

Editor's Introduction

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Most of the articles in this issue focus on two broad themes: the efforts of political actors to control the messages that reach the public and hybrid identities in the wider British Empire. The early modern public sphere has been a frequent topic in the pages of the *Journal of British Studies*. In a recent article, Peter Lake and Steven Pincus argued that public spheres appeared and disappeared in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain.¹ The crown used print to advocate its own version of events, but manuscript circulation of news created an alternative, rival, or complementary public sphere. In his article “‘At the time of his death’: Manuscript Instability and Walter Raleigh’s Performance on the Scaffold,” Andrew Fleck gives a wonderfully detailed scholarly account of one example of this phenomenon. When Sir Walter Raleigh died on the scaffold in 1618, he apparently made an impassioned speech protesting his innocence of the charge of treason. Usually, the last, dying speeches of malefactors quickly circulated as printed pamphlets or broadsheets. In this case, for a month British people could only read about the case through manuscript accounts. But so many of these accounts appeared that the crown, as well as Sir John Stucly, Raleigh’s former friend and neighbor, felt compelled to print their own accounts of Raleigh’s death to justify the crown’s case. However, manuscripts continued to circulate, becoming more elaborate as they portrayed Raleigh as a victim of Spanish interests at the Jacobean court.

Several of the articles in this issue illustrate a theme that has also been a central preoccupation of the *JBS*: the complex, hybrid nature of British identity in the imperial context. In “Missionaries, Methodists, and a Ghost: Philip Quaque in London and Cape Coast, 1756–1816,” Travis Glasson sheds new light on the career of the first African ordained as an Anglican priest in Britain. First, Glasson has discovered that Quaque became tangentially embroiled in a scandal in 1762, when his teacher, Anglican clergyman John Moore, fell prey to neighbors who alleged that a ghost accused another neighbor of murder. Glasson identifies Quaque as the African observed in the background of this affair. More significantly, Moore was involved in Methodism, and this influenced Quaque’s religious formation. Quaque thus becomes more closely tied with other Methodist sympathizers among the Africans in the Anglo-American circles, such as Olaudah Equi-

¹ Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 270–92.

ano. Glasson also demonstrates that while Quaake criticized slavery, when he served as chaplain to the Company of Merchants at the Cape Coast, he hesitated to act directly against it until later in his life.

In “*Scéal Grinn? Jokes, Puns, and the Shaping of Bilingualism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*,” Nicholas Wolf focuses on another sort of hybrid identity. In a creative analysis combining the study of jokes with Irish history, he explores the hundreds of jokes whose punch lines depend on confusions of Irish and English words. Historians have usually seen the relationship between the English and Irish languages as a contrast between a dominant, modern code and a beleaguered, traditional way of speaking. Some of these jokes, to be sure, did make fun of Irish speakers as ignorant and backward. But Wolf argues that understanding many of these jokes depended on fluency in both languages and in fact mocked monolingualists. The clash between Irish and English appeared not only in modern, imperial settings such as cities and law courts, but also in markets and on farms. Wolf also compares these jokes with similar tales in other imperial settings, such as British India, demonstrating that the ambiguities of language operated in these arenas as well.

In “Being British in Malaya, 1890–1940,” Lynn Hollen Lees turns to another area of the British Empire, where, as she argues, Malay and Chinese inhabitants of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States often asserted their own identity as British subjects, a status to which they were legally entitled if born in these territories. They celebrated the queen’s jubilee, learned English, and educated their children in the ways of the Empire. At the same time, they traded in Malay and Chinese circles and circulated books, pamphlets, and newspapers in their own languages; in some situations they would wear traditional dress and in others, Western clothing. They used their notion of British identity as a basis for making claims of equality on the state, in contrast to some British officials who focused on racial difference to deny their claims. By the interwar period, Malay nationalism and British patriotism competed with other transnational movements, such as Chinese republicanism, Indian nationalism, and Pan-Islamic movements. Lees thus challenges the assumption that British identity was necessarily based on “othering” the foreigner; instead, on the periphery, imperial subjects created their own hybrid notions of identity.

Daniel Mark Stephen, in “‘The White Man’s Grave’: British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–1925,” also addresses the problem of colonial identities in the Empire, through a focus on the West African displays at the famous Wembley exhibition. As he argues, this exhibition was intended to propagandize for a newly progressive empire that would develop and “uplift” the colonies, not just conquer and dominate them. In particular, the West African exhibits were supposed to portray Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and other colonies as inhabited by a diverse group of somewhat primitive yet hard-working people who needed British rulers to harness their energies into industrial and commercial development. However, Creole Africans in these colonies and West African students in Britain challenged this narrative and tried to expose the racism and condescension they encountered in interwar London.

In “Education or Manipulation? Labour, Democracy, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain,” Laura Beers makes an important contribution by tracing the changing attitude of the Labour Party toward the popular press. Left-wing critics

have often seen the popular press in negative terms as appealing to the lowest common denominator, irrationality, and distracting the working class from their correct political focus. Beers has found that this attitude was prevalent in the mid-1920s but not necessarily before or after. In the early years of the Labour Party, many activists did indeed scorn the press, but others were willing to use posters and newspaper articles to appeal on a visceral as well as an intellectual level to voters. During the mid-1920s, especially during the General Strike, Labour Party officials were quite hostile to the press; the Labour paper the *Daily Herald* refused to experiment with free insurance and other gimmicks to expand circulation, and most notoriously, the Trades Union Congress called out the printers during the General Strike. However, party activists soon realized the error of this tactic and began to use the popular press more by the late 1920s, which may have contributed to Labour's electoral success in the long term.

Our last haunting and evocative article is Amy Bell's "Landscapes of Fear: Wartime London, 1939–1945." Faced with the Blitz and other episodes of bombing that threatened destruction of London, government officials and news reporters tried to keep up morale, creating an emotional culture in which fear should not be expressed lest morale be damaged. However, by examining diaries, accounts by psychologists, and fiction, Bell not surprisingly discovered that Londoners faced literally gut-wrenching fear of bombardment and death. They tended to describe their physical symptoms more than their mental ones, however. Overall, psychologists and psychiatrists tended to downplay the possibility that the war caused lasting emotional trauma, although those who studied children certainly found evidence of it. It was the fiction writers Graham Greene and Elizabeth Bowen, argues Bell, who were able to best evoke the terror and dislocation of London's bombing.

Next we will have an exciting special issue on material culture, featuring articles on aristocratic women's tombs and country houses, the gentleman's drink of port, Indian diamonds and Kashmiri shawls, and English architecture.