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Jonathan Hogg. *British Nuclear Culture: Official and Unofficial Narratives in the Long 20th Century.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. 248 pp. 29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4411-6976-1.

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Early in *British Nuclear Culture* (2016), Jonathan Hogg introduces a haunting quote from Arundhati Roy, the Indian author and political activist. Roy observes that the atomic bomb has a way of embedding itself "like meat hooks" in our social fabric. It can "pervade our thinking … control our behaviour … [and] inform our dreams" (p. 15). Hogg's work, at its core, is an examination of this reality's impact on British society. The book's time period, which Hogg refers to as the "long twentieth century," spans from 1898 (with the discovery of radium) toward the millennium, ultimately concluding in 2015. The bulk of the text, however, is centered on Cold War British society and the looming threat of atomic war between 1945 and 1989. Best defined as a cultural history, Hogg's work relies heavily on discussion and perception of nuclear weapons in the media (books, television, newspapers). Through this approach, the reader is provided with a snapshot of how desensitized British society, and by extension the Western world, gradually became living under the shadow of the atomic bomb.

It is a short distance from the turn-of-the-century novelty of radiation, which was touted as useful in everything from luminescent watch dials to antiwrinkle cream to the mass death at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hogg writes of the detonation of the two American bombs in 1945 as initially having had only a marginal impact on British society. At the same time, it placed the nation at an "atomic crossroads" (pp. 50-51). While the United States moved toward an isolationist approach to nuclear technology in the early postwar era, Britain transitioned into a nuclear state by 1952. The fifties represented, in Britain, an "existential anxiety that [has] seeped into conceptions of home, family, and nation" (p. 74). The public response was ambiguous and multifaceted, as British society embraced civil defense and the antinuclear movement began to germinate. The most extreme example Hogg provides is the story of Elsie and Andrew Marshall in August 1957. The couple drowned themselves and their three children out of fear of coming nuclear war. Their suicide note explicitly references their overwhelming dread of the "extermination of masses of people and especially the children" (pp. 95-97).

In this regard, the British experience appears to differ little from those in the United States or Canada at this time. The predominant emotion is fear. The success of the novel ***On The Beach*** (1957)—and its subsequent film—in all three nations reinforces this impression. Referenced multiple times by Hogg, ***On The Beach*** tells the story of a post-nuclear war Australia, and the stateless ***USS*** Scorpion, awaiting death as a lethal cloud of radiation travels southward from the destroyed Northern Hemisphere.

The successive sixteen years (1959-75), Hogg identifies as a turning point. Concerns about fallout and the horrors of nuclear war from increasingly powerful hydrogen weapons, motivate antinuclear and antiwar protests. At the same time, cultural depictions such as ***These Are the Damned*** (1962)***, Dr. Strangelove*** (1964)***,*** and ***Fail Safe*** (1964) all demonstrate an increased willingness to satirize the situation. This is representative, in Hogg's opinion, of a shift from direct "fear" of destruction to a more anxious undercurrent that motivates a serious desire to "ban the bomb" (p. 130). It is the Thatcherite 1980s, which sees a reinforcement of the West-Soviet geopolitical axis, that makes nuclear war a real possibility again. Against increased polarization is the stark reality not predominant in past decades, that if nuclear war comes the public is on their own: exposed and vulnerable. This intensifies antinuclear efforts. At the same time, decades of living with this reality have led to the bomb's cultural normalization. Take Queen's "Hammer to Fall," which speaks of the ever-present but not abnormal presence of nuclear weapons.

In its totality, Hogg's ***British Nuclear Culture*** sits among comparable works such as Sean M. Maloney's ***Learning to Love the Bomb*** (2007) and Andrew Burtch's ***Give Me Shelter*** (2012) concerning Canada, as well as Paul Boyer's ***By the Bomb's Early Light*** (1985) and Kenneth D. Rose's ***One Nation Underground*** (2001) concerning the United States. Matthew Grant's ***After the Bomb*** (2009), which Hogg cites frequently, should also be mentioned in the British context. In a sparse field on nuclear culture, Hogg's work is a welcome addition. While it confirms that the reaction of the British public in the nuclear age largely conformed to that of the populations of Canada and the United States, this is not overly surprising given the overlapping cultural climates across the three nations. Many of the films and books that Hogg mentions were not unique to Britain. At the same time, he gives voice to the experience of the British people, which has received little scholarly attention in the context of nuclear culture. Heretofore, work on the subject in Britain has been largely concentrated on hagiographical accounts of weapons development. This sparsity is something that this Canadian historian sympathizes with. ***British Nuclear Culture*** adds a much-needed voice to what hopefully will become a growing field in both our nations.

The only part of Hogg's work that feels like it lifts out is his final chapter, on the period between 1990 and 2015. It could be cut with little loss to the overall scholarly integrity of the work. This final chapter speaks to nuclear danger as largely "rendered invisible" in the early post-1989 period (p. 159). There is nothing about 2015, other than the date that the manuscript was likely completed, that ends a subsequent era in nuclear culture. Indeed, Hogg's discussion of renewed concerns about dirty bombs in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 could be compared to the resurgent focus on radioactive dangers that has emerged from the popularity of HBO's ***Chernobyl*** (2019), as well as from American blustering over North Korea's nuclear weapons program and the Persian Gulf crisis of January 2020. This recent return to public consciousness makes the final chapter feel unfinished, and as a result, it seems that post-1989 nuclear culture is perhaps not yet ripe for scholarly examination.

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