

# Editors' Introduction

*Brian Cowan and Elizabeth Elbourne*

This first issue of the fiftieth volume of the *Journal of British Studies* begins with an article by David Underdown (1925–2009), who was surely one of the most influential recent historians of seventeenth-century Britain. Underdown was a prominent contributor to this journal, and he had recently contributed a review of Ian Gentles's *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638–1652* (Harlow, 2007) before submitting this article to us.<sup>1</sup> Underdown was also one of the earliest contributors to the *JBS*. His article “The Independents Reconsidered” was published in volume 3 in 1964, and it initiated a further debate with George Yule in volumes 7 and 8 in 1968 on the nature of civil war-era allegiances in the Westminster Parliament that would eventually culminate in his pathbreaking monograph on Pride's Purge.<sup>2</sup> Over a decade later, Underdown's equally important book on regional allegiances during the civil wars, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (1987), was the subject of a substantial and often-cited debate with John Morrill in this journal.<sup>3</sup>

Underdown's article for this issue, “‘But the Shows of their Street’: Civic Paganism and Charivari in a Somerset Town, 1607,” reflects his perennial interest in regional and civic identities and popular culture, as well as in the nature of political divisions and the contested allegiances that result from those divisions. This article uses a close study of the debates that erupted in 1607 in the town of Wells around the civic celebrations that formed part of a particularly contentious ritual year. Here we learn that the “culture wars” between early Stuart Puritans and their enemies were very real, yet far from a simple set of contests between tolerant traditionalists and religious zealots. Like Underdown's book on seventeenth-century Dorchester, *Fire from Heaven* (1992), this article demonstrates how the close study of local politics can illuminate the issues that divided early modern English

<sup>1</sup> David Underdown, review of *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638–1652*, by Ian Gentles, *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 2008): 929–31.

<sup>2</sup> David Underdown, “The Independents Reconsidered,” *Journal of British Studies* 3, no. 2 (May 1964): 57–84; George Yule, “Independents and Revolutionaries,” *Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 2 (May 1968): 11–32; David Underdown, “The Independents Again,” *Journal of British Studies* 8, no. 1 (November 1968): 83–93, and *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (London, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660* (Oxford, 1987); John Morrill, “The Ecology of Allegiance in the English Revolution,” *Journal of British Studies* 26, no. 4 (October 1987): 451–67; David Underdown, “A Reply to John Morrill,” *Journal of British Studies* 26, no. 4 (October 1987): 468–79.

society more generally.<sup>4</sup> We are grateful to Susan Amussen for her editorial assistance in finalizing this article.

Underdown's article is followed by another one on the problems of defining and understanding early Stuart Puritanism by Isaac Stephens. His article, "Confessional Identity in Early Stuart England: The 'Prayer Book Puritanism' of Elizabeth Isham," uses a case study of Elizabeth Isham (1609–54) to investigate the ways in which religious historians have understood the confessional identities of early seventeenth-century England. He offers a challenge to approaches to the topic that have seen early Stuart Puritans as recalcitrantly suspicious of, if not actually hostile to, the established church's Book of Common Prayer. The experience of Elizabeth Isham, Stephens argues, demonstrates that some early Stuart Puritans could and did find a place of demonstrable and genuine affection for the Book of Common Prayer in their piety. For this reason, he introduces the concept of "Prayer Book Puritanism" as a means of understanding this phenomenon.

Hannah Smith's article, "Politics, Patriotism, and Gender: The Standing Army Debate on the English Stage, circa 1689–1720," brings us to the later Stuart and early Hanoverian period. Many historians have identified the decline of the "standing army" debates in the years after the Glorious Revolution as a key aspect of the making of a fiscal-military state in the eighteenth century. As the second great "hundred years' war" with France commenced in the wake of the 1688 revolutions, long-standing seventeenth-century anxieties about the propriety of maintaining a regular army began to wane. The precise reasons why the army found new legitimacy at this time have remained relatively unexplored. In this article, Smith points to the English stage as a crucial place in which defenses of the English (and later British) army could be articulated for a popular audience. She notes that over forty plays were presented between the 1680s and 1730 in which positive images of the army and its officers can be discerned. Her work here thus contributes to a growing interest among political historians in using traditionally "literary" sources, such as plays, novels, or films, as source materials.

Jessica Warner examines another aspect of eighteenth-century fiscal policy in "Faith in Numbers: Quantifying Gin and Sin in Eighteenth-Century England." Warner examines the political debates and pamphlet wars behind the 1736 and 1751 Gin Acts, with particular focus on the relationship between the use of quantitative analysis and moral rhetoric in the passing of both Acts. Proponents of the new legislation were successful because their data was more extensive; they had the moral authority of the established church on their side; and their opponents were disorganized. Nonetheless, Warner finds that "political arithmetic"—that is, the use of numerate data and the force of quantitative reasoning—mattered less in these debates than the willingness of MPs to pass moral legislation and the social standing and reputations of the supporters of the Acts.

The last three articles in the issue turn to questions of modern intellectual, social, and cultural history. In "Professor James Thomson Sr. and Lord Kelvin: Religion, Science, and Liberal Unionism in Ulster and Scotland," Andrew Holmes argues that the common assumption among historians of Ireland that liberalism among Presbyterians withered away during the nineteenth century in the face of

<sup>4</sup> David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

political challenges and more conservative forms of evangelicalism is incorrect. Holmes examines the political and religious views first of James Thompson and then of his more famous son, renowned physicist Lord Kelvin. He uses this intriguing study to argue that both men were part of a liberal Presbyterian culture in Ireland that was not trumped by the conservative evangelicalism of Henry Cooke. He further argues for the importance of shared traditions in Scotland and Presbyterian Ireland. This liberal Presbyterian heritage helps make sense both of Kelvin's liberal unionism and of the particular ways in which he sought to marry science and religion. The article pays particular attention to the growth of evangelical religion and its role in the political development of Ulster Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century.

In "Finella, Mansfield Forbes, Raymond McGrath, and Modernist Architecture in Britain," Elizabeth Darling describes the genesis and content of the landmark 1930s modernist house Finella. She does much more, however, than catalog the features of a particular house. More broadly, she contributes to a revisionist movement among architectural historians who are seeking, as Darling puts it, to move away from "generalizing and primarily formalist methodologies" (128) toward more historically rooted analyses. By redefining interwar modernist architecture as architecture that sought to engage with the condition of modernity rather than as meeting a set of more formal stylistic criteria based on continental models, Darling expands the definition of British modernism. More particularly, in discussing the life and aims of Finella's owner and creator, reformist Cambridge don Mansfield Forbes, Darling also links queer history to the evolution of modernism in Britain while showing the linkages between modernist reform of the Cambridge curriculum and the quest for an appropriate architecture for a modern age.

In "The 'K-Bomb': Sex Surveys, the Popular Press, and British Sexual Culture in the 1940s and 1950s," Adrian Bingham seeks to shift our understanding of the chronology of the sexual revolution in postwar Britain. He discusses the role of newspapers in the late 1940s and early 1950s first in publicizing and analyzing the Kinsey reports, and then in commissioning, publishing, and analyzing surveys about the sex lives of the British. To look at the popular press, an underutilized source, Bingham argues, rather than at more conventional benchmarks for the emergence of the "permissive" society, enables the historian to see shifts in what it was acceptable to discuss in public well before landmarks such as the *Lady Chatterley* trial in 1960. A sea change in popular attitudes to sexuality and to what could acceptably be discussed in public was already evident by the 1950s, even if it would take until the 1960s for the implications to be fully worked out.

The next issue in this volume will include two articles with an early modern focus: one on ghosts and murder stories, as well as another on images of the human body in newspaper advertisements. It will also contain studies of loyalism during the war for American independence and the first industrial revolution in the context of the multiple British monarchies. Nineteenth-century history will be represented by an article on the search for, and meanings of, gold in nineteenth-century Ireland and another on the Third Reform Act of 1885. The issue will conclude with studies of female shoplifting and of the increasingly blurred relationship between factory and domestic space in early twentieth-century Britain.