

Editors' Introduction

Brian Cowan and Elizabeth Elbourne

The six articles in this issue of the *Journal of British Studies* range from the late middle ages to the later twentieth century. Despite chronological and thematic variation, they address aspects of politics, broadly defined, from a variety of directions. The politics of religion is a key theme for early modernists Michael Winship and Jeremy Schmidt, both of whom examine religious belief as an aspect of the history of political thought and as an element in the practice of rule in early modern England. Our nineteenth and early twentieth-century articles, by Michael Kelly and David Thackeray, respectively, look at the history of the modern political ideologies of nationalism and conservatism and their impact on political organizations and mobilization in Britain and Ireland. Our final two articles, while not overtly political, nonetheless engage with power and the politics of space. Simon Gunn's article on postwar Bradford details the political history of modernist "planning" and the cultural and aesthetic influences that helped shape the policy decisions of urban planners in the 1950s and 1960s—while at the same time showing the disruption of top-down planning by the exigencies of social change and the stubborn refusal of people to act as expected. Finally, Barbara Harris's presidential address to the 2009 North American Conference on British Studies explores ways in which early modern aristocratic women negotiated among competing options as they arranged their own burials and funerary monuments, thus leading the reader to consider the complex interaction between gender, class, and the ownership of space.

In "Algernon Sidney's Calvinist Republicanism," Michael Winship examines the republican political thought of Algernon Sidney from the perspective of his Calvinist theology. Algernon Sidney has become well known to early modern historians as one of the most lively and articulate "classical republicans" of the seventeenth century and a key figure in the history of the strained transition between the short-lived English Interregnum republic and the restored Stuart monarchy. Winship's article demonstrates that Sidney's religious beliefs are central to understanding his republican politics and that his religion can be confidently labeled as Calvinist. Sidney's Calvinism was not uneasily juxtaposed with his classical republican politics, Winship argues; rather, it helped to animate his opposition to what he perceived to be sin and tyranny. Sidney is particularly interesting among later seventeenth-century classical republicans and Calvinists alike for the many ways in which he managed to "classicize his Calvinism and Calvinize his classicism" (771), as Winship

puts it. The result is an article that revisits and enhances the arguments of Blair Worden in an often-cited article published in this journal in 1985.¹

In “Charity and the Government of the Poor in the English Charity-School Movement, circa 1700–1730,” Jeremy Schmidt similarly uses the history of political thought to offer a new history of the English charity-school movement of the early eighteenth century. Charity schools offer an important case study for understanding the complicated ways in which social hierarchy, authority, and mutual obligation were construed in the early eighteenth century. Relying on both the homiletic literature on charity and the administrative records of the charity schools themselves, Schmidt builds a case for using the charity schools projects as a key means for understanding the complicated connections between early modern ideals of authority and obligation. Ideals of natural law, philanthropy, and paternalism both animated and were challenged by the practical challenges of instituting charity schools. While the charity schools were understood by their promoters and supporters to be an excellent vehicle for improving the lot of the poor by providing the education and discipline that poor families often could not provide, the schools also became a site of contested authority between the children’s parents and the administrators of the schools.

In “Languages of Radicalism, Race, and Religion in Irish Nationalism: The French Affinity, 1848–1871,” Matthew Kelly examines Irish nationalist views of France from the mid- to late nineteenth century, including debates over the French role in continental warfare and the relationship of France to the nationalist struggles of the period on the continent. Irish responses were not uniform (despite an overarching tendency to support France as England’s “other”), but contested, revealing competing tendencies within Irish nationalism itself. Kelly further uses the example of debates over France as a way into the response of selected Irish writers to the politics of Catholicism on the continent at a time of a shifting relationship between Catholicism and nationalism in Ireland itself. As Kelly puts it, this study highlights “the ways Ernest Renan’s famous categorization of nineteenth-century nationalisms as either ‘civic’ or ‘ethnic’ does not hold true for mid-Victorian Ireland” (802). At the same time, he also makes a case for the utility of looking at Irish nationalism in a continental context.

David Thackeray’s “Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” takes a fresh look at Conservative women’s groups at the local level. Historians of Conservative women’s organizations in the early twentieth century have tended to focus on the Primrose League, despite what Thackeray suggests was the dissatisfaction of many women with that organization’s penchant for genteel social activities at the expense of activism. Thackeray focuses instead on the Women’s Unionist and Tariff Reform Association (WUTRA) and its post-1918 successor organization, the Women’s Unionist Organization (WUO). His study offers a new interpretation of Conservative activism in the early twentieth century. WUTRA and WUO were more active and more important than historians have realized, Thackeray argues. They made an important contribution to Edwardian debates about citizenship and consumption, while the local activism of such groups challenges any claim that Conservatism in this era was shaped

¹ Blair Worden, “The Commonwealth Kidney of Algernon Sidney,” *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 1985): 1–40.

primarily from the top down. Indeed, Thackeray portrays a lively local culture pioneered by women that, particularly after 1918, made a significant effort to form cross-class alliances.

Simon Gunn's "The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945–1970," looks at the key influence of modernist planning on the postwar industrial city. He makes the important argument that historians have neglected the impact of modernism on the twentieth-century destiny of cities like Bradford: "a banal urban modernism, based on functionalism rather than the iconic" (851), he claims, but modernism nonetheless. He reminds the reader of the wide scope of modernism, which was, as his study of urban renewal attempts suggests, about far more than the history of particular buildings or styles, just as the collapse of the modernist project was about far more than a switch in architectural fashion. Gunn movingly shows the fall of high hopes for the remade industrial city. He further suggests that the urban planners of the 1950s and early 1960s were unable to account for the stubborn, local change that helped undermine their sweeping meliorist visions. Gunn makes a convincing case that such under-studied "urban renewal" projects, relatively untouched by historicist or conservationist impulses, were crucial in remaking the face of postwar Britain.

Finally, we have the honor of publishing Barbara Harris's "Defining Themselves: English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550," which is based on her 2009 presidential address to the North American Conference on British Studies. In an essay that complements and enhances the arguments and evidence of her most recent article in this journal, Harris offers another innovative study of women's tombs and other types of funerary monuments.² Here, she shows how aristocratic women between 1450 and 1550 fashioned themselves in stone and glass. They were demonstrating a sense of self, she argues, in contradistinction to scholars who implicitly or explicitly suggest that "selfhood" is a more modern phenomenon. As this evidence suggests, this sense of self was one deeply defined by the integration of women into families in a patriarchal society. Harris thus makes an innovative use of visual evidence to contribute to a wider debate. She shows how women negotiated among competing family claims and attempted to define themselves as they shaped their own commemoration after death.

Our next issue will include an article by the late David Underdown on civic pageantry and charivari in early seventeenth-century Somerset, as well as articles on early Stuart Puritanism; the representation of the army on the early eighteenth-century London stage; the debates surrounding the Gin Acts of 1736 and 1751; religion and politics in northern Ireland and Britain in the long nineteenth century; modernist culture and architecture in early twentieth-century Cambridge; and British sexual culture in the 1940s and 1950s.

² Barbara J. Harris, "The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women and Care of the Dead, 1450–1550," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2009): 308–35.