

integrate an analysis of the role of social class throughout his book, much less is said about the intersections of sexuality and gender and how these categories “mutually inflect each other in specific situations” (265). Also, these materials bring to the forefront compelling questions about the roles that law and legal discourse play in the shaping of tales of same-sex desire. For example, when it is a crime “to conspire to commit sodomy,” what are the implications with respect to the performance of an identity? Of course, the reason this reviewer is left wanting more is because Kaplan has compiled so much rich and thought-provoking material and presented it in a way to create such desire in his readers.

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J. Carter Wood, *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth-Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement*, London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. xii + 204. \$150.00 (ISBN 0-415-32905-1).

This book is the product of an impressive and energetic intelligence. The extent to which it will be admired by readers, however, is liable to depend upon which modes of historical writing and analysis are most to their taste. Those with an enthusiastic predisposition toward the invocation, exploration, and deployment of theoretical perspectives will find much to enjoy and admire here. Others, who view such approaches more sceptically, may find themselves longing for oases of incident and evidence in the deserts of abstraction. Readers of each persuasion will know who they are and treat this review accordingly.

Almost half of Wood’s text is given over to detailed discussion of historiography and theory—especially that of Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias (15–20 et al.)—in an effort to articulate a usable model of analysis for the subject at hand. It is a shame that such time and energy is devoted to prolix and often repetitive theoretical exegeses, because it may have distracted from the exploration of other interesting and important questions. One of these concerns the primary source material consulted: a selected range of materials relating only to London and the south-east, and indeed, only that to be derived from the National Archives and not the (in all probability) far richer resources of summary proceedings and quarter sessions housed in the region’s local archives. The completeness and coherence, as well as the temporal and geographical representativeness of this material—the sorts of questions that historians routinely consider—must inevitably provoke concerns about how persuasively either the evidence presented or the larger national scenes actually bear out the theoretical perspective. The striking comparison here is with such recent works as Carolyn Conley’s *Melancholy Accidents* (Lanham, Md., 1999) and Martin Wiener’s *Men of Blood* (Cambridge, 2004), studies that incorporate the essential insights of Foucault and Elias without losing sight of the richness and complexity of the stories to be derived from their broad archival bases.

I suspect that the determination to find a coherent blend of theory to account for the assertions and behavior of Victorians may also have deflected Wood from

the at least equally important questions of the extent to which his evidence might suggest, on the one hand, new or modified perspectives on Victorian values, and on the other, the limits of his theoretical paradigms themselves. For all that the chapter dealing with the circumstances and rituals of fist-fighting among working men is detailed and fascinating, it does not really seem to say much that one might not already have gathered from previous historical writing. And the chapter exploring the mixed “public” and “private” dimensions of domestic violence among working people, while dovetailing nicely with much of the analytical perspective advanced in the opening chapters, offers little of substance beyond what Shani D’Cruze explored in great detail and nuance in *Crimes of Outrage* (DeKalb, Ill., 1998). More broadly, however, the large-scale perspective offered here—that the early to mid-nineteenth century saw a new premium on orderly conduct and rigorous self-restraint among the propertied classes, followed at the end of the Victorian era by a new emphasis among working peoples themselves on “respectable” behavior—will come as little surprise to historians familiar with the work of such pioneering scholars as Peter Bailey, Brian Harrison, and Robert Storch, among many others. Foucault, Elias, and their ilk do not seem to bring much to the table here that imaginative historical scholarship has not already managed to explore and elucidate.

So as an exercise in historical analysis, this book seems frustratingly limited, though it bears repeating that younger scholars with an eye to making sense of abstract perspectives on the subject will be grateful for its opening chapters. This book was undoubtedly a very fine doctoral thesis. Its mixture of strengths and weaknesses testifies to a dilemma confronting many young scholars starting out in increasingly crowded and well-established fields of study. Four decades ago, Keith Thomas opened whole new worlds to our profession by suggesting his colleagues join him in consulting the social sciences for new “tools” for the “job” of conceiving and writing rigorous new histories of society and cultures. More recent “tools” of choice have been of an ever more abstract and linguistically self-conscious character. So immense a body of scholarship has now developed around the explication of these approaches, however, that there is a real danger that overly much time and energy may be devoted to what should—when all is said and done—only be preparation for the main task at hand.

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Mark Curthoys, *Governments, Labour, and the Law in Mid-Victorian Britain: The Trade Union Legislation of the 1870s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 284. \$129.05 (ISBN 0-19-926889-4).

In this book, Mark Curthoys offers a new interpretation of the development of British trade union legislation over the course of the nineteenth century. Curthoys’s political/legal history takes us from the passage of the British Combination law of 1825, which decriminalized the basic act of combining to withhold labor (but limited the grant of immunity to a very narrow set of union activities), to the pas-