

relationship to the Egyptian mummy and British colonial control of Ireland. Even more thought-provokingly, Fox delves back into the previous chapter's consideration of the Celtic revival movement to argue that Stoker offers a cautionary tale about the problems of building a modern Irish identity from ancient myths. Reading "against the grain" (177) of Stoker's story about the reanimation of Queen Tera, Fox interprets it as a critique of Irish revivalism.

The study concludes, entertainingly, with an epilogue that examines recent reimaginings of nineteenth-century novels. Monster mash-ups like *Mansfield Park and Mummies*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and *Jane Slayre* reanimate old works in surprising ways and exemplify for Fox "resuscitative reading run amok" (224). Overall, *The Necromantics* brings together an unexpected mix of texts with illuminating results. Particularly welcome is the sustained attention given to Irish literature, as well as the decision to understand reanimation as more than just a Gothic trope. Henceforth, Fox's study will be necessary reading for anyone wishing to engage with the topic of reanimation, and it will also be of interest to scholars working on the individual texts that Fox so interestingly analyzes.

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MATTHEW GERTH. *Anti-Communism in Britain during the Early Cold War: A Very British Witch Hunt*. New Historical Perspectives. London: University of London Press, 2023. Pp. 276. £90.00 (cloth).
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The specter of McCarthyism still haunts the United States, a perverse reflection of the communist thought crime it pertained to oppose. In Britain, the "witch hunt" never quite reached the same pitch of absurdity, but fear of communism—and measures to quell such fears—permeated the halls of power. Labour, perhaps more than the Conservatives, feared communist influence and infiltration, sensitive to the *S* word that gave superficial similarity to the future visions envisaged in a social democratic west or a communist east. You could always find a red under the bed if you knew when and where to look.

Matthew Gerth leads us into the murky world of anti-communism. While the Soviet Union was a very real foe for the British government in the context of the Cold War (and decolonization), and while the Bolshevik mindset created in the travails of Russia exerted an influence in Britain (as elsewhere), the *politics* of anti-communism often revealed as much about the accuser as the accused. Strawmen and fantasy abounded; personal grudges were pursued; political expediency was never far from the fore. Gerth's thesis is that there was an overreaction to the communist threat in Britain; that anti-communism was not always the product of good faith; that encouragement came from the United States but that the application of—and response to—anti-communism in Britain was somewhat different to what was occurring across the Atlantic. Class and demographics provide reasons for this, ensuring anti-communism lacked any bottom-up (grassroots) momentum in Britain, while the state proved unwilling (or too slow) to pry into the Establishment circles where treachery was indeed manifest.


Though not revelatory, Gerth's argument is persuasive and built on a swathe of archival research. As well as a check list of key archives, copious newspapers have been consulted and personal papers mined. His research challenges the idea that Britain somehow retained a sense of moderation in comparison with the US, revealing choice examples of language, plans and imagined scenarios that demonstrate repressive contingencies and hyperbole were very much part of the story. Equally, the book seeks to do more than simply frame British

anti-communism as an indigenous version of McCarthyism. In other words, judging British anti-communism in relation to McCarthyism is not really very helpful. Better to examine the subject in itself, to demonstrate how anti-communism was expressed and fed into policy, rhetoric and party-political dynamics. A holistic account is how Gerth describes his method and approach, considering how different processes and impetuses coalesced to forge a loose consensus of what was being opposed and why.

The core of the book is built on chapters examining the Labour Party, Conservative Party and trade union movement. In each case, the extent and limitations of their efforts to offset communist influence are dissected; the point and purpose of their respective anti-communisms explored in relation to questions of power and perception. Put crudely, Labour and the trade unions remained as—if not more—concerned with communists in their own ranks as they did with any tangible Soviet threat. By contrast, the Conservatives focused attention mainly on communists abroad—though red baiting remained a hobby and a useful means to slur political opponents. In both cases, vetting and organizational procedure were chosen over populist appeal and/or obvious repression. Communism, from either side of the party-political divide in Britain, was recognized as a conspiracy rather than a movement for social change; more cult than political culture.

More intriguing are the chapters on pressure groups and key individuals. The dedication of the Tory MP Waldron Smithers and the erstwhile diplomat Lord Vansittart to imitate US methods and approaches are shown to have had an impact, even if no formal House of Un-British Activities Committee was established. Though their understanding of Soviet communism (let alone Marxism) was wholly erroneous, their ideas infused the public discourse and provoked responses. Not dissimilarly, anti-communist pressure groups emerged that tended to use communism as a catch-all term to embody a range of fears and insecurities. Quasi-religious justifications were often raised, though self- or class-interest were typically visible beneath the veneer of spiritual concern. That organizations such as the Moral Rearmament Movement, Common Cause and the Economic League found support from across the political divide gives substance to the notion that something akin to British McCarthyism was readily apparent, especially as each were defined by a desire to strengthen Anglo-American relations. Yet such pressure groups remain only a part of the story, used opportunistically by politicians as needs required.

Overall, Gerth adds depth and detail to our understanding of post-war politics. He makes the case for disingenuity and willful ignorance being an embedded part of the British polity. He also demonstrates how anti-communism was both a cause and a political tool that bore repeated use after 1945. That British anti-communism was preferred to take effect surreptitiously rather than in the glare of a show trial is hardly testament to British democracy, even if it did avoid a spectacle so crude that it might itself be thought of as decidedly un-British.

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LLOYD (MEADHBH) HOUSTON. *Irish Modernism and the Politics of Sexual Health*. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 316. \$100.00 (cloth).
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Lloyd (Meadhbh) Houston's excellent *Irish Modernism and the Politics of Sexual Health* is an important contribution to scholarship on modernism, the Irish literary revival, and twentieth-century Irish politics and culture, enlarging and complicating ideas about how Irish