Editor's Introduction

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The articles in this issue cluster around several fascinating themes: the history of crime, masculinity, female sexuality, and party politics. They also explore conventional sources in new ways.

In her article, "Love, Friendship, and Power: Queen Mary II's Letters to Frances Apsley," Molly McClain explores the intense relationship between these two women that began in girlhood. Princess Mary and the young courtier Frances Apsley exchanged passionate letters for years, referring to each other as husband and wife. While historians of sexuality long debated whether such relationships were sexual or platonic, McClain contributes to a newer trend that explores the relationship of erotic friendship to structures of power and patronage.[1] McClain demonstrates that this was both a deeply personal love affair, at least on an emotional, although probably not on a physical, level, and a highly stylized friendship conducted in the language of court masques, theater, and poetry. Neither woman could forget that Apsley could gain favor and patronage from her relationship with the princess.

Our next two articles concern the history of crime in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 1970s, the historiography of crime focused on developing statistics about the incidence and punishment of crime. The field had lost some energy, but as these articles demonstrate, it is experiencing a renaissance by combining the old empirical history with the new cultural history.[2] The representation of crime in popular culture, for instance, can illuminate anxieties about rapid social change. The next two articles are exemplary in their careful examination and cross-checking of evidence from different sources to show how representations of crime were ideologically charged.

Stephen Banks's article, "Killing with Courtesy: The English Duelist, 1785–1845," uses statistical analysis and qualitative sources to illuminate the decline in dueling in early nineteenth-century England. In contrast, dueling persisted and indeed was reinvented in France and Germany during this same time. Using reports of dueling in newspapers, Banks demonstrates that military officers accounted for an uptick in incidence during the Napoleonic Wars, but duels declined shortly after. After

[1] Most notably Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago, 2003).

[2] For some other recent *JBS* articles on crime, see A. L. Beier, "Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian 'Criminal Class': Mayhew's Convict Revisited," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 3 (July 2005): 499–515; and Dana Rabin, "Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 3 (July 2005): 457–77.

that time, both military codes and honor and civilian codes of masculinity were modified. Newspapers and other commentators increasingly mocked duelists for their bombastic bravado instead of applauding their bravery. The requirements for reputation had changed.

The availability of the Old Bailey Proceedings online, with its hundreds of searchable transcripts for criminal trials in London from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, has become a boon for historians. However, are these trial transcripts a reliable source? In "The Old Bailey Proceedings and the Representation of Crime and Criminal Justice in Eighteenth-Century London," Robert B. Shoemaker closely compares accounts of trials in the proceedings with other accounts of the same trials. Apparently people at the time did so as well; those who appeared before the court also scrutinized the proceedings out of self-interest. Shoemaker demonstrates that the Old Bailey proceedings often left out testimony favorable to the accused. Furthermore, these reports did not fully report interactions among judges, lawyers, the accused, and witnesses. As a result, they supported the interests of city authorities.

Political history in the past focused on the maneuvering of parties and politicians, before turning to the language and politics of culture. In his address as the president of the North American Conference on British Studies, "Mediating 'the Chaos of Incident' and 'the Cosmos of Sentiment': Liberalism in Britain, 1815–1914," W. C. Lubenow illuminates liberalism and liberal philosophy in the long nineteenth century. In an eloquent and searching lecture, Lubenow explores the relationship between party politics and liberalism in philosophical terms. Liberalism is very hard to define. To solve this problem, Lubenow argues, it is more fruitful to treat liberalism "as a series of practices, processes, and procedures rather than as a packet of policies, philosophies, and partisanship" (495). Liberals challenged established beliefs and authorities, but in some ways they espoused a "sensibility" more than a coherent program.

In another development, historians are combining an attention to political language and culture with the analysis of political organization by framing local and national cultures together. Matthew Cragoe, in his article, "The Great Reform Act and the Modernization of British Politics: The Impact of Conservative Associations, 1835–1841," sheds significant new light on the impact of the first Reform Act in 1832.[3] Historians have debated whether the Reform Act produced party organization or if electoral politics were still determined by local issues and the interests of great landed families. Cragoe first ingeniously demonstrates that from 1832–41, local electoral politics did concentrate on national issues. He does this by studying local Conservative associations with their large, local middle-class membership (and some working-class membership). In their speeches, toasts, and banners, they concentrated on national leadership, ideas, and issues. However, after the split over the Corn Laws, the Conservative associations disintegrated, and local electoral politics returned to local concerns.

In his article, "The Rise and Fall of a Political Party: National Liberalism in Wrexham, North Wales, 1936–1968," David Dutton also ties together local and

[3] For another recent article on this topic, see Nancy LoPatin-Lummis, "The 1832 Reform Act Debate: Should the Suffrage Be Based on Property or Taxpaying?" *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (April 2007): 320–45.

national issues in a study of the National Liberals in Wales. The Liberals split in 1932, when those who called themselves the National Liberals retreated from the principle of free trade and joined the Conservatives in the national government. Eventually, appeasement also became an issue that alienated the National Liberals from the mainstream Liberals. The National Liberals also believed that socialism—in the form of the Labour party—was a preeminent threat. Although now almost forgotten, National Liberals had more seats than the mainstream Liberals. Dutton shows that their ability to retain seats or lose them often depended on the ability of their local leader to convince local Conservatives that the National Liberals would be effective in combating socialism. By the 1950s, however, they were absorbed into the Conservative party.

Finally, Lucy Bland's fascinating and entertaining article, "The Trials and Tribulations of Edith Thompson: The Capital Crime of Sexual Incitement in 1920s England," tells the story of Edith Thompson, tried along with her lover Percy Bywater for the murder of her husband in 1923. Edith Thompson was a "new woman" who worked in the city, earned more than her husband, dressed fashionably, wore makeup, liked to dance, and avidly consumed romance novels. Although she did not actually stab her husband, she was effectively put on trial for her sexual agency. Bland shows how the trial reflected 1920s anxieties about masculinity damaged by the war and by forward women.