

with his own three unhappy marriages and failure to achieve any higher office than lord lieutenant of Cheshire. Westminster told his sister and about her husband's sexual tastes and convinced her to begin divorce proceedings. He tried to persuade Beauchamp's children to give evidence against their father, but they stood by him. In the end Westminster only agreed not to insist on a prosecution for gross indecency on condition that Beauchamp resign all his public positions and leave the country. As a result, public scandal was avoided, but the Earl spent several years abroad in a peripatetic existence, hoping that the threat of arrest would be lifted. When this did happen in 1937, he struggled to settle in Britain again, finding himself ostracised from high society. He died on a visit to New York in 1938.

Although the story of Beauchamp's disgrace has been often told, in studies of Evelyn Waugh, or aristocratic life between the wars, or of homosexuality, his political career has been neglected, even though he was close to the centre of British political life during an important period in British (and Liberal) history. It is true that he was closer to having greatness thrust upon him than to achieving it, but other lesser lights of Liberalism from the first half of the twentieth century, such as Sydney Buxton, Charles Masterman and John Burns, have all attracted the attention of

at least one biographer. Beauchamp is a subject worthy of a proper biography.

So the appearance of this volume ought to be good news for anyone with an interest in Liberal history during this period. But, sadly, although Mr Raina is a historian with an impressive list of publications to his name and links to Oxford University, he has produced a distinctly odd book. It reads not so much as a narrative biography than as a collection of documents: letters, texts of speeches, records of official events and suchlike. This might not matter, but for the eccentric choice of material. For example, we are offered twenty pages on Beauchamp's installation as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, but the events from the 1909 People's Budget through to the passage of the Parliament Act in 1911 are dealt with in a cursory few pages. There is little attempt at analysis or explanation of Beauchamp's personality, opinions and motivations, merely a rather dry chronicle of his public life in which the trivial is given equal weight to the genuinely important. While there are a few curiosities along the way one sadly has to conclude that while the life and career of the seventh Earl Beauchamp should furnish enough material for a good and readable biography, this volume is not it.

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cupidity or desperation when scientific knowledge was inadequate and there was no consensus on practical solutions or who would take responsibility for them? Local authorities had only their own limited experience to help them differentiate the quack from the genius.

Parts of the public health story appear in school curricula or are retold in television documentaries. Joseph Bazalgette's magnificent London sewage system, still in use, John Snow's tracking down the cause of a cholera outbreak, Edwin Chadwick's famous report, and infamous personality, show us public officials as heroes, a designation rarely bestowed on their trade. But heroes are, almost by definition, exceptional. Securing the health of the growing urban masses was beyond the capacity of a few heroes. It required systems, which could be operated by the average manager, office worker and workman, and systems require governance. Naturally, governance brings us to politics.

Crook suggests that there were three approaches – the radical technocratic, the democratic radical, and the Whiggish-Liberal (pp. 34–52). The radical technocratic view is, to Crook, epitomised by Chadwick, who had, after all, been secretary to Bentham, the font of rational utilitarianism. The technocratic tendency was centralising, promoting the official and professional over the politician whether local or national. Increasingly the expert did know best, but the knowledge came from many trials and errors.

The democratic radical element was represented not only in the contribution made by activist local politicians such as Toulmin Smith or Joe Chamberlain but in the busy backbench MPs serving on committees and the lobbying of pressure groups such as the Ladies' National Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge or the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. They mobilised forces for change and guided them in practical directions.

Crook represents the more Whiggish position as that shared by the political elite, dominated by Whig ministers for much of the mid-Victorian period, who added a paternalising component to the more modernising Liberals. Their function was to reconcile the competing elements and to enforce necessary compromises, broadly along the lines that the centre provided the knowledge that the localities could utilise. Much

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## Doomed to live in towns

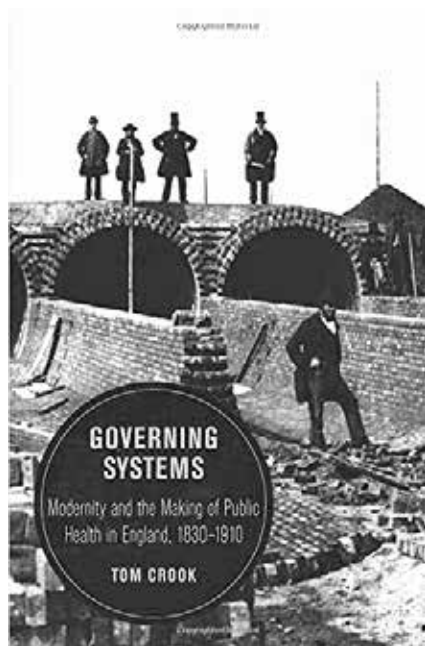
Tom Crook, *Governing Systems: Modernity and the Making of Public Health in England, 1830–1910* (University of California Press, 2016)

Review by **Tony Little**

**O**VER THE LATE eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain experienced what has since become commonplace – the transformation from a predominantly rural community enlivened by a scattering of market and harbour towns to a predominantly urban society. As the new technology of the Industrial Revolution transformed villages into cities, the commercial, financial and government bureaucracies required to support these factories intensified the demand for urban living. But the necessity to live in cities outran the

means of the municipal authorities to safeguard the health and safety of the new urban dwellers. Birmingham, Manchester, London and the other cities became death traps for too many of their inhabitants, the poorest of whom lived in appalling, overcrowded, insanitary conditions. Even the richest were subject to the deadly lottery of infectious diseases such as cholera.

Tom Crook's book analyses the responses to these novel problems. How were those 'doomed to live in towns', as a mid-Victorian categorised them (p. 36), to be saved from their own



Victorian legislation was permissive rather than mandatory.

Curiously, Crook does not envisage a variety of Tory or Conservative approaches, though one could postulate a Tory paternalism to match the Whig, as exemplified by Richard Cross, whose housing and factory legislation was as effective as that proposed by the Liberal elite, and by Conservative local authorities forced to compete with their Liberal rivals. Of course, on the Tory side one must also place the obstructive power of ratepayers who opposed the cost of government intervention and the true conservatives resisting any change.

Having set a political framework, Crook then turns away from the party battle to achieve health reforms, at the national and municipal level, to investigate what represents the modernising elements that by the Edwardian period had made towns and cities safe environments. The components he identifies we now take so much for granted that it is hard to believe that most of them were novelties to the Victorians and they made this reader reconsider what he had learnt of the Chadwicks and Chamberlains in a new light. The heroes might instigate or drive the implementation of health reforms, but they only succeeded through the supporting infrastructure and interactions between local and national systems.

The first of these necessary elements, explored through the operations of the General Register Office, is statistics. The collection of data on deaths, their analysis into death rates and their

publication by cause of death and by local area set up a complex dynamic for improvement. Analysis allowed for ranking from the best to the worst and publication facilitated investigation and involvement – campaigning by individuals and groups. Best practice could be identified and adopted.

Bureaucracy is explored through the role of the sanitary inspector. As part of the legislative wave that followed the 1832 Reform Act, many government departments expanded. More law required more clerks, or bureaucrats, but effective intervention required, as the military jargon now has it, ‘boots on the ground’: inspectors for factories, inspectors for food standards, and sanitary inspectors. Sanitary inspectors – or, as they were initially known, inspectors of nuisances – were initially authorised in the 1847 Town Improvement Clauses Act but, as for most Victorian legislation, the development of this clipboard army depended on local initiative and in particular that of the leading cities with rural areas lagging behind. The haphazard development of functions and powers eventually required systematic tidying up by central government and, perhaps more importantly, the development of professional bodies and professional standards.

Inspectors had powers of entry and powers to issue notices requiring improvement supported by court action. While there were never enough inspectors to compel adherence to high standards, the possibility of inspection and the threat of notices to stop work did much to raise standards. Significantly, inspectors acquired powers to enter both commercial establishments and private houses, utilising personal intervention and moral suasion for improvement as well as ticking the forms. Obviously, an inspector’s visits were not regarded with unalloyed joy and examples are given of the obstructions placed in their paths. These ranged from the conflicts of interest between businessmen and councillors and the inspectors of their businesses to conflicts of opinion between inspectors.

The separation of sewage from other parts of the water system is taken so much for granted that it is something of a shock to realise how much of today’s technology is the result of trial and error and conflict between competing systems. A well-illustrated chapter, one of Crook’s best, tastefully entitled ‘Matter

in its Right Place’, deals with these scientific and engineering developments, ranging from the different types of toilet in the home through the optimum choice of piping to final effluent processing. He uses it to explore the role of the entrepreneur as well as the administrator and the necessity for technological as well as administrative systems.

Two chapters deal with the related topics of personal hygiene and stamping out infectious diseases. Preventing the spread of infectious diseases had to be achieved independently of any scientific knowledge of their causes and the mechanisms for transmission. Such ignorance obviously enhanced the chances of mistakes and made convincing people of their own best interest harder when it involved any personal inconvenience. State interference was seen as a loss of individual liberty and yet, by a series of fits and starts, appropriate hygiene, hospital, port and isolation techniques were developed and in time germ theory overcame that of miasma.

The concluding section of the book situates itself in relation to a number of theoretical considerations such as modernity, system and contingency. If the development of better public health is to be properly understood, we need to move beyond the myths of the heroic pioneers and, while Crook describes his work as anti-heroic, he is perhaps unfair to himself. He does not set out to denigrate the best-known workers in the field but presents the case for acknowledging the tools and methods with which politicians and bureaucrats are compelled to operate and the ways in which such complexity makes progress uneven in any society claiming to be Liberal.

Crook’s book is not a work of straightforward political narrative but rather a well worthwhile exploration of the components of pragmatic systems through which politicians advanced and stumbled towards healthy urban living. His story is not of a steady triumphant progress of ever more effective state intervention but a more subtle and interesting investigation of the negotiations between citizens, politicians, bureaucrats and technicians. Since much political history deals with the conflict between cabinet ministers, it is vital occasionally to be reminded of the systems on which they rely for the implementation of their grand projects.

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*Speeches*. He contributed to *Mothers of Liberty* and *Peace Reform and Liberation*.

## The rivals

Dick Leonard and Mark Garnett, *Titans: Fox Vs. Pitt* (IB Tauris, 2019)

Review by **Andrew C. Thompson**

THE POLITICAL RIVALRY between William Pitt the younger and Charles James Fox was legendary at the time and the ongoing ramifications of that rivalry continue to affect politics even into the present day. In the early nineteenth century, as political parties in something approaching their modern form began to emerge, clubs named after these erstwhile antagonists sprang up in towns around the country, aiding the formation of the Whig and Tory parties. Indeed, in Cambridge a Pitt Club still exists, although its function is now much more social than political, and the ground floor of its clubhouse is rented to a branch of a well-known pizza restaurant.

Both Pitt and Fox, as the authors of this new dual biography note, have attracted considerable attention from historians and biographers in the intervening period. Yet, while such important political practitioners as Russell, Rosebery and William Hague have written about one or other of them, writing about their parallel lives has been less common. This volume seeks to give equal attention to each of them, sometimes through telling their stories in separate chapters and sometimes through focusing on their interactions, as the unfolding narrative dictates. One of the authors has written more about the politics of the Foxite tradition and the other of the Pittite (although in the much more recent past) and the idea is that this twin perspective allows for a greater degree of balance in the assessment of these parallel lives than has sometimes been the case in works that have often approached the hagiographic.

The parallel lives approach also allows the opportunity to consider properly some of the shared features of the careers of Pitt and Fox and draw attention to their similarities. Both came from families who had been involved in high-level politics for some time. Their fathers had been rivals, and occasional allies, during the tempestuous politics of the 1750s.

Both had a serious interest in the inheritance of the classical world and modelled their oratory on its best exempla. Both were interested in parliamentary reform and engaged with some of the ideas put forward by Edmund Burke to mitigate some of the worst excesses of the unreformed British constitution. Likewise, both expressed a degree of enthusiasm for the abolition of the slave trade, although Fox was ultimately more central than Pitt in pushing the legislation that led to abolition in 1807. Both also devoted their considerable reserves of mental and physical energy to the business of politics and their overall health suffered as a result – the impact of poor health on the careers of many politicians before the advent of modern medicine is often underappreciated.

The authors are particularly good at recreating the parliamentary dynamics of the contest between Pitt and Fox. They give a good impression of the ways in which they each used rather different techniques to get their respective messages across. Fox could be more brilliantly eloquent and able, for much of his career, to make emotional and persuasive speeches, regardless of his activities on the previous evening. Pitt, by contrast, was more forensic in his approach. He was able to weather the Foxite onslaught and, over time, incrementally won MPs over to his point of view. Two of the best examples of their contrasting oratorical styles are included in the appendices – Pitt's 1783 dissection of the formation of the Fox–North coalition and Fox's 1806 speech against the slave trade.

The narrative flows easily and some of the more complicated and confusing episodes of the period, such as the ministerial instability from the defeat at Yorktown in 1781 until the formation of Pitt's first ministry in late 1783, are well explained. The reader gains a good sense of the wider cast of characters involved in the politics of the period, as well as of the continuing importance of familial

connections and sociability. Fox was operating within an aristocratic Whig milieu, while Pitt's friends from his time at Cambridge remained important throughout his political career.

As the authors acknowledge, historians have disagreed considerably about several important aspects of Pitt and Fox's careers. The tone here is one that is generally more sympathetic to the view that Fox was the victim of royal prejudice, forced from office by unconstitutional actions on George III's part in 1783 and kept out for the next two decades because of the king's antipathy towards him. While the conclusion acknowledges that Fox was not without character flaws, it fails to draw the connection between subsequent efforts to memorialise Fox (and indeed Pitt) and the ways in which subsequent generations of historians viewed them. We know that Fox became a hero for nineteenth-century Liberals and that later Conservatives placed great importance on Pitt as their ideological and political forebear. This book has a tendency to assume that the divisions between Whigs and Tories that were central to nineteenth-century politics and the emergence of a two-party system were already readily apparent, even if not to such an extent, in the second half of the eighteenth century. In this it goes against the broad historiographical consensus that argues that Toryism disappeared as an effective political and parliamentary force at some point in the middle of the eighteenth century, only to re-emerge with the same name but arguably different central ideological concerns in the early nineteenth century. Thus,

