

ASHLEY MARSHALL. *Political Journalism in London, 1695–1720: Defoe, Swift, Steele and Their Contemporaries*. Studies in the Eighteenth Century. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020. Pp. 328. \$115 (cloth).

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Ashley Marshall's encyclopedic knowledge of a striking number of primary sources from the mid-seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries has served her well over the past decade in revisiting, interrogating, and sometimes unseating long held opinions on, for example, genres and authorial attribution in the long eighteenth century. In her newest monograph, *Political Journalism in London, 1695–1720*, Marshall adopts the same methodology, but she directs it at the political substance and function of newspapers and other periodicals during the reigns of Queen Anne and George I with the goal of nuancing earlier accounts of journalistic production and consumption during that period. Marshall's focus is on the complex and evolving ideological content and expression of periodicals in late Stuart and early Hanoverian London and on the ways that different journalists envisioned, engaged, and politicized readers, mediating between them and the state. She not only accomplishes these broader objectives but also provides a far more sophisticated understanding of the distinct and dynamic political journalism of canonical writers, including Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Richard Steele.

*Political Journalism* has a tripartite structure. Its first two chapters serve as a historical and cultural backdrop of political journalism near the end of Anne's reign and the beginning of George I's, stressing the centrality and operation of power and partisanship in the news business. This section is largely descriptive as Marshall dedicates significant space to outlining the politics of the time in relation to both church and state and to providing an overview of a remarkable number of overtly and covertly political periodicals that surfaced in the period, methodically distinguishing between their objectives, tone, intended readership, ideological leanings, and topical significance. She also considers how the content of each periodical reveals journalistic ideas about who in the nation is entitled to a political opinion, who should be permitted to evaluate governmental policies and practices, and which party best represents the populace. Many of the periodicals considered are rarely the subject of either literary or political analysis. In moving from description to analysis, Marshall relies on her broad range of primary sources to support her claim that the shift in partisan journalistic activity at the inception of George I's reign should not be characterized simply as "a political cooling off" period since the political periodicals during this transition convey the "violent and vengeful" early years of the Hanoverian monarchy (74). There was no sense of certainty, Marshall explains, that the ascendant Whig party would come to dominate government, and, though Whig ideology remained the same, the party's rhetoric had to be radically altered to address new circumstances. This meant that the Whigs had to embrace at times anti-populist discourse and the Tories to defend populist dissent, both abandoning earlier stances given the unsettled nature of the move from the House of Stuart to the House of Hanover.


When turning to specific periodicals, Marshall often reminds us that to read the journalistic endeavors of one author or publication in isolation is to miss the dialogic nature of myriad political papers circulating in London at the time. For readers less familiar with the ongoing conversations among journalists, Marshall provides an invaluable appendix in which she identifies every London political periodical known to have been published between 1695 and 1720, listing (when available) their dates and frequency of publication, editors and/or contributors, printers and/or publishers, and, most importantly, their political character or leanings, including the periodicals they aimed to challenge. The short-lived biweekly periodical *The Britain* (6 January 1713–c. May 1713), for instance, is characterized by Marshall as "moderate Whig vs. the *Examiner*; popularizing Harley's plan for Anglo-Dutch Alliance" (260).

In the second section of *Political Journalism*, Marshall narrows her focus to Defoe's *Review*, Swift's, William Oldisworth's and Henry St. John's *Examiner*, and all of Steele's political periodicals. She first challenges the generally accepted reading of Defoe's *Review* as a puppet of Harley's ministry and Defoe solely as a "ministerial agent" between 1710 and 1713 (91). Underscoring the variability of the *Review*'s subject matter and tone throughout its existence, Marshall believes that in its later issues, Defoe balances a zealous ideological Whiggism with a growing endorsement of Harley's objectives on the War of the Spanish Succession. However, even in this case, the *Review*, she surmises, does not blindly promote Harley's call for peace at the earliest moment, but rather still sees the value in war and the benefit of waiting until a treaty is most beneficial to Britain. Marshall is insistent that the *Review* demonstrates that Defoe "was not simply a groveling hack dutifully endorsing the government line" during Harley's ministry (112).

In turning to the high-Tory *Examiner*, Marshall once again finds that the relation between political periodical and the ministry is far more complicated than previously thought, rejecting, for example, the possibility that Harley had Swift dismissed from the *Examiner* in 1711 and underscoring Swift's role in assisting Oldisworth with the paper's continued operation given their shared vision. She posits that it was not Harley, but rather Henry St. John, who helped manage the *Examiner* behind the scenes. In considering Steele's role in the London periodical scene, Marshall de-emphasizes his partnership with Joseph Addison in order to focus on a larger and thus more representative sample of his political journalistic efforts. Marshall finds that Steele was obsessed with the (mis)use of authority, laser focused on undermining the credibility of the Tories and their defenders, committed to accommodating his tone and temper to the shifting political winds, and inclined to politicize his readers, training them, in the name of patriotism and loyalty, to question and distrust Tory policies and rhetoric. In the process, he figures himself as a "patriotic martyr and defender of the common man against the avaricious power holders" (186).

In the third and final section of her book, Marshall returns to her broader concern with how certain London journalists of the age, such as Addison and Steele, educated the public, producing more curious, observant, and involved citizens capable of participating in political life. She contrasts these Whig journalists with the likes of the Tory journalists Swift and Charles Leslie, whom Marshall claims trained readers to be docile, unquestioning subjects disinclined to question "the mysteries of the state" (245). However, Marshall surmises that most London journalists, regardless of ideology and party, were not only content to espouse and defend certain political positions, but were also starting to reflect on the proper nature, function, and consumption of journalism and on the relative authority of the government, church, subjects, and media.

With this monograph, Marshall makes a substantial and even provocative contribution to the study of political journalism in London during a key time of transition in British history. Its greatest strength (and it has many) is that Marshall has provided a more complete and complex picture of periodical culture at this historical moment than has been previously available. She succeeds by drilling down into the cluttered details of canonical and noncanonical political papers, many of which are ephemeral, and by exploring the proto-modern impulses and ideas of journalists in late Stuart and early Hanoverian London. No research library or student of periodical culture should be without it.

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