



As Plain notes, in comparison with World War I, the area of disability studies and World War II remains considerably under-researched in modern British history, barring a couple of notable exceptions. In its exploration of cultural representations of masculine disability that were offered to audiences in British cinema and literature, *Prosthetic Agency* harmonizes particularly well with Martin Francis's *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939–1945* (2008) and Julie Anderson's *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain: "Soul of a Nation"* (2011). Making a valuable contribution to the wider field of history of disability in modern Britain, Plain elegantly dissects representations of physical and mental disabilities, male violence, and dysfunction in sexual and romantic relationships in postwar storytelling to highlight acute contemporary anxieties about the long-term injurious effects of conflict upon individuals and society.

On the whole, *Prosthetic Agency* sits comfortably at the crossroads of modern social and cultural history and literature studies, although there are one or two slightly odd absences regarding its relationship with a flourishing generation of scholarship on Britain and World War II. Despite building effectively upon influential work within the historical field (namely Sonya Rose's *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945* [2003]; Francis's *The Flyer*), *Prosthetic Agency* might have connected to a greater extent with more recent scholarship that advances new understandings of multiple aspects of construction, performance and legacies of wartime civilian and military masculinities in Britain, such as Linsey Robb's *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture, 1939–1945* (2015) and Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson's *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War* (2018). Similarly, Plain's analysis of autobiographical narratives produced by flyers such as Simpson and his famous counterpart Richard Hillary (*The Last Enemy* [1942]), which detailed traumatic experiences of combat, injury, and disability, might have engaged with extant work on World War II military life-writing (Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (1997); Frances Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale: British Military Memoirs of the Second World War* (2019)).

Despite these minor quibbles, *Prosthetic Agency* offers much of cross-disciplinary interest and value to mid-century researchers. Opening up fresh avenues of enquiry into gender, disability studies, and postwar British culture and society, Plain's new book will undoubtedly be widely read and enjoyed.

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Elain Price. *Broadcasting for Wales: The Early Years of S4C*

Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022. Pp. 328. \$25.00 (paper).

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The creation of the television channel Sianel Pedwar Cymu (S4C) has an iconic status in Welsh folklore. After winning the 1979 general election, the new Conservative government went back on its commitment to create a Welsh-language television channel. This led Gwynfor Evans, then president of Plaid Cymru, to threaten a hunger strike unless the

government relented. His threat, and the belief that he was willing to die over the issue, was instrumental in forcing a rethink. S4C began broadcasting in 1982 and Evans' intervention came to be seen as a rare Welsh victory against Thatcherism and compensation for the failure of the 1979 referendum to create a Welsh Assembly.

Price's book is not an account of that story but rather an analysis of what happened next. In a monograph that was first published in Welsh, Price reviews the first four years of the channel's life, a period that was officially a trial, with S4C's fate to be decided by the government at its end. As things turned out, the review was something of a formality and the government proved both positive and generous in the support it offered the channel. This is a reminder of the importance of not following the common caricature of Thatcher's governments as anti-Welsh in everything they did.

Price uses organizational archives and oral history to explore the significant challenges involved in setting up the new television channel. Money was inevitably an issue but so too was the relatively small number of Welsh-speaking actors and production staff. Equity, the actors' union, was opposed to the use of amateur non-union staff and there were concerns about the quality of acting broadcast and the same faces being seen in multiple productions.

Although the channel was perceived to be crucial to the future of Welsh, it needed to find an identity that transcended the question of language. Trying to appeal to all different segments of the Welsh-speaking community was never going to be easy. There were tensions over what kind of programs should be made and what kind of Welsh should be used. Some complained that the Welsh broadcast could be slovenly; others found it too formal and removed from their dialect. The channel's novelty factor initially won large audiences, but these tailed off with many viewers more interested in what programs were about rather than the language they were in. As Price argues, it was never going to be possible to please all of the audience, all of the time. Indeed, since the target audience was itself a minority community, the channel had "to come to terms with the fact that only a small number of viewers would actually watch" its content (p. 128).

Price emphasizes the importance of individual managers and administrators, and their ability to forge relationships, as being important to the channel's success. Friendships between senior members of S4C, the BBC, and Channel 4 all helped bring about cooperation that was fundamental to helping the channel find its feet. S4C was broadcast in Wales instead of the new Channel 4 and good relations with those who ran the English channel were especially important. At first, S4C was supposed to broadcast twenty-two hours a week in Welsh but fifty hours in English. S4C was allowed to broadcast Channel 4 programs at no cost to itself and this enabled it to invest its limited resources in Welsh-language programming instead. But the most popular Channel 4 programs were not broadcast in Wales at the primetime slots they had in England, a cause of some complaint to Welsh viewers. This was made worse by the protrusion of Channel 4 advertising into Wales, causing confusion among audiences about when programs would be on. S4C was particularly sensitive to such complaints because a major reason for its creation in the first place was to try to minimize the antagonism the language could attract when programs in it were shown on English-language channels, as had happened before 1982.

Scholarship about contemporary Wales can often suffer from the country's smallness; to criticize is to potentially alienate patrons and allies who might be known personally to an author. Welsh political discourse similarly suffers from a lack of critical engagement because of how integrated government, media, and academia all are. The emotional importance of S4C in Welsh culture meant there was a particular danger here that the book might not be as critical as it should be. Its focus on the organization rather than content of S4C does mean some of its poor programming escapes attention, but this is not in any way a book of hagiography or one that is uncritical. In particular, the lack of attention the channel paid to Welsh learners is criticized and Price concludes the channel "adopted a very narrow definition of Welsh speakers in its early years" (p. 137). Although the implications of this are

beyond the scope of Price's book, the Welsh language community still suffers from how some speakers feel excluded from it.

The likely audience for this book is probably quite select, but it is an excellent example of how an organizational history can be clear, lively, and connected to wider issues. As Price shows, S4C's best programs, notably SuperTed, found an international audience and the channel changed the broadcasting landscape in Wales, not least through encouraging the development of a vibrant independent production industry. S4C has not always enjoyed a comfortable history, but it continues to adapt and evolve, and its longevity and popularity are an inspiration to other minority channels. Moreover, the channel remains a key part of Welsh culture and no history of media in the UK or Wales in general should ignore this fine book about its founding years.

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Kathy Alexis Psomiades. *Primitive Marriage: Victorian Anthropology, the Novel, and Sexual Modernity*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 256. \$85.00 (cloth).

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The Victorians, as Kathy Alexis Psomiades demonstrates in *Primitive Marriage: Victorian Anthropology, the Novel, and Sexual Modernity*, not only “made sex contractual” but also made “contract sexual” (89). In this book, Psomiades offers a much-needed reexamination of Michel Foucault's claims that sexuality organized modernity by presenting the trajectory of Victorian anthropology as a mediation of the marriage plot. Victorian anthropology increasingly placed sexual choice at the core of political organization. In mid-nineteenth-century Britain—a context in which fictional form was a major channel of ideas—marriage was beginning to be understood anthropologically and historically. Anthropology served less to manage anxiety about sex—a familiar framing of Victorian scientific narratives—than to denaturalize it. Victorian anthropology increasingly temporalized traditional marriage and family structures, which now looked culturally and biologically contingent, while making contemporary women's sexuality an engine of modernization. This book, drawing its title from anthropologist John McLennan's *Primitive Marriage* (1865), demonstrates that if the nineteenth-century novel was already “all about feminine choice, ... and how these choices defined bourgeois women as worthy subjects,” “anthropology magnified this choice” (78) as the origin of liberal political organization. This newly central understanding of sexual desire allowed theorists of political life to reframe collective belonging as the development of voluntary association and consent out of a more “primitive,” rapacious era of violent capture.

Psomiades presents anthropology's logic as pivoting on sexual difference rather than racial otherness, a framing that centers around post-Matrimonial Causes Act, post-Reform Bill questions about the status of women as economic, political, desiring agents, which seemed to precipitate anthropology's investment in “the archaic nature of heterosexuality” (41): Psomiades argues, “in a culture of gender-neutral contractual actors, married women stand out as those