

Editor's Introduction

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This is the first issue of the *Journal of British Studies* (*JBS*; incorporating *Albion*) under the editorship of Anna Clark (University of Minnesota), with Pat McDevitt and Claire Schen of the University at Buffalo as book review editors. The previous editors, Nicholas Rogers and James Epstein, should also be given credit for the initial editing of some of the articles, and Michael Moore commissioned some of the book reviews under the aegis of *Albion*.

We aim to continue the excellent work of the previous editors in the new expanded version of *JBS*. The British Empire has rightly received increased attention in the pages of the journal, and we will maintain this trend. We will also continue and strengthen *JBS*'s focus on British, rather than just English, history, so we are planning to publish articles on ethnicity and citizenship (a focus of the next issue) and Irish, Welsh, and Scottish history. Whenever possible, each issue will also contain a spectrum of articles from earlier to later periods. We wish to publish the very best of political, diplomatic, and constitutional history, along with exciting new interdisciplinary cultural and social histories.

The articles in this issue insightfully analyze dominant laws, discourses, and concepts but also explain how ordinary people deployed, manipulated, contested, evaded, or challenged them.

This issue begins with an important contribution to a long-running debate in British (and continental) women's history. Was the late Middle Ages a "golden age" for women, or did they remain mired in a subordinate state? At this time, the legal custom of *femme sole* status emerged, allowing women to trade on their own and make contracts without their husbands. Some historians have argued that this gave women the possibility of economic autonomy. In "The Benefits and Drawbacks of *Femme Sole* Status in England, 1300–1630," Marjorie McIntosh argues that *femme sole* status could make women vulnerable as well, so many working wives did not claim it. Instead, they used their status as *femmes couvertes* to disclaim responsibility for their trading debts.

The concept of "honor" is often thought of as the dominant discourse of the aristocracy, but as John Smail demonstrates, merchants used honor as well. In his "Credit, Risk, and Honor in Eighteenth-Century Commerce," Smail demonstrates that honor was a practical necessity for merchants engaged in long-distance trade, for they depended on faraway colleagues to honor their bills of exchange and to maintain the dense web of paper on which flourishing commerce depended. For

merchants, honor depended on reciprocity and reason, and a version of masculinity related to, but distinct from, aristocratic honor.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are often seen as moments when new modern conceptions of the self and social identities emerged, along with the institutions that regulated and monitored behavior seen as deviant. The next three articles show how ordinary people responded to these discourses.

In “Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century,” Dana Rabin traces changes in attitudes toward drunkenness. In the seventeenth century, drunkenness was judged in a religious context, as a sin, but by the eighteenth century, John Locke’s philosophical musings on the nature of the self led to debates about drunkenness and personal responsibility. Rabin then deftly moves from the rarified pages of philosophy and elegant periodicals to the grubby floor of the Old Bailey, where people charged with serious crimes tried to gain mitigation on the grounds that drunkenness impaired their judgment.

The eighteenth century was also a time when philanthropists and police tried to crack down on begging, passing new laws and creating new institutions to cleanse the streets of beggars. However, as Tim Hitchcock shows in “Begging on the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London,” common people continued to accept and even justify begging. When apprentices and maids begged at holiday times, they acted within a moral economic continuum including servants’ tips or carpenters’ “chips” (the wood scraps they took home from the shipyards). The wage was never enough, especially for poor women and children, who composed the preponderance of beggars. But the public acceptance of beggars centered around the male beggars, whom Londoners often regarded as colorful characters rather than reviled deviants.

The next article moves on to the mid-nineteenth century. In “Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian ‘Criminal Class’: Mayhew’s Convict Revisited,” A. L. Beier challenges the argument that the identity of the criminal class was simply imposed from above by authorities. Instead, using the case of David Evans, an eloquent criminal interviewed by Mayhew, Beier shows that criminals used a special argot to create their own cohesive and oppositional identity, even exaggerating their exploits to do this.

The final two articles focus on the repercussions of World War I. Philip Dehne, in “From ‘Business as Usual’ to a More Global War: The British Decision to Attack Germans in South America during the First World War,” describes how British merchants in South America pressured the British bureaucracy to help them shut out German merchants, bankers, and shipowners from trade to fight a “commercial war” in aid of the military struggle. The Board of Trade had been dominated by a *laissez-faire* attitude, which helped the interests of “gentlemanly capitalists” and bankers. However, the British merchants in South America successfully lobbied the Foreign Office to shift policy in favor of more government regulation in wartime. This article also illuminates questions of British identity in far-off lands.

Finally, in “A ‘matter for artists, and not for soldiers’? The Cultural Politics of the Earl Haig National Memorial, 1928–1937,” Stephen Heathorn shows us how veterans and the wider public challenged civil servants’ and artists’ vision of an appropriate memorial for General Haig. Many historians of World War I now view Haig as chiefly responsible for the mass slaughter of soldiers, but this is a critique that only emerged into print at the end of the 1920s. In 1929, civil servants invited

artists to design a memorial to the general, but the newspaper-reading public and veterans objected to their modernist vision. But they also complained that the proposed figure of General Haig on a massive horse seemed too belligerently Teutonic, and it took years to come up with a figure sufficiently traditional and suitable for a military hero.