

for the revolution and continued to shape societal discourses, popular protest and political movements long after the Qing had collapsed.

Because it focuses on the interplay between state control and local action, between centrifugal and centripetal forces, the narrative sheds much light on social change over time, political expediencies, population dynamics, cultural influences, environmental challenges, collective actions and individual responses. Readers learn as much about political and intellectual histories as they do about migration, war, and natural catastrophes. The narrative, moreover, reveals a keen eye for historical detail and for the big picture. Folk legends are tied into the discussion of broad historical dynamics, as in the case of the ancient legend of 'corpse-drivers', which opens the chapter on 'Sources of Disorder Under the Qing Empire' (p. 45). This story of drivers prodding tightly bundled corpses one step at a time across the country in order to deliver them to their ancestral home for burial is contextualised as the product of popular attempts to cope with the everyday consequences of population changes and forced, as well as voluntary, migration. Crossley's expertise in the history of Qing China and its ethnic frontiers, moreover, is evident throughout and is a major strength of the book. Where previous publications have underplayed the role of China's inland frontiers, this book returns them to the forefront of Sino-foreign engagement and places them alongside more familiar narratives of Chinese interaction with foreign powers along its maritime borders.

There are, however, occasional errors of fact—the assertion in the chapter on 'War', for instance, that Chiang Kai-shek was held hostage in Yan'an when the city in question was actually Xi'an (p. 197). In addition, some of the chapters contain quite a large number of typographical errors that unnecessarily distract from an otherwise captivating narrative. These shortcomings aside, this engaging book keeps the promise put forward in its title by offering an 'Interpretive History'. For the general reader looking to learn about modern Chinese history, it is suitably broad, yet gripping and conceptually engaging. For the specialist reader, it offers plenty of narrative highlights, novel approaches, and an invitation to rethink periodisation. Finding a fresh angle to a familiar story is a challenge, one that this book has dealt with creatively and convincingly.

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English as a Vocation: The Scrutiny Movement, by Christopher Hilliard
(Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012; pp. 298. £57).

With this magnificent study of the *Scrutiny* movement from the 1930s through to the 1960s, Christopher Hilliard establishes himself as one of the most creative and perceptive intellectual historians of modern Britain. If his first book, *To Exercise Our Talents* (2006), turned intellectual history upside-down, examining the world of letters from the perspective of popular writers rather than canonical luminaries, his present book turns its subject inside-out, examining the movement inspired by F.R. Leavis and his colleagues once it left Cambridge and entered secondary schools, adult education, cultural studies,

Pelican guides, and university departments across the English-speaking world. Hilliard argues that the movement was propelled not by the charisma of Leavis or the logic of *Scrutiny*, but rather through networks and mechanisms that the historian can recover. He rejects the presumption of a discrete set of ideas applied by an army of acolytes (the ‘Leavisites’ of journalistic—and too much academic—shorthand), revealing instead the transformation of these ideas in the world outside Cambridge. As Hilliard puts it, echoing his approach in his first book, ‘To examine this movement is not simply to study the “dissemination” of *Scrutiny* approaches beyond Cambridge ... It is, rather, to rewrite that history’ (pp. 2–3).

Hilliard divides his story into three phases: the development of *Scrutiny*’s approaches during the 1930s; their extension and transformation from the late 1940s through the early 1960s; and their eclipse from the mid-1960s. The movement thus advanced and retreated in tandem with the ‘double helix of democratization and deference’ (p. 250) that, as Michael Bell and Stefan Collini have shown, shaped so much of mid-century British intellectual life. Central to *Scrutiny*’s project, along with the modes of reading explicated in Chapter One and the social analysis examined in Chapter Two, was a commitment to ‘discrimination’, which contrasted with ‘taste’ in part because it could be taught. Leavisian discrimination licensed the shattering of idols—in the canon (Milton), in the English department (author biography), and in the public culture (Bloomsbury). The project was exhilarating, but ultimately limited, as the transformations associated with the 1960s undermined the assumptions upon which it rested. Hilliard shows how figures such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall attempted to manage increasingly unmanageable commitments, and in so doing he redefines ‘left-Leavisism’ not as the fusion of *Scrutiny* principles with leftist politics, but rather as a process of negotiation that ultimately left the former behind.

The heart of the book examines a series of sites in which ideas and approaches developed in *Scrutiny* were extended, transformed, and, eventually, displaced. This research is little short of breathtaking, as nearly every chapter features another arresting archive: the entrance examinations that Leavis set at Downing College, a student’s notes from one of Hoggart’s Workers’ Educational Association tutorials, departmental minutes betraying an epic curricular clash at the University of Sydney. Most impressive, though, is the chapter on the social origins and career destinations of Leavis’s undergraduates. Upon matriculation, they listed, among other details, the schools they had attended and their fathers’ occupations, and Hilliard has mined these records to show, among other things, that nearly half of Downing English students arrived from grammar schools (or their equivalents), and that the proportion of students from working-class families approximately doubled after the Second World War. These findings confirm long-standing assumptions about Leavis’s Downing, but Hilliard further reveals that a substantial number of Leavis’s students arrived from public schools, and that working-class undergraduates always remained outnumbered by their middle-class peers. Here, however, Hilliard over-reads his evidence, concluding that the preponderance of middle-class students in Downing casts doubt upon the association between Leavis and any post-war meritocracy. The ‘meritocratic moment’, though, is a claim less about sociology than ideology: it refers less to the means by which a liberated working class stormed hierarchies, than to the ways in which an

ambitious middle class justified them. Of course, neither Downing nor Britain was an actual meritocracy, as Hilliard's evidence shows, but that does not mean that the arguments that carried weight there were not meritocratic.

As his scepticism towards the meritocracy suggests, Hilliard has written a myth-busting book. The introduction cautions readers that Leavis was hardly the dominant figure in twentieth-century criticism, that it is mistaken to conflate *Scrutiny* with Leavis, and that *Scrutiny's* impact was more substantial in cultural studies than literary studies. He goes on to show, contrary to common wisdom, that most Downing English undergraduates arrived from schools with no resident Leavisite, that there was little professional penalty for having read English with Leavis, and that a focus on the teachers whom Leavis trained neglects his many other students who became, say, carpet manufacturers. As that last example suggests, though, the cumulative effect of Hilliard's forensic approach becomes oddly deflating. As the reader is disabused of one myth after another, it becomes increasingly difficult to recall how thrilling it must have been to enlist as a partisan in *Scrutiny's* campaigns. (The image is melodramatic, but so are undergraduates—even those who go on to manufacture carpets.) Leavis's admirers were sometimes referred to as 'renegades' or 'outlaws', terms that convey their sense that they were risking it all against powerful orthodoxies, but as the book proceeds the reader half-expects to learn that, upon closer examination, the movement actually contained, strictly speaking, no outlaws at all—which, however true, would nevertheless fail to capture something important about the experience of the movement.

Hilliard's deflating style is of a piece with his reluctance to engage general historiographical problems. This reluctance is frustrating, not because all books must address larger issues, but because this thoughtful book could have done so readily. With one intriguing exception, when he adduces Jan Goldstein's work on Victor Cousin to justify a focus on the practice of a movement rather than the writings of its master, each chapter begins and ends with a focus on the *Scrutiny* movement itself. Hilliard has elected to address those intellectual historians and literary scholars for whom Leavis and *Scrutiny* are obviously significant, and the fact that the Leavis estate co-operated with publication, along with the favourable notices the book has already received, indicate that his strategy has succeeded. As an admirer of the book, however, I confess to disappointment with its foreshortened horizon. Because not only is it an outstanding contribution to twentieth-century British intellectual history, but—together with *To Exercise Our Talents*—it offers a fresh and insightful approach to intellectual history generally.

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Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR, by Josie McLellan (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2011; pp. 239. £50).

It is no longer so unusual for historians to juxtapose the two seemingly most incompatible realms of human behaviour: sex and politics. While we may no longer have the faith of the sexual revolutionaries of the 1960s and '70s