

The New Criterion

Letters

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A case of murder?: a reply

by [Pat Rogers](#)

Pat Rogers replies:

Aldan Markson is right of course that the impeachment of Strafford failed in the Lords, but to describe a parliamentary bill of attainder as "murder" is an extreme use of words, unless the term is taken to mean "judicial" (i.e. legal but morally unwarranted) killing. Normally, a murder is defined as an unlawful killing, but parliament had the right to pass a bill of attainder, with the royal assent, whether or not this was the proper course to take. As it happens, I agree with Markson that Strafford was treated in an extremely cruel and unjust way, but it's not clear that we can call such things murder as ordinarily understood.

Pat Rogers is the author of *Johnson (Past Masters)*, The Samuel Johnson Encyclopedia, and the entry for Johnson in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

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