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OTHER REVIEWS

The construction of nationhood: ethnicity, religion, and nationalism. By Adrian Hastings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xii+235. ISBN 0-521-59391-3. £37.50 (hb). 0-521-625440-0. £12.95 (pb).

Judging by this book, which is based on them, the 1996 Wiles lectures at the Queen's University, Belfast, were all that such a series should be: trenchant, individual, passionate, erudite, and challenging. They are as important as they are enjoyable, grappling with a 'current crisis of historiography': what the author terms the 'historiographical schism' among students of the phenomenon of nation between what the late Ernest Gellner called the 'modernist' and 'primordialist' schools.

Professor Hastings takes up the cudgels on behalf of the primordialists. He describes his enterprise as a revisionist attack on the modernist orthodoxy that the nation was essentially an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century development, though his enrolment of Bishop Stubbs in support suggests that he might equally be described as rehabilitating an earlier tradition. Be that as it may, he strikes shrewd blows against an earlier Wiles lecturer, Eric Hobsbawm, and beyond him, at the more seminal works of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, and indeed at all the main modernist and semi-modernist writers from Elie Kedourie, in *Nationalism* (1960), to Liah Greenfeld, in *Nationalism: five roads to modernity* (1992). He points out that modernists cannot agree exactly where or when the national phenomenon appeared, and that their perspective is sometimes excessively central European. He demonstrates that they ignore medieval and early modern use of the term nation or its equivalents in a recognizably modern sense, not least in the Bible. He argues strongly for the importance of religion, stressing the fundamental significance – underestimated by modernist writers – of a vernacular Bible and liturgy in creating cultural identity in Europe and Africa. He makes bold claims: that without Christianity and the Bible 'nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed' (p. 4). In making these arguments, he presents a wealth of material taking the reader from the England of Bede and Alfred to twentieth-century Zimbabwe.

That he returns repeatedly to Britain, and particularly England, for examples of the earliness of nationhood arguably leaves the modernist argument unscathed. Modernists accept that agrarian societies occasionally produced states similar to modern nation-states, and England is the accepted prototype. As Greenfeld has put it elegantly, 'the birth of the English nation was not the birth of a nation; it was the birth of the nations.' Hastings makes an impressive case for the earliness of this portentous nativity; but as he himself stresses, there is no comparable case on the continent. Similarly with his demonstration of the unique nationhood of Ethiopia on the African continent. So the core of the modernist argument that it was during the nineteenth century that the isolated exception became the general rule – in Gellner's words, that 'the modern world is bound to [produce nation-states] in most cases' – is confirmed. Hastings seems to accept that the political and social upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generalized what he calls 'Nationalism Mark II'. If we regard precisely this universalization as what is most important in the history of the nation, the exceptional cases that Hastings presents, even if convincing, are beside the point.

But is his 'Nationalism Mark I' nationalism at all? Let us apply the Joan of Arc test: was she a nationalist? Hastings (like Shaw's Bishop Cauchon) says yes. He quotes her as saying 'all those who fight against the holy kingdom of France fight against the Lord Jesus'. He regards this as obviously nationalism; it seems to me that it is obviously not. It can only be so if we empty both Joan's beliefs and those of modern nationalists of their intellectual content. Religious fervour, dynastic fealty, and particularist pride go into the melting pot along with popular sovereignty, historical idealism, and Social Darwinism. Out comes nationalism as merely a feeling of 'horizontal bonding'. Hastings (like some modernists, indeed) makes no clear distinction between a sense of national identity and the ideology of nationalism – which among other things destroyed Joan's beloved 'holy kingdom'. As Hastings himself remarks, in medieval Europe there was 'no very clear sense of just how the bond between nation and state – "gens" or "natio" and "regnum" – was to be seen' (p. 118). But the definition of that bond is precisely what nationalism is.

It is crucial to Hastings's argument to establish some causal connection between his medieval 'nationalism' and 'Mark II'. He makes the striking assertion that 80 per cent of present-day European nations already existed by the fifteenth century. Precisely why this is important – even if only as a European peculiarity – is never spelt out. That Bacon referred in 1624 to 'the liberty of the German nation' cuts both ways, of course, as the concept only took political shape in the nineteenth century. This Hastings accepts, but he answers that 'it could only do so ... out of the half-submerged reality of a medieval nation' (p. 109) and an 'almost subliminal but intensely potent sense of blood nationalism' (p. 113). Even those medieval nations that did not achieve statehood, he adds, have such deeply rooted existence that even after 500 years their claims can be seriously 'resurrected'.

Precisely what cultural and social processes are represented by this coruscation of metaphors is never clarified. Consequently, it cannot be shown how such 'reality' might differ from, let alone be necessarily more efficacious than, the myths, traditions, and political demands newly discovered or fabricated by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century propagandists. How can historical authenticity – especially if 'almost subliminal' – be shown to be essential (rather than merely useful) to the emergence of nationalism? The point is crucial, as modernists regard invented tradition as just as effective. Hastings himself gives the example of Serbia, which perfectly brings out the problem in his argument: on one hand, Serbia's 'nationhood [is] derived from the memory of the medieval kingdom' (p. 135), but on the other that 'memory' is centred on a 'fallacious epic' and systematic falsification of the past.

I heartily recommend this stimulating and provocative book to all those interested in the history of the nation. But it does not breach the modernist ramparts; indeed, much of the evidence it contains adds a few stones to their battlements.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE ROBERT TOMBS

Great Britain: identities, institutions, and the idea of Britishness. By Keith Robbins. Harlow: Longman, 1998. Pp. xiv+377. ISBN 0-582-03138-9. £48.00 (hb). 0-582-03119-2. £18.99 (pb).

Towards the end of *Great Britain*, his contribution to Longman's 'The present and the past' series, Professor Robbins reminds us of one of the most startling changes to come over his subject area in recent decades. At the 1966 World Cup final English fans waved the union flag in support of their team. Twenty years later, at the Euro '96 tournament, this flag had been banished in favour of the cross of St George. For perhaps the first time in a millennium, the English had recognized that their nation was not automatically coterminous with the political unit to which they belonged.

To some extent Robbins introduces this 'terrace nationalism' as a throw-away example, using it to illustrate novel challenges facing the United Kingdom at the end of the twentieth century. Yet the issue the author raises with his football story haunts his whole book, and would complicate any attempt to do what this volume undertakes, and chart 'British identities, British institutions, and idea of Britishness' since classical times. The difficulty is this. For the vast bulk of population, and for the vast bulk of the period under consideration, Englishness and Britishness have meant much the same thing. Whilst the Scots and Welsh have been fairly comfortable with two levels of national consciousness (a situation which has demanded public buildings here in Bangor invest in two flagpoles), these groups have always been outnumbered by English people who have had no such complexity of identity. Moreover, even the 'Celtic' nations within the island may at times have had problems distinguishing their Britishness from Englishness. Since many of the perceived characteristics of 'Britain' seem rooted in *English* institutions and *English* self-perceptions (things such as English literature, the Westminster parliament, a soft and pastoral landscape, pragmatism, or a monarchy with its origins in the royal house of Wessex), assertions of 'Britishness' on the part of Scots and Welsh may sometimes be no more than a borrowing of positive aspects of Englishness, coupled with a hope that uglier English 'traditions' – arrogance, loutishness, xenophobia, and inebriety – do not come as an inevitable part of the package. Given this, the historian of 'Britain' is left with a dilemma. How can one write a history of British identity which is greater than a history of English identity, when the first may often be just a subset of the second?

Professor Robbins opens his book with a fine attempt to solve this problem. Charting Roman and medieval traditions of talking about Great Britain as a unit, he suggests that these provided a sense that the various peoples of the island did belong together in an entity larger than England. In his account, historians, churchmen, and chroniclers spoke of a natural unit encompassing the whole island (most poetically embodied in Arthurian myths of a Romano-British empire), which remained a powerful idea throughout the centuries, and inspired people such as Edward Plantagenet, Henry Tudur, and James Stewart to try to recapture this lost paradise. From this ideological Britishness, Robbins expands to explore a number of shared enterprises and experiences, which throughout the long timespan of his book did much to preserve feelings of insular togetherness. Thus he devotes much time to British religion. He argues that despite the complex divisions of faith introduced at the Reformation, British Protestantism eventually gelled with an ancient sense of the unity of the British church to produce an exclusive sense of divine election which would pull Britons together until at least the

Second World War. Similarly, Robbins charts shared involvement with empire. He points out that this included all the British nations in wider horizons than most Europeans (they all, for instance, remain uniquely obsessed by North America), and cleverly observes that overseas expansion allowed more international mixing than was possible in the metropolis. The English, Scots, and Welsh lived more closely together in New York, Sydney, and Bombay than they ever did in Birmingham, Swansea, or Glasgow. Again, Robbins makes much of post-Enlightenment liberalism. Here was a movement at least as much Welsh and Scots as English, which allowed Gladstone (a Scot with an English upbringing living in Wales) and Lloyd George (a Welsh-speaking Welshman from Liverpool) to command the most powerful state on earth. Robbins's accounts of all these movements are wise and welcome. Aware of the complexity and contingency of the stories he tells, and alive to historiographic debates, he nevertheless provides a clear and compelling case for their importance in any greater sense of Britain.

Unfortunately, however, whilst providing much insight into 'Britishness', Robbins can never entirely escape the problem posed at the start of this review. Although he gives space to genuinely shared experiences, he seems forced by the nature of his subject to collapse back into accounts of Englishness at important parts of his narrative. Thus Robbins wishes to argue – and who could deny? – that parliament has been vital to Britain's unique identity. It has embodied a peculiar pattern of change through gradual reform, and fostered patterns of citizenship and political participation which are matched nowhere else. Yet in telling the history of this British parliamentarianism, Robbins has to fall back on traditional Anglo-centric history. It was, after all, the *English* parliament which emerged as the central institution in the British state in the early modern period, and Robbins therefore spends a whole chapter charting its triumph with virtually no mention of Scotland or Wales. The case is similar with monarchy. It has been a London-based royalty which has unexpectedly survived and provided Britons with their characteristically personal national symbol, so Robbins concentrates on English kings, and on English reactions to these rulers.

Given these difficulties, Robbins has produced a mixed work. When he can talk about a real Britishness beyond Englishness, he offers an interesting and stimulating analysis (especially in discussing late twentieth-century challenges to a wider national identity – spotting new threats like secularization along with older chestnuts like immigration, 'Celtic' nationalisms, and Brussels). In these sections his thematic division of chapters, and an always stimulating choice of illustrations with thought-provoking captions, carry the reader along. By contrast, when struggling to find a Britain which is more than England, the book lapses into conventional English history, and – perhaps losing its theme – relates events at breakneck speed rather than offering clarifying interpretations. All in all, then, a hybrid product. The point to ponder is whether the nature of Britishness itself would force this character on any work which tried to capture such a strange identity.

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, BANGOR TONY CLAYDON

Women writers and the early modern British political tradition. Edited by Hilda L. Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. xiv + 392. ISBN 0-521-58509-0. £40.00.

Until recently, the very title of this volume would have seemed paradoxical. Although modern women writers have written about the early modern tradition, the tradition itself has been thought to be overwhelmingly male. Two contributors here point to the Cambridge University Press series, *Texts in the history of political thought*, as evidence of this gender imbalance (pp. 27, 366). Carole Pateman opens her 'Conclusion' to the volume with the claim that 'A colleague in political science asked me recently whether women were involved in political activity before they were enfranchised' (p. 365). This illustrates well Lois G. Shwoerer's own starting point, that 'the conventional definition of politics' which effectively ruled out women's participation, today seems 'rather quaint' (p. 57). Pateman describes political scientists as 'remarkably uninterested' in 'the means through which men have managed to monopolize political life for so long' (p. 365) and suggests that we turn instead to the 'work of historians' (pp. 365, 376). But 'the history of political thought' is itself 'truncated and partial' in its silence about women, as Pateman claims (p. 367). That discipline cut some of its methodological teeth when rejecting C. B. Macpherson's Marxist reduction of seventeenth-century English political thought to a mere reflection of contemporary social reality. Establishing that political thought was worthy of study in its own right, the 'history of political thought' has, as Gordon Shochet argues in this volume (p. 223), risked cutting itself off from social history, betraying the original hope of Peter Laslett (p. 241) that the two could be written in conjunction.

This collection of essays proves the worth of just such collaboration. So far from simply lamenting the near absence of women from the conventional canon of political writers, the volume attempts to explain historically how 'the political' came to be understood as excluding women. Hilda Smith argues in her piece on the early modern Englishwoman's right to vote that the 'falsely' universal language of the law, which subsumed women in the notion of 'mankind', in historical practice actually excused and obscured 'women's exclusion from the political realm' (p. 303). The law could be used to exclude women from political participation without actually saying so until the explicit denial of women's right to vote in the Representation of the People Act of 1832 (p. 338). In early modern France, as Sarah Hanley shows, the Salic law of land inheritance was misused as fraudulent authority for depriving women of their right to succeed to the throne. Merry Wiesner argues that in Germany the progress of the Reformation directly caused a decline in women's right to political participation. As early modern women were excluded from conventional political life and therefore from much conventional historiography, they are shown here finding other ways of acting politically. Lois G. Schwoerer describes women's use of the printing press during the English Civil War and Interregnum and Susan Staves finds women acting 'rather like Namierite men' (p. 278) when they were shareholders in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century companies. Investment, like so much else in early modern England, was 'potentially a site of women's political power' (p. 326).

Some women writers did produce works recognizable as political theory. Berenice Carroll describes Christine de Pizan as both a feminist and a 'pivotal figure' in 'the theory of the state, secularization of political thought, codification of military practice, development of international law, and the origins of peace theory' (pp. 23–4). The political thought of the playwright Aphra Behn is presented by Melinda Zook as more subtle and complicated than the usual dismissal of her as a tory propagandist allows. Two eighteenth-century intellectuals, Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay, are understood as political theorists in articles by Wendy Gunther-Canada, Mary Lyndon Shanley, and J. G. A. Pocock. All those recommended for inclusion in the canon of the history of political thought are shown to have been exceptions to a general rule, at the very least because they made their livings through their pens (p. 25). All revealed in their own lives those complexities and hazards of female existence which always threatened to silence them. At its most extreme, two of the authors, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emilie du Chatelet, died in childbirth. All found themselves denied the sustenance of the educational and political institutions that conferred prestige and power on past intellectuals. Several authors, such as Christine de Pizan, enjoyed the support of male mentors but the patronage relationship between men and women was always fraught with difficulty. Emilie du Chatelet is characterized by Judith P. Zinsser as struggling to maintain an intellectual life as a physicist and mathematician in the shadow of Voltaire. Anna Battigelli writes of the influence of Hobbes on Margaret Cavendish's political thought despite his 'frosty civility' towards her (p. 41). Mary Astell and Damaris Masham (the latter once dismissed by Peter Laslett as a shortsighted blue-stocking) are shown by Patricia Springborg debating as intellectual equals with John Locke. As Hilda Smith argues in one of the introductions which tie this book together so well: 'Given women's exclusion from higher education… it was these personal connections that brought attention to their work, but has ultimately led to their omission from the intellectual histories of their age' (p. 104).

The circumstances of the women's lives were so different from those of their male contemporaries that it is surprising to find political thought done at all, let alone done as well as it was by these women writers. Throughout the volume there is the distant echo of a contemporary feminist debate: whether women are to be viewed with Hobbes as natural equals to men who became unequal through some political artifice, or whether they are to be understood as essentially or naturally different from men. Jane S. Jaquette, in the case of Hobbes, and Gordon Schochet, in the case of Locke, argue that seventeenth-century social contract theory has much to offer feminists of the first persuasion (p. 194). Beginning with the premise of female equality, it could ask how women have become different and unequal, not to urge female compliance but as a strategy for change and reform. Here they explicitly reject the argument of Carole Pateman in her *Sexual contract* that the seventeenth-century social contract is fatally flawed because it is a fraternal contract between men, undertaken only after they have first enslaved women through marriage. There are similarities between the Marxism of C. B. Macpherson and the feminism of Pateman. Both view seventeenth-century political thought as the ideological turning point between the feudal and modern worlds: 'There are no feudal relics in modern patriarchy' (p. 378). Both adopt the historically suspect method of 'filling in' the logical gaps in their theorists' accounts (p. 379). There has not however been the same onslaught on Pateman as there once was on Macpherson. This volume provides some of the first evidence of dissent from her view, to which she responds with vigour and near indignation in the Conclusion. At the very least the debate here reveals that Pateman's is not the only possible feminist interpretation of seventeenth-century political thought: 'Pateman's story is not Hobbes's story' (p. 209).

Most collections of essays struggle to find a unifying theme. This must have been especially the case here with essays spanning the period 1400–1800, covering the most disparate themes from business history to legal history and including chapters on France and the Holy Roman Empire. Tight editing by Hilda Smith however lends prominence to a single historical point: one at which the history of political thought and feminist historiography neatly intersect. How did the 'lamentable distinction between private and public' (p. 218) become the 'traditional opposition of private woman/public man' (p. 127)? How did the private and the public come to be distinguished in such a way that women were almost always identified with the private sphere and men with the public? Women are accused here of some complicity in this division through their culture of sensibility (Wollstonecraft is described as 'silenced by sensibility' (pp. 127–30)). Most of the female authors studied did resist the largely seventeenth-century (p. 59) 'invention and domestication of the private sphere' (p. 202), which 'relegated women to the private sphere' (p. 240) and has persisted to the present day (pp. 59, 240). Mary Astell, for example, 'vehemently rejected' 'the division between the public and private spheres … endorsed by Hobbes and Locke' (p. 107). Against what Pateman has called 'the refusal of political theorists to admit that men's power over women is a *political* problem' (p. 382), several of the women writers discovered that power in its purest form in the intimacy of marriage. In Mary Wollstonecraft's phrase: 'marriage had bastilled me for life' (p. 161). Marriage was slavery or tyranny according to Aphra Behn (p. 83) and the anonymous author of *The hardships of the English laws*, published in 1735 and analysed here by Barbara Todd (p. 345). In Merry Weisner's reworking of the German Reformation: 'civic virtues were increasingly viewed as male' while 'women's virtues remained within a private moral and religious sphere which was increasingly viewed as secondary to a public secular one' (p. 321).

The same theme is caricatured by J. G. A. Pocock (himself the object of criticism from Hilda Smith for ignoring 'the question of gender and the Ancient Constitution' (p. 341)): 'There of course exists a modern feminist strategy which consists of denying the separation of private from public and … decentring the primacy of the political on which so much in Western values and philosophy has been founded' (p. 251). For Pocock, the admitted fact that the public world of politics has been largely a male preserve does not mean that the public/private distinction was 'invented as a form of male domination' (p. 250). His piece on Catharine Macaulay illustrates well his own theme that historical writing is itself a form of political argument. It is made very clear throughout that Macaulay is all the better for being a patriot historian rather than a feminist (p. 252). And yet on the evidence of this volume, there is no inconsistency between the history of political thought, the discipline that he has done so much to establish, and feminist historiography. Melinda Zook's piece on Aphra Behn is a good example of the 'texts in context' approach associated with the Cambridge school. Hilda Smith's collection makes us think again, and historically, about the private/public distinction. History thus becomes a form of contemporary political argument for the sceptical feminist. It is less dogmatic, as Carole Pateman concludes, than the postmodern feminist reliance on a familiar 'litany of authorities, … none of whom … displays any interest in women writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' (p. 374). By exploring such an interest, this volume begins to tell the complicated and fascinating story of how the seventeenth-century 'premise of natural liberty and equality … gave an opening for feminist arguments that was then impossible to close' (p. 382).

MARGARET SAMPSON

The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England. By Amanda Vickery. London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Pp. xii+436. ISBN 0-300-07531-6. £19.95.

Even Jane Austen at her height could not have invented Elizabeth Shackleton. The waspish central character of Amanda Vickery's prosopographic reading of the north-western female lesser gentry in the eighteenth century is just the historical gem all of us dream of unearthing in archival diggings. Married after a lengthy courtship to a persistent suitor, Shackleton presides over his home until his premature death. Then, as a respectable widow and mother of four, she elopes with the younger textile merchant John Shackleton, and lives out her years the ailing wife of a violent, heavy-drinking husband.

This life alone would provide substance enough for an enriched view of genteel – and not so genteel – life in this fast-changing region of late eighteenth-century Britain. But Shackleton's propensity to memorialize her existence in letters and diaries is more than matched by a similar propensity amongst the interlinking networks of northern women and men, resident both in the north-west and further afield, whom Vickery depicts. Through her extensive analysis of these sources, we are introduced to an equally vivid range of characters whom the likes of Smollet and Burney would have strained to create.

But Vickery's purpose is not merely biographical. Her express aim is to re-draw the experiences of gentry womanhood in the eighteenth century, debating and debunking a feminist historiography that views the parameters of feminized domesticity corseting middling and upper-class women ever more tightly across this period. The inevitability of nineteenth-century 'separate spheres' is unravelled, while the moral dichotomizing of womanhood into saint/sinner collapses before the astute understanding exhibited within these women of the complexities of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Undoubtedly, Vickery's genteel daughters have long wanted exposure in a century already well-populated by lively historical accounts of actresses, royal mistresses, and fictional stereotypes like Pamela. Vickery's women are thoroughly real, with much to say both directly and indirectly on the environments of the virtuous household and public engagement, both idealized and realized. They are arguably the missing link in our constructions of polite society. Behind every monied northern merchant might stand an Anne Gossip, but as Vickery stresses, perhaps 'behind' is not the appropriate positioning for these women. In the fluid ranks of the Lancashire propertied classes, these are women whose visibility came of standing alongside or instead of their husbands: through desperation, as in Shackleton's desire to obliterate her husband's boorishness, or through superior accomplishments as with the educated Anna Larpent, or simply through money, as the heiress underwriting a husband's investments.

Vickery confidently delineates a new geography of contemporary understandings of public and private, but occasionally we lose sight of just whom and what Vickery is trying to illuminate, in a mass of evidence that muddies rather than clarifies her course. The evidence of other categories of womenhood – such as aristocrats and actresses – in the eighteenth century is perhaps too great a temptation not to draw upon, despite the degree of hostility evinced towards such women and their conduct by the likes of Shackleton. At times status differences between these and other women – notably servants – are unpacked, only to be submerged beneath the sheer breadth of experiences exhibited among Vickery's subjects: from the penurious, abused Ellen Stock, to the wealthy heiress Anne Stanhope. They are all indeed gentlemen's daughters, but this is itself a slippery enough category across this period. Vickery touches upon this status ambivalence for the menfolk of these women, but perhaps insufficiently to anchor her revision of female inclusion in a wholly coherent cultural landscape.

Textual issues are also skirted. Despite an interesting discussion of the rhetoric of courtship correspondence, examination of the epistolatory and literary genres through which the more informal correspondence would have been framed is lacking. In these letters, the frequently giddy flitting between children's illnesses, moral strictures, recipes, and gossip suggests extensive textual familiarity, encouraged but by no means limited within the print resources of conduct, domestic and romantic literature that were arguably truly coming of age under the readership of these correspondents.

There is, as Vickery herself admits, much these letters do not tell us – notably of sex and spirituality – and she does not venture to explore these regions, even speculatively. This is arguably a shortcoming, since it is in areas like religion that geographical and gender particularities, otherwise played down by Vickery, might have emerged. The financial (as opposed to oeconomical) dimension of these women's lives is also sketchy. Although perhaps explicable in the context of the letters' contents and other scholarship, it is surely still crucial to examine this aspect. There are hints, in the destiny of Ellen Stock at least, that concerns of inheritance, marriage portion, or a balanced business account loomed as large throughout these women's lives as the demands of propriety and family.

These concerns do not lessen what can be gleaned from this well-written, if occasionally overwritten, book, and the numerous print errors are small annoyances in a text printed relatively affordably. We should indeed give thanks for the discovery of Elizabeth Shackleton and her ilk. Yet if this is as one reviewer suggests, 'the most important thing in English feminist history for ten years', such history is constructed as other recent (post-)feminist writing – an elegant backlash, but with less bite than expected.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM SARA PENNELL

Forging Mexico, 1821–1835. By Timothy E. Anna. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Pp. xiii+330. ISBN 0-8032-1047-7. £38.00.

The early national period in Mexico has been, comparatively speaking, generally neglected in the historiography. In fact, it has only been in the last three decades that a number of studies have started to focus, in some detail, on the three 'forgotten' decades following the achievement of independence in 1821. Moreover, ever since the collapse of the First Federal Republic (October 1835), the few historical interpretations which have prevailed of the period in question have tended to view the history of Mexico from a particularly marked centralist bias. In other words, the years which are analysed and narrated in Timothy E. Anna's most recent volume are years which have been, on the whole, either overlooked or oversimplified, or which have been interpreted from the limited viewpoint of the Valley of Mexico. The result of this is that many of the complexities of the politics of early republican Mexico continue to defy easy categorization, and that in those studies where an attempt has been made to decipher the labyrinthine trends and associations characterizing Mexican national politics in the aftermath of independence, this has tended to be carried out under the assumption that the events which took place, and the beliefs which were sustained in the capital, were either typical or representative of events and beliefs elsewhere in the country. It is for this reason that the collapse of the First Federal Republic has generally been blamed on the nature of early Mexican federalism: i.e. that which was translated into a political system in the 1824 constitution. The scarce historiography, with its centralist bias, has, therefore, systematically argued that early Mexican federalism led to the disintegration of a country which was united in 1821; that it was a foreign import, a US model which clashed with those traditional Hispanic political customs Mexico had inherited after 300 years of colonial rule; that it gave way to the rise of extreme provincialism and, by default, a plague of *caciques*-cum-*caudillos*, who took to destabilizing the country with that endless stream of *pronunciamientos* and revolts which came to be perceived as characteristic of the period ('the age of *caudillos*'); that it weakened a country that could have been a world power; and that it was responsible for the gradual and irreversible dismemberment of the nation, leading to the eventual loss of half of the national territory to the United States in the 1846–8 Mexican–American War. On this view, it was the inherent secessionism of the federalist process – the devolution of both power and sovereignty to the states – which resulted in the inevitable separation from Mexico of Texas, New Mexico, and Alta California.

Timothy E. Anna's study is a compelling and timely corrective of the dominant centralist discourse of the historiography. It proves very convincingly that it was the states that forged Mexico in the first place and that it was not the states that fragmented a previously united whole. In other words, it was through provincehood that nationhood was achieved, and not the other way round. The quest for self-determination and state sovereignty was, in other words, an equally ardent quest to create a united republic, without there having been a contradiction in such a dual aspiration. The federalists desired unity, but not uniformity. They attempted to create an operational union amid pre-existing diversity. Likewise, the federalist movement was one of the most progressive in Mexico, in the way that a truly federated federation was a guarantee against the empowerment of an absolutist and authoritarian centre or dictator. It is no surprise, in this sense, that it was the federalists who rejected the attempts that were made by the centre to disarm their provincial militias and replace them with a strengthened regular army expected to obey orders issued from the high command in Mexico City. Moreover, Anna's research also illustrates, with extraordinary clarity, how the final draft of the 1824 charter was a watered-down version of the original *Acta constitutiva*, one which, in fact, was tampered with and moderated by the powerful centralist elites of the capital until its federalist framework was one they could live with. In brief, if the federal constitution failed, it was not because it was a federalist charter, but because of the contradictory compromises which were imposed on it by the centralist elites who dominated the constituent congress in the spring and summer of 1824.

What also emerge in Anna's study are the well-substantiated arguments that at independence Mexico was neither a nation nor a nation-state, that Mexicanism was only one of many identities, and that, as a result, the history of Mexico is, in fact, a history of its states and regions; that its identity, on similar grounds, is an identity based on states and regions. In other words, Anna's volume, very successfully, turns the dominant centralist version of Mexican history upside-down, and provides a thorough and detailed analysis of the ways in which the centralist–federalist divide dominated and affected Mexican politics in the 1820s and early 1830s. What is also commendable in the study is the way Anna succeeds in highlighting the extent to which the burning federalist–centralist issues of early republican Mexico are once more a fundamental and controversial component of Mexico's present-day transition to democracy. In other words, the author illustrates, only too well, the relevance of history and the past by relating them to the ongoing crises of the nation. It is going to take a particularly inspired and resourceful centralist to dispute Anna's federalist interpretation of early independent Mexico.

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS WILL FOWLER

The contentious crown: public discussion of the British monarchy in the reign of Queen Victoria. By Richard Williams. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1997. Pp. vii+276. ISBN 1-85928-106-0. £40.00.

Democratic royalism: the transformation of the British monarchy, 1861–1914. By William M. Kuhn. London: Macmillan, 1996. Pp. x+180. ISBN 0-333-65813-2. £40.00.

The monarchy: fifteen hundred years of British tradition. Edited by Robert Smith and John S. Moore. London: Smith's Peerage Ltd, 1998. Pp. xvi+381. ISBN 0-9524229-5-6. £19.95.

Since David Cannadine applied the Hobsbawm and Ranger 'invention of tradition' thesis to nineteenth- and twentieth-century monarchy fifteen years ago, the rites of modern royalty increasingly have become debated amongst historians, and in the press generally. Richard Williams's *The contentious crown: public discussion of the British monarchy in the reign of Queen Victoria* represents a valuable contribution to this dialogue, as well as to the growing historiography concerning monarchical culture. Williams provides a detailed analysis of Victorian attitudes towards the monarchy as reflected in contemporary newspapers, from *The Times* to the *Northern Star*. In particular, he demonstrates how the Victorian monarchy was a subject of heated and often hostile discussion in the press. Its German antecedents continued to be a focus of antagonism. Likewise it was attacked for the amount of public money it absorbed, and for hindering the emergence of a meritocratic society. Within this framework of criticism, which frequently arose from non-republican commentators, Williams contextualizes the Victorian republican movements. The political function of the monarchy, and public perceptions of it, is another of the book's themes. Although Victoria continued to be a strongly partisan and politicized monarch, an image emerged of her as the perfect constitutional monarch who was beyond party strife. Williams highlights the divergence of this appearance from the reality, and argues especially for a reappraisal of Albert's supposed role as 'founder of constitutional monarchy' and his shaping of royal policy. But the study also shows that alongside public criticism there always existed veneration for the institution and its incumbent. Victoria was portrayed as an angel on the throne, as well as in the home, whilst the lives of the royal family were fashioned into a sentimental operetta for newspaper audiences. Press enthusiasm grew for public royal pageantry.

Although Williams's book is illuminating on aspects that constituted newspaper debate of the monarchy, some important issues he raises remain only explored partly. More could be made of the impact that Victoria's gender had upon discussions and perceptions of monarchy. The work concentrates mainly on the written discourse concerning royalty. The significance of illustrations in newspapers and periodicals which operated as complementary, supplementary, or as a substitute for newspaper comment ought not to be overlooked as a means of shaping the views of the literate, semi-literate, or illiterate through pictorial argument. And, as Williams admits, his study is only an analysis of national public opinion in so far as newspapers and speechmakers reflected and shaped it. In this case the motivations of newspaper proprietors and journalists deserve greater investigation. An intriguing instance of this, which he briefly mentions, is the examples of *Reynolds's Newspaper* and *Bow Bells*, the former being an anti-royal publication, the latter pro-royal, and both printed from the same office.

What motivated the promoters of Victorian and Edwardian monarchy is the overriding theme of William M. Kuhn's *Democratic royalism: the transformation of the British monarchy, 1861–1914*. Kuhn focuses upon five architects of the theory and practice of royal ceremonial: Walter Bagehot, William Gladstone, Reginald Baliol Brett, second Viscount Esher, Randall Davidson, later archbishop of Canterbury, and Henry Fitzalan-Howard, fifteenth duke of Norfolk. By doing so he vividly and very readably elucidates the mind sets of those behind the scenes of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pageantry, without losing sight of the element of idiocy that characterizes royal ceremonial. These figures, Kuhn argues, were proponents of what he labels 'democratic royalism', an argument and an emotion which presented the monarchy as vital to the newly democratized Britain by bringing stability, consensus, and morality to the political system. What emerges from Kuhn's portraits is the complexity of these men's motives, challenging the idea that social control over the great unwashed was the sole inspiration for royal ceremonial, and that the organizers of royal ceremonial 'invented' them. Indeed, the charge of 'invention' would have disturbed them greatly, as Kuhn shows. They saw royal ceremonies as enshrined in the nation's historical and spiritual past. Esher fought with Edward VII to prevent him doing away with 'ancient precedents'; and he attributed the fall of the French monarchy to the contempt shown by the social elites towards royal customs. Others had slightly different motives. Gladstone's reason for promoting a public thanksgiving ceremony for the recovery of the Prince of Wales in 1872 was not only to raise a positive public profile of the monarchy, but also because the idea of the nation at prayer appealed to him. His attachment to monarchy was linked deeply to his belief in the divinity of the institution. He saw Victoria as God's earthly regent, which led him to excuse her frequent rudeness towards him, and he did not reveal her lapses from the ideal of a non-partisan monarch even when to do so might have been in his political interest. The duke of Norfolk's chief interest in ceremonial sprung from his desire to claim his hereditary right, as earl marshal, to arrange royal occasions. He appears to have had little interest in them himself, nor held especial ideas as to how ceremonies could publicly project the monarch. Despite Norfolk's increasingly obvious incompetence at organizing events, he was allowed to continue in the office; his claims to it being based on the same principle as those of the monarch of Great Britain to the throne.

The importance of the monarchy as the fount of all social honour is an aspect of nineteenth- and twentieth-century monarchical culture which merits further consideration, and which Kuhn only touches on briefly. He highlights the fact that one of Norfolk's main concerns at royal events was to avoid creating a seating plan which established a precedence of rank for the social elites who attended, thus preventing the monarch and his officials from being deluged by individuals' claims to prove their social position within the nobility. Such ceremonies, it seems, were more concerned with attempting to keep the upper, rather than working, classes in order. Even Victoria's enthusiasm for the title of 'empress' was, Kuhn suggests, to increase her children's and her own social status amongst the monarchies of Europe. Although the Victorian monarchy was attacked for representing an aristocratic society, for many this was its great attraction. Williams draws attention to the deference of the middle-class press towards the monarchy which reflected the craving of the self-made for aristocratic approbation. Complex as were Victorian and Edwardian attitudes to monarchy, to comprehend fully their attachment to monarchism, it is also vital to understand their endearment to the concept of social status.

The continuance of such a preoccupation into the late twentieth century is highlighted revealingly by the long list of peers and 'manorial lords' whose names appear as subscribers to *The monarchy: fifteen hundred years of British tradition*. This collection of essays, some of which were presented as papers to the 1993 conference of the Manorial Society, forms the concluding volume of a trilogy which has previously covered the Houses of Lords and Commons. Its contributors range diversely from senior historians, to a co-editor of Debrett's Peerage, to J. Enoch Powell. The book divides between an historical review of English and Scottish monarchy, from its traceable beginnings to the present day, and, more controversially, to speculation about its future. The historical chapters, written by well-known academics, generally provide a lucid, approachable, and broad survey of the evolution of the monarchy from an institution which needed to be feared, to that which desires to be loved. Two particular themes emerge. First, the connection the monarch provided between the British Isles and mainland Europe, from Saxon times to the Hanoverians. This European perspective is enhanced by essays on Charlemagne, and late eighteenth-century France. Second, the flexibility of the institution of monarchy to survive individual monarchs, as exemplified by the 1688/9 Revolution. Here it would have been pertinent to provide a chapter on the quasi-monarchical position of Oliver Cromwell in the later 1650s. Indeed the absence of any detailed discussion of the most turbulent political event in the monarchy's history, the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth-century, the execution of Charles I, and the Interregnum represents a grave omission in a collection which seeks to examine the function and importance of monarchy, especially when a study of the French Revolution and monarchy is included. In a book subtitled 'British tradition' another notable deficiency is the brevity with which the Scottish monarchy is dealt. This could have been a valuable opportunity to contrast the monarchies of both countries. Also, the somewhat complacent theorizing about the role and effectiveness of late twentieth-century British monarchy rests uneasily with the historical content of earlier chapters. Encouraging the reader to expect 'a new golden age' under a putatively Augustan William V (as does one pseudo-Virgil) gives the volume a propagandist air which mars its attempt to provide a scholarly background to future constitutional debate.

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