

tantalize and provoke, and these are often worth pursuing. For example, her discussion of the connections between clothing and sexuality—how clothing is sexualized, how stripping oneself of clothing had social meaning, and how medical interpretations “refashioned the patient”—is indeed fascinating. Also interesting is her brief consideration of the compression of time or a sequence of events in the creation of sexual identities.

This volume contains much to commend it and should be a valuable resource for readers interested in the histories of medicine, insanity and the asylum, and sexual identities and behaviors. More broadly, it is also a useful addition to our knowledge of nineteenth-century European social and political history. Goldberg should be praised for her successful exploration of the “complexities of the relationship between psychiatric labels (official illness), the thing they name (real people, gestures and words), and the historical contexts in which this occurs” (p. 189).

JANE SLAUGHTER
Department of History
University of New Mexico



Sex, Gender, and Social Change in Britain since 1880. By LESLEY A. HALL. European Culture and Society Series. London: Macmillan Press, 2000. Pp. ix + 254. \$60.00 (cloth).

The closing of the millennium has had a positive effect on the history of sexuality. Recently, Angus McLaren published his general survey, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); in the same vein, but with a more specialized focus, is the subject of this review—Lesley Hall’s *Sex, Gender, and Social Change in Britain since 1880*—which offers an extremely readable discussion of the history of sexuality in Britain from the crucial watershed of 1880 to the present. Both of these books provide erudite accounts of the changing nature of sexuality in society. In *Sex, Gender, and Social Change*, Hall brings her specialist knowledge of medical and social history to an excellent synthesis, which sets new standards in the historiography of English sexuality for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These new standards are created predominantly because of the bigger picture that Hall sketches and fills out with both wit and detail.

Over the last thirty years, historical interest in sexuality has expanded at a rapid pace. This has developed partially from feminist history and partially from Foucaultian interests in the history of sexuality. However, there have been other influences, including more Freudian-styled histories (like Steven Marcus’s seminal *The Other Victorians* [New York: Basic Books, 1966]). A key focus of these historical works has been a detailed

study of Victorian sexuality. How could it not be so? We all knew that the Victorians were uptight about sex, dressed their table legs in lace underwear, and put Oscar Wilde in prison for being homosexual. Thankfully, an abundance of detailed historical attention challenged our ignorance, although it encouraged great debate about what the Victorians actually did do between the sheets (from writers such as Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, I: Education of the Senses* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985], and Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality and the Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994]). But what we did not have, until Hall's work and to a lesser extent, McLaren's above-mentioned book, has been an historically sophisticated discussion of how British, twentieth-century understandings of sexuality (in its protean forms) developed from the morass of weird, scary, sometimes boring, and often amusing practices and discourses that were perpetuated in the Victorian period. Did the British, for instance, ever abruptly escape the long Victorian shadow of hypocrisy the way that Lytton Strachey hoped, by shooting beams of light into the dark recesses of his parents' age? Or has twentieth-century sexuality, however conceived on the sceptered isle, grown out of its Victorian heritage? In addressing these questions, Hall puts a lot of contemporary historical research to the test in order to construct a detailed narrative where no outline had previously existed.

Of course, as her many readers are aware, Hall has already contributed mightily to the existing history and historiography of English sexuality with her groundbreaking research on the letters written to Marie Stopes by terrified and confused men, on Stella Browne and the radical feminist birth controllers, on eugenics, on the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, and on sex advice after 1800. Much of her work in the present overview fills in spaces left between her other publications. Some of this is done with her skilled handling of archival material from the Mass Observation survey, the Ellis archives at the British Library, the Carpenter archives at Sheffield Public Library, the Norman Haire papers at Sydney University, and the British Social Hygiene Council archives at the Wellcome Library in London, to name but a few. Hall also extracts the best from existing secondary accounts of such topics as abortion, marriage and divorce, homosexuality, and psychoanalysis.

Behind Hall's discussion of sexuality lies a deep interest in social history; not content merely to discuss discourses about sexuality from different fields (medical, religious, governmental), she portrays a seething backdrop of social struggle for sexual liberation after the crucial date of 1880. Of importance here is the way that gender has permeated, or is constructed by, these discourses. Hall draws on the large body of gender history to situate her claims, although she tempers some of the more

separatist arguments made by other scholars as she contextualizes past writings about sexuality (especially with regard to the treatment of some of the radical claims made by late-nineteenth-century feminists). This is done by explaining sexual relations as constrained by social upheavals (such as wars, the Depression, social rebellion, religious decay, etc.). As gender relations changed, so did the sexual relations that were permitted by society (and vice versa, although one would not want to be too reductionist here, and Hall is not). Many of the changes that took place throughout the twentieth century—female sexual emancipation, challenges to monogamy, rise in sexual activity between unmarried persons, access to birth control, increasing importance of female sexual satisfaction—were promulgated beginning in the 1880s by some of the radicals of London (such as Havelock Ellis, Stella Browne, George Ives, and Edward Carpenter). But the move from radical dinner parties and earnest political meetings to liberated, safe, and permitted sex between consenting adults has been a long time in the making: perhaps we are not there yet.

Another facet of Hall's work that I would like to commend is the expert use of medical discourses and the discussion of their role in constructing sex and gender. Sex has been intimately associated with medicine, not least because of the things that can go wrong: venereal disease and unwanted pregnancy among them. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, medicine (or a subdivision thereof) has struggled to reach a position where it could discuss sexuality without the burden of morality or law. Although religious and legal arguments are still pervasive (see any discussion of AIDS), medicine eventually did attain the most orthodox position of power to discuss sex. Consequently, any good social history of sexuality will deal with medical writings; in Hall's book this is done with the skill that has made her the premier historian of early-twentieth-century sexuality in England. Such medical discourses have been placed in their professional and social contexts in a way that does not let them dominate the broader, more sensitive argument that Hall offers.

To close, I would like to proclaim that *Sex, Gender, and Social Change* is an ideal textbook for students. It offers the best overview of the development of sexuality in twentieth-century Britain, and it promises to become essential reading for anyone interested in the topic, or for anyone hoping to teach a course on the topic. There is enough primary material to make important contributions to the field of the history of sexuality, and the synthesis of previous historical writing, which was long overdue, is both thought-provoking and convincing.

IVAN DALLEY-CROZIER
Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine