

Rule Britannia?  
Britain and Britishness  
1707–1901



# Rule Britannia? Britain and Britishness 1707–1901

Edited by

Peter Lindfield and Christie Margrave

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This collection of essays arises from a large interdisciplinary and international conference held at the University of St Andrews between 10 and 12 August 2012 — *Emblems of Nationhood: Britishness 1707–1901*. Over the course of three days a broad and range of dynamic speakers from the UK, Europe and America, including postgraduate researchers and junior and senior academics, delivered fifty-four papers addressing the incredibly broad spectrum of Britishness and its manifestations. Professors Linda Colley (Princeton), Colin Kidd (St Andrews) and Calum Colvin (Dundee) were very generous in accepting invitations to deliver plenaries at the conference.

Organising such an event inevitably accrued a large number of debts, not least to the secretaries and heads of schools of Art History, History, English and Modern Languages at St Andrews. We thank them for the time and effort assisting us with this project. We are also indebted to a number of bodies who awarded us handsome grants to run the conference and offer generous postgraduate bursaries: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; The Russell Trust; The Royal Historical Society; The Scottish Society for Art History; The Society for French Studies; CAPOD (University of St Andrews Development); The University of St Andrews' Schools of Art History, History, English and Modern Languages; The University of the Highlands and Islands.

As editors, we wish to extend our thanks to the independent peer reviewers who read and offered sage feedback on the essays included in this volume, and the contributors themselves who have shown a lot of patience whilst this volume was realised around hectic academic timetables.

*Peter Lindfield and Christie Margrave, University of St Andrews  
March 2015*



# INTRODUCTION

## CHRISTIE MARGRAVE

National identity and the concept of Britishness are central points of enquiry repeatedly called upon in contemporary social and political rhetoric, particularly when we begin to see, in recent years, Britain seriously considering breaking up its three hundred year old union. Yet our understanding of the concepts of nationalism and national identity in the modern world can be enhanced by an understanding and appreciation of historical ideas of Britons' national identity and of Britishness. Keith Robbins's monograph on Britishness, for instance, reminds us of the contribution of the past to the creation of the present.<sup>1</sup> Coinciding with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the University of St Andrews held a multi-disciplinary conference — *Emblems of Nationhood, 1707–1901* — in August 2012 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first publication of Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation*. Through discussing depictions of Britain and Britishness in literature, philosophy, music, historical documents, art and design between the Act of Union in 1707 and the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the conference examined both the concept and the roots of British national identity alongside the impact of artistic and cultural depictions of Britain and Britishness in both domestic and international contexts. In so doing, it addressed how expressions of nationalism have moulded both critical perspectives on national identity and their creative products.

Both the *Emblems of Nationhood* conference itself and this collection of essays arising from it, have as their *terminus a quo* 1707 and as their *terminus ad quem* 1901. The beginning point is an obvious choice: the Act of the Union passed by the Parliament of Westminster in 1707, joined, for the first time, Scotland to England and Wales, uniting them 'into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain'.<sup>2</sup> The choice of a *terminus ad*

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness* (London; New York: Longman, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Union with England Act 1707, Introduction,

<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1707/7/section/I>> [accessed 14 January 2015].

*quem* which marks the death of Queen Victoria, is also an important one. Queen Victoria's lengthy reign and the stability she represented at the heart of the establishment were crucial to Britons' national pride in their identity, and the many developments in industrialisation, colonisation and empire occurring throughout Victoria's reign contributed greatly to a sense of what it meant to be British. According to a BBC Radio 4 broadcast in 2006,

Her 440 million subjects felt safe while Victoria was on the throne; but with her passing, the empire settled uneasily after the official and popular mourning. [...] When mourning finished, that same empire contemplated its own mortality. The Anglo-Boer War had shown that the British were not so invincible as previously thought.<sup>3</sup>

Inevitably, the sense of unease at Victoria's death would affect the factors which had contributed to British identity and pride throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Linda Colley's monograph on the forging of the British Nation and its identity, remains a crucial, seminal text for modern scholars analysing the origin of British national identity post-Act of the Union, and the effects of that origin and identity in the modern world.<sup>4</sup> Though the book was first published in 1992, the reprinting of a new edition in 2012 attests to the continued fundamental importance of Colley's work. However, further contributions to the field, such as the many other scholarly works from the last decade which address notions of British identity and its creation in relation to the Empire, must not be overlooked. Such works include those by Dana Arnold, Kathleen Wilson, and Tillman W. Nechtman.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Tony Kusher has addressed the role of immigration in constructing Britishness.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to investigate the origins and

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from the abstract describing the Radio 4 broadcast of episode 72 from *This Sceptred Isle: Empire, a 90 Part History of the British Empire* <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/empire/episodes/episode\\_72.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/empire/episodes/episode_72.shtml)> [accessed 15 January 2015].

<sup>4</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Dana Arnold, ed., *Cultural Identities and the aesthetics of Britishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Kathleen Wilson, *Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tillman Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Tony Kusher, *The Battle of Britishness: Migrant Journeys, 1685 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

meaning of a British identity, we must also note Keith Robbins's contribution to the field, which analyses how England, Scotland and Wales have influenced each other in their creation of Britishness. Additionally, numerous works have documented English, Scottish and Welsh individual nationalism and national identity, including those by Alexander J. Motyl,<sup>7</sup> Gerald Newman, who argues that England was perhaps the first modern country to experience nationalism,<sup>8</sup> David L. Adamson, who theorises and discusses the origins of Welsh nationalism,<sup>9</sup> and Tanya Bültmann, who focuses on often overlooked aspects of history and culture in her analysis of Scottish identity and nationalism in the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The new directions Britishness has begun to take in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been explored by Steven Caunce, Ewa Mazierska, Susan Sydney-Smith and John L. Walton.<sup>11</sup>

It is Colley's work, however, which our conference aimed to build upon, and which the findings of the essays published here both reinforce and develop. Colley discusses civilian responses to Britain and Britishness, and brings together 'the mental furniture of the Britons from different social backgrounds and from different parts of the island' with regard to analysing the forging and promotion of a British national identity.<sup>12</sup> However, as Colley herself states, she has not discussed in detail 'what fine art, or the theatre, or literature, or music can tell us about this subject'.<sup>13</sup> The present collection adds a new contribution in each of these areas to the discussion of Britain and Britishness between 1707 and 1901, with Lindfield and Davison discussing fine art and furniture design, Sitt discussing garden design and theory, Singer analysing literary narrative, Frazier Wood analysing music and drama, and Bourgès and Beddoes

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander J. Motyl, ed., *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, 2 vols (San Diego, CA; London: Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> David L. Adamson, *Class, Ideology and the Nation: A Theory of Welsh Nationalism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991). See also: Sir Reginald Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: A Study* (London: Collins, 1954).

<sup>10</sup> Tanya Bültmann, *Scottish Rights Vindicated: Identity and Nationalism in Mid-Nineteenth Century Scotland* (Bielefeld: Fakultät für Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft, 2005). See also: J. H. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism* (London: Faber, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Steven Caunce, Ewa Mazierska, Susan Sydney-Smith and John L. Walton, *Relocating Britishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

analysing propaganda, the former of the two investigating the narrative and dramatic rhetoric of sermons, and the latter the artistic imagery of advertising. In this way, this collection aims to add a very real contribution to our understanding of British identity and pride at a crucial period in British history.

In so doing, the essays included here draw on several themes identified in Colley's *Britons*. It should be noted here that, although the essays that appear in this collection discuss a wide range of topics from across the entire period between 1707 and 1901, their arrangement in this volume is not chronological. The contributions are, instead, grouped into thematic sections that discuss and articulate specific techniques highlighting, or being used to shape, a British national identity. Firstly, they draw on the theme of war. Colley describes Great Britain 'as an invented nation [...] forged above all by war'.<sup>14</sup> The British Empire grew over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bringing the British into contact and conflict with foreign peoples, both other colonisers and the colonised, and the British 'defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour'.<sup>15</sup> This notion of self-definition is discussed by Beddoes in the present collection, in her essay on the United Kingdom Tea Company. In particular, however, the wars discussed in this collection in terms of helping to define a British sense of identity are the on-going wars with the French. 'Time and time again', writes Colley, 'war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it'.<sup>16</sup> In the present volume, Lindfield and Davison, in particular, highlight the ways in which anti-French sentiment and British military and naval victories over the French are promoted and celebrated in fine art and furniture design respectively.

However, although war fought against a common enemy was perhaps the greatest factor in bringing together a nation built on variances and differing cultures, it was not the only factor to unite the nation in common solidarity and pride and to help it found its new, collective Britishness. War may well have 'played a vital part in the invention of a British nation after 1707', however 'it could never have been so influential without other factors, and in particular without the impact of religion'.<sup>17</sup> A second theme identified by Colley which will therefore feature in this collection, is that

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 367.



of Protestantism. In their continual wars against the French, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britons 'defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power'.<sup>18</sup> The notion that 'Britishness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been forged with France, first Catholic and then for a time Atheist, as 'the Other'', and that Protestantism was therefore central to the concept of what it meant to be British is also proffered by Robbins.<sup>19</sup> The importance of Protestantism (and of strong anti-Catholic sentiment) to the construction and promotion of British identity is discussed by Bourguès, who therefore also highlights anti-French feeling, though this time on the level of religion, coupled with anti-Spanish feeling. It becomes clear, then, in the present volume, through the essays of Beddoes, Lindfield, Davison and Bourguès, that British identity seemed indeed to be actively forged and promoted based on what it was not (French and Catholic, or foreign and colonised), as much as what it was (British, Protestant and colonising).

As well as requiring that the ruler of the newly United Kingdom of Great Britain be Protestant,<sup>20</sup> the Act of the Union also stated that there would be 'one legislature and one system of free trade'.<sup>21</sup> Trade, both with the colonised countries of the Empire and with countries outside of the Empire, was crucial to the founding of British identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to our understanding of British power and consequent pride. Trade, like war and religion, is consequently another recurrent theme in the present collection. Davison shows how customers of John Shearer followed the news reports of the Napoleonic wars and expressed particular interest in the success of the Royal Navy owing, in great part, to the effects of these wars on the maritime trade between Britain and America. Beddoes also addresses the importance of trade to the construction of British identity in her analysis of the advertising campaigns of the United Kingdom Tea Company.

The 'growing sense of Britishness' in this period, however, did not mean that other loyalties were ignored or suppressed.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, '[a]s even the briefest acquaintance with Great Britain will confirm, the Welsh, the Scottish and the English remain in many ways distinct peoples in cultural terms'.<sup>23</sup> We must also bear in mind when discussing the theme of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Robbins, p. 224.

<sup>20</sup> Union with England Act 1707, Section II, <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1707/7/section/II>> [accessed 14 January 2015].

<sup>21</sup> Colley, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Britishness, therefore, the sense of patriotism constructed upon the foundations of cultural history, tradition and legend, in addition to those themes mentioned above. In this respect, the question of whether the British celebrated an Anglo-Saxon or Celtic identity, or indeed a mixture of the two, must be raised. This is something discussed and touched upon by several essays in this collection, but is explored particularly in Section III, in which the pieces by Frazier Wood and Singer delineate contrasting points of view in the period under examination here. In the end, as Colley states, '[t]he sense of a common identity [...] did not come into being [...] because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead, Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other'.<sup>24</sup> This perhaps explains why John Shearer, when inlaying his furniture with news of the British naval victories over the French, identifies himself as a 'True North Briton' in the words of Davison: certainly still Scottish, but no less British for that. Yet, there are always elements of individual nationalism occurring in art and literature throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Singer reminds us, and we must never forget or overlook those in our efforts to understand collective Britishness and the themes upon which it is constructed.

The aim of the present volume, however, is not solely to demonstrate how the arguments of key scholars of Britishness such as Colley and Robbins are upheld (or, in the case of Singer's analysis, challenged) in an analysis of the fine arts, literature, music, drama, garden design and propaganda of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It aims to analyse the creativity, imagery and rhetoric behind the recognised key foundations of the construction of Britishness (war, religion, trade and individual cultures), which remain, thus far, unexplored and certainly not united in a single collection. That is, this volume aims to understand the rhetoric behind religion, the literary techniques behind the narratives and dramatisations of individual cultures and legends, the imagery behind trade, the artistic techniques employed to celebrate victories in war. In other words, we explore here not so much the foundations of Britishness themselves, as the tools used to reinforce them.

Section I of the present collection concerns British art and design in the promotion of national identity. Peter Lindfield's article shows how the Rococo — an artistic movement originating in France — was adapted to incorporate elements of artistic styles strongly associated with Britain, such as the Gothic. In so doing, Lindfield not only gives a clear insight as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

to how the Rococo was practised by the British, but how, in fact, '[u]nder the control of British craftsmen a nationally distinctive form of the Rococo developed' which counteracted the fashionable movement's association with France, the country with which the British were so often at war in the eighteenth century. Through their artistic development, the British were actively promoting their own nationalism, and asserting their identity as different from the French. Lindfield argues that British national pride was shown through depicting the French in a negative light, and showing British emblems in a positive one. Lindfield's examples include Thomas Rowlandson's depiction of *Old Vauxhall Gardens*, Matthias Lock's *Design for a Girandole*, and several pieces by the celebrated Thomas Chippendale. Furthermore, through discussion of the inclusion of British national emblems of identity and legend such as those of Britannia and St George, into Rococo design, Lindfield also illustrates that Britons' notion of their national identity being built on what it was not — i.e. French — went further than a simple opposition. In fact, the 'Rococo's adoption and domestic production were central to the Anti-Gallican Association's aims in the 1750s'. Both commissioners and artists appeared to seek a way to promote British national identity and pride through Rococo art, suppressing its French links and actively using it to 'distance themselves from the enemy'.

Elizabeth Davison shows that a similar anti-French vein is felt several decades later in the expression of British identity in John Shearer's furniture between 1790 and 1820. Whereas the Seven Years' War affected the anti-French feeling in the mid-eighteenth century, the period analysed by Lindfield, it was the responses to news regarding the Napoleonic Wars which were evoked in the emblems carved into Shearer's work. As Davison argues, however, an analysis of Shearer's messages of British pride also furnishes us with an insight into British identity within the island nation. Davison shows how Shearer viewed Briton as one country, defining himself as British, and proud to show his political allegiance to Britain and her Royal Navy in particular, but that he never forgot his simultaneous continuing attachments to the North, to Scotland. He identified as a 'North Briton', therefore. She argues how Shearer's love of his Scottish homeland is evidenced by inlays and carvings of thistles, but that his overall British pride and allegiance to the Royal Navy also come through. This association, she argues, is expressed in his carvings of British emblems, such as the crowned lion rampant, and in his positive inscriptions regarding Admiral Nelson and the victories of the British fleet over the French. An analysis of furniture design can add, therefore, to Colley's argument that the English and Scottish were brought together in

pride and identity, not only through the Act of the Union itself, but through a communal desire to stand against the French. As little paper documentation remains to inform us of Shearer's life, we must turn to his furniture for information regarding his sense of allegiance and identity, thus proving that art and design can provide as much information about Britishness as can a study of political documentation or social meetings. As with the fine art analysed in Lindfield's article, the carved furniture of Shearer tells us just as much about the interest in British pride demonstrated by the customers who bought his designs as it does about that of the carver himself.

Art and furniture design are not alone in presenting an eighteenth and nineteenth century view of British identity and British political freedom, however. Martina Sitt explores German perceptions on what Britishness involved through understanding garden design. Sitt argues that, according to C.L.L. Hirschfeld, the art of gardening was a very British development, and Hirschfeld developed a theory of the relationship between national taste, political ideas and British gardening. She further argues that some of Hirschfeld's ideas on Britishness, gleaned from his examinations of British gardens, 'still influence our contemporary understanding of national identity'.

Whilst in the early and mid-eighteenth century, Voltaire and Montesquieu had admired the stability and ritual that they saw to be inherent in British politics, society and industry, when it came to garden design, the European Continent's admiration of the British was for something very different. The wildness, and freedom from constraint inherent within the *jardin à l'anglaise* was the envy of the French<sup>25</sup> and indeed of most of Europe.

Throughout Europe this revolution accorded with the spirit of the times. Every sentimentalist, republican philosopher, or romance writer, rebelling against rigid law and order of any kind, delighted in this so-called return to the freedom of nature.<sup>26</sup>

The English-style garden soon became associated with Britain in the late-eighteenth century, and Sitt's article shows the impressions on the Germans made by a recognised symbol of Britishness. Whilst much has been written regarding the features that characterised a British garden in the eighteenth century, Sitt argues that 'only Hirschfeld has endeavoured

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander Minski, *Le Prérromantisme* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Rose Standish Nichols, *English Pleasure Gardens* (Jaffrey, NH: David R. Godine, 2003), p.220.

to combine this with the political idea of a nation'. Hirschfeld rejected the notion that looking at gardens was equivalent to looking at landscape paintings, instead arguing that the garden must be experienced by moving through it. The action of the spectator in an English-style garden was, then, according to Hirschfeld, 'equally as free as the garden itself, because the movement of the spectator was self-controlled, and without the surveillance (of the King) to which it would have been submitted in a French Baroque garden'.

Section II of this volume addresses the issue of propaganda, and the rhetorical and persuasive techniques employed in the creation of national identity. The essays which form Section II analyse writings published a hundred and fifty years apart and deal with what, at first sight, appear to be very different subjects indeed. However, both articles show very clearly the intentions both to persuade public opinion on what constituted true Britishness and to stir up national pride through the use of differing types of propaganda. Furthermore, both pieces go some way to demonstrating the effects of creative rhetoric and persuasive imagery on the making and promotion of a British national identity.

The first essay in Section II deals with one of the chief foundation stones, and indeed emblems, of British identity mentioned by Colley: Protestantism. Nicolas Bourguès investigates how the preachers John Jenings, White Kennett, William Goldwin and Joseph Harrington conceived Britain and Protestantism in the Hanoverian period. Protestantism, writes Colley, 'served as a powerful cement between the English, the Welsh and the Scots',<sup>27</sup> and formed a large cornerstone of 'the foundation that made the invention of Great Britain possible'.<sup>28</sup> This is certainly true in Bourguès's analysis. However, Bourguès's article is highly original, through its analysis of rhetorical technique, imagery and historical narrative, in the insight that it offers into early eighteenth-century sermon making, and how preachers employed these literary techniques in order to offer a celebratory rendering of British history, set in the continuity of a Protestant heritage, and in order to promote one of the foundation stones of British identity, and thus in order to promote Britishness itself.

Bourguès demonstrates early eighteenth-century preachers' employment of panoramic staging of historical event as dramatic epic and the use of theatrical lexicon, coupled with the heroic, biblical allegorisation of Protestant monarchs, the narrative presentation of Catholic nemeses (including the Pope and Philip II of Spain), and indeed the allegorisation

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<sup>27</sup> Colley, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

of Britain and the Protestant religion itself. These techniques provide specific, strong examples of logos, pathos and ethos in their attempts to convey persuasive messages to the British public that Protestantism, upon which Great Britain is built, is a universal emblem for moral purity. National identity is defined positively 'in spectacular circumstances which elicit pride' and is built upon morality, and readers and audiences of the sermons are 'called upon to take part in the continuation of that national identity'.

'Protestantism, broadly understood, provided the majority of Britons with a framework for their lives', writes Colley, '[b]ut if religion underpinned national identity [...] it was also the case that an active commitment to nation was often intimately bound up with an element of self-interest'.<sup>29</sup> She continues: '[f]rom patriotism, men and women were able to anticipate profits of some kind. [...] Perhaps one in every five families in eighteenth-century Britain drew its livelihood from trade and distribution'.<sup>30</sup> If, as Colley states, both religion and trade have an effect on Britishness, then both of their respective forms of propaganda — sermon making and advertising — certainly do. In the second article of Section II of the present collection, Emalee Beddoes investigates the theme of trade and its relation to British identity, analysing the advertising campaigns of the United Kingdom Tea Company and their propaganda images promoting notions of Britishness and British pride. Beddoes argues that the United Kingdom Tea Company was, although international, 'nationalist in both name and rhetoric', and that it utilised an association between tea and Britishness within its advertising in order to negotiate tea's heterogeneous identity as an imperial commodity that was physically and ideologically assimilated into British daily life.

The theme of space is a key one to Beddoes's arguments, in particular the space of the Empire, domestic space and, of course, advertising space. Although tea was imported to Britain from plantations in China, India, and later also from Africa, and was therefore of foreign origin, British national emblems, such as Britannia, were employed in tea advertising campaigns in order to replace the foreign associations of the drink with those strongly advocating the might of Britain and her Empire. Furthermore, when foreignness and foreign space is portrayed, it is not done so in order to show a threat to Britain, British identity or British ritual, it is done in order to show a racial hierarchy, with Britain at the top, thus further reinforcing national pride. The tea table itself becomes a space of identity creation.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Beddoes argues how advertising campaigns display the tea table as a space associated with stability through ritual, reinforcing the feminine sphere of domesticity. Drawing on arguments made by Julie Fromer, Beddoes also presents the tea table as a space which helped to create a British national identity out of differing social groups and classes, and at which a coded, behavioural language of tea drinking ritual was developed that was unique to Britain. Finally, advertising, and thus the products being promoted, also became part of the national landscape, visible on public buildings and in the home, thus persuading the public, through continual exposure to both the product and the arguments made about it through the imagery and captions on billboards, of the Britishness of tea and of its importance to the creation of British national identity.

Finally, Section III addresses the question of an Anglo-Saxon or a Celtic Britishness. Whilst Frazier Wood's article argues how the former was promoted and proudly upheld in the mid-eighteenth-century, Singer's on the other hand shows how, in the aftermath of English criticisms of Wales, the Welsh attempted to promote their sense of national identity by contradicting the traditionally received view of the English, Anglo-Saxon heritage as the key to British identity.

In his analysis of *Alfred: A Masque*, Dustin Frazier Wood expands upon current scholarship on *Alfred* by concentrating not on the frequently discussed 'Rule, Britannia!' or the political ideology of the piece, but by considering the historical narrative underpinning the plot of the drama and music alongside eighteenth-century Anglo-Saxon studies. In so doing, Frazier Wood underlines the function of the historical narrative to the newly created Britain's exploration of its people's historical identity, and to the promotion of a sense of unity and patriotism.

Through this dramatic, musical text and its many incarnations and revivals in the eighteenth century, Alfred and his England were used as a point of comparison for contemporary politics. Alfred, the good and just king, successful warrior and defender of his people, was to be emulated by Prince Frederick. Yet, *Alfred* portrays not only the great qualities of King Alfred himself, but also portrays the common man in ninth-century England in a very positive light, highlighting his virtues, honour and patriotism. Frazier Wood shows how the emphasis and phrasing of the spoken word 'underscores the fact that such virtues are part of an Anglo-Saxon's identity'. This was intended both to flatter the common man in the eighteenth-century audience, and also to encourage such behaviour in his contemporary society. Furthermore, *Alfred* highlighted the fundamental unity of king and people in a common cause and a common Anglo-Saxon identity, a notion which was also viewed positively by the English

eighteenth-century audience. *Alfred* was, in short, ‘a production capable of expressing patriotism and common cause whilst advocating for reform’, according to Frazier Wood.

Since the late sixteenth century, Frazier Wood argues, the study of law ‘posited the Anglo-Saxon period of history as the essential, foundational time for English identity’. However, according to Colley, the Anglo-Saxon period of history not only affected the English: ‘the majority of Lowland Scots and a substantial minority of Welshmen were not [...] Celtic in ethnic origin, but Anglo-Saxon or Norse’.<sup>31</sup> In fact, according to Colley, in 1707 ‘the Welsh and Scots [...] rarely defined themselves against the English by reference to the kind of rich Celtic nationalism that certain Irish patriots would make so much of after the 1840s’.<sup>32</sup> This was not always so for the non-English parts of Britain, however, and Singer’s article illustrates that in 1858, a century after the many incarnations of *Alfred: A Masque* appeared on the British stage, Welsh literature begins to look at the Celtic origins of the Welsh nation in an effort to provide an alternative to Anglo-Saxon nationalism.

Rita Singer argues that in response to criticisms of the Welsh state of education made by the English in 1847, the novelist L.M. Spooner, who herself had both English and Welsh roots, penned a historical novel, set at the time of the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century in order to create ‘a counter-discourse for Victorian historiography [that] challenges established Anglocentric narratives’, by tracing the British royal dynasty and its position on the throne to the acts of a Welsh family who ensure the victory of Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and to the prophecies of a Welsh witch. Spooner’s narration of events is not without foundation. Indeed, according to Robbins,

In 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth, it is alleged that the blow which finally killed the king, Richard III, was delivered by a Welshman, Sir Rhys ap Thomas, who had thrown his forces behind the claimant, Henry, Earl of Richmond. And Henry was Henry Tudor, son of Owen ap Maredudd ap Tudor, born in Pembroke Castle. The new dynasty on the throne of England was indubitably half Welsh.<sup>33</sup>

Singer argues that Spooner creates her counter-discourse to Victorian historiography, in which the creation of modern Britain relies heavily on Wales and its people, through three techniques: by affording Wales and its

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Robbins, p. 20.



landscape a much more central role in terms of the importance of space; by embellishing historical events with Celtic mythology; and through characterisation, by using her three principal female characters, representing three different nations — Wales, England and France — to reinforce the power of multi-cultural heritage, thus arguing against a purely Saxon, mono-cultural narrative of history.

English legend and history is replaced with Celtic mythology, the Tudor dynasty and their military victory in the Wars of the Roses are traced back to Wales, and a major English female character rejects her Englishness for a Welsh pseudonym and pseudo-identity. Both war and religion remain fundamental themes to identifying a cultural and national identity. However, here, an identity founded after victory in war is not one that seeks to define itself as single and united against a common enemy, but rather one made up of multiple, multi-cultural layers. Furthermore, Spooner's Britain is not the Protestant one promoted so strongly throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but rather one which emerged from paganism and with the aid of pagan prophecy. Therefore, whilst Davison's examination of Shearer's furniture in Section I reveals a closeness between Scotland and England in the minds of the joiner and his customers, that closeness between the Celtic periphery and England is not echoed in the novelist L.M. Spooner's views of the Welsh and English, according to the final article of this volume, thus foreshadowing some of the return to individual cultural identity which we begin to see even more starkly in the twenty-first century.

In their exploration of the tools and techniques used to promote the foundation stones of British identity, the essays included here ultimately underscore the complexity and multi-faceted nature of British identity and its variously imaginative expressions between the Act of the Union and the death of Queen Victoria. Though some of these diverse expressions appear contradictory — at least upon first inspection — they are all united in building an image of the self. This image of the British self was founded upon national pasts (heritage), as well as the present and the future. As with contemporary political debate, then, the struggle to define three nations in one rests upon the past, present and future.



**PART I:**

**BRITISH ART AND DESIGN  
IN THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY**



## CHAPTER ONE

# NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH DESIGN: THE ANGLICISATION OF THE ROCOCO IN MID-EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

PETER N. LINDFIELD

As true lovers of our country, therefore we are studious to promote the consumption of our own manufactures and to discourage those of so formidable a neighbor [France]. Our own are sufficient for all the ends and purposes of life, not only as to *neatness* and *decency*, but for *equipage* and *dress*. And would we be content with our own, a multitude of useful hands alight be employed, and many an heart made glad by the earnings of industry and labour, who otherwise must be left to starve, or to be maintained at a parish charge. It must be then matter of concern to every honest Englishman, to think what sums are expended among a people, for which the only return we have is a large import of their follies, and fopperies, their vanities and vices; — that so much *Gold and Silver* should be carried abroad, to bring back a ridiculous cargo of *Apes and Peacocks*.<sup>1</sup>

The Rococo developed out of the grotesque, a Renaissance revival of ancient Roman forms, and effectively lightened the preceding style known today as Louis XIV.<sup>2</sup> Frenchmen brought the Rococo, characterised by the mutable rock-like, watery, waxy and shelly matter known as *rocaille*, to Britain in the 1730s, and initially its most skilled practitioners in Britain were French.<sup>3</sup> British artists and craftsmen soon adopted and mastered the style, including William Hogarth (1697–1764) who revived the Kneller

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<sup>1</sup> M. Audley, *A Sermon Preached Before the Several Associations of the Laudable Order of Anti-Gallicans, at Bow-Church in Cheapside* (London: Printed for J. Robinson, 1752), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> M. Snodin, 'English Rococo and its Continental Origins', in M. Snodin and E. Moncrieff (eds), *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England* (London: Trefoil Books and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Academy of Painting and Drawing in 1734 as the St Martin's Lane Academy, London, to facilitate artistic training and the mastering of its ornament.

The style became exceptionally popular amongst the trappings of merchant and aristocratic comfort and sophistication: country- and town house furniture, silverware, and ceiling plasterwork being notable categories under the style's influence.<sup>4</sup> Its broad reach is suitably illustrated by the plasterwork and furniture at Hopetoun House, Midlothian, and Duff House, Banffshire.<sup>5</sup> As such, the Rococo became a national style in terms of influence and geographic spread,<sup>6</sup> and a slew of furniture pattern books both promoted and responded to this aesthetic, including Matthias Darly's *A New Book of Chinese, Gothic and Modern Chairs, with the Manner of Putting Them in Perspective According to Brook Taylor* (1751), Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754, 1755, 1762), Thomas Johnson's *Collection of Designs* (1758), The Society of Upholsterers and Cabinet-Makers' *Household Furniture in the Genteel Taste for the Year 1760* (1760), Thomas Johnson's *One Hundred and Fifty New Designs* (1761), William Ince's and Jonathan Mayhew's *The Universal System of Household Furniture* (1762), and Robert Manwaring's *The Chair-Maker's Guide* (1766).<sup>7</sup>

Despite a surfeit of pattern books containing Rococo designs, the style was not without controversy. Primarily, its inherent asymmetry directly rebelled against the balanced rationalism and hierarchy of Classicism, particularly as expressed through the Palladian architecture and interiors by Richard Boyle (1694–1753), third Earl of Burlington and fourth Earl of

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<sup>4</sup> See J. Hardy, 'Rococo Furniture and Carving', in M. Snodin and E. Moncrieff (eds), *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England* (London: Trefoil Books and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), pp. 154–88, and G. Jackson-Stops, 'Rococo Architecture and Interiors' in M. Snodin and E. Moncrieff (eds), *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England* (London: Trefoil Books and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), pp. 190–209.

<sup>5</sup> For a general discussion of Rococo plasterwork, see G. Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (London: Phaidon, 1975). See also I. Gow and T. Clifford, *Duff House* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1995), and The Marquess of Linlithgow, *Hopetoun House* (Derby: Heritage House, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See L. Colley, 'The English Rococo: Historical Background', in M. Snodin and E. Moncrieff (eds), *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England* (London: Trefoil Books and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), pp. 12–13.

<sup>7</sup> See P. Ward-Jackson, *English Furniture Designs of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office and Victoria and Albert Museum, 1958), pp. 37–60.