

Editors' Introduction

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This issue begins with two articles on classic themes in early modern British history, the nature of the English Reformation and the crisis of authority faced by King Charles I in the early years of his reign. An article on late Victorian and Edwardian working-class education follows. We conclude with a special forum on memory and history, “Remembering the Past: Memory, History, Commemoration.”

Leif Dixon’s article, “William Perkins, ‘Atheisme,’ and the Crises of England’s Long Reformation,” uses a study of the Elizabethan divine William Perkins’s thinking about atheism to explore the complexities of post-Reformation English religious thought. Rather than looking for evidence of atheism itself, Dixon asks, “What can early modern anti-atheism tell us about contemporary perceptions?” (794). He observes that the concept of atheism “only had meaning when it was applied to something else” (811) and was indeed most commonly used as a pejorative adjective (e.g., “atheistical”) applied to other objectionable ideas and practices, such as apostasy and hypocrisy. For Perkins, and by extension for most late Tudor divines, the concept of atheism was not an empty category. It had real meaning, but more so as an adjective than as a discretely identifiable noun. Much like puritanism itself, which many historians now tend to understand as a qualifying degree of Protestant zeal, rather than a distinct set of doctrines or beliefs, the late Tudor concept of “atheism” is best understood as a means by which post-Reformation, and especially puritan, divines qualified the things that they found exceptionally distasteful or troubling to the true faith.

In “Evil Counsel: The *Propositions to Bridle the Impertinency of Parliament* and the Critique of Caroline Government in the Late 1620s,” Noah Millstone addresses a theme introduced by F. J. Levy’s classic article in this journal titled “How Information Spread among the Gentry, 1550–1640”: how was political information and commentary on contemporary affairs distributed among the subjects of a regime that sought strictly to control the spread of critical debate?¹ He uses a careful study of the composition and circulation of one particular manuscript tract, *Propositions for your Majesty’s Service*, which was copied and circulated widely in 1629 after King Charles had dissolved the last Westminster Parliament to sit

¹ F. J. Levy, “How Information Spread among the Gentry, 1550–1640,” *Journal of British Studies* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 11–34.

until the calling of his fateful Short Parliament in 1640. The *Propositions*, Millstone demonstrates, provides evidence of substantial fears that the English government could become tyrannical, and he argues that it should be understood as an example of the “dark side of [the] ‘moderate monarchism’” (816) that is often thought to have dominated political thinking in pre-civil war England.

In “The Citizens of Morley College,” Andrea Geddes Poole offers a study of the late nineteenth-century educational institution, the Morley College for Working Men and Women established by the social reformer Emma Cons. Geddes Poole locates the origins of Morley College in two related social impulses within late Victorian society, the general movement for working-class education and the specific reform efforts of those “social missionaries” who sought to improve and enhance the lives and aspirations of the poor. She argues that “the purpose of Morley College was not simply embourgeoisement; it was just as much concerned with empowering” (861) its predominantly working-class students by providing them with access to knowledge and cultural capital that had largely been restricted to England’s social elite.

FORUM ON REMEMBERING THE PAST: MEMORY, HISTORY, COMMEMORATION

The history of memory has proved a compelling topic for historians of Britain, Ireland, and the British world in recent years—even if British historians arguably came to the field somewhat tardily in contrast with colleagues in fields such as African history, with its closer relationship to anthropology and oral history, or French history, deeply influenced as it has been by ideas of “collective memory” and “*les lieux de mémoire*.” In recent decades, however, the topic of memory in British history has exploded in so many different directions that it is difficult to see it as a coherent area of inquiry. Back in the 1960s, in concert with the “new social history,” oral history seemed to offer hope for greater access to the experience of groups underrepresented in the written historical record: its possibilities were particularly exciting for historians of women and of the working class. If historians now see the uses of orality as more fractured and more opaque, oral history is no less significant as a mode of inquiry. Narrative theory has provided critical elements for the historian’s tool kit (even if not fully used, as Simon Prince suggests in this issue), while work in the 1980s and 1990s on “theatres of memory” and on the relationship of memory to identity formation provided key departures from within British historiography that continue to resonate. More generally, there has recently been increasing interest among historians of Britain and the British Empire in what one might term “the politics of memory,” including the politics of contested memories in locations such as Ireland in which traumatic conflict has deeply shaped the present. The politics of commemoration have proved to be a particularly fruitful way into these issues, as some of the essays in this forum suggest. This is a tradition that has been mined to good effect by previous work in this journal and in *Albion*, including Christopher Whatley’s recent examination of the politics of commemorating the life of Robbie Burns; Nicoletta Gullace’s work on the memory of the Great War; Guy Beiner’s article on the politics of trauma and triumphalism in

modern Ireland; and Melinda Zook's study of the creation of a secular canon of Whig martyrs in the wake of the Glorious Revolution.²

These are not simple issues, nor is it easy to describe common frameworks, particularly given the range of different theoretical approaches to the central issue of memory. It might make more sense to think in terms of common questions about shared memory in narrative form. How do societies preserve a coherent account of their history? What is the relationship between "public" and "private" memory? How do individuals and groups remember? What do they remember and why? How do narratives about the past affect the politics of the present, and how are they shaped in turn by those politics? What can the history of contested memories and the politics of commemoration tell us about divided societies? Is it appropriate to think in terms of "group" memories, whether defined as collective memory, national stories, or smaller-group commemoration, or is "memory" ultimately individual? Is "memory" even the right term? And how can evidentiary verification connect with the contents of "memory"?

Our four contributors to this forum all write in some way about how people in the past thought about and commemorated their own pasts. Each of these contributions also, tellingly, pays attention in some way to memories of conflict, and the changing uses made through time of these memories. Edmund Rogers and James McConnel both look at the public commemoration of key moments in the religious and constitutional struggles of the seventeenth century. McConnel's article "Remembering the 1605 Gunpowder Plot in Ireland, 1605–1918" asks how the commemoration of 5 November, the day on which Guy Fawkes was foiled in an attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament, changed through time in the British Isles, particularly in Ireland. He argues that 5 November was in fact a relatively minor day in the Protestant calendar in Ireland, until the holiday was revived by Orangists in the aftermath of Catholic emancipation, serving thereafter as a symbol of an imagined connection with British Protestants. Contemporary conflict thus created fertile ground for the attempted reinvention of a tradition that had been hitherto associated largely with church celebration and that the elite was in any case attempting gently to stifle by the early nineteenth century. Edmund Rogers argues in "1688 and 1888: Victorian Society and the Bicentenary of the Glorious Revolution" that although historians generally contrast the lack of commemoration of 1688 in 1888 with the fervent debates and widespread commemoration of 1788, this misses the extensive evidence available through underused local newspapers and other local sources. In fact, 1888 was commemorated with great passion but in limited circles, often sectarian and often with local bases, to ends such as Unionism or the promotion of denominational education. The year 1688 had thus become by 1888 a symbol

² Christopher A. Whatley, "'It Is Said That Burns Was a Radical': Contest, Concession, and the Political Legacy of Robert Burns, ca. 1796–1859," *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 3 (July 2011): 639–66; Nicoletta F. Gullace, "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 1997): 178–206; Guy Beiner, "Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (April 2007): 366–89; Melinda Zook, "'The Bloody Assizes': Whig Martyrdom and Memory after the Glorious Revolution," *Albion* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 373–96.

of Protestant causes, rather than the rallying point for both radicals and Tory constitutionalists that it had been in 1788.

Both McConnel and Rogers show self-consciously “Protestant” uses of history and of popular commemoration to political and sectarian ends; they also raise issues around the “providential” interpretation of history. What happens, Rogers asks, when popular views of issues such as the role of providence in history are at odds with changing philosophies of history on a more academic plane? Both authors demonstrate that it is crucially important to look for local divergences in “national” commemoration and to pay attention to the adroit attempts of interest groups to turn putatively consensual public celebrations to more particular ends. They also underscore that particular communities “remember” in particular ways and that this cultural particularity is an important part of the story. Northern Irish Unionists, for example, used ceremonies of commemoration to political ends in ways that both kept alive and even reinvented and revitalized certain rituals and public ceremonies: commemoration thus had different meanings in Northern Ireland than elsewhere.

Felicia Yap examines imperial memory. She looks at the ways in which British civilian detainees in Japanese camps during the Second World War remembered and publicly described their experiences, from the 1940s to the present. These memories did not entirely fit national narratives: the detainees were among the last representatives of a fading empire; they themselves often saw their own suffering as negligible compared to the far worse suffering of those in prisoner-of-war camps, let alone those subjected to horrors of the holocaust, and the war exposed fatal weaknesses in the British Empire in Asia. For a host of complicated reasons, then, the memories of detainees have not been central to “national” narratives, and detainees themselves did not widely publish for many years after an initial postwar wave of memoirs. In recent years, however, a new wave of elderly detainees (and their descendents) have revisited the experience of the Japanese camps, as memory and commemoration continue to shift in response to the concerns of the present. Yap thus turns our attention to the processes by which private memories are transformed (or not) into “public” memories. Her work also introduces the critical question of the relationship of microhistories to larger metanarratives.

Finally, Simon Prince addresses some overarching theoretical issues. He criticizes some recent uses of the history of memory and argues for the utility of replacing memory with narrative as an organizing concept to describe the use of the past in the present. “During the last three decades, the memory industry has achieved impressive market share in the humanities and social sciences, pushed through leveraged buyouts of folk and oral history and of the study of myth and tradition, established itself in every major territory across the world, and expanded aggressively into the courts, museums, mass media, and politics. Such success should make scholars suspicious” (942). Through a comparative study of French and Irish historiography, Prince more particularly criticizes the insufficiently critical and often decontextualized use made by many historians, particularly of Ireland, of Pierre Nora’s concept of *les lieux de mémoire*, or “realms of memory.” More useful, he claims, is the idea of “story” rather than “memory”: stories are what communities tell themselves, he claims, creating metaphors for imagined futures though the prisms of imagined pasts. He closes this analysis with a rereading of the nationalist

narratives in the 1960s that helped fuel and explain Northern Ireland's slide toward sectarian conflict.

The next issue of the *Journal of British Studies* will contain seven new research articles covering every century from the sixteenth through the twentieth. It will include articles on religion and politics in later Tudor and later Stuart England, respectively, and a study of public sociability in eighteenth-century London. The long nineteenth century will be represented by an intellectual history of the role of Greece and Rome in the British imperial imagination and an article on working-class education in late Victorian London. The issue will conclude with an article on Mass Observation and debates about modernity and disenchantment in the 1930s, seen through the lens of Mass Observation's work on superstition in Blackpool, and, finally, an article on how British debates about race in the 1960s referenced the American civil rights movement and the events of Little Rock, Arkansas.