Editors' Introduction

Brian Cowan
Elizabeth Elbourne

This is the first issue of the *Journal of British Studies* to be published by Cambridge University Press. With this issue, we have instituted a few changes to the presentation of the journal's articles. Henceforth, for instance, we will include independent abstracts. In addition to discussing individual articles, the editors' introduction will range more widely, with attention to general historiographical concerns provoked by the articles and even, on occasion, news and commentary about the journal, the North American Conference on British Studies, and the state of the field.

This issue begins with the presidential address delivered in November 2011 by Philippa Levine to the NACBS in Denver, Colorado, on the occasion of her retirement as president. In "Naked Truths: Bodies, Knowledge, and the Erotics of Colonial Power," Levine examines the explosion in the number of publicly circulating photographs of naked or half-naked colonized peoples from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. How did this genre relate to better-studied Victorian genres of studio art depicting "nudes" (especially female nudes)? How was the "nakedness" of "savages" understood, and how did these pictures circulate? Levine analyzes the nakedness of the colonial subject as a marker of difference. "Nakedness," she argues, "was never merely a description of the state of unclothedness, but a set of cultural artifacts, a set of cultural determinants, a set of describers, a condition of the social, that reined in, even as it produced desire" (p. 5).

The issue continues with two articles on later Stuart England. Both address in various ways the impact of the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 on structures of thought in the wake of the installation of a new postrevolutionary regime. Brent Sirota's article, "The Trinitarian Crisis in Church and State: Religious Controversy and the Making of the Postrevolutionary Church of England, 1687–1702," tackles the question of why theological debates over the doctrine of the Trinity became so heated, and so intensely politicized, after the so-called Glorious Revolution. Sirota finds the answer in the political instability and uncertainties that characterized the reign of William III and Mary. He sees the period as one wracked by a "disciplinary

1

crisis," which he defines as "a series of constitutional and ecclesiological controversies over precisely which civil and religious institutions bore responsibility for undertaking" the vindication of theological orthodoxy (p. 26). It was the instability of authority in the postrevolutionary church and state that allowed disputes about trinitarianism to escalate into a full-blown political crisis. Sirota's argument here thus continues and refines the ongoing debate about the politics of religion in postrevolutionary England.[1] Tony Claydon's "Daily News and the Construction of Time in Late Stuart England, 1695–1714" addresses a different problem for postrevolutionary England: how to understand the news in an age of unprecedented expansion of newspapers after the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695. Rather than seeing the emergence of daily news as a clear and indeed revolutionary break with past modes of experiencing time, Claydon makes an argument for continuity. While the publication and reception of postrevolutionary news stories did mark a new, progressive sense of the "present day," stories also retained aspects of traditional reporting. More precisely, these newspapers presented their readers with a rather fluid sense of time: journalists not only dealt with the present but also "constructed history, froze time, and reversed the order of occurrences." As Claydon puts it, we see newspapers dealing in "multiple timelines," "self-conscious speculation about two kinds of future (that in the future and that in the past)," and the presentation of events out of context and without chronology (p. 55). The sense of time in early modern news writing was far more complex than we have previously recognized, and this has wider consequences for our understanding of early modern views of time.[2]

Brad Jones's article, "In Favor of Popery: Patriotism, Protestantism, and the Gordon Riots in the Revolutionary Atlantic World," echoes Claydon's focus on transnational communication networks, but to very different ends. Jones examines London's famous Gordon Riots of June 1780 in the context of Britain's transatlantic empire. These riots targeted Roman Catholics and, more generally, perceived attempts to repeal the legal restrictions on Roman Catholicism in Great Britain and throughout its empire; they were the most violent and destructive outbreak of urban violence in London's history. Jones sees the controversies provoked by the 1778 Catholic Relief bills throughout the British Empire as key to understanding the riots as symptoms of a more general crisis of authority and imperial identity throughout the late eighteenth-century British worlds. He argues that the debates that engendered the riots, and that the riots in turn engendered, were part of "a complex network of communication that linked Britons living in all corners of the Atlantic empire" (p. 79). The emergence of the radical Protestant Whig patriotism characterized by Gordon and his supporters destabilized the British imperium

---

[1] In this journal in particular, see J. C. D. Clark, "England's Ancien Regime as a Confessional State," *Albion* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 450–74; and Roger D. Lund, "Guilt by Association: The Atheist Cabal and the Rise of the Public Sphere in Augustan England," *Albion* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 391–421.

[2] Compare Ian K. Steele, "Communicating an English Revolution to the Colonies, 1688–1689," *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 3 (July 1985): 333–57; D. R. Woolf, "Speech, Text, and Time: The Sense of Hearing and the Sense of the Past in Renaissance England," *Albion* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 159–93; and David Randall, "Joseph Mead, Novellante: News, Sociability, and Credibility in Early Stuart England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 293–312.

in the 1780s and, he suggests, may have laid the groundwork for the even greater disturbances that were to occur in the succeeding decade. Jones's work here thus revisits, and usefully brings into dialogue, the arguments of two important articles published by Iain McCalman and Linda Colley in this journal in the 1990s.[3] He also provides a fresh Atlantic World and imperial history perspective on the riots themselves. His work reminds us that the famous disturbances in London can be understood as part of a broader crisis of imperial authority in the later eighteenth century and indeed were seen by many contemporaries in this light.

James Livesey's "Free Trade and Empire in the Anglo-Irish Commercial Propositions of 1785" addresses a different set of tensions within the British empire in the 1780s: the debates over free trade between Britain and Ireland. Here, Livesey argues that William Pitt's proposal in 1785 to establish free trade between Britain and Ireland failed because political economists of the day held vastly differing, and ultimately incompatible, views as to what "free trade" really meant. He contends that Pitt's concept of free trade owed its inspiration to Adam Smith and that this understanding assumed the importance, and indeed the necessity, of overarching imperial institutions as a means of regulating trading between the different states within the empire. Most Irish commentators, however, had a very different understanding of free trade. Livesey argues that Irish discourse on trade accepted the autonomy of a political community to regulate their own trade. This "neo-Machiavellian" concept of free trade was not compatible with Pitt's Smithian vision; therefore, "Irish enthusiasts for free trade seem also not to have been aware that in appealing to free trade they were pushing at an open door, though one that opened in a direction they did not necessarily want to travel" (p. 103). Once this was realized, the door was quickly shut and the proposals failed. Livesey's argument here demonstrates the usefulness of incorporating perspectives added by the intellectual history of political economy and imperial relations into our understanding of the relationship between free trade and late Hanoverian state formation.[4]

Our next article, Andy Croll's "Strikers and the Right to Poor Relief in Late Victorian Britain: The Making of the *Merthyr Tydfil* Judgment of 1900" shifts focus from the transimperial to the local, but with a significant national kick. Croll looks at the bitter coal miners' strike in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales at the very end of the nineteenth century. The strike demonstrates, he argues, that local Poor Law guardians felt obliged to relieve the destitute, even when they had exacerbated or even caused their own destitution through a labor strike. This says something important about the capaciousness of the Victorian Poor Law: even after the New Poor Law of 1834, the obligation to prevent starvation was considered absolute. Croll

---

[3] Iain McCalman, "Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte: Riot and Sexuality in the Genesis of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*," *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1996): 343–67; Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 1992): 309–29.

[4] This theme has long been a concern of readers of this journal. See Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, "From 'Fiscal-Military' State to Laissez-Faire State, 1760–1850," *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 1993): 44–70; and Anna Gambles, "Free Trade and State Formation: The Political Economy of Fisheries Policy in Britain and the United Kingdom circa 1780–1850," *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 3 (July 2000): 288–316.

convincingly shows how strikers negotiated the poor relief system, in this particular case adroitly pushing the guardians into providing outdoor relief. The *Merthyr Tydfil* judgement of 1900 thus was not a routine ruling, but rather the nail in the coffin of an older way of viewing Poor Law. It needs to be seen as part of the employer push-back against unionization at the turn of the century. Paradoxically, the right to poor relief was not one that most workers wanted, given, Croll argues, the sense of degra-dation associated with poor relief. The fact that strikers took relief in 1898 under-scores how desperate the strike was. Croll makes a significant contribution here to labor history as well as to the history of poor relief.[5]

The final two articles, taken together, shed light on feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mo Moulton, in "'You Have Votes and Power': Women's Engagement with the Irish Question in Britain, 1919–23," highlights the rich and underexplored role of British women in supporting republican Ireland. She pays particular attention to two groups. One consisted of generally well-heeled activist women in Britain, often English, Liberal, and former suffragists, who opposed British government policy in Ireland and supported the Irish right to self-determination. The second group comprised women of Irish origin on the British mainland who supported the republican cause. These women, Moulton shows, sometimes engaged in smuggling arms and otherwise assisting military efforts. She also demonstrates how many former suffragists took up the Irish cause in the immediate aftermath of 1918 as they sought a new path for women. These two groups of women did not in fact work closely together, suggesting the limits to political activism based on gender. Moulton nonetheless demonstrates the value of "gendering" the history of British engagement with Ireland.

Sue Morgan's "*Sex and Common-Sense:* Maude Royden, Religion, and Modern Sexuality" analyzes Maude Royden's life and writings about sex. In contrast to Moulton, Morgan focuses on a single woman, and indeed largely on a single text, but she does so in a manner that opens up wider questions and illuminates the nexus between feminism and religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth cen-turies. Royden, a suffragist and Christian lay leader, supported women priests and was in many respects a pioneering figure. Her work on sexuality suggests that the church took "modern" positions on sexuality in the interwar years and that there remains a wider history to be written of modernity, religion, and feminism in the early twentieth century (however the vexed term *modernity* is defined). Morgan argues convincingly that historians of sexuality in this period need to move away from a too narrow focus on secular ideas about sexuality and to incorporate religious approaches. Both Moulton and Morgan, then, call into question the existence of a unified "women's movement" between the wars, even as they also show the impor-tance of women's activism.

In various ways, then, many of the articles in this issue explore networks and the linkages between the local and the global, opening British history to a wider set of relationships.

---

[5] For an earlier study of the Poor Law and the politics of relief in this journal, compare Marjorie Levine-Clark, "The Gendered Economy of Family Liability: Intergenerational Relationships and Poor Law Relief in England's Black Country, 1871–1911," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2006): 72–89.