

Editor's Introduction

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These well-written articles are all on different time periods, but they would be of interest to any scholar of British history, because they concern themes with broad relevance: empire, criminal insanity, royal illegitimacy, genocide, and popular apathy toward politics.

Much British history currently is concerned with empire, but mostly for the modern period. We begin our issue with an excellent article on the fourteenth-century English empire, which began as Edward III expanded English domains into parts of France and Ireland. In “Lordship and Principality: Colonial Policy in Ireland and Aquitaine in the 1360s,” David Green contrasts English governance in these two colonial territories to explain why these imperial ambitions failed in the fourteenth century. As English meanings of sovereignty developed, they clashed with indigenous understandings of authority in Ireland and Aquitaine. The English rulers tried to impose heavy financial burdens, but absentee lords could not extract revenue as effectively. This was also a time of increasing intolerance of linguistic differences, especially in Ireland. Above all, this was an attempt to impose an English “state,” which failed, but set an important precedent for the United Kingdom.

In his fascinating “Exorcising Madness in Late Elizabethan England: *The Seduction of Arthington* and the Criminal Culpability of Demoniacs,” Owen Williams explores the questions: Did Elizabethans believe that people possessed by demons were not to be held accountable for criminal acts? Were they mad or bad? He also sheds new light on the 1591 case of William Hacket, a radical Puritan prophet arrested for declaiming in Cheapside against the government. One of his followers was Henry Arthington, who called for Elizabeth to be deposed and proclaimed Hacket the emperor of Europe. But while Arthington escaped execution, Hacket was hung. Williams analyzes Arthington’s justification for his actions, *The Seduction of Arthington*, to explain why, along the way elucidating the Elizabethan theory of insanity and demoniac possession as it related to religious change.

The Duke of Monmouth’s rising in 1685 is customarily dismissed as a tragic yet unimportant episode in British history, and the duke himself—Charles II’s illegitimate son—as weak and unprincipled. But in his exciting article “The Last Royal Bastard and the Multitude,” Wolfram Schmidgen ingeniously suggests that the ambiguity of Monmouth’s status—his illegitimacy, his royalty, his split allegiances—were the source of his appeal to the “multitude.” Schmidgen creatively

looks at theories of sexual generation, Shakespeare, Dryden, and popular tracts to discern the relationship between Monmouth's origins and perceptions of him politically. While Tories decried Monmouth for his illegitimacy, common people found him appealing because he was both royal and a bastard. Monmouth's mixed status could be used to signify the theory of mixed government.¹

In his disturbing and well-researched article "From Terror to Genocide: Britain's Tasmanian Penal Colony and Australia's History Wars," Benjamin Madley examines why the Aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania became nearly extinct in the nineteenth century. This question has been the topic of heated debate in Australia. Madley not only argues that genocide was indeed committed against the Tasmanian Aborigines, he also explains why: it resulted from a "culture of terror" and endemic violence in the harsh conditions of the early nineteenth-century settlement. Settlers were isolated with inadequate food in forts surrounded by barren rocks. The convict inhabitants were often violent and dangerous, and in response the authorities subjected them to a regime of public flogging and execution. Settlers and escaped convicts often killed and tortured Aborigines; while the British government denounced these actions, they failed to punish them. When the Aborigines fought back, the settlers advocated "extermination," and they and British troops killed hundreds of Aborigines. To "protect" the Aborigines, the government then established camps where harsh conditions killed the remaining population.

Our last two articles concern popular attitudes toward politics in the postwar era and suggest that many ordinary British people found party or even nationalist politics to be off-putting and irrelevant. These articles represent a welcome continuation of the trend of the "new political history" that looks at cultures of politics through innovative sources, in this case cinema and sport. In "A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations of Politicians and Party Politics, circa 1944–1964," Steven Fielding suggests that while historians have assumed that postwar politics were defined by class, consensus, and the major two parties, ordinary people were alienated from the system of representative politics. With a creative use of sources, he shows that films depicted politicians as corrupt and self-interested, stressing populism rather than party politics.²

In his intriguing article "A Prince, a King, and a Referendum: Rugby, Politics, and Nationhood in Wales, 1969–1979," Martin Johnes uses sport to explain why the Welsh people rejected devolution in 1979. This was not a rejection of national identity, he argues; instead, the Welsh preferred to express their national identity through sport rather than through politics. Unlike the Plaid Cymru movement, rugby unified those who spoke Welsh and those who did not. In 1979 the Welsh rejected devolution because they distrusted both Labour and the Conservatives, but they were very proud of their nationality. By 1997, however, rugby had declined and politics became a vehicle for nationalism, as the referendum for a Welsh assembly passed.

¹ For a related exploration of perceptions of gender ambiguity and royalty, see Cynthia Herrup, "The King's Two Genders," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 3 (July 2006): 493–510.

² For related articles on wartime film, see Jo Fox, "Millions Like Us? Accented Language and the Ordinary in British Films of the Second World War," and Caroline Levine, "Propaganda for Democracy: The Curious Case of *Love on the Dole*," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 4 (October 2006): 819–45, 846–74.