

and enforcement of the sexual offences laws, detailed in Part One. As Houlbrook describes in Part Two, London also provided the freedom, anonymity, and convivial public and private spaces in which men met and loved. It was in these spaces, Houlbrook argues in Part Three, that the fluctuating identities of queer and normal, of trade and queens were explored, defined, dissolved, and reformed. And finally in Part Four, London is revealed as the site of the shifting bureaucratic and legal reactions to queer urban culture that would culminate in the 1967 Sexual Offences Law which privileged a new privatized form of male homosexuality, even as it sought to exclude the public expressions of sexuality that had formed the basis of so much queer urban culture. The city of London was not just the backdrop for these individual and historical events, but profoundly influenced male sexual practices and identities, and they in turn helped to shape the physical and cultural forms of modern urban life.

Matt Houlbrook's book is a landmark in queer history, much as George Chauncey's *Gay New York* was ten years ago. Although occasionally marred by impenetrable prose, Houlbrook's work provides a detailed map of the complex spaces and patterns of class, sex, gender, and identity that constituted queer urban culture in London between 1918 and 1957.

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Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005).

This is an ambitious book. Some of the material discussed here may seem old hat to historians familiar with the huge body of literature on working-class popular culture in Britain in the century before the end of World War Two, but Brad Beaven has undertaken to work back through much of that writing to extract some key debates and, by adding new evidence or re-examining older findings, to challenge some facile or overly simplistic perspectives. His re-interpretation is thoughtful and compelling.

Beaven is interested in one central question: how did working-class men respond to the 'civilizing' projects directed at them by a dominant order intent on turning them into acceptable material for 'citizenship'? He notes that the greatest anxieties that began to emerge in bourgeois circles by the second half of the nineteenth century were about what men got up to in their 'free time' after work. Consequently, a series of cultural projects in 'rational leisure' were launched to tame and shape them into self-disciplined, responsible actors capable of participating appropriately in public life. There was particular concern about the destructive impact of commercial pleasures that more and more working men bought into over the century, and that, according to critical commentators, were turning them into dull, passive, poorly motivated creatures. As a

result, various social engineers tried Bank Holidays, Penny Readings, workingmen's clubs, temperance societies, Boy Scout troops, bicycle clubs, company recreation outlets, and eventually the BBC to distract and uplift. Along the way, much was learned about the futility of preachy instruction and the greater attractiveness of purposefully controlled play or amusement. This book assesses whether working men paid much attention to these incursions into their recreational time and space.

Beaven realizes that he is not the first to tackle these issues, and notes how much theoretical and historiographical ink has been spilled since the 1970s over how to interpret the impact of these schemes. He wants to leave behind blunt conclusions that emphasize successful manipulation by cultural elitists or leisure-industry capitalists, as well as too-easy assumptions about class struggle through popular culture. He accepts that it is no longer possible to talk about a single British 'working-class culture' without acknowledging gender and generational differences, and therefore carefully limits his discussion to men and notes the particular experiences of male youth.

He has the advantage of coming to this study of leisure from a long immersion in the history of work and industry, specifically the new mass-production industries (bicycles and autos) in Coventry in the half century before World War Two. The large number of semi-skilled workers in that economically upbeat city, who, he rightly notes, have too often been ignored in favour of those in more desperate circumstances in the North of England, remain the focus of this book, though his analytical reach extends across the country. Hence much of his discussion involves men who were comparatively well off and able to afford the main commercial pleasures on offer.

In many cases (though not all), Beaven finds they flocked to the new 'civilizing' cultural activities, but the critical factor was "the extent to which the values and social mores that ran through the entertainment were received, understood, and adopted by the working-class audience" (21). In fact, as he looks at how working men engaged with workingmen's clubs, music halls, cinema, commercial sports, and even radio listening, he repeatedly points out how they adapted the new cultural activities to their own needs and generally managed to keep a good distance from the control of the cultural creators. In the late nineteenth century, the Penny Readings got subverted by the rowdiness and aggressiveness of audiences who insisted on manipulating the performances to suit their own cultural preferences. Male wage-earners also took control of the working men's clubs and even allowed the sale of alcohol. They largely ignored projects of cultural colonization like the elegant People's Palace in East End London, as well as the Salvation Army's counter-attractions and the socialists' earnest tee-totalling programs. He makes a similar case about schemes to tame working-class boys, who dragged much of their transgressive street culture into the Boys' Clubs and kept their distance from the more militaristic Boy

Scouts until after the war.

The preference of the working class for the musical hall, pub, cheap novel, cinema, and football pitch, all heavily commercialized, did not mean they were merely passively absorbing mass-produced cultural products. Audiences in all these cultural arenas loudly and aggressively intervened to shape the performance, demanding familiar songs and routines in the music halls, hooting, joking, and socializing through movies, and surging onto the field to influence the outcome of games in favour of a beloved home team. Mass culture for working men, Beaven argues, should be seen “less as replacing an authentic working-class culture and more as a successful imitator of it” (81).

Unlike many other studies, he does not stop this argument with the Great War, but confronts the issues of the new leisure patterns that emerged as British working-class families relocated to new suburbs. There, he insists, married working men turned somewhat more towards privatized pursuits in and around the household (like gardening or hobbies), but not to the complete exclusion of collective, homosocial fun in local pubs and in extremely popular company-sponsored recreation programs (where, once again, they tended to slip out of the paternalistic control of employers, who had become the new “moral guardian[s] of popular leisure pursuits” [141]). Ultimately, Beaven concludes, “notions of ‘good’ citizenship offered from above were largely rejected or sidestepped by workingmen preferring a more immediate frame of reference located within their own culture” (213).

There is a lot to like in this argument. It is a particularly helpful way to think about how workers engaged with the new cultural forms of the twentieth century and negotiated their way into a reconstituted class identity in the midst of ‘mass culture’—in Beaven’s words, how “they imposed their own layer of meaning and enjoyment” (206). In that sense, his book closely parallels Liz Cohen’s perspective on American workers in *Making the New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. That said, there are some silences or issues not adequately addressed. Aside from a brief discussion of the Salvation Army and some church-based Boys’ Clubs, the place of religion and the churches in the ‘civilizing’ project and male workers’ response gets no attention. Also, the constant identification of the labour movement with *prim* socialists, many of them middle class, leaves out the possibility that other voices and tendencies within workers’ movements were more attuned to different discourses that resonated with the male wage-earner’s cultural preferences (on drinking or football, for example—did not unions sponsor some of these activities themselves?).

Conceptually, there are two more serious questions. First, Beaven’s brief introductory remarks on citizenship touch on relatively little of a large, complex literature. Second, while he proclaims a preference for a gendered analysis of popular culture, he never engages in a sustained discussion of how the class-

based responses to projects to reform working men contributed to the construction of working-class masculinities, or what they meant for the younger wage-earning women who were also visible in public spaces and popular pastimes. In part, this reflects an avoidance of sexuality as a point of cultural confrontation. There is now a growing body of historical scholarship and theoretical literature on masculinities that could have helped here.

I am nonetheless glad that Beaven wrote this book and like the general thrust of his argument. He is challenging us to rethink now deeply ingrained assumptions about working-class cultures, and he makes a convincing case. That makes this book well worth reading. It is, however, a shame that at \$84.95 (Canadian) it is beyond the reach of most people (and libraries).

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Christopher E. Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Christopher Forth's much needed book is a stellar example of a gendered history of politics as well as a political history of gender, sexuality, and the body. Following in the footsteps of such ground-breakers as Edward Berenson and Robert Nye, Forth adds a significant contribution to not only masculinity studies, but also a major corrective to political histories of one of the most pivotal events in modern French history: the Dreyfus Affair. Like his fellow Dreyfus-era historians Venita Datta and John Cerullo, Christopher Forth sees the Dreyfus Affair in a much larger cultural context; the event became a prism through which the anxieties of modernity were reflected and refracted throughout French society and culture. While one can argue that the 'crisis of masculinity' began earlier than the 1890s, Forth convincingly shows that cultural concern about the manliness and its expression through the male body—both its physical appearance and actions—became a mainstay of the debate launched by the Affair.

One of the impressive features of the book is that its central event is both everywhere and nowhere; we get fleeting descriptions of what happened to Captain Alfred Dreyfus and some inklings of the ensuing *affaire*, but the story that concerns Forth is that which played out in the cultural arena. According to him, the polemical debate that ensued between the republican Dreyfusard camp and the ultra-nationalist 'antis' revolved around three interrelated areas of concern: modernity, medicine, and manhood (8). The resulting discourse about manhood became wrapped up in existing anxieties about the cultural and social dislocation brought on by modernity and a growing concern with the body due to the advent of modern medicine. In a debate that became increasingly vitriolic and laced with overt and covert anti-Semitism, attacks on the opposition's