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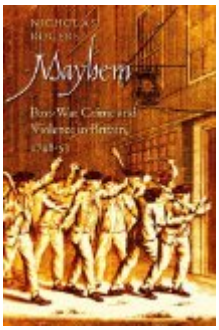
Nicholas Rogers. *Mayhem: Post-War Crime and Violence in Britain, 1748-53.* Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. xi + 258 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-16962-1.



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Published on H-Albion (August, 2013)

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From riots at turnpikes to the excesses of the Gin Craze, and from the Hawkhurst gang to attacks on houses of ill repute, mid-eighteenth-century London was alive with disturbance, resistance, and disorder. These perceived crises put the dominant Whigs on the defensive as they scrambled to devise policy and legislation that would reassert aristocratic authority, reinstate hierarchies of deference and power, and enact social reform. Nicholas Rogers's micro-history (usually used only for very local or single case studies) reconstructs several of these "incidents" as a violent dialogue between patrician rulers and the plebeian ruled, focusing on the effects of the demobilization of eighty thousand military men--4 percent of the country's male population--in the turbulent period between 1748 and 1754. These five years, from the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which ended the War of Austrian Succession (also known as King George's War) to the start of hostilities of the Seven Years' War in 1754, have been seen by most scholars as a hiccup or a hiatus between Britain's wars with France. Rogers shows how contemporaries perceived the return of sailors and soldiers to civilian life as a social, legal, and cultural crisis.

Challenging the Namier thesis that the Whig oligarchy of the mid-eighteenth century was stable, placid, and forged in compromise, Rogers argues that the "cascading, overlapping narratives" in each of his chapters belied this stability, revealing deep anxieties about the country's ability to fight its wars with France effectively. The demobilization crisis manifested itself in increasing unemployment, a visible crime wave, and palpable class tension. The seemingly far-reaching defiance and resistance caused many among the elite to worry about the security of their property and the maintenance of public order. In an era in which Britain prided itself on having no standing army and no police force, the government had few tools available to reimpose its paternalist order.

Rogers's first chapter examines the fallout from the last battle of the War of Austrian Succession. Admiral Charles Knowles led the British in a

bloody and disastrous clash with the Spanish fleet, led by Don Andres Reggio, off the coast of Cuba in October 1748. In a desperate attempt to avoid the blame for the failure of the Caribbean campaign, Knowles and his officers accused each other of cowardice and incompetence. Duels settled questions of honor left unresolved by lawful courts martial. Chapters 2 and 3 follow the sailors home after the war and reconstruct their struggles to reintegrate into civilian life. The fighting force included many men who were maimed and disabled, living on small pensions, often owed back pay and prize money they had difficulty collecting. The results of widespread unemployment included a rise in property crime as well as strikes, riots, smuggling, and continued support of or at least identification with the Jacobite cause. Seen as threatening troublemakers, the demobilized men found that military service to their country earned them little assistance from the government. If tried in criminal court, their status as veterans ensured neither a reduction in punishment nor an increased chance of pardon.

Why was this period perceived as a crisis by Whig elites? As Rogers notes, previous demobilizations had been much larger. The answer lies in the expanding number of newspapers, each reporting the behavior of soldiers at home after a long war and in the five hundred coffeehouses throughout London where such events were read and discussed. Rogers argues that this increased press coverage of crime increased the panic and anxiety of elite Londoners. Tensions ran high, exacerbated by the earthquakes of 1750 (analyzed in chapter 4), which many interpreted as signs of divine wrath. English clerics responded to the limits of scientific explanation with an uninspiring interpretation that failed to resonate with the populace, reflecting the Church of England as marginal and its message out of touch.

Chapter 5, "Riots, Revels, and Reprisals," details brazen plebeian resistance with a focus on the smuggling epidemic in the Southeast. The English addiction to tea inspired a lucrative business that seemed to have escaped patrician control despite many measures, such as the use of troops to patrol coastal entry points. Rogers documents the difficulties that authorities faced when they prosecuted the crime since onlookers and potential police informants sympathized with the smugglers and believed smuggling to be a victimless crime.

The last three chapters of the book shift the focus away from plebian resistance to chronicle official responses to the perceived crisis. The worries about Britain's inability to compete with France in future altercations were channeled into a discussion of the Gin Craze and how to halt the erosion of social stability caused (as was argued) by the degeneracy of the working poor. In chapter 6, Rogers focuses on debates among commentators about the accuracy of the Bills of Mortality and whether they really documented the demographic ravages of increased consumption of spirits. He argues that the resulting calls for a census to track population trends demonstrates eighteenth-century experiments with governmentality (efforts "to develop new sites of knowledge on which social reform might be based and to micromanage target populations" [p. 216]) usually traced to the nineteenth century.

Henry Fielding's proposals for social reform are the focus of chapter 7 which analyzes his ***An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*** (1751). Fielding's bestseller suggested countering crime through increased regulation of the poor with the expressed goal of reimposing the traditional social order. Fielding, suspicious of any situation in which the poor had any agency in relation to their social superiors, made structural proposals to restrict mobility and keep wages low as a means of controlling "the mob." Parliament balked at implementing grand schemes that would expand the government through the creation of large institutions and instead took up conventional solutions which had little impact af-

ter an initial flurry of enforcement. Although fundamental to any study of crime and policing in the eighteenth century, Fielding never mentions demobilization, and Rogers strains to explain the reasons for this absence and the relationship of the text to the book's object of analysis.

The first seven chapters of the book set the demobilization crisis in the context of the rich history of crime in England in the eighteenth century. Taking an imperial perspective, Rogers breaks new ground in the book's final chapter with his discussion of the government program that offered former soldiers and sailors land in Nova Scotia. This program was an effort to defend the "empire of the St. Lawrence" and its lucrative fisheries from French incursion. Though billed as a reward to veterans for their loyal service to the country, the land grants were motivated by the government's desire to increase the white, British population in order to offset the Acadians and indigenous peoples already living in the newly acquired territory. Under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Cornwallis the treatment of the Nova Scotia settlers was authoritarian and the labor regimes harsh. Outbreaks of disease and violent confrontations with surrounding hostile populations led to massive defection with many of the men leaving the colony for Boston and other port cities.

Well written and engaging, the book brings together well-known scholarship on the history of crime and on the public sphere with the literature on Britain's imperial expansion. The analysis would have benefited from an expanded treatment of gender, especially masculinity; in the final chapter, an examination of race would have deepened our understanding of the imperial project and how the veterans did or did not see themselves as part of it. The images that accompany each chapter are full of a multiplicity of detail; further consideration would have added to the book’s examination of the micro-histories that made up the crisis of demobilization.

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