the Cabinet downwards – over the conduct of foreign affairs, and while Packer does cite some of Wilson's research, the latter's important *Primat der Innenpolitik* argument is left unexamined.

Two further chapters deal with the constitutional issues of Home Rule, the House of Lords, and female suffrage. Although not much of substance is added here to existing accounts, specialists will be interested in the able discussion of the so-called 'Ripon plan' for the reform of the House of Lords, while students will find the treatment of Liberal policy on Home Rule – for Scotland and Wales as well as Ireland – informative and concise. Packer emphasises the lack of appeal of Irish Home Rule for Liberals, going so far as to say that the electoral debacle of 1886 'convinced most Liberals that the issue had no appeal for the British electorate'. Yet while parliamentary support for Home Rule certainly declined over time, as Packer shows, 'no appeal' does seem rather strong: Home Rule remained a platform cause that could raise cheers among the Liberal rank and file well into the Edwardian period, and the reasons for this still remain under-explored by historians.

The next three chapters, before the epilogue dealing with World War One, concern Nonconformity, the economy and finance, and social reform. Packer has already published work on all three of these themes, as is demonstrated by his confident treatment of them. Fiscal and economic policy is discussed with great clarity, with appropriately strong stress being laid on the still-continuing importance of free trade to the Liberal creed. Free trade, of course, had been central to the political identity of the Gladstonian Liberal Party, as indeed had been the defence of religious freedom and the association with Nonconformity, and Packer underlines the persistence of these 'older' strands of Liberal ideology in the years before 1914. In his insistence on the continuing centrality of Nonconformity to Liberalism, Packer's line appears consistent with revisionist critiques of the Peter Clarke-inspired position that by the Edwardian period, social class had replaced religion as the primary determinant of political identity. But he adds a distinctive twist to his revisionism by arguing (as in a previous *Journal of British Studies* article) that new evangelical strands within Nonconformist theology, emphasising the value of 'good works', helped fuel the social reform agenda of the New Liberalism (the Rowntree family is the classic example here). Such a perspective helps us understand why the social reforms enacted by Liberal governments were, as Packer argues, unproblematically compatible with mainstream Liberalism.

Overall, the book does much to confirm the now-dominant argument that the Liberals were an effective, modern party of government in the Edwardian period; they were not in terminal or even in serious decline in 1914, and perhaps not even in 1915.

It is perhaps to be regretted that the book lacks a conclusion as such; we get, instead, an 'epilogue' on Liberal wartime policy in 1914–15. But readers will find it easy enough to draw together the main themes of Packer's study. Overall, the book does much to confirm the now-dominant argument that the Liberals were an effective, modern party of government in the Edwardian period; they were not in terminal or even in serious decline in 1914, and perhaps not even in 1915. (For Packer, the upshot of this is that the finger of blame is pointed squarely at Lloyd George.) Yet if the Liberals were in good shape before the First World War, the reason for this was in large part electoral, and it is a shame that this otherwise excellent book pays little attention to elections or popular politics: ideology mattered at the polls, as well as in Parliament. Notwithstanding this criticism (which some may think unfairly levelled at a study of government policy), this is a book that should appeal to anybody interested in the history of the Liberal Party, and one which will be of considerable utility in a teaching context. One must hope that the publisher sees fit to bring out a paperback edition, as the £45.00 price tag will surely deter.

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War memoirs

Andrew Suttie, *Rewriting the First World War: Lloyd George, Politics and Strategy 1914–18* (Palgrave, 2005)

Reviewed by **Richard Toye**

Amidst the many dramatic changes in twentieth-century British politics, it is easy to overlook the significant shifts that occurred in the way that politicians wrote their memoirs. Typically, autobiographies of Victorian statesmen were discreet, worthy, and, consequently, dull. Since 1918 – perhaps in part as a consequence of new, less deferential habits of biographers and journalists – politicians have been inclined, if not always exactly to greater frankness, then at least to more active self-justification and score-settling. This has frequently necessitated putting previously confidential material into the public domain, albeit often in a misleadingly selective way. The typical politician's memoir has therefore

now become both more heavily documented and more 'controversial' than its predecessors. David Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* (1933–36) did not start this process – Winston Churchill's *The World Crisis* (1923–31) was arguably the real landmark work – but they were an important contribution to it. As such, they are certainly worthy of a book-length examination in their own right, and Andrew Suttie rises to the task with coolness and competence.

The *War Memoirs* are notable for their forthright and polemical attacks on the supposedly incompetent generals whom Lloyd George held responsible for numerous failed offensives, involving an appalling death toll, on the Western Front. Suttie demonstrates that this picture is highly unsatisfactory. As he puts it (p. 4), in spite of Lloyd George's 'determined attempt to avoid all responsibility for wartime disasters, he cannot escape the fact that, as he so proudly proclaims, he was the only statesman to see it through from beginning to end in a position of power and responsibility. His relentless attacks on the politicians, generals and their strategy and conduct of the war and military operations ultimately rebounds to his own discredit and cannot fail to detract from his own significant and genuine wartime achievements.' In other words, insofar as the memoirs helped cement the popular view of the war as futile, unnecessary and wasteful of lives, they correspondingly diminished Lloyd George's chances of being remembered as a great national leader. If the whole conflict had been pointless, then his own role was not much to celebrate, even if he had, as he claimed, in fact been right at every significant turn.

Suttie's book comprises one chapter on the process by which the memoirs were written, followed by a further eight on key episodes and themes with which they dealt. These range from the outbreak of war in 1914, to the third battle of Ypres (or Passchendaele), to the question of war and revolution in Russia. Suttie is at pains to show that the generals' conduct of the war was by no means as incompetent as Lloyd George claimed. In Suttie's view the war, if it was to be won, had to be won in France. Lloyd George's obsession, both during the war and in the memoirs, with 'knocking the props' from under Germany (by defeating her weaker allies) was misconceived. There were of course disasters, Passchendaele not least among them. But even the much-maligned Field-Marshal Haig was capable of learning, and by 1918, on the basis of new tactics, the British army was enjoying real success in the field. Suttie effectively exposes many of the evasions and inconsistencies in Lloyd George's account. For example, he notes that, having attacked Haig for continuing with offensives beyond the point where it should have been clear that they had failed, Lloyd George also criticised him for not having pressed forward further after his initial gains during the August 1918 Battle of Amiens. As Suttie puts it (p. 175), 'Earlier, one of Lloyd George's chief accusations against Haig had been that he did not know when to stop … But at Amiens Haig did just that, and turned his attention to a more promising sector of his front, thereby avoiding yet another costly Western Front offensive which failed to meet distant objectives.'

Suttie's analysis is thus in tune with the now well-established revisionist view of the war, but he is neither wholly condemnatory of Lloyd George nor uniformly exculpatory of the generals. He gives Lloyd George due credit for his performance as Minister of Munitions in 1915–16. He also takes a nuanced approach to Passchendaele, conceding that Lloyd George, who was by now Prime Minister, was right to oppose the offensive whereas Haig was much too optimistic about its chances. In Suttie's view, Lloyd George nonetheless held much responsibility for what went wrong, because at the time he was politically strong enough to have insisted on halting the offensive, even if that meant replacing Haig, but did not do so. The point about his political position is debatable, but it is certainly true that the explanations in the *War Memoirs* for his failure to take the risk are lacking in conviction.

This new volume, then, forms a valuable critical guide to the *War Memoirs*. It deserves to be read by anyone who is still in thrall to the *Blackadder* view of the Great War – that is, that British strategy consisted merely of a series of inept attempts to move Haig's drinks cabinet 'six inches closer to Berlin'. However, it is slightly disappointing that Suttie has not made a bit more of his material. He is of course right to conclude (p. 203) that 'the *War Memoirs* should

not be regarded or used as a work of serious history', in the sense of a work that strives for objectivity, but this does not exactly come as a shock. As he acknowledges in the same passage, 'Most historians now approach the *War Memoirs* with extreme caution.' Indeed, many of the original reviewers of the memoirs, as quoted by Suttie, were themselves clearly aware that the book was marred by Lloyd George's self-evident desire for revenge on those who he thought had wronged him. This calls into question Suttie's assertions, which he makes little attempt to justify, about the subsequent influence of Lloyd George's account. Nor does he ask searching questions about the autobiographical genre, the processes of memory, or the degree to which Lloyd George may himself have been influenced by the 'literature of disenchantment' with the war that had already emerged by the time the *War Memoirs* were composed.

While Suttie does his best to be fair to Lloyd George, the catalogue of the (genuine) failings of his memoirs at times becomes somewhat relentless, and we do not really learn what led to them. In a rare moment of psychological speculation, Suttie suggests that Lloyd George's attacks on Haig and others reached 'a level of vituperation which must … have sprung from a deep sense of guilt at not having stopped the carnage' (p. 6). Perhaps, but no evidence is offered for this surmise. It seems just as plausible to suggest that Lloyd George, no matter what the topic, was driven by a near-pathological urge to justify himself. Frances Stevenson, his mistress, recorded in her diary as he was writing the memoirs that 'Some of his friends think he would do better sometimes to admit that he has occasionally made mistakes, and been in the wrong, but he seems incapable of doing this – possibly because he is able always to make out such a completely good case for everything – the instinct of the clever lawyer at all times.' If even Lloyd George's friends could see this, it is no surprise that the *War Memoirs*, in spite of the huge flurry of interest they attracted when published, never attained classic status, and failed to arrest the ongoing decline of his personal reputation.

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This new volume, then, forms a valuable critical guide to the *War Memoirs*. It deserves to be read by anyone who is still in thrall to the *Blackadder* view of the Great War.

Theoretician of modernity

Norman Kemp-Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines*, with a new introduction by Don Garrett (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
Reviewed by **Sylvana Tomaselli**

David Hume is one of the most acute theoreticians of modernity. Amongst other things, he understood how commerce had come to occupy the centre of modern politics; he was the first political commentator of note to examine the processes by which commerce had become a matter of state in modern nations. More interestingly still, and as Istvan Hont has argued in *Jealousy of Trade* (2005), Hume saw that while liberty had been the prerequisite of trade in republics, the causal relation between liberty and trade had become inverted in the large monarchies characteristic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From being dependent on liberty, commerce was now the agent of civil liberties in modern states. The depth of Hume's insights into the factors that made for this process, and hence moulded modern nations as well as international relations, place him at the heart of contemporary political theory today.

This was by no means always so. Indeed, not only was his importance to political thought very much underrated until relatively recently, but his place within the history of philosophy was also far from secure, certainly until the end of the nineteenth century or arguably even the first half of the twentieth. The Old Catalogue of Cambridge University Library (in full use until fairly recently) listed him as 'Hume, David, the historian'. Amongst those who contributed most to rehabilitating David Hume as not just 'the philosopher' he became principally known as in the latter part of the twentieth century, but as one of the greatest of philosophers, Norman Kemp Smith was one of the most significant.

As Don Garrett writes in a succinct new introduction to *The Philosophy of David Hume*, students of Hume and philosophers more generally are very much in Kemp Smith's debt; his seminal work kindled much scholarship on Hume himself and stimulated valuable philosophical enquiry into the various epistemological and moral issues the eighteenth-century Scot raised and tackled. Kemp Smith's sympathetic and lucid explication of Hume's philosophy as expounded principally in *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40) and the *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* and *Concerning the Principles*