

Editors' Introduction: *Journal of British Studies*, 54:1 (January 2015)

Brian Cowan
Elizabeth Elbourne

This issue of the *Journal of British Studies* begins with an essay by Dane Kennedy, “The Imperial History Wars,” based on the address he gave at the 2013 North American Conference on British Studies upon the conclusion of his term as president. As an eminent historian who took the so-called imperial turn and has written on themes as varied as settler society in Kenya, the exploration of Australia, the maverick Victorian writer, explorer, and soldier Richard Burton, as well as hill stations in the British Raj, Kennedy has had a front-row seat to many conflicts over imperial history and its meanings. How has imperial history reflected wider political and social struggles during various periods? Why does it remain a popular field, even so long after the formal end of empire? In seeking to answer these questions, Kennedy draws on both his own experience and a deep knowledge of the field to argue that historians of empire need to be more self-reflexive about their practice and conscious of the ways in which the present shapes the past.

The remaining articles in this issue include several iconoclastic pieces. Tobias Gregory rethinks Milton and his political relationship with Oliver Cromwell. Michelle Brock gives a sympathetic reading of Scottish reformation piety and the anxiety created by what she terms “internalizing the demonic.” Richard Ward asks why it was paupers and not executed criminals whose bodies were made available for dissection to surgeons in the late eighteenth century. Two of our four articles focused on modern British history explore sources and methodology: Luke Blaxill argues for the value of a quantitative analysis of political discourse by using this technique to reassess the electoral reception of Joseph Chamberlain’s “unauthorized program” of 1885, while Joe Moran gives a comprehensive overview of another type of source, the diary, and its uses in the twentieth century. Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange, and Bertrand Taithe examine what they term the “philanthropic marketplace” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a focus on scandal and concern about the financial probity of charities, while Alister Chapman makes an innovative contribution to the study of secularization in Britain from the 1960s onward, tying it to declining belief in a divinely sanctioned imperial mission.

With Michelle Brock’s “Internalizing the Demonic: Satan and the Self in Early Modern Scottish Piety,” we find the devil in Scotland. Brock shows how belief in the devil informed religious life and thought in post-Reformation Scotland. She demonstrates that the religious introspection demanded by Protestant piety had its demonic corollary in satanic ideas and devilish influence. The Reformed impulse towards self-surveillance in matters of faith also created a palpable recognition that

an "evil heart" lies within everyone. Brock refers to this dilemma as a process of "internalizing the demonic" and highlights the personal tolls taken by the anxieties that resulted from this process. She extrapolates from this the many psychological and social tensions created by Reformed religion in Scotland and, she suggests, perhaps in the wider British world as well.

From the general angst of post-Reformation piety we turn to a close and careful study of two individuals who dominate the history of the 1650s. In "Milton and Cromwell: Another Look at the Evidence," Tobias Gregory revisits the relationship between the Lord Protector and his secretary for foreign tongues. He argues that previous accounts of this relationship have been overeager to find evidence of growing disaffection between Milton and Cromwell. In fact, Milton's relationship to the Protectorate regime may have been more complex and less unidirectional than we have been led to believe. The reason for the rush to assume that Milton became estranged from the Protector's regime, Gregory suggests, has been a tendency among scholars to overemphasize Milton's republican politics and to underemphasize his religious commitments. The article reminds us that the evidence for Milton's relationship with Cromwell is thin and that we should be wary of importing our assumptions about Milton's character and beliefs into an area that is rather poorly documented.

Advocating the dissection of the corpses of criminals subjected to the death penalty is not a position that is generally associated with late eighteenth-century philanthropists. Richard Ward begins his essay "The Criminal Corpse, Anatomists, and the Criminal Law: Parliamentary Attempts to Extend the Dissection of Offenders in Late Eighteenth-Century England" with the paradox that it was in fact William Wilberforce, leading anti-slavery activist and opponent of cruelty to children and animals, who spearheaded one of the two unsuccessful attempts in the late eighteenth century to provide the bodies of executed criminals to doctors for dissection. His article asks what the intellectual and practical motivations were behind these two attempts, as well as why the efforts failed. In answering these questions, Ward shows how medical interests were pitted against the perceived needs of the criminal justice system in struggles over the fate of the criminal corpse. The failure of Wilberforce's initiatives for legislative change demonstrates limitations on the influence of medical professionals even when calls to advance scientific knowledge were becoming more persuasive than ever before.

In "Joseph Chamberlain and the Third Reform Act: A Reassessment of the 'Unauthorized Programme' of 1885," Luke Blaxill uses a case study of the 1885 election in East Anglia to argue that the radical "unauthorized program" of Joseph Chamberlain resonated with the electorate to a much greater extent than many historians have recognized. Radicalism was poised to play a more significant role in the late Victorian Liberal party than even many liberal politicians at the time anticipated, had the party not splintered in 1886. Blaxill's methodological argument is that a large-scale quantitative analysis of political discourse, in this case of electoral speeches, can reveal significant patterns and shifts over time. This analysis can be done through sampling techniques that allow us to analyze large quantities of text with attention to key foci. As Blaxill claims, despite his emphasis on language, this technique differs from other discourse-driven studies in that it does not aim to give a close reading of the rhetoric of a particular time or place but rather prioritizes "the systematic investigation of broad linguistic trends over a huge volume of speech using quantitative computer-driven methods" (p. 94). Such an analysis reveals, he argues, that

the electoral reforms of 1883–85—including the enfranchisement of the rural working class—transformed and radicalized political language far more than historians have acknowledged. This was particularly the case in the rural constituencies, which have traditionally been seen as bastions of conservatism.

Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange, and Bertrand Taithe revisit the world of late Victorian philanthropy in “The Charity-Mongers of Modern Babylon: Bureaucracy, Scandal, and the Transformation of the Philanthropic Marketplace, c.1870–1912.” Their article addresses philanthropic organizations’ struggle for legitimacy during a period in which they faced an increasingly skeptical public from which to solicit charitable donations. They argue that greater attention to “charity fraud” had the somewhat paradoxical effect of enhancing the legitimacy and reputation of philanthropic endeavors because such scandals encouraged transparency regarding the fund-raising and accounting practices of these institutions. The authors see the world of Victorian philanthropy as a competitive market in which a reputation for probity was a key to success. The innovations of the late nineteenth-century charity market, they suggest, would establish standards of best practice for the industry that remain influential and important to the present day.

Historians of the early modern period have long been interested in exploiting the insights provided by diaries and autobiographical writings, and several contributors to the *JBS* have addressed this topic in the past.¹ Here, Joe Moran tackles the large theme of the diary in the twentieth century in his wide-ranging article “Public Lives, Private Histories: The Diary in Twentieth-Century Britain.” He examines the ways in which diaries were produced and used, particularly in the interwar period, during which thousands of people took to recording the details of their daily lives, often in diaries made for this very purpose. He looks at influences on diary writing, from Virginia Woolf’s choice of ink to the literary forms that provided models for the general public. He further asks, more broadly, how historians have thought about and used diaries and how they might best do so in the future. Moran’s article concludes by raising questions about self-writing in the digital age.

Finally, Alister Chapman approaches the vexed issue of postwar secularization from an innovative angle in “The International Context of Secularization in England: The End of Empire, Immigration, and the Decline of Christian National Identity, 1945–1970.” While he draws on recent literature about religion and British society, his main aim is to explore the striking and indeed seemingly sudden decline of belief in Britain’s divinely supported imperial mission. He claims that the idea that God supported the nation’s drive to empire was a key feature of how the British elite, at any rate, thought about and justified empire. This vision collapsed between the end of the Second World War and the early years of decolonization in the 1960s. A declining sense of providentialism might be read as a loss of nerve on the part of an Anglican elite that had traditionally supported empire. But, Chapman argues, it was far more than that, and instead reflected important shifts in thinking about Christianity and the role of God in the imagined

¹ Margo Todd, “Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 3 (1992): 236–64; Lotte Mulligan, “Self-Scrutiny and the Study of Nature: Robert Hooke’s Diary as Natural History,” *Journal of British Studies* 35, no.3 (1996): 311–42; Andrew Cambers, “Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580–1720,” *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 796–825.

life of the nation. Britain's loss of belief in itself as a Christian nation should also be put in the context of increased immigration after the Second World War and the associated diversification of culture and religion. Overall, Chapman claims, studies of religion need to be put into an international context far more than is currently done. This contribution is thus a fresh way of thinking about religion and its discontents in the late twentieth century, as well as shifting ideas of the "nation."

Our next issue will include an article on political thought and practice in the Elizabethan age, as well as two articles on eighteenth-century material culture: one addressing the material culture of British mariners, and the other looking at the meanings associated with the tokens issued by London's Foundling Hospital. The issue also features articles on the scandal press in nineteenth-century Scotland; an intellectual history of J. A. Hobson's works; an architectural history of early twentieth-century school buildings; an investigation of female philanthropy among British settlers in Kenya; and a study of photography during the Troubles in Northern Ireland.