

questions of individual/national identity and the application of this dilemma in terms of the colonising male and his colonised subject raised questions that are addressed directly.

Instrumental in the dissemination of both moral and imperial values were the perpetuation of traditions (often invented) and propaganda. An important tool in the latter respect was the raft of literary outpourings that followed Thomas Hughes' epic of 1857, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Mangan rightly considers that this was the means by which a growing number of boys (as literacy improved) grew to adopt and accept the morality propounded from the pages of schoolboy hero novels, war stories and weekly serials that were devoured both at home and abroad. The cover of the book illustrates one such work, that of Ralph Simmons, *For School and Country - A Story for Boys* (Cassell, 1911). Mangan also notes, interestingly, that although the genre was eagerly taken up in other parts of the Empire and 'home-grown' heroes were created, they never matched the popularity of the original 'British' heroes.

All in all this book provides a valuable resource for the academic, the student and anyone interested in the place of the public school and its sports field in creating that form of 'maleness' that was peculiar to those times. It is, however, not just a sports history text. Yes, it addresses and analyses the place of sport in the public and independent schools of Imperial Britain but it will also serve the social, political, religious, educational and cultural historian just as well.

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Allyson N. May, *The Foxhunting Controversy 1781–2004: Class and Cruelty* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2013). Pp. 209. £60 (hb). ISBN 9781409442202

Fox hunting and its circumscribed world have for many years attracted fierce debate, and aroused strong emotions and passions. Indeed, *The Encyclopedia of Traditional British Rural Sports*¹ was forced to have two entries on hunting – the case for and the case against. It has already attracted substantial well-researched monographs from several social historians, including Carr, Itzkowitz, Ridley and Griffin as well as governmental select committee enquiries, many more journalistic studies, Thomas's work on the pressure-group politics of hunting, memoirs, histories of local hunts, novels, and innumerable polemics from pro- and

anti-groups, such as the Countryside Alliance, the League Against Cruel Sports, and the Hunt Saboteurs Association. Other studies such as that by R. W. Hoyle² usefully set hunting in its broader field sports context.

So is there much more to say? In part there is, and May's book is at its strongest when she opens up new areas of enquiry, rather than summarises earlier work. In the early nineteenth century fox hunting, the pursuit of foxes with packs of foxhounds and usually mounted riders, that 'peculiar privilege' of the English, was probably England's most 'national' sport. But as May points out (p. 1), less than two centuries later, the British Labour government introduced 18 separate bills trying to deal with it over its first two terms, spent no less than 700 hours of parliamentary time on the issue, faced down strong Lords' opposition and 'countryside' marches on London, which argued that hunting was an integral part of country life, and finally succeeded in banning the sport under the 2004 Hunting with Dogs Act. Only the Iraq war got anywhere near as much public and parliamentary attention.

May is an associate professor in the history Department at the University of Western Ontario, whose earlier research was in the legal history of crime in the UK, before she turned to landscape studies and this study of certain aspects of hunting. In part her book is a history book, but it also takes a strong literary turn, whilst her background in legal history has helped her follow the legal attacks on fox hunting competently. After a strong introduction, which uses Peter Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting*, first published in 1781, to show that the subject has long been controversial, and to introduce key aspects of subsequent debates such as social class and animal cruelty, the first substantive chapter, 'The Field', runs through the history of the hunt participants, the rural *ancien regime* of aristocrats and squires, the growing middle class interest, farmers, clergy, women and children, up to the late twentieth century. There is little new here, but she reminds readers that over time the association with royal and aristocratic privilege had become much weaker, and that hunting stereotypes were increasingly inaccurate. By the later twentieth century participation was actually relatively democratic, cross-class, and not, as often represented by its opponents, a sport for 'toffs'.

May examines the changing attitudes across British society to issues of animal cruelty and animal welfare, and the complex ways in which these increasingly intertwined with class concerns, from the attacks on supposedly more working-class cruel sports in the nineteenth century to the various shifts in public opinion over time, including the increasingly anti-establishment arguments against hunting in the twentieth century, and the growing vitriolic hostility related to heightened sensitivity to animal

welfare and a sense that the activity was anachronistic. The complexities of the politicisation of the attacks on fox hunting in the twentieth century are carefully delineated. In general, the British Conservative Party has provided support for hunting. (Indeed, since the Conservatives returned to power in 2010 a repeal of the Act is increasingly likely to be back on the agenda). May offers her readers a useful analysis of the reasons lying behind the changing stance of the Labour party, whose rank and file members, with strong class antagonisms and concerns about cruelty, were often bitterly opposed. The leadership, however, recognising that any change in the status quo, either way, would lose votes, was reluctant to introduce a ban.

The sheer volume of literary coverage of hunting forces her chapter on the hunt in literature and its changing treatment, tone and choices of theme to be selective. She covers writers as diverse as Surtees (who created the illusion that the writing and the hunting field was a playground for both gentlemen and cads), Trollope, Masfield and Woolf as well as the changing attitudes to hunting and cruelty shown in 'pony' books and the children's literature of K. M. Peyton and others. Chapter 6 shows how pro-hunting arguments by the end of the twentieth century had moved from 'pest control and conservation' to new arguments based on feelings, emotions and the psychological appeal of the flight from modernity and nostalgia for the pre-World War period, rural landscape and pastoral life, with the hunt represented as a key part of that.

Fox hunting is, as May makes clear, an emotive subject, and her balanced and thoughtful approach may not appeal to readers with strong views on either side of the debate, but it offers an overview of the cultural, social and literary history of the debate, while at the same time giving an insight into the two key questions: why hunting has held such an enduring place in the lives of its supporters and why it has aroused such controversy in Britain.

References

1. Tony Collins, John Martin and Wray Vamplew (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Traditional British Rural Sports* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).
2. R. W. Hoyle (Ed.), *Our Hunting Fathers: Field Sports in England After 1850* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2007).

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