## *The Hanoverian Succession in Great Britain and its Empire.* Edited by Brent S. Sirota and Allan I. Macinnes. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. 2019. 235 pp. £65.00. Hardback. ISBN **9781783274499**.

This collection of essays on the Hanoverian Succession of 1714 covers that pivotal event in British history from numerous angles: parliamentary, religious, economic, intellectual, cultural, imperial, Scottish and European – from above, below and from middling perspectives. Many of the essays in the collection engage with J.H. Plumb’s still influential *The Growth of Political Stability* *in England, 1675-1725* (1967). The sharpest repudiation of Plumb’s thesis is found in the book’s opening essay by Daniel Szechi, a distinguished historian of Jacobitism, who helpfully points out that ‘Between 1714 and 1803 the British states were some of the most turbulent in Europe.’ (p. 24). For evident reasons, Jacobitism is a key theme in many of the collection’s essays. As the editors write in the introduction: ‘Jacobitism, however vague or sentimental, was often the beneficiary of [the] manifold discontents of the era.’ (p. 6). Even if some details and implications are debated and revised, this emphasis is undoubtedly indebted to parliamentary historian Eveline Cruickshanks, who put Jacobitism at the heart of her research into the Tory party and Tory members of parliament between 1715 and 1754, and the many studies she inspired.

Of particular interest for parliamentary history in this collection is Christopher Dudley’s essay, which argues that the election of 1715 should not be viewed as the commencement of the Whig supremacy, whereby the Whigs abandoned their principles and became oligarchs. Rather, it should be regarded as a continuation of the ‘Age of Party’, which had been dominated by different interpretations of the Glorious Revolution. These principles were highlighted during the trial of Henry Sacheverell in 1710.[[1]](#footnote-1) Other issues – including Church and Dissent, war and foreign policy, and trade and political economy – were related to competing interpretations of the Revolution Settlement and its aftermath. Dudley’s essay centres on a careful reading of Sacheverell’s controversial sermon, in which Sacheverell in fact justified the Glorious Revolution on the basis of *passive obedience.* James II/VII had not been *actively* resisted: ‘the refusal of his subjects to carry out his unlawful commands had sparked a crisis of conscience in him and he fled the kingdom, abdicating the throne.’ (p. 41). Many Tories believed that Whig polemics’ stress on resistance threatened the monarchical element of the mixed and balanced constitution affirmed at the Revolution, and risked bringing Britain back to the civil war era of the middle of the seventeenth century. By contrast, the Whigs contended that condemning resistance implied the denial of the legitimacy of the Glorious Revolution. The 1715 election was fought in the spirit of these rival interpretations, just like the elections of 1710 and 1713. Many Tory candidates in the election presented themselves as loyal to the Protestant Succession, with some even classified as Jacobites (pp. 47-8). This strategy failed, however. The defections of Bolingbroke and Ormonde, and Daniel Defoe’s *The Secret History of the White-Staff* (1714)*,* despite the author’s best intentions, smeared the Tories with the Jacobite stamp. Although the Tories held on to the majority of the clergy and gentry vote in most constituencies, the margins were lower and they could not prevent a swing towards the Whigs. The development of oligarchy was a subsequent development, when the gains in the 1715 election were secured by legislation such as the Septennial Act. In short, Dudley argues that the Tory defeat in 1715 and its aftermath was not inevitable at the time of the Hanoverian Succession, and only appears as such with the benefit of hindsight (p. 45).

One of the collection’s most interesting, if controversial, essays is Steve Pincus’s and Amy Watson’s ‘Patriotism after the Hanoverian Succession’. By highlighting that ‘Patriotism was, first, not an exclusively popular movement in composition, and second, not an exclusively English one in scope’ (p. 158), the essay makes important points countering the pathbreaking work of cultural and social historians such as Kathleen Wilson and Nicholas Rogers. As the essay shows, patriotism was especially attractive for many Scots involved in political contestation in the Walpole era, thanks to its focus on *British* loyalty (p. 160). Evidence for this is also present in Allan Macinnes’s essay ‘Securing the Union and the Hanoverian Succession in Scotland, 1707-37’, which cites a pamphlet entitled *The Occasional Patriot, written in plain Scotch* (Edinburgh, 1734). However, parts of Pincus and Watson’s argument may prove more contentious, including the wider framework described as follows: ‘The Patriots began in the 1710s-20s as an interest group within the Whig party, then transformed in the 1720s-30s into a political opposition aligned with the Tories, and finally emerged in the 1730s-40s as a distinct party in their own right, with a singular organisational structure and ideological agenda.’ (p. 157). One issue is that this argument is advanced without reference to important works which have made similar claims, at least in part, especially Christine Gerrard’s *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole* (Oxford, 1994) and Robert (Bob) Harris’s *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford, 1993).

Another problem is the viability of the argument itself. The key question is how *distinct* a party the Patriots were in the 1730s and 1740s. As the essay recognises, the Patriots in the 1730s must be considered as part of the broader Country opposition, and this was in practice a coalition comprising Whigs, Tories and Jacobites – even if its intellectual leader, Bolingbroke, sought to turn it into a more unified opposition party.[[2]](#footnote-2) As Pincus and Watson stress, Tory-Jacobite members of this opposition were fully attuned to Patriot discourse. In addition, it may be pointed out that the *Common Sense* journalwas sponsored by the Stuart Pretender.[[3]](#footnote-3) Moreover, as Gerrard highlights in her book, Samuel Johnson wrote unmistakable Jacobite and Patriot tracts at nearly the exact same time in the late 1730s.[[4]](#footnote-4) It is hard to escape the conclusion that opposition Whigs and Tories remained divided on religious and at least some dynastic questions, and that the Patriot discourse was their joint platform. At different moments and depending on the circumstances, this platform was either solid or shaky. When opposition Whigs and Tories split, each side sought to cling onto the Patriot label. For instance, the English Jacobite William King of St Mary Hall, Oxford, attacked William Pulteney in his posthumous memoirs as betrayer of the Patriot cause for abandoning the Tories in 1742. In short, Pulteney failed to form a ‘patriot ministry’, according to King, who did not make his peace with the Hanoverian regime until the accession of George III in 1760.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Pincus and Watson write in their essay that ‘Thomas Ruddiman’s *Caledonian Mercury* [in Edinburgh]had also developed a discernible Jacobite viewpoint by the 1730s.’ (p. 162). This is true, but hardly evidence of the Patriots becoming a ‘distinct party in their own right’. During the ‘Forty-five’, the *Caledonian Mercury* reported enthusiastically on Jacobite advances. After the Jacobite takeover of Edinburgh in September 1745, it was reported that ‘All the publick Offices continue their Business, nor is any Person molested or injured in Person or Property’.[[6]](#footnote-6) It also assisted the Jacobite propaganda campaign by printing Charles Stuart’s proclamations and reviving the controversy of the Glencoe Massacre of 1692.[[7]](#footnote-7) This agenda is unlikely to have pleased Scottish Whig Patriots such as Stair and Marchmont.

These Jacobite contexts illustrate the disparate nature of eighteenth-century Patriotism, rather than ideological coherence. Although coherence can be found in political argument, we must recognise that the Patriot discourse was used by people with various political objectives in the 1730s and 1740s. Even if they co-operated more than occasionally, they can hardly be said to have formed a ‘distinct party’. When Pincus and Watson appear to distinguish Patriot writers from Bolingbroke (p. 164), who perhaps did more than anyone else to popularise the term, the notion of a ‘distinct party’ appears forced and tenuous. The absence of evidence to back up this bold claim lessens the impact of an otherwise highly valuable and learned essay, which rightly challenges the idea that the rage of party ended in 1714 or 1722.[[8]](#footnote-8) The ‘Age of Party’ certainly continued into the Walpole era, and whilst it was transformed and Patriotism became a key term in political discourse, if the Tory and Jacobite elements of the opposition are given their due as much as the opposition Whigs, it will be hard to describe *the* Patriots in the 1730s and 1740s as a distinct party challenging establishment Whiggism. Patriotism at this time was the language of a coalition of parties – another key term which needs further exploration by historians.

Some of the volume’s excellent essays are perhaps not as tightly focused on the Hanoverian Succession as they could have been. For instance, in Megan Lindsay Cherry’s ‘Colonial Policy in North America, 1689-1717’ as well as Esther Mijers’ ‘Displaced but not Replaced: The Continuation of Dutch Intellectual Influence in Early Hanoverian Britain’, the Glorious Revolution is the focal event as much as the Hanoverian Succession. However, the strength of this volume is certainly its wide range and richness, and even though each essay can be read as a standalone piece, the real benefit comes from reading them in sequence from cover to cover.

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1. By contrast, Brent S. Sirota’s contribution downplays the importance of Sacheverell, arguing that his brand of extreme royalism and episcopalism was ‘already an anachronism at the time of his impeachment in 1710.’ (p. 61). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Max Skjönsberg, ‘Lord Bolingbroke’s Theory of Party and Opposition’, *Historical Journal*, lix (2016), 947-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. George Hilton Jones, ‘The Jacobites, Charles Molloy, and *Common Sense*’, *The Review of English Studies*, iv (1953), 144-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford, 1994), 231-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. William King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of His Own Times* (London, 1818), 42-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *The Caledonian Mercury,* Edinburgh 18 September 1745, No. 3891. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See, e.g., 7 October 1745, No 3898; 9 October 1745, No. 3899; 14 October 1745, No. 3901; 16 October 1745, No. 3902. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See especially Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* (Cambridge, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)