

Editor's Introduction

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All the articles in this issue focus on close readings of texts and discourses, revealing different meanings hidden by the chasm between the present and the past. Two of our authors explore the contrast between newspaper accounts of political behavior and behind-the-scenes studies by officials and researchers. Others explore the implication of the clash between official discourses about women and how women actually behaved.

We are happy to publish an article that reaches back into the Anglo-Saxon period. In "Demon Possession in Anglo-Saxon and Early Modern England: Continuity and Evolution in Social Context," Richard Raiswell and Peter Dendle contrast the ways in which people in these different periods understood the afflictions of those who experienced terrible fits, convulsions, and hallucinations. In both periods, people referred to the Gospels, which told them that the victims were possessed by demons. In both eras, different religious authorities competed for control of the explanation and treatment of demonic possession. In the Anglo-Saxon period, local healers and those who believed in magic spells to expel demons contended with priests who demanded confession. At times, the two traditions were blended. In the early modern period, Puritans competed with the official church over responses to demonic possession. The authors found significant differences in the two periods; for example, in the early modern era, witchcraft was seen as playing a much more important role in possession.¹

In her ingenious article, "Sex, Scandal, Satire, and Population in 1798: Revisiting Malthus's *First Essay*," Gail Bederman sheds new light on Malthus's first *Essay on Population*, published in that year. Historians have recognized that Malthus attacked philosopher William Godwin's optimistic view that society could change and instead promulgated a gloomy picture of unrelenting and fatal population growth. But Bederman has discovered that Malthus was responding more specifically to the scandal that erupted in 1798 when Godwin published his frank memoirs of his wife, the famous feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, complete with accounts of her affairs and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Bederman has discovered that Malthus not only owned Godwin's memoirs of Wollstonecraft and Wollstonecraft's *Posthumous Works* but also briefly noted his own thoughts at significant points in the margins of these books. Bederman is thus able to argue that Malthus's focus

¹ For another recent article on early modern demon possession, see Owen Williams, "Exorcising Madness in Late Elizabethan England: *The Seduction of Arthington* and the Criminal Culpability of Demoniacs," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 2008): 30–52.

on the figure of the uncontrolled sexual woman stemmed from his response to Wollstonecraft as well as Godwin.

Female missionaries are once again explored in the *Journal of British Studies* in Elizabeth Prevost's article, "Married to the Mission Field: Gender, Christianity, and Professionalization in Britain and Colonial Africa, 1865–1914."² In the late nineteenth century, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) had definitively accepted single female missionaries and sent them to the field in Africa, although officials still had doubts about their stamina. By closely reading their speeches and letters, Prevost finds that the female missionaries themselves and their supporters insisted that they be viewed not just as helpers, nurses, or teachers but as promulgators of religion. By emphasizing their spiritual role as missionaries, they claimed a place for themselves in religious institutions that combined reason and enterprise with the more traditional feminine qualities of emotion and empathy. However, the CMS also faced difficulties in contending with these female missionaries because it still hesitated to place single female missionaries with unmarried male missionaries or other European officials, fearing impropriety. Some of the female missionaries met their husbands in the mission field, but if they married, the CMS considered their work to be subsumed under their husbands' work. Mission work both constrained and enabled women, concludes Prevost in her subtle, sensitive, and extensively researched article.

In elections in the past ten or fifteen years, politicians in both Great Britain and the United States have resorted to using focus groups to discern the motivations and feelings of voters. In an intriguing approach in "Mass-Observation, Market Research, and the Birth of the Focus Group, 1937–1997," Joe Moran demonstrates that the British left-wing group Mass-Observation pioneered qualitative analysis of voters' opinions in the 1930s. Scorning the scientific pretensions of polling, in the 1940s Mass-Observation interviewed people to discover the roots of political apathy, a key concern of the Labour Party at that time.³ These efforts anticipated the motivation research and focus groups of the 1950s and 1960s. However, unlike Mass-Observation, these more commercial endeavors tended to treat voters as consumers rather than as thoughtful subjects.

Jordanna Bailkin makes an important intervention into discussions of postwar race relations and immigration in her article, "Leaving Home: The Politics of Deportation in Postwar Britain." Most historiographical discussion has focused on immigration restrictions rather than deportation. Blaming the Notting Hill and Nottingham riots on alleged crime and moral offenses committed by West Indians, politicians and newspapers sometimes called for the deportation of immigrants in the late 1950s. As a result, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, best known for restricting immigration on the basis of race, also allowed for

² For an earlier analysis of this topic, see Clare Midgley, "Can Women Be Missionaries? Envisioning Female Agency in the Early Nineteenth-Century British Empire," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 335–58.

³ For a recent discussion of political apathy in the postwar years, see Steven Fielding, "A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations of Politicians and Party Politics, circa 1944–1964," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 2008): 107–28. In our next issue, we will also have an article that explores Labour Party efforts to use advertising to win over such voters: Laura Beers, "Education or Manipulation? Labour, Democracy, and the Mass Media between the Wars," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2009), forthcoming.

deportation. While the public discourse of deportation thus focused on racial issues, Bailkin made a surprising discovery: most of those deported during the 1960s were Irish. While they were generally sent back to Ireland for committing petty crimes, by reading government minutes Bailkin has found that the Home Office used these deportation battles to combat Irish Republican Army terrorism. She concludes that the Home Office eventually broadened its powers of deportation in 1969 in order to use executive powers to control immigration and terrorism.

The subject of sexuality also appears in Rebecca Jennings's fascinating article, "The most uninhibited party they'd ever been to': The Postwar Encounter between Psychiatry and the British Lesbian, 1945–1971." The modern history of sexuality originally assumed that sexologists and psychiatrists imposed an identity on those with same-sex desires, but a newer historiography has challenged this assumption.⁴ Women who were attracted to other women felt isolated and strange in postwar society, so they sometimes sought out the writings of psychiatrists to explain their desires. But most psychiatrists portrayed lesbians as neurotic women who failed to mature and adjust to the prescribed feminine role of marriage and motherhood; instead, they were too independent and career oriented. Yet some psychiatrists and psychologists were somewhat more open-minded in trying to find an etiology for lesbianism, and the Minorities Research Group, an organization for lesbians, tried to cooperate with them in providing research subjects. However, the women eventually turned away from the psychiatric project. Jennings demonstrates that lesbians read, negotiated with, cooperated with, challenged, and fought back against the official discourse on homosexuality.

⁴ Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago, 2000).