

In This Issue

This issue of the *Law and History Review* concentrates on topics in the culture and politics—and indeed the definition—of Anglo-American law, civil and constitutional. In our lead article, David Lemmings explores Blackstone's project for lecturing on the common law at Oxford (1753–66) and education for the bar generally. He places both in the context of eighteenth-century criticisms of legal learning and culture that arose during what appears to have been a period of crisis in the administration of civil justice in England. Lemmings argues that Blackstone's lectures can be interpreted as an attempt to respond to the problems of the common law by remedying severe deficiencies in the education of barristers. He concludes that, notwithstanding Blackstone's personal success, English legal culture remained exclusive, necessitating reformation of the common law from without, by parliamentary intervention.

The remaining articles in this issue are presented together as a forum, the subject of which—the conceptualization of constitutionalism in eighteenth-century New York—transports us from the metropolitan center to the far western rim of the first British empire, but otherwise leaves intact our general focus on the interpenetrations of culture, politics, and law. In the first article, Christine Desan explores the institutional fluidity that marks even the most basic categories of Anglo-American constitutionalism, such as the differentiation of legislative from adjudicatory authority. At the turn of the eighteenth century, she argues, the distinction was deeply contested on both sides of the Atlantic. In England, administrators, legislators, and judges all asserted authority to resolve public law claims, or claims against the government for money. These English ambiguities provided Americans with opportunities to create novel constitutional forms. In New York, legislators seized adjudicative power over public law claims from imperial administrators by defining it as essential to their role as representatives. The result was legislative adjudication—a development that located legal power in an institution that was neither executive nor judicial, and conceived of it in a new way. In the second article, Daniel Hulsebosch examines constitutional practices in New York through the differing interpretations given to the imperial constitution by specific cultural groups and, like Desan, explores how their struggles reconfigured the English constitution in the colonial environment. Hulsebosch argues that contests over the meaning and relevance of English law among three groups in particular (imperial agents, the creole provincial elite, and disparate communities in the northern marchlands) clearly illuminate the clashes in contemporary definitions of ba-

sic ideas about the Empire and its constitution. Offering another view of politics, Hulsebosch underscores the limited ability of imperial politics to contain the tensions arising from the institutional ambiguities that definitional uncertainty created. Both articles are made the subject of commentaries by David Konig and Bruce Mann, to which the authors offer responses.

The issue also presents numerous book reviews and the third in our series of electronic resource pages, this one composed by Ian Mylchreest of the History Department, Monash University (Melbourne, Australia), who has been sharing with Chris Waldrep (History, Eastern Illinois University) the task of moderating the ASLH's sponsored electronic discussion list H-Law. Subscribers to the *Law and History Review* are encouraged to explore and contribute to H-Law, which offers a convenient forum for, among other matters, discussion of the scholarship on display in the *Review*.

Subscribers will be aware that they are receiving this issue of the *Law and History Review* several months earlier than they might have expected. This is no accident. As we announced in the previous issue, after fifteen years of publishing two issues annually, beginning with the 1998 volume year the *Law and History Review* has become a three-issue journal. This expansion attests to our confidence in the quality and energy of scholarship in the field of legal history and our desire to assist in maintaining the discipline in its current thriving condition. Subscribers can expect to receive the first issue of each year (Spring) in late January, the second (Summer) in May, and the third (Fall) in September.

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