

THE PERSISTENCE OF PARTY

Political parties are taken for granted today, but how was the idea of party viewed in the eighteenth century, when core components of modern, representative politics were trialled? From Bolingbroke to Burke, political thinkers regarded party as a fundamental concept of politics, especially in the parliamentary system of Great Britain. The paradox of party was best formulated by David Hume: while parties often threatened the total dissolution of the government, they were also the source of life and vigour in modern politics. In the eighteenth century, party was usually understood as a set of flexible and evolving principles, associated with names and traditions, which categorised and managed political actors, voters, and commentators. Max Skjönsberg thus demonstrates that the idea of party as ideological unity is not purely a nineteenth- or twentieth-century phenomenon but can be traced to the eighteenth century.

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THE PERSISTENCE OF PARTY

Ideas of Harmonious Discord in Eighteenth-Century Britain

MAX SKJÖNSBERG

University of Liverpool



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To Janet

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All of the above are part of William Hogarth's series of election paintings.

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Note on the Text

Eighteenth-century spelling has been kept in citations, in English and in French, and I have not made any attempts to ‘correct’ the grammar in eighteenth-century citations. I have, however, avoided reproducing graphical signs such as ‘y^e’ and ‘y^v’. [Sic] has sometimes been inserted for clarity. When deemed necessary, ‘cf.’ has been used in the footnotes to indicate contrasting views. Old-style dates have usually been converted to new style in the sense that I have taken each year to start on 1 January rather than 25 March (which was generally the case in Britain until 1752). In order to remain faithful to the historical sources I have treated, and not to mischaracterise the period, it has not always been possible to avoid gendered language and use gender neutral pronouns. I have also occasionally used eighteenth-century expressions such as ‘man of letters’. For most citations in French, I have used reliable and reasonably literal translations, but I have kept some shorter quotations from correspondence and lesser known works in French. For the sake of economy, I have used short titles and surnames in the footnotes, apart from when the full title has been deemed to be of extra significance.

Abbreviations

Add	Additional
<i>Anecdotes</i>	William King, <i>Political and Literary Anecdotes of His Own Times</i> (London, 1818)
BJECS	<i>British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
BL	British Library, London
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>Commons, 1690–1715</i>	<i>History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1690–1715</i> , ed. Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley, and David Hayton (5 vols., Cambridge, 2002)
<i>Commons, 1715–54</i>	<i>History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1715–54</i> , ed. Romney Sedgwick (2 vols., London, 1970)
<i>Commons, 1754–90</i>	<i>History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754–90</i> , ed. Lewis Namier and John Brooke (3 vols., London, 1964)
<i>Contributions</i>	Bolingbroke, <i>Contributions to the Craftsman</i> , ed. Simon Varey (Oxford, 1982)
<i>Correspondence</i>	<i>The Correspondence of Edmund Burke</i> , ed. Thomas W. Copeland et al. (10 vols., Chicago, 1958–78)
<i>Dissertation</i>	Rapin, <i>An Historical Dissertation upon Whig and Tory</i> , translated by Mr Ozell (London, 1717). (Rapin, <i>Dissertation sur les Whigs et les Torys</i> (The Hague, 1717))
ECS	<i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>Egmont Papers</i>	Aubrey N. Newman (ed.), ‘Leicester House Politics, 1750–60, from the Papers of John, 2nd Earl of Egmont’, <i>Camden Fourth Series</i> , 7 (1969), 85–228

<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office, The Keep
<i>Essays</i>	David Hume, <i>Essays, Moral, Political and Literary</i> , ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1987)
<i>Estimate</i>	John Brown, <i>An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times</i> (2 vols., London, 1757–8)
<i>Fox Memorials</i>	<i>Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox</i> , ed. Lord John Russell (4 vols., London, 1853–7)
<i>Further Letters</i>	<i>Further Letters of David Hume</i> , ed. Felix Waldmann (Edinburgh, 2014)
<i>Hearne's Recollections</i>	<i>Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne</i> , ed. C.E. Doble et al (11 vols., Oxford, 1885–1921)
<i>HEI</i>	<i>History of European Ideas</i>
<i>Hervey's Memoirs</i>	Lord Hervey, <i>Some Materials towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II</i> , ed. Romney Sedgwick (3 vols., London, 1931)
<i>Histoire</i>	Rapin, <i>Histoire d'Angleterre</i> (10 vols., The Hague, 1724–7)
<i>History</i>	David Hume, <i>The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688</i> (6 vols., Indianapolis, 1983 [1754–61])
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
<i>HPT</i>	<i>History of Political Thought</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of David Hume</i> , ed. J.Y.T. Greig (1932), (2 vols., Oxford, 2011)
<i>Marchmont Papers</i>	<i>A Selection from the Papers of the Earls of Marchmont, in the Possession of the Right Honourable Sir George Henry Rose: Illustrative of Events from 1685 to 1750</i> (3 vols., London, 1831)
<i>Memoirs of George III</i>	Horace Walpole, <i>Memoirs of the Reign of King George III</i> (4 vols., London, 1845)
MS	Manuscript(s)
<i>New Letters</i>	<i>New Letters of David Hume</i> , ed. Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner (1954), (Oxford, 2011)
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>

List of Abbreviations

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<i>Parl. Hist.</i>	<i>The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803</i> , ed. William Cobbett (36 vols., London, 1802–20)
<i>PH</i>	<i>Parliamentary History</i>
<i>Political Writings</i>	Bolingbroke, <i>Political Writings</i> , ed. David Armitage (Cambridge, 1997)
<i>RA</i>	Royal Archives, Windsor Castle
<i>TCD</i>	Trinity College Dublin
<i>Tory and Whig</i>	<i>Tory and Whig: The Parliamentary Papers of Edward Harley, 3rd Earl of Oxford, and William Hay, MP for Seaford, 1716–53</i> , ed. Stephen Taylor and Clyve Jones (Woodbridge, 1998)
<i>Treatise</i>	Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1978 [1739–40])
<i>Unpublished Letters</i>	<i>The Unpublished Letters of Henry St John, First Viscount Bolingbroke</i> , ed. Adrian Lashmore-Davies (5 vols., London, 2013)
<i>W&S</i>	<i>The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke</i> , ed. Paul Langford et al. (9 vols., Oxford, 1970–2015)
<i>Waldegrave Memoirs</i>	<i>The Memoirs and Speeches of James, 2nd Earl Waldegrave, 1742–63</i> , ed. J.C.D. Clark (Cambridge, 1988)
<i>Works</i>	<i>The Works of the Late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke</i> , ed. David Mallet (5 vols., London, 1754)
<i>WWM</i>	Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Sheffield City Archives