

Wording Petitions

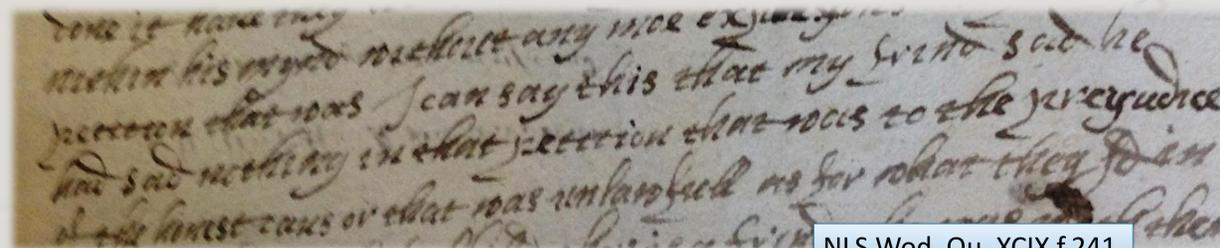
The Supplication of John Kid (d.1679)

Early modern Scots who had been imprisoned for challenging or questioning the authority of the Stuart monarchy faced the uncomfortable fact that the act of petitioning, and the language dictated by it, incorporated a submissive recognition of this very same authority. How these prisoners chose to negotiate this contradiction through the wording of their petitions exposes a significant interpretative issue for petitions as sources: which words or phrases should be considered part of their form and which might be read as genuine sentiment?

John Kid

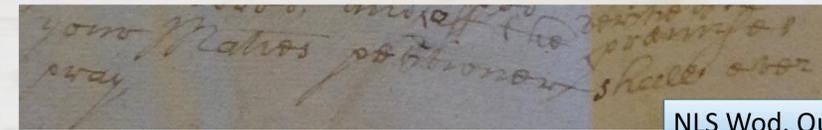
- Radical field preacher.
- A Bothwell rebel in conflict with its ringleaders.
- Claimed to have been granted quarter by royal troops.
- Executed August 14th 1679 - an unsuccessful petitioner!

Petition: Submission? Seditious?



“...my friend said he had said nothing in that petition that was to the prejudice of the honest caus or that was unfaithfull...”

– Janet Chrechtoun



“We have no Ground to question the Matters of Fact in this Petition, since so peremptorily they undertake to prove them. The Stile is evidently that of their **Lawyers**, and when People are under their Management, it must be expected their **Petitions will run in their Phrases**... [sic] Their dying Speeches and known Sentiments make it evident, they of themselves **would never have termed this Rising a Rebellion**” – Wodrow, pp.85-86.

“He continued at his own House, and always exhorted such of **the Rebels** as came to him, to lay down their Arms, and **supplicate for Pardon**- Petition by the advocates of John Kid & John King in Wodrow, p.85

“...being unfortunatlie near **Bothwellbridge in companie with thwse who wer then in armes ag[ain]st your royall au[thor]itie...**” – Supplication by John Kid [NLS Wod. Qu. XCIX f.242]

References

- Cowan, I. B., *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660 – 1688* (London: 1976)
- Hickee, G., ed., *The Spirit of Popery Speaking out of the Mouths of Phanatical-Protestants of the Last Speeches of Mr John Kid and Mr John King* (London: 1680)
- Hume-Brown, P., *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd series, vi (Edinburgh: 1914)
- Wodrow, R., *The history of the sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restauration to the Revolution* (Edinburgh: 1722) ii
- Background Image: ‘The supplication of Mr John Kid prisoner in the tolbuith of Edinburgh’, NLS Wod. Qu. (No. 36) f.242