

## PARLIAMENT THE MIRROR OF THE NATION

The notion of “representative democracy” seems unquestionably familiar today, but how did the Victorian era – the epoch when the modern democratic state was made – understand democracy, parliamentary representation, and diversity? In the famous nineteenth-century debates about representation and parliamentary reform, two interlocked ideals were of the greatest importance: descriptive representation, that the House of Commons “mirror” the diversity that marked society, and deliberation within the legislative assembly. These ideals presented a major obstacle to the acceptance of a democratic suffrage, which it was widely feared would produce an unrepresentative and undeliberative House of Commons. Here, Gregory Conti examines how the Victorians conceived the representative and deliberative functions of the House of Commons and what it meant for Parliament to be the “mirror of the nation.” Combining historical analysis and political theory, he analyses the fascinating nineteenth-century debates among contending schools of thought over the norms and institutions of deliberative representative government, and explores the consequences of recovering this debate.

GREGORY CONTI is Assistant Professor of Politics at Princeton University. He has written numerous articles about the history of liberalism and democratic theory, with a special focus on questions of representation and freedom of speech. He has served as a research fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge.

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*Edited by* David Armitage, Richard Bourke, Jennifer Pitts, and John Robertson

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PARLIAMENT THE MIRROR  
OF THE NATION

*Representation, Deliberation, and Democracy in Victorian  
Britain*

GREGORY CONTI

*Princeton University*



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Portions of the first half of the book have appeared, in rather different form, in: “Democracy Confronts Diversity: Descriptive Representation in Victorian Britain,” *Political Theory*, 47 (2019); and “Reappraising Walter Bagehot’s Liberalism: Discussion, Public Opinion, and the Meaning of Parliamentary Government,” *History of European Ideas*, 41 (2015) (co-authored with Will Selinger). My thanks for their permission to re-use this material.

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## *Note on the Text*

**Note on Translations:** For foreign language texts I have used, wherever possible, a modern English translation. For texts with no reliable English edition, and which I have cited in the original language, the translations are my own.

**Note on Citations:** All citations to Walter Bagehot's texts (with the exception of a few instances which are noted) will refer to *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, 15 vols., ed. Norman St. John-Stevas (Cambridge, MA, 1965–86). Likewise, all citations to J. S. Mill's texts will refer to *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 vols., ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto, 1963–91).

**Note on Attributions:** For much of the period covered here, it was rare for authors of periodicals to sign their work. For the identity of the authors of these articles I have relied on the attributions provided by *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*, online edition [<http://wellesley.chadwyck.com>].

## *Abbreviations*

### **Primary Sources**

<i>BM</i>	<i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i>
<i>CM</i>	<i>Cornhill Magazine</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Contemporary Review</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>Edinburgh Review</i>
<i>FM</i>	<i>Fraser's Magazine</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>Fortnightly Review</i>
<i>Hansard</i>	<i>Hansard Parliamentary Debates</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Macmillan's Magazine</i>
<i>NBR</i>	<i>The North British Review</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>The Nineteenth Century</i> (from 1900, <i>The Nineteenth Century and After</i> )
<i>NR</i>	<i>National Review</i>
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Saturday Review</i>
<i>WR</i>	<i>Westminster Review</i>

### **Academic Journals and Secondary Materials**

<i>APSR</i>	<i>American Political Science Review</i>
<i>ARPS</i>	<i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>
<i>BJPS</i>	<i>British Journal of Political Science</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , Oxford University Press, 2004, online version [ <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com/">www.oxforddnb.com/</a> ]
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EJPT</i>	<i>European Journal of Political Theory</i>
<i>HEI</i>	<i>History of European Ideas</i>

*List of Abbreviations*

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<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HPT</i>	<i>History of Political Thought</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Historical Research</i>
<i>IPSR</i>	<i>International Political Science Review</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JPP</i>	<i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>JP</i>	<i>Journal of Politics</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>Parliamentary Affairs</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>Parliamentary History</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Political Studies</i>
<i>PSQ</i>	<i>Political Science Quarterly</i>
<i>PT</i>	<i>Political Theory</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VS</i>	<i>Victorian Studies</i>

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