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Approaches to the crowd

Interest in crowd unrest, whether in London or in the country in general, has burgeoned enormously in the past few decades. It was as long ago as 1938 that Max Beloff first published his pioneer study of popular disturbances in England in the period 1660–1714.[1] Since then, the study of the crowd has been completely transformed by a number of scholars working mainly on Hanoverian England, Eric Hobsbawm, George Rudé, and Edward Thompson being the best known.[2] Several case studies of riots in London during the eighteenth century have greatly increased our knowledge of popular political attitudes in the metropolis.[3] The work of Christopher Hill and Brian Manning, who sought to recapture the attitudes and outlooks of those below the level of society's elite in the first half of the seventeenth century,[4] has stimulated further investigation into popular political agitation for the period up to 1660.[5] Political unrest in London in the late 1630s and 1640s

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[1] M. Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances, 1660–1714* (1938).

[2] E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine-Breakers', *PP*, 1 (1952), 57–70; G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848* (New York, 1964); E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *PP*, 50 (1971), 76–136. A useful overview of popular disturbances in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is provided by J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700–1870* (1979).

[3] G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763–1774* (Oxford, 1962); G. Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: Studies in Popular Protest* (1970), part 3; N. Rogers, 'Popular Disaffection in London during the Forty-Five', *London Journal*, 1 (1975), 5–27; G. Holmes, 'The Sacheverell Riots: The Crowd and the Church in Early Eighteenth-Century London', in P. Slack, ed., *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 232–62; N. Rogers, 'Popular Protest in Early Hanoverian London', in ibid., pp. 263–93; J. L. Fitts, 'Newcastle's Mob', *Albion*, 5 (1973), 41–9.

[4] C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1975); B. S. Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1978); B. S. Manning, 'The Nobles, the People, and the Constitution', *PP*, 9 (1956), 42–64; B. S. Manning, 'Religion and Politics: The Godly People', in B. S. Manning, ed., *Politics, Religion, and the English Civil War* (1973), pp. 81–123; B. S. Manning, 'The Peasantry and the English Revolution', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2 (1975), 133–58.

[5] B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study of Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (1972); K. J. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982); B. Sharp,

has received considerable recent attention.[6] As a result, the later seventeenth
century has now become the historiographical poor relation to both the
earlier and later periods.[7]

This neglect of interest in Charles II's reign is surprising, considering the
significant part crowd agitation seems to have played in the politics of the
period. In 1926 Sir Charles Firth argued that popular unrest in the City
in late 1659 and early 1660 played a crucial role in bringing about the
restoration of monarchy, and he drew a contrast with the 1640s, when
the opposition of the City had led to the 'vanquishing' of Charles I.[8] The
cause of this apparent change in the political sympathies of the London
populace, and the extent to which they had shed their previous radicalism
(if radical they had been) by 1660, is a question which has still to be fully
investigated.[9] If Firth is correct in arguing that the restoration of the Stuarts
was genuinely popular, this popularity does not appear to have lasted long.
However, little is as yet known as to when and why disillusionment with
the new regime began to creep in.[10]

The 1670s and 1680s were dominated by anxieties about popery: a catho-
lic presence at Court, a foreign policy pursued in alliance with the catholic
French against the protestant Dutch, the prospect of a catholic succession,
were all cause for concern. Fears of what catholic rule would mean were
intensified by Louis XIV's style of government in France, whilst the tech-
niques employed at home by Danby in his attempt to 'manage' parliament,
caused many to believe there was already a drift to a more absolute form
of government in England.[11] It has been acknowledged that these fears of

> *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586–1660*
> (1980); D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England,*
> *1603–1660* (Oxford, 1985); A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in*
> *Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985).
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> [6] Manning, *English People*, esp. chs. 3, 4; S. R. Smith, 'The Apprentices' Parliament of 1647',
> *History Today*, 22 (1972), 576–82; S. R. Smith, 'The London Apprentices as Seventeenth-
> Century Adolescents', in Slack, ed., *Rebellion*, pp. 219–31; S. R. Smith, 'Almost Revolution-
> aries: The London Apprentices during the Civil Wars', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 42
> (1978–9), 313–28; I. Gentles, 'The Struggle for London in the Second Civil War', *HJ*,
> 26 (1983), 277–305; K. J. Lindley, 'Riot Prevention and Control in Early Stuart London',
> *TRHS*, 5th Series, 33 (1983), 109–26
> [7] Excluding my work, there is only one article specifically on crowd unrest in London in
> Charles II's reign, and this focuses on the 'trade' disputes of the weavers in 1675. See
> R. M. Dunn, 'The London Weavers' Riot of 1675', *Guildhall Studies in London History*,
> I, no. 1 (October, 1973), 13–23.
> [8] Sir C. Firth, 'London during the Civil War', *History*, 11 (1926–7), 25–36.
> [9] But see the remarks on this in: Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, chs. 17, 18; C. Hill,
> *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* (1980); C. Hill, *The Experience*
> *of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (1984).
> [10] But see T. J. G. Harris, 'The Bawdy House Riots of 1668', *HJ*, 29 (1986), 537–56.
> [11] J. R. Jones, *Country and Court: England 1658–1714* (1978), ch. 9.

popery and arbitrary government permeated all levels of society,[12] and that the popular anti-catholic agitation of 1688 is important to our understanding of the Glorious Revolution.[13] Much is known about the conflicts within the political elite in the second half of Charles II's reign. Historians have examined the rise of parties in the 1670s, the Popish Plot of 1678 and its subsequent political exploitation, the demand for the exclusion of the catholic heir and the strife between the whigs and tories in the three exclusion parliaments of 1679–81; and also the extra-parliamentary activity of the whigs after 1681 and the consequent tory reaction.[14] Party tensions within the City of London have been investigated; in particular, the political struggles of the whigs and tories in the common council and the court of aldermen, and also the battles for control of the important political offices of lord mayor and sheriff.[15] The 'London crowd' is known to have played an important part in the drama of these years: important enough, indeed, to lead to the coining of a new word. According to Sir Roger North, it was during the exclusion crisis that 'the Rabble first changed their Title, and were called the Mob', being a contraction of the Latin *mobile vulgus*.[16] We know that the whigs sought to apply pressure for exclusion by mobilizing mass support, especially in London, by using techniques of agitation and propaganda, the most famous being their petitioning campaigns and the pope-burning rituals held on 17 November.[17] Yet the crowd agitation of the period

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[12] R. Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', in Slack, ed., *Rebellion*, pp. 129–61; R. Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in C. Russell, ed., *The Origins of the English Civil War* (1973), pp. 144–67; K. H. D. Haley, '"No Popery" in the Reign of Charles II', in J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman, eds., *Britain and the Netherlands*, V (The Hague, 1975), 102–19.

[13] W. L. Sachse, 'The Mob and the Revolution of 1688', *JBS*, 4 (1964), 23–41.

[14] K. G. Feiling, *A History of the Tory Party, 1640–1714* (Oxford, 1924); J. R. Jones, *The First Whigs: The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678–83* (Oxford, 1961); K. H. D. Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford, 1968); J. P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (1972); J. Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1973); J. R. Western, *Monarchy and Revolution: The English State in the 1680s* (1972); J. H. M. Salmon, 'Algernon Sidney and the Rye House Plot', *History Today*, 4 (1954), 698–705; D. J. Milne, 'The Results of the Rye House Plot and their Influences upon the Revolution of 1688', *TRHS*, 5th Series, 1 (1951), 91–108; R. E. Pickavance, 'The English Boroughs and the King's Government: A Study of the Tory Reaction, 1681–85', unpub. Oxford DPhil thesis (1976).

[15] D. F. Allen, 'The Crown and the Corporation of London in the Exclusion Crisis', unpub. Cambridge PhD thesis (1977); A. G. Smith, 'London and the Crown, 1681–1685', unpub. Wisconsin PhD thesis (1967).

[16] R. North, *Examen; Or, An Enquiry into the Credit and Veracity of a Pretended Complete History* (1740), p. 574. The *OED* dates the first use of '*mobile vulgus*' in England to 1600, of 'mobile' to 1676, and of 'mob' to 1688.

[17] Haley, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 559–64, 627–8, 641; Allen, 'Crown and Corporation', pp. 137–59; O. W. Furley, 'The Pope-Burning Processions of the Late Seventeenth Century', *History*, 44 (1959), 16–23; S. Williams, 'The Pope-Burning Processions of 1679–81', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 21 (1958), 104–18.

has usually only been considered as a footnote to the history of the elite, and not seriously studied in its own right.[18]

Our understanding of the political conflicts of this time could be enhanced by a detailed study of the London crowd. Some historians have argued that the parliamentary struggles of the Stuart century can be fully understood only if we acknowledge that the 'political nation' was, in fact, far broader than usually believed.[19] Work on parties in the reign of Queen Anne has shown that the bitter party strife of this period was fed by political divisions that existed at all levels of society, and not just at the level of parliament and the electorate.[20] Although Geoffrey Holmes has recently warned against exaggerating these tensions, he still believes that the split within the elite in Charles II's reign, and the willingness of part of that elite to countenance popular agitation, especially in London, was a major cause of continuing political instability at this time.[21] Originally, historians saw the whig/tory divide of the exclusion period very much in constitutional terms, between monarchists, parliamentarians, and republicans.[22] Yet party tensions of William's and Anne's reigns have been shown to have had an important religious dimension,[23] and it has been recently recognized that religion was perhaps a more important factor in defining elite attitudes towards power within the state in the 1670s and 1680s than pure constitutional principle.[24] The crucial factor here was the question of religious persecution, a persecution which, arguably, affected the lower orders much more severely than it did members of the elite. In short, our full understanding of politics in Charles II's reign has been limited by an over-concentration on the elite, something which a study of crowd politics in London could go some way towards rectifying.[25]

[18] The only person to examine the activities of the London crowd in Charles's reign in any depth is Arthur Smith, although he focuses on the period 1681–5. See Smith, 'London and the Crown', chs. 5, 6. Useful insights into popular agitation can be found in Haley, *Shaftesbury*.

[19] J. H. Plumb, 'Political Man', in J. L. Clifford, ed., *Man Versus Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Six Points of View* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 1–21; J. H. Plumb, 'The Growth of the Electorate in England, 1600–1715', *PP*, 45 (1969), 90–116; D. Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975).

[20] G. Holmes and W. A. Speck, eds., *The Divided Society: Party Politics in England, 1694–1716* (1967).

[21] G. Holmes, 'The Achievement of Stability: The Social Context of Politics from the 1680s to the Age of Walpole', in J. Cannon, ed., *The Whig Ascendancy: Colloquies on Hanoverian England* (1981), pp. 1–27.

[22] B. Behrens, 'The Whig Theory of the Constitution in the Reign of Charles II', *CHJ*, 7 (1941), 42–71; O. W. Furley, 'The Whig Exclusionists: Pamphlet Literature in the Exclusion Campaign', *CHJ*, 13 (1957), 19–36; Jones, *First Whigs*; D. F. Allen, 'Political Clubs in Restoration London', *HJ*, 19 (1976), 561–80; Allen, 'Crown and Corporation'.

[23] G. Holmes, *Religion and Party in Late Stuart England* (1975); G. S. De Krey, *A Fractured Society: The Politics of London in the First Age of Party, 1688–1715* (Oxford, 1985).

[24] M. A. Goldie, 'John Locke and Anglican Royalism', *Political Studies*, 31 (1983), 61–85.

[25] Cf. J. S. Morrill, *Seventeenth-Century Britain, 1603–1714* (1980), p. 126.

It is necessary to say at the outset something about what I mean by crowd politics. To maintain a certain flexibility, it might be more helpful to start with some negative definitions. Unlike Rudé, who chose to focus on the 'aggressive mob' and the 'hostile outburst', I shall not limit my study to riots and social protest. Many of the crowd scenes of Charles II's reign are more appropriately described as demonstrations, which were often of a peaceful kind.[26] Indeed, the best-known crowds of that period are the ones which witnessed the pope-burning processions of the exclusion period, and these more properly come within Rudé's category of audiences, or ceremonial crowds, which he did not include in his area of study.[27] Another weakness with focusing on riot is that we look only at the disaffected. If, as Rudé has shown, crowed were usually composed of 'the inferior set of people',[28] it is nevertheless a fallacy to assume that 'the inferior set' as a whole must have shared the views expressed in the riot.[29] Yet I do not intend to offer a study of the 'crowd' in London *per se*, whether that crowd be a riotous or a celebratory one.[30] For reasons which will be explained shortly, I do not believe the concept of the crowd to be a very helpful organizational category. Moreover, this study will find it necessary to examine many types of activity, such as the speaking of seditious words, which are not crowd phenomena. Nor is my main concern the suppression of crowd activity, or the maintenance of order,[31] although aspects of this, and of riots and crowds in general, will, of course, be considered.

What I am interested in is studying the political views of those types of people whom contemporaries regarded as composing 'the mob', the mass of ordinary Londoners below the level of the social and political elite. I shall be concerned with political activity which took a non-institutional form, or what might loosely be termed 'street politics'. Primarily my intention is to offer an investigation of the expression and significance of public opinion in London, exploring the attitudes and concerns of those below the level of the elite. Central to this book will be an examination of the proposition,

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[26] The word demonstration was not used in this sense in English until the nineteenth century. See *OED*. However, it was fairly common for contemporary observers to refer to crowd scenes as 'demonstrations of joy' or 'demonstrations of infidelity'. See Bodl. Lib., MS Carte 30, fol. 649; BL, Add. MS 25,363, fol. 125; *HMC, Ormond*, NS IV, 580; LC, MS 18,124, VIII, fol. 174; ibid., IX, fol. 93.

[27] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 4.

[28] G. Rudé, 'The London "Mob" of the Eighteenth Century', in his *Paris and London*, pp. 298–302.

[29] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 210.

[30] For such a study, see J. M. Harrison, 'The Crowd in Bristol, 1790–1835', unpub. Cambridge PhD thesis (1983).

[31] D. F. Allen, 'The Political Role of the London Trained Bands in the Exclusion Crisis, 1678–1681, *EHR*, 87 (1972), 287–303; Dunn, 'Weavers' Riots'; Lindley, 'Riot Prevention'.

which has not been seriously challenged, that 'the London crowd' was in
favour of a restoration of monarchy in 1659–60, but 20 years later had
become alienated from the Stuarts, and was once more an instrument of
radical politics. Such an examination will, in part, entail a study of popular
protest after the fashion of historians like Rudé, Holmes, and Rogers, using
legal records to look at riots, demonstrations, and seditious words. It will
involve a consideration of celebratory crowds and public rituals. It also
necessitates an investigation of how people become informed about the pol-
itical controversies of their age, whether through exposure to propaganda
deliberately aimed at politicizing the masses, or through everyday religious,
social, and economic experience. As well as asking which people protested
and why, it will also need to assess the typicality of those who protested,
ask whether some people perhaps remained loyal, and investigate whether
we are seeing a redefinition in the allegiances of the London crowd over
time, or whether we in fact have two very different crowds in London.
A study of this nature raises particular conceptual problems, which need
to be considered first.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Studies of the crowd, and the related sphere of collective protest with which
it has often been (rather confusingly) conflated, have come from a variety
of academic disciplines with very different preoccupations. Nevertheless,
in two crucial respects, most of the existing literature encourages us to think
about the crowd in similar ways. First, there is a tendency to invest the
crowd with an artificial reality of its own, or to 'reify' the crowd. Not
only is the crowd ascribed a greater unity and homogeneity of feeling than
is necessarily warranted, but 'it' is even said to possess a mind of its own.
Secondly, most approaches are dominated by structural considerations
which make it difficult to investigate the way crowds change over time.

   In the late nineteenth century, Gustave Le Bon postulated the view that
'the crowd' had a 'collective mind', and that the people that composed
it thought and acted 'in a manner quite different from that in which each
individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation'.[32]
Sigmund Freud sought to underpin Le Bon's conclusions in psychoanalytic
theory, reinforcing the description of the homogeneity of crowd members
when he argued that individuals in the group 'behave as though they were
uniform'.[33] Although their views on the irrational behaviour of crowds have

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[32] G. Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896), p. 6.
[33] S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1922), p. 56.

been severely criticized,[34] the concept of the collective conscience of the crowd has been acknowledged to possess some merit.[35]

A massive literature by social psychologists and sociologists exists which investigates the question of why collective unrest breaks out,[36] the aim being, in contrast to historical research, to develop analytical concepts which are both temporally and culturally non-specific; or, as one author put it, to discover 'principles common to all crowds'.[37] Despite the greater interest of historians in the unique or the individual episode, and the desire to set their work in a context which is historically specific, we can still detect a tendency towards a rather static analysis. Historians have asked important questions about the structure of a particular crowd, or the 'rules' governing a particular type of disturbance (such as the food riot), but have been less interested in looking at changes through time in the assumptions and attitudes of the types of people who composed the crowd. The invaluable contributions of scholars like Hobsbawm, Rudé, and Thompson,[38] which have led to a complete re-thinking of the approach to the study of riot, were all preoccupied with the questions of the composition, organization, objectives and beliefs of the rioting crowd. The conclusion found for eighteenth-century England, that the crowd was not the 'rabble' or society's dregs, but was composed of respectable (if often lowly) types, who were informed, disciplined, and in possession of broad notions of the necessity and legitimacy of their actions, has also been found to have an applicability in other countries and centuries.[39] The typical technique has been to offer case studies of particular riots, and this has even been true when a number of riots are being studied in a single area over a period of time. Thus Rudé has

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[34] G. Lefebvre, 'Foules révolutionaires', *Annales historique de la Révolution française*, 11 (1934), 1–26; R. A. Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave LeBon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic* (1975).

[35] Lefebvre, 'Foules révolutionaries', pp. 10–11.

[36] For useful surveys of this literature, see: S. Milgram and H. Toch, 'Collective Behaviour: Crowds and Social Movements', in G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds., *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, IV (Reading, Massachusetts, 1969), 507–610; S. Wright, *Crowds and Riots: A Study in Social Organization* (1978), ch. 1; S. Taylor, 'The Scarman Report and the Explanation of Riots', in J. Benyon, ed., *Scarman and After: Essays Reflecting on Lord Scarman's Report, the Riots, and their Aftermath* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 20–7.

[37] Milgram and Toch, 'Collective Behaviour', p. 509.

[38] See references in footnote 2 above.

[39] See, for example: D. J. V. Jones, *Before Rebecca: Popular Protests in Wales, 1793–1895* (1973), pp. 201–3; K. J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780–1815* (Edinburgh, 1979), ch. 9; Rudé, *Crowd in History*, pp. 23–31, 38, 44; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 1959), pp. 113–14; R. Pillorget, *Mouvements insurrectionnels en Provence entre 1596 et 1715* (Paris, 1975), pp. 992–5; L. Rodriguez, 'The Spanish Riots of 1766', *PP*, 59 (1973), 143–5; J. C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in South-East Asia* (New Haven, 1976). Of course, this is not to suggest that all the conclusions of these authors are similar.

offered a series of case studies of 'the London mob' through the eighteenth
century, but he has not investigated the way the attitudes of the lower orders,
as occasionally revealed in riot, changed over time.

All the above approaches concentrate on crowd conflict. This is something
which has been criticized in recent years, because the focus is solely on
forms of dissension within society. An historical distortion is thereby encour-
aged by deliberately ignoring those forms of collective behaviour which
could function to generate and sustain consensus.[40] Emile Durkeim, in his
work on religious rituals, showed how certain types of collective activity
could function as a form of social integration.[41] E. Shils and M. Young,
in their study of the coronation of Elizabeth II, developed a neo-Durkheimian
analysis, seeing the coronation as the kind of ceremonial 'in which society
reaffirms the moral values which constitute it as a society and renews its
devotion to those values by an act of communion'.[42] This type of approach
could have a pertinence for some of the public rituals of Charles II's reign,
such as the coronation of 1661, the lord mayor's shows, or even the pope-
burning processions of the exclusion crisis. By concentrating on the extent
to which cohesion or social integration is encouraged by such rituals, how-
ever, we can blind ourselves to more fundamental tensions that still exist.
Just because a crowd is willing to take to the streets to demonstrate its
attachment to the monarchy, say, or to the civic authorities, or its hostility
towards catholicism, this does not mean that the experience of that attach-
ment is the same for different members of the crowd.[43] In that respect,
many historians who focus explicitly on crowd protest nevertheless commit
a similar error to the neo-Durkheimians. For them, the conflict exists between
the crowd, often synonymous with the lower orders, and the ruling classes;
but at the level of the crowd, the model is still a consensual one. The real
problem with focusing on the rioting crowd, therefore, is not that it exagger-
ates dissension, but that it obscures it. Because the contented and the satisfied
seldom have anything to protest about, such an approach cannot help us
understand the extent to which dissatisfaction was not the norm amongst
those whom Rudé styles 'the inferior set of people'. And yet in particular
political circumstances, such as those which prevailed in London in 1647,

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[40] R. J. Holton, 'The Crowd in History: Some Problems of Theory and Method', *Social History*,
3 (1978), 219–33; Harrison, 'Crowd in Bristol', pp. 3–4, ch. 11.

[41] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. by J. W. Swain (1915), esp.
p. 427.

[42] E. Shils and M. Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, NS I, no.
2 (December, 1953), 67.

[43] Cf. criticisms of the neo-Durkheimian approach by S. Lukes, 'Political Ritual and Social
Integration', *Sociology*, 9 (1975), 292–3; E. Hammerton and D. Cannadine, 'Conflict and
Consensus on a Ceremonial Occasion: The Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge in 1897', *HJ*,
24 (1981), 111–46.

it is possible to see from collective actions that there was fierce political disagreement amongst the lower orders.[44]

Although the approaches so far summarized are different in significant respects, they all encourage us to see the crowd as an homogeneous entity and as representing a consensus, at least within itself, and amongst the types of people of whom it was composed. This tendency to 'reify' the crowd is reinforced by the static approach usually employed. No way has been suggested for examining changes in the attitudes of the crowd over time. This raises problems when 'it', 'the crowd', is seen to change its mind. Contemporaries simply believed that the masses were fickle: 'what is more fickle than the multitude?';[45] 'the multitude judg weakly', and nothing could be expected from them but 'uncertaintie'.[46] Oliver Cromwell believed that 'those very persons' who cheered him in success, 'would shout as much if [he] . . . were going to be hanged'.[47]

Despite the attempts of modern historians to ascribe a certain degree of rationality to the activity of the crowd, those who have attempted a diachronic analysis by joining up the case studies have been led to similar conclusions. The London crowd was pro-Stuart in 1660, whig in 1679–81, anti-Stuart by 1688, tory by 1710, anti-Hanoverian, if not unambiguously pro-Stuart after 1714, and pro-Wilkes by the 1760s. The London crowd is therefore seen as traditionally acting in opposition to whichever government was in power.[48] For example, Dame Lucy Sutherland suggested that 'whenever political excitement ran high the London crowd could be relied on to emerge and give the added support of their clamour to the Opposition cause'.[49] Even Rudé fell into the same trap. Discussing the view that the London crowd in the late eighteenth century was still an unreliable instrument of radical politics, he cited as proof the fact that 'the same crowd that had shouted for "Wilkes and Liberty" in 1768 was, a dozen years later, directing its energies into channels that were hardly propitious for the radical cause – destroying catholic houses and chapels'.[50]

Three things need to be avoided: the reification of the crowd; the temptation of using 'it' as evidence of 'public opinion' in general; and, finally, trying to measure changes in that opinion by comparing the activities of

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[44] Gentles, 'Struggle for London'.
[45] N. Estwicke, *A Dialogue Betwixt a Conformist and a Nonconformist Concerning the Lawfulness of Private Meetings* (1668), p. 9.
[46] Rev. J. Ward, *Diary, Extending from 1648 to 1679*, ed. C. Severn (1839), pp. 223, 291.
[47] Burnet, I, 154.
[48] Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 315. See also the analysis in his ch. 4.
[49] L. Sutherland, 'The City of London in Eighteenth-Century Politics', in R. Pares and A. J. P. Taylor, eds., *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier* (Oxford, 1956), p. 59.
[50] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, pp. 220–1.

'the London crowd' over time.[51] Although an obvious point, it perhaps
needs to be stressed that a crowd is a collection of individuals, and every
time a new crowd appears, the individuals are re-grouped. Some die, some
become disillusioned, some change sides, some do fight again, whilst others
see no need to, but each crowd is different from the last. The conceptual
starting point should not, therefore, be 'the crowd', but the problem of
individual political self-definition. We need to discover how different people
perceived and experienced their political world: for example, through an
inherited cultural apparatus, through religious practice, a direct experience
of the workings of the law, exposure to propaganda, socio-economic
influences, the unfolding of political events, and so forth. The ideal must
be to recreate all the dimensions of the political culture of the people of
London. When considering collective action, a certain crowd at a specific
time might be seen as perhaps offering only a partial statement of certain
aspects of that political culture. Another crowd later on might contain some
similar elements to the last, although some might have been redefined, and
different people might be stating different views for the first time, even though
these views were held before but remained unexpressed in protest. To put
it another way: whig and tory crowds at different times might not mean
that 'the London crowd' changed its mind. Instead, we might be witnessing
two different aspects of London political culture that were present (in some
form) throughout the period, but which required different historical conjunc-
tures for them to manifest themselves in protest and therefore become visible
to the historian.

It is thus essential to begin by exploring the contours of London political
culture, and then to investigate the ways in which the concerns and preoccu-
pations of Londoners developed and were shaped over time so that we
can achieve a satisfactory diachronic approach. In Chapter 2 I shall look
at the potential for political activity by the masses, at their ability to take
self-coordinated collective action in support of their views, and at the degree
to which they were informed and concerned about the political issues of
their day. What will become clear is that London political culture was not
a consensual one. Instead, fundamental tensions existed which tended to
divide the London populace. In particular, we shall notice that antagonism
between anglicans, presbyterians and separatists worked against any form
of collective identity for 'the London crowd'. The implications of this divided
political culture for our understanding of crowd unrest in the capital in
Charles II's reign are then explored in full in the rest of the book.

[51] Cf. F. H. Allport, 'Towards a Science of Public Opinion', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1
(1937), 7–8.