

1914, the fear of invasion had led Britain to prioritize its key strength, that of its navy, on facilitating the expeditionary force's shoring up of France, and in protecting its own shores.

Morgan-Owen writes persuasively and is clearly a master of both his sources and the historiography. Thus, although the book is relatively short, at 233 pages, it certainly packs a punch. Where its strength really lies is Morgan-Owen's skill in communicating how complicated, and changeable, the picture is in this period. As any scholar of this period knows, geopolitical reality and popular sentiment and belief (often whipped up by far-from-disinterested public figures), were often at odds. Thus, it is not enough to simply dismiss fears as fantastical as, if acted upon, they had real and long-term effects. Moreover, *Fear of Invasion* ably shows the important complexities, and sometimes contradictions, within British decision making. By putting the Admiralty, the War Office General Staff, and the (only sporadically interested and often distracted) government of the day in the same frame, Morgan-Owen brings nuance to the discussion, convincingly placing home defense into debates about prewar defense planning.

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LYNDA NEAD. *The Tiger in the Smoke: Art and Culture in Post-War Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. Pp. 407. \$45.00 (cloth).
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With its intriguing title and sumptuous illustrations, Lynda Nead's latest book delves into cultural atmospheres alive in the decade and a half that followed the Second World War. As commentators quipped at the time, a visitor to Britain in the late 1940s or early 1950s could have been forgiven for thinking that Britain had lost the war; a gray depression seemed to hang in the air and cling to threadbare clothes. Nead pursues this and other cultural feelings by explaining how moods were articulated in the visual culture, journalism, and imaginative fictions of the day, and by locating material resources that linked these moods to specific social and cultural forces. Organized into three sections, the chapters in *The Tiger in the Smoke* capture a set of feelings that gather around fogs and ruins, connect to color and Commonwealth migration into Britain, and circulate in domestic interiors, animating a world of love and sex. If the book has an overriding theme, it is that these postwar atmospheres indicate how a gleamingly modern world of reconstruction never quite manages to shrug off the past: like a dense smog, the past leaks into the present, leaving grubby marks and obscuring vision. For *The Tiger in the Smoke*, the postwar modern is never fully born, never fully realized.

Nead draws evidence from assorted artifacts: movies and magazines, statements from slightly cranky pressure groups, advertisements and novels, color charts and dress patterns, Mass-Observation reports and radio shows. Her characteristic maneuver is to unfold a theme that on first flush might seem to be minor. For instance, in the chapter "An English Sunday Afternoon," she begins with the dragging ennui of a wet day. Such a setup initially feels ahistorical, as if the feeling described could pertain to any number of decades and social contexts. Yet the triumph of the book is Nead's flair for making vague atmospheres do surprisingly precise historical work. Not only was Sunday, with its dank moods, the setting of some of the best-known dramas of the immediate postwar period (such as John Osborne's 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*, or Alan Sillitoe's 1958 novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), it was also the topic for a sustained investigation by Mass-Observation, whose *Meet Yourself on Sunday* was published in 1949. At the same time, a pressure group

called the Lord's Day Observation Society, founded in 1831, became increasingly active as it campaigned to maintain Sunday as a respite from the creeping secularism and consumer culture that now threatened every aspect of British life. But in Nead's hands, the atmosphere of Sunday afternoon involves more than conflict between tradition and reform: it also constitutes a tonal range generated by a sexual division of labor that often made the work of Sunday fall wholly on the shoulders of women. Moreover, it includes touches of racial tension, as when the Lord's Day Observation Society complains about concessions granted to Jews "and other aliens" (290).

In her final chapter, Nead persuades readers that changing postwar attitudes and atmospheres can be vividly registered in something as seemingly insignificant as a shift from women wearing dressing gowns around the home to wearing housecoats. It is a subtle analysis and could be superficially understood as arguing that housecoats symbolized a new sense of the domestic interior as rational, modern, and technological. Yet Nead is doing something more sophisticated than trading in symbols of modernity. By the time we reach the dressing gown chapter, we have been sensitized to the way Nead's objects become laminated with layers of meanings and performances that render them not so much cultural symbols as nodes in a complex relay of habits, presentations, and values. In this way, the New Look housecoat does not straightforwardly symbolize the more equal companionate marriages that are emerging in the postwar period; rather, it takes its place as a crucial prop in developing a new amorous ecology and its characteristic moods. At the same time, of course, something is happening to the dressing gown, rendering it more dissolute, more disheveled. The cultural work that recasts these objects, re-moods them, is there in the fashion spreads, in the patterns for housecoats, in the films that offer a new fragility to the "woman in a dressing gown."

To treat atmospheres and moods as objects for historians seems both innovative and right; after all, the best histories do not just tell us what happened but give us a sense of how a period felt. But atmospheres and moods are elusive. With *The Tiger in the Smoke* we have a form of scholarship that renders the vague with rigor and precision, that tracks amorphous qualities with relentless inquisitiveness. It is a stunning example of what interdisciplinary research can accomplish.

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PAUL OCOBOCK. *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya*. New African Histories Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017. Pp. 356. \$34.95 (paper).
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Paul Ocobock's *An Uncertain Age* is a thoroughly researched, carefully considered study of the interrelationship between masculinity and generational status in colonial Africa. Ocobock positions the book as a series of "coming of age stories" that explain how ordinary and elite young males endeavored to become "men" in British-ruled Kenya. Arranged in chronological order, his chapters reexamine some of the most fundamental issues of Kenyan history—labor, education, urbanization, resistance—through the prism of the transition to adulthood. Ocobock's analysis of these central themes innovatively turns on the shifting and flexible meanings of male circumcision and initiation to manhood. In pre-conquest times, circumcision made East African boys into men as part of a series of customs and rituals that entailed both deference to and defiance of older generations. *An Uncertain Age* shows how the colonial regime, which Ocobock terms the "elder state," attempted to discipline young men by co-opting and