State Formation and the Historiography of Early Modern England

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Abstract

The history of the state was once at the core of academic history and university curricula. In English history, the revolution of 1649 was said to be of epochal significance and influential analyses of its causes sought to tie together disparate fields of study in a single explanation. Over the last thirty years, however, such accounts have been heavily criticised and, partly as a consequence, the historiography of Stuart England became much more fragmented. Recent histories of 'state formation' however, promise to overcome some of the effects of that fragmentation. They explore the organisation, institutionalisation, representation and expression of political power rather than the more or less conscious efforts of particular individuals or groups to transform the state. This emphasis on the broader social and cultural processes which shaped the state reconnects important elements of recent social, economic, cultural, intellectual and political histories. Moreover, it may help to forge connections between medieval, early modern and later modern histories, and the integration of English experience into wider comparative histories.

Histories of the state once formed the backbone of the profession, holding together relatively disparate areas of study in fairly coherent narratives (usually of a nationalist and/or progressive brand). In the English case (as, no doubt, in many others), these narratives were held by those constructing them to be of more than national significance – the history of England was said to be of global significance since it was the home of modern representative politics and of industrialisation, and the history of the state was often central to the explanation of their birth.[1] Suspicion of those narratives, and a greater self-consciousness about the conditional nature of historical understandings, have undermined these histories; so too the greater diversity of historical study. The revolution of 1649, once a central feature of histories of seventeenth-century England, indeed of the history of post-Roman England, has lost its centrality for a generation of scholars influenced by developments in social and cultural history. Christopher Hill's synoptic view of the course of change over the seventeenth century, which had as its central point the revolution of 1649, has not just lost its

hold on the field; the space for that kind of book seems to have disappeared. The question seems to be not simply how can we embrace, for example, the histories of sexuality, political economy and science in a single narrative, but why should we try? Although I will suggest that the state is 'back in', therefore, I will not be arguing that it has resumed its place at the head of the table or that it should. Nonetheless, a number of new works have drawn our attention back to the state. Taken together, they demonstrate that the study of the organisation, institutionalisation, representation and expression of political power remains an important means by which to approach an understanding of many aspects of social, economic, intellectual and cultural life. Moreover, these issues can now be addressed in a way that opens up English history to comparison with other national histories. Histories of state formation have something to say to the current generation.

The dethroning of the English revolution

The English revolution was not the only key point in the canonical history of the early modern state of course: significant claims were also made for the importance of the Tudor revolution in government, the development of the English (later British) empire and for the Glorious Revolution, for example.[2] These milestones in the history of the state have been, along with the industrial and scientific revolutions among those at the heart of 'early modernity' as a concept applied to England. In what follows, I will concentrate on the historiographical fate of the English revolution but I think this fate reflects wider developments in early modern historiography.

The English revolution was dethroned partly by revisionism in early Stuart political history and partly by the development of alternative histories. To take the latter point first: one of the most important and exciting fields of social history in the last generation has been the study of social stratification, studied in rural contexts. The political agenda for this work was often that enunciated by E. P. Thompson – the desire to rescue the poor from the massive condescension of posterity. These people (the humble rather than the historians, although in one sense both groups) were at best bit-part players in the grand narratives of English history. Attention to the humble and their concerns might lead to attempts to recover the role of disadvantaged social groups in great events – especially in the case of Marxists and marxisants – but more common was the effort to recover the politics of their everyday lives. Most often, this has been presumed to depend on an attention to the village level of analysis and in those contexts, the key methodological influences were anthropological – the observation of quotidian ritual and action held the key to unlocking the realities of local life. This form of anthropology is, of course, notoriously blind to history both in the neutral sense of change

over time and in the sense intended by the builders of master narratives. Social historians engaged in this kind of history were not guilty of the first, of course, but had more or less accepted their enemies' assertion that ordinary people played no role in the latter. It almost seemed, in fact, that the charge was reversed – it was the grand story, rather than the people, that was irrelevant to the really important issues.[3]

This was related to a change of the frame in which English history was viewed. Early modern villagers inhabited closely defined geographical worlds and their articulation to larger networks of exchange, communication and meaning was rarely explored. This did not rule out the possibility of comparative history, and the addressing of big questions, in fact in one sense it was positively encouraged. However, the basis of comparison was the experience of a particular social group – the lower orders – and, as often as not, a single theoretical concern – modernisation. Perhaps the seminal article for my generation of historians was Keith Wrightson's 'Aspects of social differentiation'.[4] It is suggestive of our frame of reference that it was published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* rather than, say, the *Journal of British Studies*: the natural point of comparison in this context seemed to be French, Indian or Indonesian peasantries and this work had no obvious connection to the older narratives of English history.

This strand of social history was in dialogue with a dominant mode of economic history – demography – driven by an excitement at the possibilities of computer-aided analysis and the larger, perhaps *Annaliste*, trend towards the accumulation of 'hard fact' (although I think none of the Cambridge group would have been guilty of claiming that 'if it can't be counted then it doesn't count'). The units of analysis, theoretical concerns and points of comparison were similar. By comparison, those writing the history of domestic and overseas trade beat a rather lonely path, and so some of the central themes of an older historiography concerned with economic modernisation have become rather neglected.[5]

In part, this apparent lack of engagement with the national political story also arose from dissatisfactions with previous attempts to connect political, economic and social history in accounts of the development of the state. Hill, Trevor-Roper and Stone had all proposed syntheses of political and social history which, in one way or another, grafted social histories onto the pre-existing political narrative. Two features of these accounts have proven unsatisfactory to the scholars who came after them. On one hand, the development of state was often seen as the result of the victory of particular political parties or individuals with consciously-articulated views of how the state should be built. This created a tendency to focus on national institutions, and in particular on parliament, as the place to look for politics, and the negotiation of political change. On the other hand, the interests of particular social groups were often said to determine their choice of views about how the state should change. Attempts to make the latter connection – court and country, the role of the middling

sort, the interests of differing merchant groups or rising or falling gentry – were all open to empirical challenge and charges of determinism.[6] A new generation of social history resting on deep research in local archives created dissatisfactions with these empirical problems and elisions. At the same time, historians of all kinds reacted against an emphasis on parliament as the cockpit of political debate and the primary generator of political and institutional change. An emphasis on the local raised questions about the practical importance of constitutional or institutional change at the centre while at the same time drawing attention to institutional changes in the localities, and the importance of local energies and initiatives in promoting such change. Recent histories of state formation (as distinct from state building) have sought to make a connection between social, economic and political histories without presuming that it is centrally-driven or that it is the outcome of a conscious act of creation, or that where such consciousness is discerned, that it can or should be derived from socio-economic interest.[7]

Where once the English revolution was seen as a moment at which economic, social and political histories intersected therefore, these historiographical tendencies tended to fragment our overall sense of English history in this period; and where social historians now write about the state they do not necessarily do so within the framework of the received narrative of national politics. However, the key reason for the dethroning of the English revolution, and the abandonment of long-term histories of the development of the state, has been the impact of revisionism on the political history of the period. Over the same period, political histories of the seventeenth century became dominated by the debate about the causes of the English civil war.[8] Revisionist hostility to Marxism was both empirical and methodological; the attack on Whiggery, mainly the latter, although it was encouraged by laudable liberal concerns about its imperialising implications. Some writing about localism as a kind of anti-ideology seems to owe something to the radicalism of the Vietnam generation – a sense that war is made by politicians for their own ends, and against the will and interests of the people. In any case, the scientism of 60s and 70s scholarship was here expressed in the craft mysteries of Anglo-American empiricism: to exaggerate only slightly, explanations had to rest on explicit statements in surviving documents. The effects of this on the forms of explanation for the outbreak of the war are well-known, but it also tended to reinforce the insularity of English history, often despite the best efforts of its most influential practitioners.[9]

A relatively hidden and largely unintended consequence though, was to draw attention away from the long-term effects of civil war and revolution. Marxists and Whigs were accused of deriving the causes of the war from some of its claimed consequences for the development of the state; but the attack has taken the form primarily of disputing the arguments about causation, not consequence. For a long time few people worked on

the 1650s, and even fewer worked on both the 1630s and the 1670s. This political history absorbed the idea, for example, that there was a distinctive English common law mind and employed it as a means of establishing the uniqueness of early Stuart political culture, but there has been relatively little interest in what happened to it thereafter.[10]

These are crude (though I hope not offensive) characterisations. It goes without saying that this generation of historians have contributed enormously to the development of our field, and stimulated great interest in it. The main point of this overview is to suggest that these historiographical developments have tended to fragment, chronologically and thematically, our sense of the history of the English state, and in some cases to militate against the possibilities of comparative history. In all these historiographies we can offer explanations for these developments internal to the historiographies themselves. In the case of the dominant form of social history it was a more or less explicit rejection of the national story – paradoxically, anti-nationalism led to a literally parochial focus, rather than an interest in England's global history. This was probably also true of economic and political histories – there was a kind of liberal aversion to the study of empire and commercial expansion. There are signs, however, that the state is coming back; and the story is shorn of the old teleologies and dubious moral claims.

State formation in early modern England

In fact, although it did not occupy centre stage, the state was always a player in these histories and there is now a growing literature which takes the state as its focus. Social, political and economic historians have become interested in the state, and a related revitalisation of the history of the empire has further reinforced this development. There is also shared ground between these historiographies and the related study of political culture and so the study of the state seems to offer a way into a variety of areas of study. I want also to suggest that this serves to open English history up to comparative history. My focus, in what follows will be on the 'long seventeenth-century', with the English revolution as its focal point, but I will also try to discuss the periods before and after that.

The classic village study of Terling has provided a point of departure for social historians and a key theme developed from that book, not least by one of its authors, has been the history of social regulation. Allied work on poverty and crime has drawn attention to the impact of government on ordinary lives. This work has tended to paint a picture of an increasingly intrusive and active state, although it was a younger generation of historians who put it squarely in that context.[11] The key players here were the middling sort, fired (to a degree contested by historians) by a godly vision of societal reformation, responding to the profound social problems arising from rapid population growth in the context of

an economy slow to expand output and create work. These local groups often took the lead in the development of social policy, particularly in towns where migration created very visible social problems and borough authorities flexed their muscles in confronting them. Statute frequently followed local practice, and the key note everywhere was local discretion – legislation was often effectively 'permissive' and local elites chose among available powers in search of the most appropriate local solutions to the difficulties as they perceived them. The key period for these developments was 1550–1640, with particularly rapid developments in the poor laws during hard years such as the 1590s and 1630s. By the time of the outbreak of civil war, the key features of a new, statutory system of social regulation were in place and the powers were exercised at the initiative of local elites throughout the civil wars and revolution, emerging unscathed (and perhaps even enhanced) at the restoration.

If the social histories of rural England and of godly cities give emphasis to the increasing effectiveness of governance, historians of the reformation have on the whole been more sceptical about the power of the state. Revisionist histories of the reformation emphasise its initial destructiveness and its weakness as a constructive process, triumphing eventually through inertia selling rather than active consumer demand. The starkest version of this story (which of course never approached the starkness of this summary) has itself been subject to some revision. There is now a less gloomy view of the history of protestantism within popular culture but this revision has not really affected the view of the state. Voluntarism characterises many accounts of popular religion, and this tends to demonstrate the weakness of the state in imposing religious practices. In a sense this builds on the distinction between the official reformation and the protestant reformation: the latter owed much to local initiative, was shaped by a variety of interests and was not comfortably within the control of central government. It also became entwined with a number of other issues in national and international politics, creating a protestant political interest which was not subordinated fully to monarchical or ecclesiastical control. Successive regimes enjoyed considerable success in reducing catholicism to minority status, but they signally failed in achieving the stated aim of a stable, uniform version of protestant religious practice. Matters got worse, of course, in the 1640s; and little better after the restoration. By the late seventeenth century, a limited toleration, coupled with civil disabilities for non-Anglicans, allowed for the preservation of a degree of protestant harmony.

Political histories, when mention is made of the state, tend to associate it with fiscal-military matters. A number of recent works have emphasised a structural transformation of the state during the 1640s, after a long period of faltering but partially effective reform. The emphasis was once on structural failure in the early Stuart period, as attempts to modernise the fiscal and military resources of the realm foundered on the problem

of consent, particularly from those groups who were implementing social regulation and hedging their bets over religion. England was saved from disaster in all this, however, by the channel and it was not until the civil war that large-scale mobilisation was forced on the English. More recent work on the early Stuart period has revised this picture somewhat by emphasising what was possible, and drawing attention to the fairly continuous English experience of warfare in the century before the civil war.[12] It nonetheless seems clear that the civil war prompted a major change in the capacity of the state in these respects. During the 1640s there was a double transformation of state finances: they came to rest almost exclusively on taxation and that was associated with (probably) a doubling of the proportion of national wealth being claimed by the state. These gains were not lost at the restoration and, following the Glorious Revolution, there was a further doubling in the proportion of national wealth being disposed of by the state. In this sense, and in some of the ways in which the money was assessed, collected and audited, these developments were modernising: a demesne state was replaced by a tax state in which an increasing number of offices were bureaucratic in form.

Partly as a consequence of this fiscal–military transformation, the later seventeenth–century state was more capable of fostering territorial and commercial expansion. During the 1650s, the English established military domination in Britain and Ireland and the development of the navy and customs administration underpinned the development of the navigation system. Fiscal–military reform at home allowed for greater ambition in the regulation of the nascent empire, which began to develop more rapidly in the second half of the seventeenth century. The institutional framework of these developments was established by a former generation of scholars, of course, but more emphasis has recently been given to the ideology that animated them; and closer consideration to the ways in which the simultaneous development of state and empire shaped the development of each.[13]

This multifaceted structural history grows out of local studies, and the state is here seen mainly from below.[14] Many of the old landmarks survive – particularly the 1640s and 1690s – but these moments are viewed as important for aspects of the state, and less as transformative of the entire structure. Others are added – the 1590s and 1620s, for example – and that tends again to dilute the claims for any one period, although the 1640s continue to occupy a central place in all these narratives. The local perspective also reinforces the tendency of structural histories to discount the doings of great men – what are usually termed high politics. The studies I have been discussing are more concerned with government than politics, they are less top-down, more impersonal and emphasise the *longue durée*. Yet, they are not incompatible with the study of high politics: protestantisation may have been a long-term process, but its origins lie in the breach with Rome, a high political one. Among the many weaknesses currently attributed to Charles I, for example, is his blindness to the structural

limitations on his actions. Structural histories provide a context for the analysis of particular episodes, and political decisions at key moments can clearly affect structural developments.

Political culture and state formation

This kind of analysis rests on the delineation of functional challenges and of systemic responses to them and that form of analysis offers possibilities for comparative histories, both of the functional challenges and the systemic responses. Before turning to that comparative point, however, I want to introduce another important element of recent histories of the state – the cultural dimension of state formation.

The extent to which state policies did or did not secure consent is a key theme in the histories of social regulation, the reformation, fiscal-military change and the growth of empire sketched out above. The effectiveness of government did not, indeed could not, rest on coercion alone but also and more routinely depended on the willing co-operation of local elites. This is a particularly well-developed theme in studies of the role of the middling sort in village or borough government, and of the gentry in the government of their counties.[15] At the level of national politics, however, the creation of an alliance between elites and the Crown is also discussed in terms of values. There is a very well developed historiography on the politics of persuasion. At the level of local elites this is a less well-developed theme but there are significant works on this theme at the level of the gentry, although not necessarily glossed in these terms.[16] The legitimacy of the authority of these groups was represented to their subordinates not just explicitly but via a series of recognisable performances. State power was expressed through a political culture which offered the means to render particular actions legitimate.

The analysis of the functioning of that political culture is therefore an important component of the new histories of the state and offers a further means by which to forge connections between currently disparate fields of study. For example, post-revisionist scholarship of the early Stuart period has turned away from a strict reliance on what the documents explicitly say, or at least has become more alert to the difficulties of listening to them. Making explicit the unstated assumptions of contemporaries and emphasising the complexity of the reception of ideas have become ways of listening for dissent and opposition. Early seventeenth-century England is coming to be seen by historians as a Renaissance or humanist culture again, and that cultural turn is, inevitably, resulting in a widening of historical vision.[17] It is happening too in Tudor history, where the administrative and modernising preoccupations of Elton (and perhaps of Thomas Cromwell) are giving way to the analysis of the larger (and more alien) political culture.[18] It is through these rituals, symbols, performances and languages, that political power was legitimated. Ideas were used to do things: it is important

to understand who was doing what and why, but also how they were able to explain their actions to themselves and those they sought to persuade. In a sense, this work on political culture has tended to deconstruct political institutions, by giving emphasis to the performative elements of the exercise of power. This is particularly true of recent histories of the court, but it is nonetheless the case that recent work on government at all levels has tended to assess its functioning rather than to anatomise the formal powers of institutions. Animated by human agents, the institutions of the state were trying to do things. They were enabled or constrained both by the formal powers they enjoyed but also by the process of rendering their power legitimate.

Renewed attention to this dimension of government has reinforced our sense of the degree to which political power in this society was negotiated. Power was legitimated with reference values in society at large: governments and political actors sought to appropriate those values for current programmes but they did not fully control them. By the same token, those outside government could appropriate these languages and performances to limit or embarrass their governors. Common law thought, for example, was an important means by which political power was legitimated but legal knowledge and habits of thought were not the preserve of the educated elite. There is now abundant evidence not only of the penetration of these values into local society but of the active use of these ideas by individuals and communities to further their interests, even in opposition to their governors. Resistance is therefore the obverse of this emphasis on the performative dimension of government and this has a cultural history too. Here, the current terms of art are manipulation, subversion and appropriation.[19] We may perhaps look forward to a fuller 'hidden history' of the state – the moulding of its activities by the need to secure consent, and by failures to achieve that.

This cultural turn is, of course, a much broader phenomenon and it does, in itself, represent a further point of convergence in social, political and economic history. In all these fields historians have been turning towards the study of collective meanings as a route into an understanding of the past. Another extremely important strand of recent social history, for example, has been the recovery of *mentalité* – the progress of protestantism, literacy, popular politics and so on.[20] Community is no longer considered simply functional, but in the hands of some historians becomes a system of shared ritual and symbolic expression, and what was being expressed was a full range of relationships: social history in this mode embraces politics, religion and economy, as well as the household, gender, deviance and so forth.[21] Economic history has been rather less affected by this concern with culture and discourse, representation and meaning. However, the rise of capitalism has recently been addressed in terms of a problem of the self – the birth of economic man – rather than capital accumulation and the take-off into self-sustained growth.[22] Particularly in

eighteenth-century studies, consumption, and what it means, has become as important as production in understanding economic life. In all these areas the significance of texts, statements and objects lies in the meanings they had for contemporaries. Although this convergence does not lead naturally, or exclusively, to the history of the state, or to comparative histories, I think it can and will give a new lease of life to the study of the early modern English state in a broader comparative perspective.

The early modern state in comparative context

It is possible, as the foregoing demonstrates, to discuss these issues at an abstract level, and that abstraction may help to open up English history to comparative study. There are a number of ways in which this might work and I will briefly outline three: methodological, chronological and geographical.

Chronological comparison is possible on these new terms, which do not give exclusive emphasis to institutional histories, and do not collapse the distinction between change (or even modernisation) and progress. Recent work on the fifteenth century has emphasised the role of local elites in government and political culture as an active force in shaping political action.[23] This has led, to some extent, to a reformulation of questions in early Tudor historiography relating to the new monarchy, or the revolution in government. Efforts at social regulation very similar to those of the later Tudor period have been traced to much earlier periods, expressed through different institutions, and without godly protestant-ism.[24] Many medieval historians are reluctant to employ the term state, however, associating it with a number of characteristics of modern states, or elements of our political vocabulary, which were not present in the medieval period.[25] With or without the term state, however, it is clear that similar analytic concerns are being addressed: both in the account of the functional challenges being addressed and the style of explanation for the failure or success of the responses. The great exception, of course, is the reformation, which posed quite new kinds of problems and offered quite novel opportunities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In general, however, thematic comparison is possible and offers the opportunity of a reconnection of this particular part of the history of the English state, or of English governance.

Eighteenth-century studies also provide points of comparison. Recent work on fiscal-military mobilisation and on the empire in seventeenth-century England connects with influential works by Brewer and Colley on eighteenth-century Britain. In this context, the majority view is perhaps that the 1690s are more important than the 1640s, although the latter are usually seen as an important preliminary.[26] The broad pattern of social regulation continued, although the level of legislation from 1690 onwards increased dramatically. There was, perhaps, something of a return

to voluntarism in welfare provision too. Non-anglicans continued to face political and civil disabilities and patriarchal or anglican justifications for political power were very significant. But this should not obscure the fact that this was increasingly urban, commercial and polite society in which the middling sort occupied an important place.[27] Indeed, in the course of the eighteenth-century local government was often ceded to them as the gentry tended to withdraw from its routines. Such thematic connections could be multiplied but the main point here is that there are clearly similar questions being posed and answered for the period 1400–1800. There is a consistent concern with the nature and role of local elites; the terms of the political culture through which their role was legitimated; and the nature of the functional challenges to which they were responding. They are not currently embraced within a single frame of reference, but they could be. It would involve the analysis of the interactions between functional challenges, dominant social groups and available political institutions and languages. Many of the familiar landmarks of the history of the state would survive (for example 1529, 1649, 1688 and 1832), but the significance attached to them would be richer, more complex and as a result more ambiguous.

   This frame of reference would also allow for geographical comparison. The English revolution would be seen here not as the first modern revolution but as a legitimation crisis – violence resulting from the inability of existing languages and institutions to cope with the functional challenges perceived by political actors. The crisis, and in particular its specific form, was not inevitable, but viewed in this light it was comparable with the experience of other European states, all of which faced the destabilising effects of reformation, military revolution and population growth as well as the shifting patterns of overseas trade. More than this, the languages available to cope with these challenges were common to Europe as a whole. This observation is not new to political historians, of course, but has been a relatively neglected element of recent writing on early modern England. It is salutary, and perhaps stimulating, to think of the English state as a variation on a common theme.[28] Like all other variations, of course, it was unique, despite the obvious family resemblance.

   The geographical frame of this analysis might also be Atlantic. Cultural histories, while conflating the distinctions made by much 60s and 70s social science between economic, social and political concerns, offer new key categories, such as meaning, the self and the other. These concerns, applied to early modern society, might draw us towards exoticism – encounters with uncivil societies, tropical fruits and new lands seem to suit this cultural history. The history of empire has in some senses been reborn as this history of exotic encounter – a history in which Englishmen abroad re-invented themselves and those they encountered, and how that history affected the development of identities at home. Atlantic history might therefore become a context in which to understand important

dimensions of English and British history, and revitalise the study of empire, commerce and consumption. The state, of course, would figure in any such revival.

Histories of the state are unlikely to re-establish the primacy in the historical canon that they once enjoyed (and there is no suggestion here that they should), but there is a sense in which they have recovered some of the ground that they have lost. Recent work on the state has tended to revolve around systematic analysis in terms which are to some extent transportable. It has also given emphasis to the force of ideas and assumptions in shaping and even promoting political change. State formation offers a way of considering the exercise of political power at the interface of the local and national, and in a way that integrates institutional histories with social and cultural histories. For that reason, it has been consciously pursued as a means to connect social and political historiographies. As a vehicle for rethinking the relationship between local histories and wider histories, it is also, potentially, a link between accounts of organic social, economic and cultural change and histories of purposeful political action. It is in that sense symptomatic of a cautious attempt, evident in a variety of contexts, to reopen some of the questions which were dropped in the wake of the revisionism of the 1980s. As a result, the history of the state offers a means of integrating important elements of a rather fragmented historiography and opening up early modern English history to comparisons, both chronological and geographical. In this way, the development of the state is a subject of study which, once again, has much to tell us about the past, and our place in relation to it.

Notes

[1] This was less true of the national historiographies of other Stuart territories. In the national histories of Ireland, Scotland and the American colonies, the history of the state did not provide the main story: on the whole, the state was considered as something external to the national history, until the point of independence, or union. Some recent studies have tended to address this gap in those historiographies: for Scotland see, for example, J. Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1999).
[2] G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1953). The fullest critical engagement with the argument is C. Coleman and D. R. Starkey (ed.), *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford, 1986). Progressive views of the effects of the Glorious Revolution have been one of the chief objects of attack for Jonathan Clark's revisionism. For a recent statement see J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime* 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2000). For a recent (and provocative) statement of the relationship between the development of the British empire and of a 'modernity' see N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (London, 2003).
[3] K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (London, 1982), for example, which inspired a generation of research, and continues to exercise a considerable hold over the field of English social history, makes only passing reference to the civil wars and has no index entry for the English revolution. The implied model of political change has been extremely influential in recent studies of state formation.
[4] K. Wrightson, 'Aspects of social differentiation in rural England, *c.*1580–1660', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 5 (1), 1977, pp. 33–47.

[5] But see the important new book by D. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770* (Cambridge, 2003).

[6] For an account of these various schools of interpretation see R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* 3rd edn (Manchester, 1998). Hostility to the attempt to relate the appeal of particular brands of religious feeling, with associated political implications, to particular social groups informed criticism of Christopher Hill and much of the 'left-wing' historiography of the English revolution. It may also provide part of the context for criticisms attracted by the 'Terling thesis', which seems to relate particular social and political attitudes to religious preferences which were socially-biased in their appeal. For the debate about these issues see the final chapter of K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525–1700* rev. edn (Oxford, 1995).

[7] This was the central thrust of M. J. Braddick, 'State formation and social change in early modern England: a problem stated and approaches suggested', *Social History*, 16 (1), 1991, pp. 1–17, although there and elsewhere I have given considerable emphasis to the role of material interests in shaping political development. The work of David Underdown and Mark Stoyle, demonstrates the continued interest and fruitfulness of seeking to relate particular political preferences to local cultures: M. Stoyle, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994); D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603–1660* (Oxford, 1985).

[8] Most of the leading lights of seventeenth-century political history made their mark in the study of the causes of the civil war: C. Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990); C. Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991); J. S. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (Harlow, 1993); J. S. Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces: the People of England and the Tragedies of War 1630–1648* 2nd edn (Harlow, 1999); K. M. Sharpe (ed.), *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History* (Oxford, 1978); K. M. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT/London, 1992); and G. Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: an Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (Basingstoke, 1992). Post-revisionism is also pre-war in emphasis: see the essays collected in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642* (Harlow, 1989); and the monographs published by the contributors. Mark Kishlansky, another historian whose rise to prominence was associated with revisionism, seems to have moved from the origins of the revolution (as distinct from the war), and its transformative consequences, back into the debate about the causes: M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979); M. A. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986); M. A. Kishlansky, 'Tyranny denied: Charles I, Attorney General Heath, and the Five Knights' Case', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1), 1999, pp. 53–83.

[9] In fact, of course, Morrill and Russell have both placed English developments in a comparative frame and other prominent revisionists, such as Kishlansky and Sharpe, have made arguments about long-term political change. Nonetheless, it is their work as critics of the Whig and Marxist narratives that has contributed most to their academic reputations. In *Revolt in the Provinces*, Morrill notes rather regretfully that that book is considered mainly to be a contribution to the debate about the causes of the civil war despite the intention of the author. As Morrill notes, the chapters dealing with the course and impact of the war have been much less discussed than the chapter relating to its causes.

[10] Despite the work of J. G. A. Pocock.

[11] Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*; K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England', in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 10–46. Work by Chris Brooks, Cynthia Herrup, Jim Sharpe and Paul Slack was also of central significance to these developments: C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'Lower Branch' of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986); C. W. Brooks, 'Interpersonal conflict and social tension: civil litigation in England, 1640–1870', in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, eds A. L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. M. Rosenheim (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 357–99; C. B. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987); J. A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550–1750* (Harlow, 1984); and 'The people and the law', in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century*

England, ed. B. Reay (London, 1985), pp. 244–70; P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (Harlow, 1988). For the incorporation of these issues more explicitly into histories of the state see Braddick, 'State formation and social change in early modern England'; M. J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000); S. Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c.1550–1640* (Basingstoke, 2000). The arguments of this and the following four paragraphs derive from Braddick, *State Formation*, which contains full references to secondary literature.

[12] T. Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester, 1998); M. C. Fissel, *English Warfare 1511–1642* (London, 2001).

[13] Braddick, *State Formation*, ch. 9. See also D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); E. Mancke, 'Empire and State', in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, eds D. Armitage and M. Braddick (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 175–95.

[14] Although it also obviously owes much to Conrad Russell's account of 'functional failure'. See, for example, Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War.*

[15] For parish government see Wrightson, 'Politics of the parish'; Hindle, *State and Social Change*; P. Collinson, 'The monarchical republic of Queen Elizabeth I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 69 (2), 1987, pp. 394–424; M. Goldie, 'The unacknowledged republic: officeholding in early modern England', in *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500–1850*, ed. T. Harris (Palgrave, 2001), pp. 153–94. For pre-civil war boroughs see C. F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite, and the Crown, 1580–1640* (Stanford, 1999). For county government see A. J. Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces: the Government of Stuart England* (New Haven, CT/London, 1986).

[16] For a stimulating overview of the role of cultural forms in the articulation of national political issues see R. M. Smuts, *Culture and Power in England, 1585–1685* (Basingstoke, 1999); for the gentry see F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke, 1994).

[17] Recent work by Kevin Sharpe is of central importance here: K. M. Sharpe (ed.), *Remapping Early Modern England: the Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge, 2000); K. M. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: the Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT/London, 2000).

[18] See the overviews provided by J. A. Guy, 'Tudor monarchy and political culture', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. J. S. Morrill (Oxford, 1996), pp. 219–38; J. A. Guy, 'Monarchy and counsel: models of the state', in *The Sixteenth Century, 1485–1603*, ed. P. Collinson (Oxford, 2001).

[19] See Griffiths. Fox and Hindle (eds), *The Expenence of Authonty*; M. J. Braddick and J. Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

[20] For religious culture see T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991); A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999). For popular politics see J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: the Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999); A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country, 1520–1770* (Cambridge, 1999).

[21] See especially D. C. Beaver, *Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester 1590–1690* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); P. Withington, 'Citizens, community and political culture in Restoration England', in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, eds A. Shepard and P. Withington (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 134–55; P. Withington, 'Views from the bridge: revolution and restoration in seventeenth-century York', *Past and Present*, 170, 2001, pp. 121–51.

[22] C. Muldrew, 'From a "light cloak" to an "iron cage": historical changes in the relation between community and individualism', in *Communities in Early Modern England: Network, Place, Rhetoric*, eds A. Shepard and P. Withington (Manchester/New York, 2000), pp. 156–77.

[23] See, for example, S. K. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361–1399* (Oxford, 1990); G. L. Harriss, 'Political society and the growth of government in late medieval England', *Past and Present*, 138, 1993, pp. 28–57; C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c.1437–1509* (Cambridge, 1997); J. L. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996).

[24] M. K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge, 1998).

[25] Whereas I think it is possible to deploy the term in a more neutral sense: Braddick, *State Formation*, pp. 11–20. I would be willing to use the term in relation to earlier periods, with an

appropriate qualifier: we might refer, for example, to a late medieval state specified differently from a Renaissance, modern or post-modern state. On the other hand, I think it is also possible to reconnect these histories without using the term.

[26] I disagree for reasons stated at length in Braddick, *State Formation*, chs. 4–5 or, more briefly, in M. J. Braddick, 'The rise of the fiscal state', in *The Companion to Stuart Britain*, ed. B. Coward (Oxford, 2003), pp. 69–87.

[27] J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989); L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT/London, 1992); Clark, *English Society*; P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989); J. Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus (*c.*1683–1803)', in *Charity, Self-interest and Welfare in the English Past*, ed. M. Daunton (London, 1996), pp. 139–80.

[28] This insight is given considerable prominence in J. Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000).

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