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Mann, Alastair J., *James VII. Duke and King of Scots, 1633 – 1701* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2014, Pp. vii-224; ISBN 978-1-904607-90-8, £25).

This new work by Alastair Mann charts the life of one of the British Isles' most enigmatic and provocative monarchs from a fiery, promising youth and celebrated soldier to a 'crumpled' fatalist in exile. Significantly, Mann frames his study as one of 'James VII, Duke and King of Scots', stepping away from biographies placing England center-stage of both contemporary and historiographical concerns.

Mann addresses assumptions about James based upon pre-supposed personal and political flaws and balances polemicised depictions of him against revisionist work, like that of John Callow, which acknowledges James' positive attributes and successes. The first and second chapters follow James' early life and Interregnum exile, revealing a young man forged by the religious and political turbulence around him. Later, by drawing on Scottish evidence, Mann enhances the standard interpretation of James in later life set down by John Miller and humanises the tyrannical spectre perpetuated by Whig historians after his death. For example, Mann refutes James' enthusiasm for the torture of prisoners in Edinburgh and instead emphasises his clemency, arguing that James genuinely believed in toleration of others' religious views so long as their political loyalty remained unqualified. Thus, Mann provides a counterweight to contrary depictions, like William Gibson's in which James appears unbendingly intolerant and Miller's contention that James only strategically accommodated unorthodox Protestants.

One of Mann's most significant arguments is that James was in many ways 'the last King of Scots'; a monarch more willingly and genuinely engaged with Scottish concerns than any since 1603. There is much evidence for this and in chapters three and four Mann presents first a duke and then a king actively involved with Scottish policy and economic interest from the earliest days of the restoration when he took a prominent role on the Scots' Council in London. Between 1679 and 1682 James exchanged London's heated political climate for Edinburgh where he successfully took control of the Scots' Privy Council and directed royalist legislation through the Scottish Parliament - acknowledgement and appreciation of which is often lacking in other biographies. James' long-standing and often surprisingly apolitical passion for Scottish military and trade is also examined, with Mann claiming James as their most consistent influence of the period.

Both before and after his accession, the dominant themes surrounding James' person and reign have been his Catholicism and resulting association with early modern fears of absolutist tyranny. Within the context of pre-Revolution Scotland, however, Mann argues that James' religion did not trigger immediate withdrawal of support. Mann contends that in Scotland cultural ties to the Stuarts ran deep and Roman Catholics formed an insignificant minority, leaving militant Presbyterians as the immediate threat to political stability. Therefore, although James was all but forced to resign from the English Admiralty in 1673 he was still appointed Lord High Admiral of Scotland that year. However, Mann does maintain that James actively pursued both absolutist and 'Catholicizing' policies in Scotland consistently attempting to increase royal prerogative – gradually eroding his support - from his time in Edinburgh to the selection of a Scottish 'secret committee' during his reign.

As a Scotland-focused biography, depictions of even James' more significant relationships often markedly differ from those based upon more anglocentric analysis. For example, Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyll, commonly cast by historians as foil and rival to James and his ambitions because of his infamous opposition to the 1681 Test Act and failed 1685 uprising. Mann rescues James from allegations of political recklessness or personal rancour in his dealings with Argyll and suggests simply political opportunism. Indeed, despite increasingly appearing as a liability to the Stuarts' hard-won stability in Scotland, it is unlikely that Argyll's execution was ever actually intended in 1681.

James was - as Mann labels him - the 'First Jacobite' and of all his reign's repercussions it is arguably Jacobitism that has most greatly impacted on how Scotland has been understood by later generations. Mann's fifth chapter addresses James' life during the early years of the exiled Stuart court, where Scots came to play disproportionately prominent roles and traces their initial efforts to re-instate James to the Scottish throne. However, there is room left to further explore how James personally influenced this loyalty. In particular, given the strong historical association between Jacobitism and the Highland clans that gave James his one, momentary taste of Scottish counter-Revolution at Killiecrankie in 1689, deeper analysis of James' interaction with Highland leaders and clan culture – both as duke and King – could prove illustrative.

James VII strikes an undeniably contradictory figure and Mann's work skillfully negotiates the echoes sounded by these contradictions through centuries of comment,

analysis and caricature. This work remains foremost a biography but its analysis, particularly that resulting from its Scottish framework, offers refreshing and invaluable insights into all areas of history in which James' shadow looms large.

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