church and state, as the years progressed such memories also became the lens through which debates over other political issues were played out: 'public memory of civil

[1] Though M. Stoyle has outlined a prospectus for work in the area. See M. Stoyle, 'Memories of the Maimed: the Testimony of Charles I's Former Soldiers, 1660 – 1730', History, 88 (2003), 204 – 226.
[2] For a succinct summary of the different approaches to memory see B. Mitsztal, Theories of Social Remembering (London: Open University Press, 2003).

wars after 1660 functioned as a prison. That is to say, the public memory of the conflicted past undergirded a legal cordon sanitaire around the puritan impulse' (p.5).

The first chapter is a discussion of the politicisation of memory of the wars in historical writing 1660 - 1673. Neufeld convincingly shows that during this period officially sanctioned histories of the wars presented puritan-inspired resistance as the cause of the conflict and, in so doing, sought to justify the religiously exclusive Restoration settlement. Chapters 3 and 4 go on to consider how and why memories of the wars changed in historical writings from 1680 – 5 and 1696 – 1714, respectively. Particular emphasis is given to the impact of the end of the Licensing Act in 1679 and the subsequent rise of 'historical parallelism' (p. 105). Neufeld traces how memories of the wars were reinterpreted as a means of attempting to influence contemporary political debates.

Chapter five is an analysis of a single source - John Walker's The Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion (1714). Neufeld considers the purpose of Walker's project, his methodology, and, perplexingly, its reception. Neufeld prefaces this study with a claim that he would not consider reception (p.15); it is unfortunate that he chooses this section to break that dictate because Fiona MacCall's recent work offers a far more extensive analysis of this point.[3] Chapter six focuses on the printed sermons that were circulated on 'Restoration Day', and traces both elements of continuity and also of development in line with the emerging political concernsof the later 17th century.

In what is something of an anomaly in a volume that focuses on printed histories, chapter two considers the relief petitions of injured soldiers and the memoirs of Sir Hugh Cholmley and Richard Atkins. These sources sit uneasily alongside each other and also the rest of the volume. Neufeld claims that their commonality lies in their purpose to 'vindicate their [the authors] sense of personal identity' (p. 56). In the case of the petitions this is a contestable claim requiring

[3] Fiona McCall, *Baal's Priests: The Royalist Clergy during the English Revolution* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

significant further justification by Neufeld. Though he makes an interesting point about the way relief for soldiers could be political: he suggests that the higher number of pensions granted in the 1680s could be the result of a desire to reinforce the rewards of loyalty during a tumultuous time, but – his handling of this unpublished material is weak. He states that it is 'clear that veterans drew upon public scripts to make sense of their individual experience of the wars' without offering any substantiation for the claim (p.62). He then makes two contradictory assertions without clarification: the petitions are on one hand 'reflections of what men actually endured' (p.61) but also '…not the reality of the Civil War veterans past experience' (p.61).

The uncomfortable inclusion of the soldier's petitions in the volume stems from an unresolved tension in Neufeld's work. In his introduction Neufeld clarifies that his subject matter is only 'the political nation's answer to the question of remembering and forgetting' (p.5).He does not define what constitutes the 'political nation' (though I would venture it is unlikely to include poor petitioners). However, he then defines his subject matter of 'public memory' (without much recourse to the theoretical literature) as 'representations of the past put abroad for open consumption' (p.8). He puts no qualification on who creates these representations. Thus, Neufeld never offers complete clarity on exactly what is the subject of his study: the political nation, public memory, or some undefined combination of the two. This makes it easy for him to slip between them and offer a number of conclusions about 'public memory', broadly, that he cannot substantiate with his largely elite-centred sources. For example, in chapter six he takes an absence of printed challenges to Thanksgiving sermons as straightforward evidence of their public acceptance. The reader (and perhaps the author too) would benefit from the establishment of a tighter theoretical framework at the outset to avoid confusion over book's scope.

The main strength in Neufeld's volume lies in its careful reading of printed histories and in its in-depth consideration of how a single volume could be re-edited over time in response to political

debates. However, as Neufeld acknowledges, this reveals only a fraction of memories. This book serves as a powerful call to arms for historians to tackle the multitude of questions about early modern war memories which Neufeld asks but cannot hope to answer in one volume.

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