

members of well-established theatrical families (cultural capital) and actresses (corporeal capital), women were very much a part of the West End theater establishment.

Turning to the theater itself in part 2, Bratton shows how these women exerted a distinct and pervasive influence on the development of the West End stage. Despite the solidification of the ideology of separate spheres, this time of transition allowed women to slip through “stressed out openings” created by this “moment of aporia” (117) and gain positions of power. In chapter 4, “Performing the Crisis,” Bratton proposes that certain actresses were uniquely qualified to enact this sense of dislocation and transformation. Transvestite performances such as those of Eliza Vestris and Celine Celeste would have resonated with audiences immersed in the “category crisis” (118) that marked the early Victorian period. Moving beyond performance in chapter 5, Bratton examines the ways in which some women made it to the very heart of the West End theater business, often through marriage, ambitiously pursuing their careers while maintaining their reputations as respectable women. Bratton’s story challenges traditional narratives of lucky actresses who married out of the theater and instead examines a cohort of ambitious, intelligent women who married in. Besides the more well-known cases of Eliza Vestris, Ellen Kean, and Marie Bancroft, Bratton identifies a wide range of women who used marriage to promote their theatrical careers, many quite successfully.

Acknowledging the multitude of factors that contributed to the making of the West End theater during the mid-nineteenth century—commercial interests, elitist agendas, pervasive adaptations of Dickens, and the satirical bent of many of the playwrights who wrote for both the stage and the comic journal *Punch*—women specifically, Bratton claims, played an important role. For example, it was Mary Ann Keeley’s performance of Dickens’s characters, transvestite and straight, that elevated the source material to new levels of gender-inflected knowing humor and compelling pathos. Red-hot melodrama and screaming farce dominated at The Adelphi under Celine Celeste, representing an “affective and somatic” (197) type of theater (coded feminine) that was contrasted negatively, in the grand narrative of the West End stage, with the more sophisticated realistic theater (coded masculine) that supplanted it. Burlesques featured at The Strand under the management of the Swansboroughs epitomized both the cathartic emotionalism and humor of The Adelphi lineup and a type of participatory mode that created, however temporarily, a sense of community.

Bratton’s study makes clear that the theater these women created can be traced directly to the present-day affective and communal experiences that continue to draw pleasure-seekers to the West End. A groundbreaking contribution, this book will be of interest to those in the fields of theater history, performance studies, literature, women’s studies, and cultural studies. Good scholarship is generative as well as informative, and *The Making of the West End Stage* promises to open new avenues of inquiry about the complex relationship between gender and genre on the Victorian stage.

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STEPHEN BROOKE. *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 284. \$125.00 (cloth). doi:10.1017/jbr.2012.39

Stephen Brooke’s sophisticated study, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present*, persuasively shows how class shaped sexual reform and how sexual change in turn reshaped social identities. His analysis spans the late nineteenth century to the present, examining this dynamic as it developed in distinct yet linked moments in a longer history.

Focusing on birth control, abortion, and homosexuality, *Sexual Politics* tracks the interplay between the advocacy of sexual reform and the alteration of law and policy. In opposition and in government, Labour activists mediated this relationship as the emphasis of sexual reform shifted from class politics to sexual rights. Chapter 1 establishes the convergences and divergences between sexual reform and the socialist and feminist movements from the 1880s to the 1920s. While thinkers like Edward Carpenter and Olive Schreiner offered utopian approaches to sexuality and society, the dominance of the male breadwinner norm in the working class and among men in the labor movement were formidable obstacles to change. However, Brooke discerns in these years the emergence of a new “protagonist” (35)—the working-class mother—and of organizations like the Women’s Industrial Council, the Women’s Cooperative Guild, and the Women’s Labour League united around a platform of progressive maternalism.

Part 1 provides a fascinating view of the 1920s and 1930s, hard times for sexual reform despite the opportunities created by the expansion of health and welfare services and the entry of Labour into government. Chapter 2 recounts the efforts of advocates like Stella Browne and the Workers Birth Control Group in the 1920s to move Labour to support contraception for working-class women in a period when mass unemployment had undercut the male breadwinner norm and amplified the needs of mothers and children. Chapter 3 examines the attempts of Dora Russell and Naomi Mitchison to renew the emancipatory project of (hetero)sexual reform and includes an intriguing discussion of the place of emotion in their conceptions of sexual life. Chapter 4 returns to the story of organizing for change in the 1930s, with the campaign of the Abortion Law Reform Association, supported by Labour women’s groups, to broaden the grounds on which abortions could be performed legally. Sexual reform advocates articulated the relationship between sexual reform and social well-being and consolidated the political standing of working-class women as mothers and workers. Increasingly, activists pointed out class inequalities in access to family planning and took the position that reproductive decisions should be made by women.

Parts 2 and 3 take us through the sexual politics of the two decades that culminated in the legislation of 1967 and then the three decades that ended with Tony Blair’s New Labour government in 1997. Brooke’s long perspective reveals old as well as new elements in the unfolding project of sexual reform. Chapter 5 gauges the impact of a younger generation of women and men who wanted to limit family size and enjoy rising living standards in the 1940s and 1950s. He argues that we should see the beginnings of the “permissive” society in this combining of family and self rather than in their opposition. Chapter 6 explores the social, cultural, and political shifts during the late 1950s and 1960s that tipped the balance in favor of reform and then traces the parliamentary twists and turns that led to the enactment of three private member’s bills in 1967 providing contraception to all women under the National Health Service, broadening the medical grounds for legal abortion up to twenty-eight weeks, and decriminalizing homosexual acts in private between consenting men over twenty-one. The Abortion Law Reform Association and the new Homosexual Law Reform Society, crusading MPs like Lena Jeger and Leo Abse, and a supportive Labour cabinet interested in moving the party in liberal directions beyond class-based politics all played a part in these successes. The legislation modernized rather than revolutionized the state’s treatment of sexuality. For example, the protagonist of the Sexual Offences Act was imagined to be an inoffensive homosexual man deserving of privacy. Nevertheless, Brooke shows how “respectability, like maternalism, was an ambiguous, but important, vehicle of reform” (181–82).

The 1967 reforms opened up new terrains of struggle. Repeated attempts were made to restrict abortion, and Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government used Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 to conflate Labour, the left, and homosexuality. Chapters 7 and 8 recount separately the ups and downs of Labour’s defense of the right to abortion and support for the rights of homosexuals and lesbians. Brooke charts the tensions as well as the collaborations among Labour, the trade unions, and feminist, gay, lesbian, and socialist

groups as new protagonists emerged on the scene of sexual politics. Brooke argues that Labour's programmatic commitment to reproductive and sexual rights in the 1990s reflected a deeper transformation, both "gradual" and "radical" (254), in the ways that the family and gendered individuals were conceived. Doubling as an epilogue, the conclusion underlines the long and ongoing transition from class politics to sexual rights by reviewing further reforms under New Labour from 1997 to 2010, such as the equalization of the age of consent and the recognition of lesbian and gay unions and families.

Sexual Politics is an ambitious and imaginative study. Its historical sweep allows valuable comparisons between periods and its analytic framework connects domains—intimate life, utopian ideas, party politics, law and policy—often kept apart. It will interest a wide variety of historians concerned with sexuality, the mutual constitution of class and gender, and the interactions of the Labour Party, social movements, and government in twentieth-century Britain. Deftly integrating older and newer historiographies, Brooke has enriched the field with his innovative argument about the changing terms of the relationship between sexual reform and class politics. I am particularly taken with his use of the notion of protagonists as a way to tie together political rhetoric and social identities. Usually deployed in discussions of figures active in reform advocacy and policy debates who also embody a social sector, his findings on everyday life and grassroots politics suggest that it can also be used more broadly to analyze the generation of collective subjects.

The sheer range of *Sexual Politics* invites further research on several fronts. For example, Brooke highlights the importance of postwar novels, plays, and films in turning sexual and social problems into public issues. Further studies of radio, television, and newer media could provide additional insight into the construction of protagonists since the 1960s. He also points out influential developments in Europe and the United States and regional differences within the United Kingdom. These insights could be elaborated by investigations of cross-border travel and migration between Britain and Ireland, both north and south, throwing more light on the formation of demands for reproductive and sexual rights on both islands. Suffice it to say that my musings about these research possibilities are not meant as criticisms but as appreciations of the fine contribution made by Brooke's *Sexual Politics* and anticipations of the stimulating lead it will give to new work.

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ALISTER CHAPMAN. *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 240. \$55.00 (cloth).
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In 2005, *Time* magazine included John Stott in its annual list of the one hundred most influential people in the world, yet, as Alister Chapman notes, "most of the people who read *Time* that week would never have heard of him" (3). And most of the readers of the *Journal of British Studies* this month will not have heard of him either. This peculiar fact—that one of the most important figures in the history of twentieth-century Christianity is relatively unknown in Britain (and among British historians) despite his quintessential Britishness—is central to the argument of *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*. In this short, clearly written study of Stott's life and impact, Chapman explores the interplay between the contracting role of Christianity in Britain and the increasingly important global position of evangelicalism, and the way in which these "conflicting trajectories" (7) shaped, and were shaped by, John Stott. Moreover, by placing this "very English clergyman" (9) within his