

image of Nightingale as a national leader, and the significance of Mary Seacole in promoting reassessments of British history and society again found forceful—and controversial—expression. The Crimean War lives on as Britons negotiate change and disruption through reference to another shared experience of trauma and to the lasting, if pliable, values and figures whom that trauma seared into the national consciousness.

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SIMON JAMES MORGAN. *Celebrities, Heroes and Champions: Popular Politicians in the Age of Reform, 1810–67*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021. Pp. 320. \$140.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.128

The first half of Britain's nineteenth century was an age of epic political battles. In the waging and recounting of epic battles, we humans seem to require heroes. Consequently, these decades produced political heroes aplenty: William Cobbett raising his fist and taking up his pen against a corrupt political oligarchy—"the Thing"; Daniel O'Connell, "the Great Dan," rallying the mass of Irish Catholics to challenge first their political exclusion and then the Union itself; Richard Cobden championing the "People's Bread" against the landed interest. In *Celebrities, Heroes and Champions: Popular Politicians in the Age of Reform, 1810–67*, Simon Morgan provides a better understanding of the political culture of these decades by giving us the first extensive account of how political heroism and celebrity was constructed, deployed, and contested.

Morgan makes and sustains five convincing arguments over the course of this highly readable and entertaining book. His first argument is that at a time when the parliamentary electorate was still quite narrow, popular political leaders represented and indeed almost embodied serious political ideas that garnered broad and deep support and emotional attachment to those ideas. His second argument is that political heroism could and often did extend into an even broader celebrity, chiefly through various media of cultural transmission—illustrated newspapers, Staffordshire figurines, early and mass-circulating photographs, even branded commercial products (such as Henry "Orator" Hunt's Breakfast Powder and Matchless Blacking). Morgan's third point is that while these various forms of transmission often reinforced the image of a self-styled people's champion they could also subvert or at least dilute that image by opening it up to alternative meanings and uses. His fourth argument is that the public sphere through which notions of political heroism and celebrity circulated was a compound of the local (Chartism's particular appeal in Manchester and Leeds, antislavery's especially potent resonance in Edinburgh and Glasgow), the national (O'Connell's enormous influence particularly in Irish politics), and the international (as in the rapturous British receptions accorded to foreign celebrities as varied as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Giuseppe Garibaldi). Morgan's fifth point is that personality politics had a transformative effect on Britain's wider political culture in several different ways. A narrow political elite needed to respond to people's champions in what Morgan memorably calls the "heroic age of British popular politics" (4), and it did so through means ranging from oppression and imprisonment to co-option and emulation. At the same time, the relentless stress on the personality of popular politicians could serve both as a useful adjunct to effective organization (as in how Cobden's bourgeois rectitude bolstered the Anti-Corn Law League) and as a source of division and a focus of wounding attack (as in how Feargus O'Connor's increasingly erratic personality did serious damage to the Chartist cause).

Historians already know a lot about the personality politics of this era from an exceptionally rich biographical literature and a long tradition of set-piece accounts of the battles that marked it—the forces of antislavery versus the planter interest, the forces of Free Trade versus the landed interest, the forces of radical political reform versus the political oligarchy. What is interesting, novel, and useful about Morgan’s account is that it provides a broader taxonomy of the politics of personality that provides a better understanding of the relationships between the pantheon of popular leaders and the different political contests with which they have been associated. And while in this way the whole of his book adds up to more than the sum of its parts, those parts conjure a vivid image of the human drama at the root of all politics—but a drama that is perhaps especially conspicuous in the political struggles of this “heroic age” (4). Thus Morgan memorably conjures the giant procession that marked Sir Francis Burdett’s victory in the Westminster election of 1807, with Burdett himself sitting atop a Corinthian column as he was pulled through the streets on an enormous carriage that also bore a statue of Britannia; the skill with which O’Connell and his advisors organized several of the biggest monster meetings in British political history, and the aplomb with which the “Liberator” played his role in them; and how Lajos Kossuth and Garibaldi became multimedia personalities in a Liberal England that could happily embrace even radical revolutionaries in its self-congratulatory efforts to contrast itself with continental despotism. On a humbler but no less interesting and colorful level, Morgan vividly conveys the pugilistic brio with which an Anti-Corn Law League agitator like James Acland took the battle to the heart of protectionist England and doggedly persisted even after being hit by a stone in Truro and thrown over the banister of the Bull Inn at Woodbridge. Here and elsewhere, Morgan drives home his broader points through the force of vivid anecdote.

Good books leave us wanting even more. The *more* here would be a broader consideration of how the political establishment forged its own politics of heroism and celebrity. Morgan’s book is almost solely about oppositional politics—at least until Palmerston started to cultivate a popular style and Gladstone perfected it in the 1860s. The heroic style in British politics was hitherto overwhelmingly oppositional, but it was never the sole property of radical reformers. Take, for instance, the cult of Pitt as “the pilot who weathered the storm” of the French Revolution, or the cult of Peel as the hero who split his party and sacrificed his premiership for the sake of Free Trade. It helped that both Pitt and Peel died prematurely. The conservative disinterestedness they embodied in life and even more in death held broad political appeal. But they could not be seen to appeal directly to a broad public out of doors for fear of compromising the authority of a Parliament selected by what they insisted was an appropriately narrow electorate. This awkward and sometimes paradoxical Tory attitude toward the politics of heroism is worth exploring at length. But that is a fit subject for another book.

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ANNA NEIMA. *Practical Utopia: The Many Lives of Dartington Hall*. Modern British Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp 340. \$99.99 (cloth).
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Anna Neima’s illuminative and deftly researched *Practical Utopia: The Many Lives of Dartington Hall*—a “small scale story about very big ideas” (4)—provides an informed and multifaceted window into the activities of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst at Dartington Hall in Devonshire, England, focusing on their efforts at community building and