

1810, but acknowledges that they were not widespread until the mid-nineteenth century. As in the earlier period, Harris argues that a multiplicity of factors contributed to this trend. He emphasizes the role of the business community in encouraging the spread of joint stock companies to emerging sectors. Harris also emphasizes that legal uncertainties were resolved when various courts agreed that joint stock companies had to be incorporated. In general, the book illustrates that the evolution of law and business organization was highly complex and could have turned out very differently. His most provocative claim is that joint stock companies were not necessarily destined to become the dominant form of business organization in nineteenth-century England.

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Nicola Lacey, *A Life of H. L. A. Hart: The Nightmare and the Noble Dream*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. xxii + 422. \$35.00 cloth (ISBN 0-19-927497-5).

Nicola Lacey's biography of H. L. A. Hart offers a wonderful sense of what it was like to be an English legal academic in the post-war years, of how work and life might have interacted to produce serious scholarship. Of course, one might complain that Hart was anything but representative even of leading academics. However, as we have but one similar work about a legal academic—Fifoot's biography of Maitland—it is best to ignore those qualms and enjoy the product.

Hart, known as Herbert, was born into a secular Jewish family in trade in Yorkshire. Three years in public (that is, private) school left him out of sympathy with that piece of elite culture, though for reasons not wholly clear. These years that overlapped with puberty left Herbert with a strong dislike of the adolescent male English culture associated with athletics and a sense that his strength was in intellectual pursuits.

Herbert then went up to New College, Oxford, where he shown as a student, fit in well with the more upper class surrounding, and seemed to repress the casual English anti-semitism that he surely came into contact with. Considering careers both in law and philosophy, he was passed over for a prestigious fellowship at All Souls College and then missed sitting for the exams for a law degree at Oxford due to illness. Therefore, he chose to join Middle Temple where, after the requisite pupillage, he rather quickly became an accomplished, prosperous barrister.

During these years Herbert met Jenifer Williams at, where else, a country house party. She was "sexually experienced, socially confident, and politically committed" to leftist causes; he was "sexually inexperienced, emotionally reserved and considerably less [of a] political man" (71). It was a grand, if a bit too literary, love affair, then marriage, that lasted fifty-five years. They seem to have thrived on the sparks set off by their contrasting minds, though their life together was anything but perfect as he obsessively questioned his heterosexuality and pretty much lost interest in sex altogether and she sought sexual outlets in affairs with

others, including his friend Isaiah Berlin. Hart was not an active father. Indeed, as was common in their class, much of the job of raising their four children was left to a nanny/housekeeper, called Nanny, especially after Jenifer began teaching.

After war broke out in 1939, Herbert was rejected for military service because of a heart murmur. Jenifer, who was at this time a personal secretary to a high civil servant, thereafter secured Herbert an interview for a job with M15, British counterintelligence. Herbert's reputation at the bar and social class got him the post and his intelligence made him very good at it. He thrived in the work.

As the war wound down, the thought of going back to legal practice was something close to abhorrent to him and Herbert began to work his contacts in search of an academic appointment that eventually came as a Fellow back at New College. And, as they say, the rest is history: Professor of Jurisprudence at University College, two important monographs, three books of essays, service on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Principal of Brasenose College and thirteen honorary degrees.

The details of this academic career are mind-numbing, but like a Seurat painting, the resulting canvas is stunning. The reader gets a sense of life at Oxford—the rivalries, the friendships, the teaching, the writing, the seminars, the politics of preferment; life at home—the difficulties of meshing two careers, vacations, weekend gatherings at country houses, the trouble of raising multiple children, marital discord, blame and recrimination; and the life of the mind—all of the anxieties that come with the terror of the empty page, and the related terror of the inability to answer one's critics without giving up one's basic insights.

From time to time there also appear wonderful insights about the choices made and not made. My favorite is about the reasons for Hart's following the philosophical paths set out by J. L. Austin rather than of the later Wittgenstein.

[I]f fully pursued, the Wittgensteinian message—as Wittgenstein himself saw—undermines the pretensions of philosophy as the “master discipline” which illuminates our access to knowledge about the world. For once the notion of “context” is broadened out, the inexorable conclusion is that illumination of legal practices lies not merely in an analysis of doctrinal language but in a historical and social study of the institutions and power relations within which that usage takes place. A full acceptance of Wittgenstein, in other words, would have threatened Herbert's idea of himself as a philosopher. (218)

The same may be true of this book. Taken seriously as a model, it threatens the idea of being an intellectual historian.

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