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Review of *Recollections in the Republics: Memories of the British Civil Wars in England, 1649-1659* by Imogen Peck

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**Imogen Peck, *Recollections in the Republics: Memories of the British Civil Wars in England, 1649-1659*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xiv+232 pp. ISBN 978-0198845584 (hardback). Price £65.00.**

The civil wars across the British Isles have continued to thrive in early modern historiography. In recent years, the period has undergone a revision in how we look at the religious, social, cultural, and political impact of the wars and the various republican regimes, and their effect over the lives of its citizens across the Three Kingdoms. The wars and bloody conflict undoubtedly had a lasting impression on men and women from all levels of society, and it is here that Imogen Peck appraises the contemporary memories of the civil wars in republican England. *Recollections in the Republics* complements the recent work by Matthew Neufeld (Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660*, 2013) and Edward Legon (Legon, *Revolution Remembered*, 2019) by assessing how memories of the civil wars was remembered by those who actively fought on both sides of the conflict, and the ordinary men and women whose lives were permanently altered along the way. What makes Peck's monograph innovative is that she centres her argument on the recollections of the war made during these two volatile decades, rather than focusing on memories of the war in the aftermath of the restoration and the changing fortunes of royalist supporters. Peck's research findings are based on a wide variety of primary sources, including petitions, court records, diaries, newsbooks, and material culture. Peck asserts that 'memory was a multifaceted, flexible, and dynamic resource' (p. 2), and that the aim of her monograph is to showcase how memory was constantly developed by people as a consequence of the civil wars.

Throughout *Recollections in the Republics*, Peck details how contemporary memories of the wars were remembered, collected, and shaped by parliamentarians and royalists who wanted to create a particular narrative about their activities during the conflict. In the first chapter, Peck discusses how national authorities tried to shape how the war was recounted, revealing that parliamentarian accounts emphasised 'blood guilt' so that politicians and writers like Thomas May could place the blame and accountability of the war solely on King Charles I. Peck also points out how parliamentarians argued that it was God's providence that secured their overall victory in the wars, which is developed further as a theme throughout the monograph. She also gives attention to how the Scots were blamed for their actions and 'treachery' in the conflict, which exposes deep-rooted prejudices and fractured relationships between England and Scotland at the time. Peck further charts the oral recounting of the wars in Chapter Three, which is dedicated to the ways in which the civil wars entered everyday discourse. Through legal records, depositions, and petitions, Peck examines how people processed their recent memories of the conflict, and how

memories of the war altered people's relationships within their communities, especially when illicit speeches reflected the divide between royalist and parliamentary supporters. Peck discusses that these discourses were significant as they fashioned how a person's character and loyalty was depicted, which in turn effected their social standing and status within their local communities. This is explored further in Chapter Five, when Peck focuses on the narratives and recollections about the war in petitions submitted by soldiers and widows. She argues persuasively that soldiers and widows recounted certain battles, life-changing injuries, and other war ailments they had attained to not only underscore their loyalty to Parliament and the state, but so that they persuade the authorities to provide them with pensions and financial assistance that they depended on for their survival.

Throughout *Recollections in the Republics*, Peck illustrates the mnemonic powers of written works and physical monuments in how contemporaries remembered the civil wars. In Chapter Four, Peck assesses the challenge for parliamentary victors, as well as royalist victims, to commemorate physical sites of memory during and after the wars. Peck describes in great detail how parliament struggled to impose days of thanksgiving and observation nationwide, with Gloucester and London enthusiastically embracing commemoration of those who fought in the battles from their communities, while other areas toned down any commemorations as they still reeled from the physical battle-scars that had devastated their communities. Peck deftly argues how physical commemorations of memorials of both royalist and parliamentarian soldiers were carefully phrased so that it was unclear publicly which side people fought on, though she points out that after the restoration royalists became more open about their loyalty in their memorials. Peck also focuses on how rival reminiscences were purposefully shaped in the narratives published and collated by participants in the war. In Chapter Two, Peck explores how royalists, Levellers, and advocates of the 'good old cause' endeavoured to carefully form the memory of the wars in printed texts, which included the martyrdom of Charles I. She argues that Leveller texts were used to recall how parliament had failed to deliver the reforms that they were promised and had fought for on the battlefield, which were developed further by those harking back to the years of the 'good old cause' that was not tainted by the betrayal of Cromwell and the purging of parliament.

*Recollections in the Republics* is a highly detailed study about how the memories of the civil wars were remembered in the mid-seventeenth century. Peck's extensive range of primary source material is utilised effectively throughout her monograph, and is a lively account about how the battles, sieges and bloodshed was remembered by men and women who survived the conflict. Peck demonstrates that by analysing the civil wars through the lens of memory studies, we can learn about how the conflicts impacted print, material culture and personal relationships. *Recollections in the Republics* will be of valuable interest to those interested in studying the civil wars through the

## REVIEWS

perspective of material culture, literature, social history, political history, and cultural history.

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**Jeremy Black, *How the Army made Britain a Global Power, 1688-1815*. Oxford: Casemate Academic, 2021. 205pp. ISBN: 978-1952715082 (hardback). Price £55.**

With this book prolific military historian Jeremy Black seeks to refocus attention on the military, rather than naval, dimensions of Britain's expansion as a global power, noting the lack of a single volume on this topic despite numerous excellent works examining various aspects of it. Black is successful in setting out the strengths and weaknesses of the British army and state over the long eighteenth century and in outlining the successes and failures the army met with campaigning globally. He argues that it learnt from, and built on, these experiences and that this, alongside the geographical range and near continuous service of the army's commanders and soldiery, led to Britain achieving global dominance by 1815. That it makes this argument in just over two hundred pages whilst also outlining Britain's campaigning efforts around the world and over a multitude of conflicts is the book's key achievement. In particular, Black's argument that the British successfully honed a well-disciplined musket fire and bayonet charge from the 1750s that became an essential tactical strategy in almost all the locations in which it fought is strongly reinforced throughout the volume. Yet Black is not only concerned with tactics and strategy, considering the political, social, and cultural factors that impacted the army's ability to function effectively during both war and peace time. The book recognises the role these factors played in the army's development, with specific attention given to the army's role at home and the military reforms undertaken at various times, with most emphasis given to those upon the outbreak of war with revolutionary France.

Black emphasises the importance of viewing both the role of the army in Britain's expansion and the army itself as a collective rather than as a series of individual conflicts and commanders. Yet he also seeks to demonstrate the individual experiences of some of those involved in the conflicts. Unsurprisingly, special attention is given to Marlborough and Wellington, two commanders whose service bookends the study and who Black argues shared similar leadership qualities despite operating within different contexts. But Black also seeks to provide an insight into the careers and experiences of other officers and even ordinary soldiers. He does this using