LEFT HISTORY
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Historical Inquiry and Debate
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EDITORIAL NOTE

The production of this issue was delayed by a long and difficult strike by the graduate students and contract faculty at the journal’s host institution, York University. This strike, which closely affected everyone involved with the production of Left History, raised hard and divisive questions about the politics that surround academic life and labour, as well as the relationship between the university, the state, and the broader community. The relevance of publications like Left History, with its reputation for solid progressive scholarship and debate, became increasingly apparent in the midst of this conflict. While the editors make no apologies for standing in solidarity with the striking CUPE 3903 members, we appreciate the patience of our contributors and subscribers for any delays in the publication of this issue.

On that note, we would like to salute three of our editors who have recently handed over the reins of Left History. Ian Mosby, Jason Ellis, and Stephen Brooke have each devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to the journal over the past several years. Much of the credit for Left History’s continued status as a forum for dynamic academic debate is owed to their hard work and dedication. Their efforts are warmly appreciated by readers and contributors alike.
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Canada’s Cold War in Fur

Joan Sangster—Trent University

Intense battles within the trade union movement over ideology and strategy are an integral part of Canadian working-class history throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Those debates were often intertwined with the history of the left, a fractious category that included divergent groups of revolutionaries and reformists, social democrats, and communists, who might disagree vehemently with each other, while embracing a similar conviction that leftists should be involved in the labour movement. Undoubtedly, the most dramatic instance of intra-left struggle within the trade union movement occurred during the Cold War, as social democrats and their allies led a largely successful campaign to remove known and suspected communists—and the unions they led—from trade union centrals like the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL). The intense Cold War battles fought roughly between 1946 and 1956, however, had deep roots in the interwar period, and they also had repercussions for labour long after ‘communist’ unions had been expelled from the TLC and CCL.

This article explores one as yet undocumented Cold War battle fought within the Canadian International Fur and Leather Workers Union (IFLWU), with a particular focus on the Toronto labour scene. Canada’s Cold War in fur was shaped by international union politics, fierce ideological differences, state policies on both sides of the 49th parallel, and the ethnic contours of the workforce. While the general parameters of the Cold War battle within the fur industry were similar across the country, Toronto was distinct: dual unions existed in the city from the late 1930s to the 1950s, the Toronto divisions were particularly sharp and violent, and the anti-communist Toronto union played a significant role in the Cold War merger of fur workers into the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workman Union (AMC) in 1955.1

How Cold War politics unfolded in fur had much in common with other anti-communist union battles: these were largely leadership rather than rank and file battles, and ideological differences were not honestly debated but instead became caricatured hyperboles. At the same time, the fur conflict was distinct because of its nationalist angle and its ensuing consequences. Unlike the electrical workers, there were not two rival unions created in Canada, and unlike the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, fur workers did not man-
age to sustain an autonomous national presence in Canada. Nonetheless, the IFLWU battle encapsulated the tragic irony of the Cold War in labour quite well. Continually invoking democracy as their guide, anti-communist trade unionists knowingly abandoned democratic and just practices in order to achieve their political goals, though in the final analysis, communists too abandoned democratic union decisions for Communist Party priorities. Moreover, by targeting not only communists, but also those who refused to shun them, trade union leaders created a broader Cold War ‘chill’ within the labour movement, encouraging an atmosphere of conformity, unquestioning acceptance of Canadian foreign policy, and a suspicion of oppositional militancy from the rank and file.

Cold War Labour History

The Cold War within the labour movement was primarily a long-standing contest between communists, including members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC, and known after 1943 as the Labour Progressive Party, or LPP), and social democrats and liberal reformers, given strong leadership by the CCF-affiliated unionists. These divisions were obviously intertwined with broader international and North American Cold War politics. While Canada may not have witnessed the same public outings, imprisonments, and use of the electric chair as in the United States (US), Canadian communists were certainly persecuted, though often away from public view. As Reginald Whittaker and Gary Marcuse’s research shows, anti-communist purges permeated everything from the National Film Board to the civil service, peace, educational and reform organizations, and of course unions. The Cold War also shaped immigration policy, and thus the emerging workforce; potential immigrants with suspected communist tendencies were denied entry, yet in the aftermath of World War II, the state turned a blind eye to former fascists. The most critical Cold War opponents contend that the state manufactured scares, ignored civil rights, and used anti-communism as a means of crushing anti-capitalist and anti-NATO dissent. Finding a middle ground, Reginald Whittaker and Steve Hewitt conclude that there was indeed some security risk from the USSR, but that Canada’s ‘insecurity’ state purposely exaggerated this as a means of silencing dissent, and in the process, rode roughshod over the lives of those targeted.

Trade unions were central to the Cold War, and indeed, the Cold War was one element of the post-war Fordist accord between capital and the mainstream labour movement. Since communists and social democrats both saw influence within the house of labour as a sine qua non of their political success, unions became the site of intense internal political struggles. Scholars exploring the Cold War in Canadian working-class history initially focussed on internal trade union politics, and later widened their purview to other organizations, such as women’s trade union auxiliaries, consumer groups, and the peace movement. Very few Canadian authors examining the impact of the Cold War on labour suggest that
the purges were a “necessity”; more often, they contend that the long-term consequences were negative for the entire labour movement. Irving Abella’s 1973 study of the CCL remains an insightful analysis of labour’s Cold War. While he reproaches social democrats for their abandonment of “truth and justice” in their relentless campaign against communist unionists, he is also critical of Communist Party policies. New Left historians have also attempted to rewrite communist labour history in North America without the blinkers of Cold War ideology, often by focusing on local, single-issue, and rank and file organizing, seemingly less tainted by Comintern directives. While their sympathetic analyses of a wide range of communist organizing has contributed important new perspectives, there is a tendency, as Bryan Palmer points out in a recent review of the historiography, to simultaneously sidestep unpleasant questions about decisions coming from the centre, Party leadership, and Stalinism.

Most historians are in agreement that the Cold War in labour had repercussions far beyond the few unions deemed ‘communist.’ In the TLC, according to Whitaker and Marcuse, anti-communism was used to help the AFL successfully suppress nationalist claims for autonomous Canadian decision making, purging unionists who would “not toe the internationalist line.” Furthermore, independent socialist, even civil libertarian positions, became very difficult to sustain in this highly polarized atmosphere since all trade unionists who refused to join the anti-communist crusade were deemed equally suspect. When communists and their “sympathizers” were barred as delegates from TLC meetings, for example, those who expressed concern about this undemocratic practice were simply dismissed as naive—or worse, supporters—of revolutionaries who were “evil destroyers of democracy and freedom” and “saboteurs” to boot. The CCL campaign was similarly hyperbolic: their newspaper continually propagandized against communists, deemed to be “anti-Christian, godless, materialistic, disloyal, and a menace to democracy.”

Even though social democratic leaders were the predominant victors in these battles, McCarthyism could in turn be used against them by anti-socialist crusaders. In the final analysis, conclude Reginald Whitaker and Steve Hewitt, the CCF did much to support the Cold War, but “the Cold War did nothing for the CCF” as it suffered the fallout from anti-socialist campaigns waged in the name of anti-communism.

The state was not a neutral bystander in labour’s Cold War. While some appointed bodies like labour relations boards had to appear neutral, the state was sympathetic to anti-communist unionists; it offered ideological support, and in specific cases such as the Canadian Seamen’s Union or Maurice Duplessis’ Quebec government, it intervened to facilitate the removal of communists from the union movement. Imagined enemies of the state were not only trade unionists and leftists, but in the civil service they might also be homosexuals supposedly more likely to succumb to the insidious blackmail of foreign agents circulating in Ottawa. As Elaine Tyler May and John D’Emilio argued some time ago, the interconnec-
tions between the Cold War and gender, particularly the exaltation of heterosexuality and the heteronormative family, are quite significant." The question of gender is particularly important in union histories since some US feminist historians contend that we have exaggerated the conservatism of the Cold War period in women's labour history, when in fact the post-World War II era saw an increase in union equity campaigns on women's behalf. Lisa Kannenberg, in contrast, still maintains that the Cold War suppressed the unionization of women workers and stifled discussion of equality issues within the larger movement.

The Canadian Cold War in labour was distinct from that of the US: we did not contend with the same ‘race’ questions that enveloped organizing in the US South; a few communist-led unions survived here without the terror of a Taft-Hartley law; and, at least in the case of the fur workers, the communist issue in Canada was linked to nationalist debates about Canadian union autonomy from US union leadership. Nevertheless, we cannot extricate our history from that of the US, since anti-communist battles were played out within the intricate politics of international unions that were essentially under American leadership control. This was precisely the case for fur workers whose union, the International Fur and Leather Workers Union, came to its end during the Cold War.

**Interwar battles in fur**

Just as the insecurity state was rooted in a pre-Cold War past, so too was the inter-union and intra-union conflict that characterized the Cold War struggles in fur unions. Long before the iron curtain fell, antagonistic divisions existed in the trade union movement that reflected different conservative, liberal, social democratic and communist perspectives. To understand the vehemence of the Cold War in fur, it is necessary to look briefly at the nature of the industry and fur union politics during the interwar years.

Fur production was characterized by a high number of small workplaces: in 1949, for example, there were 642 manufacturers in the country, concentrated mainly in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montréal, and with a workforce that included a large number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Some local meetings and papers were in Yiddish, and the few remaining membership lists for Winnipeg indicate the geographical and social clustering of what was likely a strong Jewish union membership. This ethnic pattern was somewhat different in Montréal, where French Canadians also worked in the shops, and in Toronto, where non-Jewish and Jewish workers actually had different locals at one point, causing some tension, particularly since the Jewish workers saw their non-Jewish comrades as more conservative.

The work process within the industry was segregated more by gender than ethnicity: the skills required to create coats from pelts were primarily the preserve of men, apprenticed to learn the techniques of sorting, wetting and stretch-
ing, blocking, and then cutting the skins. Skilled male fur workers, remembers one former worker of the interwar period, were the “aristocrats” of the garment trade; Jewish parents were pleased when a young woman chose a “young man in fur” as her economic future seemed secure.21 In contrast, women worked as sewing machine operators, made linings, and did the finishing of the coat. As a minority of the fur workforce, their jobs were designated less skilled and were remunerated poorly, even when they shared the same operator work as men. In Canada, their share of these positions also decreased in the post-World War II period, in part due to the influx of many displaced male fur workers from Europe.24

From the 1920s to World War II, the significant numbers of politicized, left-wing Jewish immigrants working in fur provided a cadre of union activists, and despite the gendered division of labour, women shared similar concerns with male workers about the low wages, contracting out, seasonally long hours, and unhealthy working conditions (respiratory problems were prevalent) in the industry. Ontario’s Minimum Wage Board records indicate that female sewing machine operators often received “shockingly low” wages until employers, prodded by unions, were forced to comply with the law.25 In many respects, the organization of the fur industry was not unlike the garment trade, and there was some fluidity in their mutual leadership, as organizers like Muni Taub moved from positions in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to the Fur Workers Union.26

The fur industry posed substantial difficulties for union organizing, not only because of the prevalence of sub-contracting, the profusion of small workplaces, and the ease with which new businesses were set up, but also because many anti-union employers were ready to use injunctions, yellow dog contracts, dismissals of activists, and strikebreakers to maintain control of their factories.27 Although these employers might also be Eastern European Jews, their cultural affinity with their workers did not negate their inevitably divergent economic interests, and their fierce attempts to prevent unionization.28 In Winnipeg, to note only one example, the union was brought to its knees in the late 1930s after a year-long and difficult strike that involved hundreds of arrests when the notoriously anti-union Hurtig Furs successfully sued the union for over two thousand dollars in damages.29 Two of the most prominent Communist women organizing in fur, Pearl Wedro and Freda Goodin, emerged from Winnipeg battles in the 1930s only to find themselves respectively blacklisted and jailed after the strike’s end.30 From the 1920s on, Canadian organizing was also characterized by political struggles between social democratic (or anti-communist) and communist fur workers. Nowhere were these conflicts more acute than in Toronto. The original Toronto Fur Workers Union was chartered by the AFL/TLC in 1913 and after a strike in 1923, increased its presence in the industry. By 1926, after a significant strike in the US in which communists faced down a gangster element, Ben Gold and other communist leaders took control of the fur workers until they were

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removed by social democrats, with AFL aid, in the late 1920s. Given this social democratic coup, the Communist Party’s Third Period’s call for dual unions resonated well with American communist fur workers, though in Canada, inter-union battles persisted throughout the early 1930s. Nonetheless, the struggle for control of fur unions was always a cross-border affair, with American leadership contests and union battles inevitably shaping the Canadian scene.

The consequences of these schisms, and dual unions in general, are a matter of historical contention. These political battles did focus union energies on acrimonious competitions for leadership control and they sometimes resulted in attempts to decertify other locals rather than organize new ones—a situation that only aided employers. The fights between competing Jewish factions, argues Ruth Frager, may have also alienated other ‘non-aligned,’ non-Jewish workers. Fratricide in fur, however, was not only a consequence of the Communist Third Period of the early 1930s, as dual unions emerged in Toronto during the Popular Front of the late 1930s. Initiatives from the International office in New York, and the new Communist line of ‘uniting to fight fascism’ helped to push the two sides together under one union roof, and from 1935 to 1937, a brief period of harmony prevailed. The Toronto peace pact soon fell apart, and a breakaway fur workers union, led by social democrat Max Federman, was chartered directly under the AFL in 1938 (a relative rarity), with the blessing of AFL president, William Green.

No one was more important to the long history of the Cold War in fur than Max Federman. A Jewish Polish immigrant who immigrated to Canada at nineteen, Federman found work in the fur industry in 1920, and by the end of the decade, he had moved into the leadership of the social democratic fur faction in Toronto. His right-hand supporter was Harry Simon, a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant who arrived in Canada in 1921; by age nineteen, in 1928, he had been elected business agent of his fur local. Both were committed social democratic unionists; both were supporters of Poale Zion, or Labour Zionism, a group that advocated the “mobilization of the proletariat to a Zionist revival” intended to secure a homeland for Jews in Israel.

By the late 1930s, therefore, an AFL (social democratic) and CIO (communist) union in Toronto competed for members, territory, and over union property: the contest was intense, violent, and unrelenting. Though bitter personal hatreds emerged, we should not reduce the Cold War only to sectarian struggles and petty politics. Social democrats and communists did have different views on foreign policy, divergent understandings of socialism, and varied cultural-ethnic identities. Indeed, the case of fur reminds us to be wary of homogenizing any one ethnic group for divisions were intense within a cadre of Jewish unionists. While Federman saw religious practice, Jewish culture, and Zionist support for a Jewish homeland as interconnected, elements of identity, his Jewish communist opponents’ sense of ethnicity was based on a cultural, though definitely secular identi-
ty. They portrayed themselves as more ‘internationalist’ in orientation, interested in class solidarity rather than a Jewish national state. During the early 1930s, for instance, communists opposed Zionism, labelling it a fascist and capitalist enterprise and thus creating even more political animosity between the two left camps in fur. While communist opposition to the creation of a Jewish state was moderated after World War II, a lingering antipathy to Zionist organizations remained.6

During the thirties, remembered Al Hershkovitz, a communist fur organizer who subsequently left the Party in the late 1940s (becoming Federman’s assistant), there were “hot battles in the streets” for control of union territory.” Mirroring earlier patterns in the American fur industry, these struggles sometimes involved paid protectors or hired gangsters. In one confrontation, Federman’s supporters attacked the communists, taking baseball bats to a car and chasing opponents down Spadina Avenue. In the trial that followed in a Toronto court, it was ascertained that the “strong arm men” hired by Federman had criminal records, were not fur workers, and were promised cash in return for their services.63 Federman’s AFL union countered with its own accusations, claiming “Communist hoodlums” attacked a union meeting at a member’s house, “brutally” assaulting his wife. Both sides routinely charged the other with employing violent tactics, intimidating workers, collaborating with the bosses, and ignoring contracting out when it suited them. Given the incomplete historical records, it is difficult to assign blame to only one side, though it seems that only the social democrats were taken to court. One thing is certain: these battles took on a masculine air of bravado and bullying. While activist female fur workers were not shy about blocking workplace doors and physically intimidating scabs during strikes, they were usually absent from all-out union rumbles, and the prevalence of this violence undoubtedly played a role in marginalizing them from the leadership of the union.

As in the later Cold War, these struggles were waged most decisively at the upper levels by leaders who often chose to disregard workers’ interests. The brief attempt at unity fell apart because Max Federman and Harry Simon were charged by the US head office with fraud. While their self-appointed union committee cleared them, the international ILFWU (admittedly including their opponents) found them guilty and fired them. Federman claimed the charges were nothing but political retribution,69 and then managed to secure his own directly-chartered AFL local, creating dual unions in the city. Left to sort out the mess in fur, The Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC), with the aid of labour lawyer J.L. Cohen, investigated and concluded that the creation of fake worker entries had been made in the unemployment benefit account book, creating a secret fund then used by the Federman group, with the checks cashed by a local poolroom proprietor who testified that he got a few cents and promise of a job in the fur shops for one of his relatives.70 Federman admitted to some parts of the scheme but argued that the funds were used for organizing work in Montreal. Simon and
Federman cried “bogus trial,” but the Labour Council decided there was ample
evidence of guilt; even Al Hershokovitz, later Federman’s right hand man, claimed
in retrospect that he had been playing “hanky panky” with the books. The declaration of war in 1939 shifted the political terrain dramatically,
as the Communist Party’s defense of the Hitler-Stalin pact now put them on the
moral defensive. So too did the internment of communist union organizers like
the ILFWU’s Muni Taub. In a trade so heavily populated by Jews, excusing the
Hitler-Stalin pact was a political liability to say the least, though some committed
Stalinists like Taub defended it, even years later. The AFL union used the
Communists’ about face to full advantage, often appealing to both employers and
workers on the basis of Jewish fears of antisemitism. The communist union,
they claimed, had abandoned the fight against the Nazis; voting for Joe Salsberg,
said one of their pamphlets, endorsed by the Canadian Jewish Congress, was like
voting for Hitler or Goebbels. Most anti-communist propaganda never mentioned
gender, appealing to workers primarily on the basis of their loyalty as
Canadian citizens, or as Jews fighting anti-Semitism, but it is revealing that Pearl
Wedro was pilloried in terms that also mocked her appearance. Whoever appoint-
ed this “Stalinist fish wife” to a leadership position, asked the AFL union con-
temptuously, perhaps another small indication of the masculinist mindset that was
deepest ingrained in the union. The AFL union also threatened fur employers,
telling them not to sign any agreements with the CIO union as its leadership was
simply a “fifth column” of Stalinist agents supporting Nazism. Should they dis-
oblige, they would be exposed publicly as ‘traitors. When the USSR joined the war,
these attacks declined but the political antagonisms in fur simply festered for the
remaining war years.

The Cold War

For a fleeting moment, the IFLWU might have felt optimistic at the war’s end. Fur
workers used the wartime labour situation to organize more locals and obtain bet-
ter contracts, and with the aid of their union counsel, J.L. Cohen, the IFLWU util-
ized the regulatory powers of the War Labour Board to consolidate union gains.
Workers now enjoyed a 44 hour week, a week’s vacation, a closed union shop, and
contract clauses on the fair distribution of work. In Toronto and Winnipeg,
women’s union auxiliaries were founded; a short-lived publication of the CIO
union, The Beaver, was initiated; and there were new efforts to organzie tanneries.
American IFLWU president, Ben Gold, who was given to lecturing Canadian
unionists from time to time, urged the Toronto IFLWU organizer, communist
Fred Collins, to expand on these gains and beef up the union’s grass roots organ-
ization by bringing in “the leather workers, holding educational, classes, lectures
and concerts.” In Gold’s view, things could only improve in Toronto as the past
leadership had proven either “incompetent or dishonest.”
However, as the Cold War heated up, cooking the books seemed a lesser evil in comparison to the Soviet Union in the eyes of both the CCL and the American AFL leadership, who identified Max Federman as their key ally against communist trade unionism. The Canadian IFLWU was expelled from the CCL in 1950 on the pretext that they had criticized the CCL leadership on the issue of wage and price controls, but essentially because of its communist leadership. The general process of excising communists from the labour movement was similar across many unions. Propaganda in the union press often laid the groundwork for expulsions, and it was generally the leadership, rather than the rank and file, who initiated these expulsions, sometimes disguising their true ideological motives with other justifications. These were also complex cross-border affairs, characterized occasionally by antagonistic US-Canada union relations, but more predominantly by cooperation between anti-communist labour leaders. The nature of the industry and union did have some bearing on the process: unlike influential mass production unions like the UAW, where both communist and social democratic/liberal factions had considerable power, the ILFWU had no internal anti-communist opposition to nurture into the leadership, so expulsion was the quick and preferred option.

At precisely the moment the IFLWU was expelled, it had to cope with an industry in economic trouble as fur sales were in a slump after 1949. The ILFWU struggled on independently, though it also faced raiding attempts by the AFL fur union, hoping to expand into Winnipeg and Montreal—appealing to younger Montreal workers, claimed one IFLWU official with disgust, with a combination of anti-communism and “booze parties.” The AFL fur union tried to entice workers away from the IFLWU by stressing two issues: it claimed to be far superior at bargaining, (though there is not the evidence to support this), and it relentlessly pressed home a patriotic appeal: “we know that you are loyal Canadians and that you believe in the Canadian way of life. We don’t blame you for the swindles, sellouts...the espionage work for the Soviet Union.” Meanwhile, in the US, court cases launched against the international president, Ben Gold, an open Party member, were severely crippling the IFLWU. When Gold resigned, the new leadership considered a new home, though ironically, it was a change in Communist policy in the early 1950s, namely a new directive that union members try to find refuge in the “mainstream” of the labour movement, that also pushed the fur workers into a merger with the AMC. The result was the largest Cold War battle in the union yet.

The Canadian IFLWU District 10 was automatically expected to participate in the merger, even though the absence of a Taft-Hartley law here made their situation different. Ben Gold recognized this when he gently chided Canadians for not being brave enough in the face of McCarthyism: “we have been under fire all along...you have had it easier.” Yet in Montreal, the Canadian union faced similar state persecution. In 1954, Maurice Duplessis introduced legislation that essentially mimicked Taft-Hartley, decreeing that unions with communist officers would
be denied standing with the Labour Board—putting all IFLWU contracts in jeopardy. The IFLWU President, Robert Haddow, a Communist, and machinist by trade, feared this would mean the union’s “destruction,” in Quebec, and the Montreal IFLWU did become legally independent from the International as a defensive measure.

Still, Communist Party advice to abandon independent unions like the IFLWU was geared more towards the American situation, as the fear of intensified legal persecution, along with the impending AFL-CIO merger, shaped the decision to find a safe haven in the AFL-CIO. It did not really matter that the Canadian labour situation was somewhat different: the Canadian Party was of little concern to Soviet and Cominform advisors, the Canadian IFLWU was a mere 3500 members, and it was simply assumed that key trade union decisions were made at head offices in the US.

Since the AMC had recently been granted the jurisdictional rights to leather workers by the AFL, and was already raiding some IFLWU locals, a merger was seen as one way to preserve fur and leather worker locals. Confidential discussions began in the fall of 1954, before Ben Gold was completely ousted, led by the long-time ILFWU Vice-President, Abe Feinglass, who had left the Communist Party six years previously. A merger agreement was hammered out and presented in December 1954 to the AFL Executive Council, and in January to Canadian and American IFLWU representatives meeting in special convention. The convention document was purposely sugar coated: the merger was justified by the Fur Workers’ long-standing political commitment to “labor unity” and rationalized with claims that the autonomy, assets, and rights of locals would be respected. Union leaders told the delegates that signing anti-Communist affidavits and banning Ben Gold forever was a “weakness” in the pact to be sure, but not too great a price to pay for unity.

Selling the merger to fur workers was not initially difficult for Feinglass, and AMC leaders Patrick Gorman and Earl Jimerson were also solidly behind the deal—and why not, with the prospect of 70,000 new members, and substantial assets, including a 1.3 million resort property in upstate New York? Getting the AFL’s necessary approval, however, proved to be an uphill battle. The AMC presented the merger to the AFL as a “new and dynamic” strategy for combating communism: rather than expelling whole unions, leaving all these workers at the ideological mercy of their leaders, this merger would “amputate the tentacles of the Communist octopus” by integrating workers into the AMC where their loyalties would be “remolded.” Over the next six months, as AMC leaders appealed repeatedly to the AFL Executive Council to secure their approval, a pattern became clear: every time AFL President George Meany objected to the merger, claiming there were still communists in the IFLWU who were just looking for a devious way to hide in the AFL, the AMC revised the merger plans to provide more authoritarian, drastic guarantees of “de-communization.” They agreed that
any “communist” activity by members could lead to expulsion of the local, that communists were to be barred from future election, that the new AMC Fur Department would be under the close grip of the AMC Executive, and that expulsions could take place even without a trial. In turn, Feinglass and the AMC leaders pressed downward on all the IFLWU locals, expelling suspected communists and even going to the ridiculous length of banning any participation in the New York City May Day parades!

There is some evidence that these AMC leaders did not expect such strong AFL directives and grew disheartened by the ferocious extent of this witch hunt. Feinglass was rather dismayed when members were expelled for attending May Day demonstrations, while Gorman privately complained to some other union heads about the “tommyrot” of AFL hypocrisy on de-communization, and about the “evil influence” of ILGWU President David Dubinsky who had “wanted fur for himself,” and who was behind the AFL objections.40 In public, however, they joined the incessant calls for the elimination of all communists from the labour movement, they provided information to HUAC, and they cooperated with Meany’s special anti-communist envoy sent to keep an eye on them.41 Meany himself was under pressure from other AFL leaders who were skeptical that “surface changes” in the IFLWU would “eliminate” all the resident communists, whom they envisioned as “traitors to their fellow man, to their country, and to their God.”42 The AFL’s suspicions of the IFLWU were not surprising considering that communist newspapers on both sides of the border were actually in favour of the merger; in May of 1955, the Canadian Tribune extolled it as a “new era for labour.”43

When the merger was first announced in Canada, it was heartily endorsed by IFLWU District president Haddow. Max Federman, in contrast, headed for the AFL Executive Council meeting in Miami in February of 1955, to tell them that his AFL-chartered union resolutely opposed the merger as the IFLWU was controlled by communists, “a cancer” that he had battled for “35 years of his life”; he even claimed that Feinglass was still a communist in disguise.44 Accusations about Feinglass were treated with written guffaws by the AMC leaders: if he is a communist, they joked, he is the most “double crossing communist that ever existed” because, more than anyone else, he “de-communized” the union.45 Yet, a few months later, Federman headed south again to appear before the AFL in order to endorse the merger. Why did his tune suddenly change? He was promised a seat on the International Fur Department’s Council, and was essentially reassured that he would have the upper hand in the union, backed up by AMC leaders.46 Canadian anti-communist trade unionists realized they could finally eliminate their long-time foes through this merger—and how sweet revenge must have seemed to Federman and Simon especially. Federman was now so keen on the merger that he wanted his locals to affiliate immediately, but was held back until the final merger was accomplished.

Before this change of heart, Harry Simon had also objected to the merg-
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er, and to make his point that the IFLWU was controlled by communists, he sent the AMC leadership (and then on to the AFL) a list of eleven unacceptable leaders and staff members in the union. This blacklist now became the unchanging template for Canadian purges.\textsuperscript{49} Canadian Labour Congress President Claude Jodoin also intervened with similar intentions.\textsuperscript{50} The secret list operated much like McCarthy’s, including suspicious people as well as known Party members, and providing no real opportunity for people to defend themselves. Some on the list were open Party members, like Haddow, but others like Montreal business agent Charlotte Gauthier may have simply been unionists who agreed to work with communists. Unaware of the full extent of the blacklist, Canadian communist IFLWU leaders continued to support the merger through the spring of 1955, faithfully following the Party line. Without a Taft-Hartley Act, they surmised Canadians might escape signing non-communist affidavits. As Haddow told American leaders, Canadian unionists “expect to be governed by their own laws...resentment would result from the stigma of being governed” from abroad.\textsuperscript{51} AMC and AFL leaders, however, had a different view of the border. While the Canadian unionists usually equated the international divide with autonomy, American leaders tended to see the Canadian District 10 as just another district to be brought into line.

When AMC leaders came to Canada in the spring to sell the merger to the IFLWU, the latter continued to plea for “Canadian autonomy” and the “right to differ” over important issues. Haddow’s nationalistic speech to the group criticized the overbearing and more reactionary American state and reiterated District 10’s wish to sign on only if they could secure their “traditions...leadership and autonomy.” American leaders warned that Taft-Hartley might be the price to pay for the merger, and that this was something any “loyal citizen obeying the law” should have no qualms about. Americans speeches about \textit{loving} Canada likely scored few points, grating on the Canadians’ nerves: “I like Canada,” opined American leader Marvin Hook, “I like your country, although I have never yet had time to go fishing here.... We will put everything back that we take out. There is great potential here, a frontier of resources.” Probably more reassuring was Feinglass’ claim that the AMC did not intend to “dictate” to the Canadians; he also reminded them that dual, and duelling, unions were crippling Canadian organizing. AMC leaders were thus speaking two languages: a tough ‘take it or leave it’ rhetoric, and one which reassured by claiming that some vestiges of Canadian sovereignty might be salvaged.\textsuperscript{71} They had at least learned that the Canadian IFLWU was unlikely to appreciate the maladroitness assurance they offered to Harry Simon that they would insist on the new union being “thoroughly American” with strong “allegiance to the US [state].”\textsuperscript{72}

As the deadline for AFL approval approached, two groups in particular got cold feet: New York City (NYC) and Canadian District 10. The AMC was desperate to bring them into line, and it may have been easier to do in Canada than NYC where a larger, powerful fur council—Ben Gold’s power base—had histori-
ally controlled elections. As pressure mounted on Gorman to get tougher with communists, he was able to use the Canadians as an example of his anti-communist credentials. In a series of letters to well-known anti-communist activist Father Charles Rice (who opposed the merger since he believed the evil communists would simply hide underground in the union), Gorman assuaged his concerns when he wrote, “this week we will kick out about five in Canada...and as fast as we find them, out they go.” In fact, Gorman sometimes claimed that Canadian leaders were eliminated before they had actually resigned; some Canadians staffers were dispirited to hear from New York newspapers that they had been let go — a rather insulting way to receive a pink slip.

The Canadian District balked at the AMC’s renewed demands for leadership resignations, feeling “it is clear that the Amalgamated is willing to pay the price [for the merger] as long as the sacrifices are made by Canadians.” However, concessions were made: at a May meeting at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, Haddow sat with four US union leaders and watched as they dictated his resignation. Toronto organizer and communist Dewer Ferguson, in the midst of a unionization campaign at a local tannery, followed suit. Haddow publicly urged the IFLWU to proceed with the merger though he was permitted to “record the view that our officers were wrong in succumbing to a McCarthyite witch hunt” led by the AFL and TLC. Although other Canadian IFLWU leaders feared that the union could not withstand a “life and death” struggle with the AFL, talk of a Canadian secession movement began to circulate. Meaney was nonplussed when informed of the possibility: if this is the “sacrifice” we have to make for a successful merger in the US, he commented, we can always regain non-communist fur workers later.

After Haddow resigned, the Canadians were still under the impression that they could salvage some autonomy, but they were wrong. At its May meeting, the AFL again rejected the merger, and using Simon’s blacklist as their measure, demanded more purges, something Federman later celebrated as part of his contribution to union history. Canadian locals across the country now protested more assertively to the AMC; over the summer, their letters and telegrams of “burning resentment” flooded into the AMC Chicago office. Asserting that no more resignations would be accepted, they denounced the “beheading” of the Canadian district, and the violation of democratic rights: we need the right to “form our own policy in keeping with Canadian needs, to elect our own leaders, to differ when the national interest is involved,” wrote the Vancouver local.

To the AMC, these Canadian rumblings of discontent were irksome, but probably less worrisome than the US situation. In July, the AMC closed in: Feinglass came to Montreal, “took over the finances, stopped the subsidy, cut off funds, and put the remaining organization on the International’s payroll.” Hershkovitz, now working for Federman, tried to intercede on behalf of some of his former comrades but admitted he could do nothing to stop further purges:
Gorman, he reported, “regretted” the attacks but “Federman and Meany” would not rest until more leaders resigned. On 5 August, a few days before the next AFL Executive Council meeting, telegrams were sent to four more Canadians on the Harry Simon list, ordering them to resign. When they refused, their locals were put into receivership.

Six Canadian locals called an emergency convention on 20 August to consider seceding as an “autonomous” union. Fur workers and their leaders bitterly vented their anger: “We were prepared to make peace with Federman on honourable terms,” they wrote,

“...but he demanded the whole organization and Meany agreed.... “The merger was negotiated without our agreement, consent or consultation...we got fine speeches about democracy but broken promises. Leadership was removed without our consent, the district was destroyed ... from day one we were treated like colonials to be dictated to.”

Handing over the union to Federman, they charged, meant sweet deals with employers and future “intimidation from the US.” Memory of the battles of the thirties also weighed on their minds: Haddow’s hand written list of the pros and cons of unity with the AFL fur union had included the word “gangsterism” under the AFL-Federman column. Abe Feinglass appeared at the convention to nip the secession movement in the bud, but it was ultimately the Communists who did so. After the convention had vented its nationalist anger, voting for independence from the AMC, a committee of seven was set up to explore secession. Four of the IFLWU communist leaders on the committee capitulated, offering their resignations and accepting the merger terms.

As Communist Party pressure was clearly involved, Federman was contemptuous of this latest flip flop. Because of the Party’s endorsement of ‘mainstreaming’ as a union strategy, communist leaders in the IFLWU bowed to humiliating terms, the abandonment of free union elections, and a purge even Feinglass termed “ruthless.” By the time the AFL Executive met in October, at least two more on the Canadian list had been forced out. Satisfied that the AMC had thoroughly eliminated communist leaders in the IFLWU, the AFL approved the merger, though it was reassured that even more communists would be pushed out of the union in the future.

Dismissed Communist organizers like Muni Taub and Pearl Wedro found themselves unemployed and blacklisted. The merger did allow the Montreal local to safely reintegrate with the International, which it did in 1956. It is questionable, though, how much was gained for fur workers. In the US, argues Bert Cochran, the IFLWU benefited little from the merger, and might as well have continued as an independent. In Canada, other communist-led unions which had been expelled from the CCL did resist mainstreaming: the UE (United Electrical
Workers) with an independently-minded leadership refused to follow this advice, and the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers managed to survive as an independent Canadian entity for some time, despite raiding campaigns led by the United Steel Workers. It is difficult to say if the IFLWU, a much smaller union, would have survived as well, especially in the face of continuing raids and a declining industry. Certainly, once the IFLWU embraced mainstreaming as the only way forward, they were trapped in a merger that knew no end of leadership purges—though these were also related to the union’s lack of power within the international, and the existence of the anti-communist, Toronto-based dual union, which not only provided US leaders with a blacklist, but kept urging them to implement it. It was a rather ignominious end for the IFLWU, a union with a proud tradition of skill, militancy, and political activism.

Cold War Consequences

Nor was the Cold War in fur entirely over. Well into the mid 1960s, the social democrats and communists sparred within the fur section of the Amalgamated, though Federman was successful in keeping communists out of the Canadian leadership. Leadership control by communists was simply replaced by leadership control by social democrats, aided by the AMC head office which directed who could and could not run for office in Canada.” Wedro eventually found a factory job in Toronto, and once represented her local on the Toronto Fur Board. During elections, Federman and his leadership routinely put out leaflets denouncing “oppositionists” like Wedro in virulent anti-communist language, claiming they were also dangerous “splitters” who opposed the 1955 merger. Hershkovitz was occasionally targeted by anti-communists, but it was so clear that he had changed sides that these attacks came to nothing. Joe Salsberg also made a political comeback after 1956, speaking at fur worker educationalas. After denouncing the Communist Party, he was no longer equated with Hitler by social democratic fur leaders.

The persistence of anti-communism was well illustrated by the case of Bill Mitchell, who was purged as a Montreal business agent in 1955, but in 1956, left the Party. He wanted to run for election as business agent in 1957 but the AMC said no. He had to pass a stringent repentance test that included securing Meany’s blessing. It would take more than a routine ‘apologia’ letter to do this. Mitchell could not simply reject the Communist Party; he had to declare that he “regretted ever being a communist” and denounce all communist ideas, “everywhere.” Groveling in anti-communist mea culpas was the price to be paid, and Mitchell acquiesced. For communists who once devoted all their waking hours to these ideas, one wonders how they coped psychologically with being pressured to say their lives had been spent uselessly.

The continuing fear of communism was fanned after the merger by the Anti-Communist Fur Workers League, a small but vocal US-based group that lobb-
bied for more purges, claiming in their newspaper, *The Anti-Communist Fur Workers Voice*, that the union was not sufficiently “cleansed of the communist plague.” “You can’t get rid of an octopus by cutting off its arms,” they wrote, but only by removing “the head.” There were some indications that they had links to Max Federman. Both expressed continuing animosity towards Canadian fur organizer, Myer Kling, who moved to the US in the thirties to work for the IFLWU. Kling admitted to spending a few years in the Canadian Communist Party from 1929 to 1932, a confession that haunted him for decades. Referring to Kling as this “vermin, Stalinist hatchetman, alter boy of Ben Gold,” the paper claimed he was the “chief prosecutor against Federman....used to take [communist] control in Canada [in 1938].” If Federman had provided this information, he had mixed up his prosecutors. The Anti-Communist Fur Workers League continued to provide blacklists to the AMC, and they lobbied to have Kling deported to the Soviet Union where they stated he should meet the same Gulag fate as Soviet subversives.

The AMC leadership placated these anti-communist lobbyists, but privately, they seemed to tire of the witch hunt. They did not fire Kling and paid for his long legal battle against deportation; at his victory celebration in 1962, Gorman even criticized the witch hunt waged against him. Central to Gorman’s views on the Cold War was the concept of repentance, and it is interesting that the AMC’s anti-communist pledges were accompanied by a required statement of which church one belonged to. If former communists were sufficiently penitent in word and deed, they should be welcomed back into unions. Reintegration also became synonymous with American patriotism. As Gorman had written to Father Rice about the fur workers: we should “pray for them, we may not be able to make them Christians, but we can make them Americans”—surely a reference to the Jewish heritage of many workers.

By the 1970s, the ethnicity of fur workers in Canada altered as Greek and other European immigrants became the new work force in the fur industry. The legacy of the Cold War on the union, however, was still imprinted on the AMC; later merged into the United Food and Commercial Workers. Federman, who continued to lead the fur workers, argued at conventions during the 1950s and 1960s that the peace movement was suspect, and that there should be no “appeasement” of the Soviet Union. He still supported an anti-communist loyalty oath in the 1970s so that “no member of the Communist Party will ever hold union office again.” He remained committed to Zionism, using the fur union to advertize his Labour Zionist views. Israel, he argued, was the “hope of democracy” in the Middle East, positioned against “reactionary Arab forces.” The war in Viet Nam was also endorsed as a noble cause, a “crusade against communism.” Federman was not the only Cold Warrior in the labour movement; more broadly, some union leaders’ fervent endorsement of Cold War ideology helped to stifle critiques of American foreign policy, from the Marshall Plan through to the Viet Nam War, and it also acted as a more general ‘chill’ within the movement on any
left-wing dissent that, in their minds, bore a resemblance to communism.

**Gender and Ethnicity in Cold War Battles**

During this long Cold War in fur, the rival Canadian fur unions were united only once, in their joint effort in 1947 to rescue five hundred Europeans from displaced persons camps after the horror of the Holocaust. This effort purposely sought single male workers, and neither fur union fundamentally challenged the gendered division of labour and differential wages within the industry. Nor was there concern expressed in the 1950s as women disproportionately lost their jobs as the fur industry faltered. Although it may appear that the Cold War had the same consequences for male and female workers, a closer examination of new organizing and equity issues suggests that gender needs to be taken into account.

New organizing did not fall completely by the wayside after the ILFWU was expelled from the CCL; the union held their own, even as pariahs in the official union movement. Had it survived, the ILFWU had the potential to reach out to new immigrants, women, and non-Anglo/non-white workers as it was trying to extend its base in fur to new locals in tanneries, shoe making, and leather goods, small workplaces where women were a significant part of the labour force. In Vancouver, Pearl Wedro organized a string of shoe makers so small in size that she astutely secured a common agreement to protect all of them. In another leather goods workplace in southern Ontario, Wedro also tried to raise the issue of equal pay for women workers during the organizing effort. After the merger, there is little indication of continuing organizational fervour for such marginalized workers. Indeed, the AMC, which admitted it was literally ‘made’ with amalgamations, was now most interested in merging with the large United Packing House Workers of America. Nor can we discount the fact that fending off Cold War attacks took up inordinate union time and energy that might have been spent on new union organizing.

There was also renewed discussion after war’s end within the ILFWU of separate women’s committees, designed to train female union leaders and address issues of equal pay, maternity leave, retention of seniority rights on maternity leave, and special health protections for women’s work. Women’s committees (for workers) and women’s auxiliaries (for wives of workers) were originally to be organized jointly, but by 1950, it was suggested they work separately, sharing some projects such as International Women’s Day. Canadian organizers Pearl Wedro and Charlotte Gauthier were involved in the organization of the international women’s committee, with Gauthier serving as secretary. In Canada, with a smaller membership base, the union had more success setting up auxiliaries, designed, as one stated, “to help our men fight for better working conditions and better lives for our families.” Some were involved in respectable local philanthropy, but others addressed political issues, such as women workers’ right to collect UIC on the same basis as men, and the need for day nurseries.
The IFLWU’s efforts to address the specific needs of women workers may have been, in part, an attempt to secure the loyalty of a minority constituency in the union in difficult, anti-communist times, though the union agenda also mirrored a long-standing Communist political platform on women’s equality. One should not overemphasize a heartfelt commitment to women’s equality in a union that had been built on masculinist power structures. On hearing a resolution for more action on equality issues from the women’s committee in 1946, Gold paternalistically acknowledged this little “spanking,” from the women, and he asked that they add words of praise for the union’s good track record on women’s wages and status. Gender equality may have been more ‘convention talk’ than action, but the AMC was even less interested in women’s issues. There were no women organizers in the new AMC in Canada, though Gauthier, originally on the blacklist, was later re-hired as the business agent in Quebec, perhaps because of her language skills and disavowal of her earlier communist contacts. The union’s 1962 celebration of its history featured pictures of its all-male executive board. Nor were the specific needs of women workers, or issues like equal pay, discussed in the Fur Department section of the AMC paper, The Butcher Worker. Admittedly, assessing the impact of the Cold War on women fur workers inevitably involves conjecture about a series of ‘might’s. However, it is clear that women were transferred to a union without the same tradition of concern about the woman question, with a leadership in Canada that disdained democratic process in favour of political control—and the latter has proven to be key to women’s ability to have gender equity issues raised in unions.

Conclusion

Cold War battles within the North American labour movement were shaped both by common, broad influences, but also by historical, regional, and political specificities. Canada’s Cold War in fur was influenced by the ethnic complexion of the workplace, by the Canadian IFLWU’s place within the international union, by state policies (especially the US Taft-Hartley Act), and by the contending political visions of social democratic and communist politicians. These political contentions were grounded in a long history of conflict, ideological debates, and contests for power earlier in the early twentieth century, and they had an impact after McCarthyism had abated.

During the Cold War, TLC and CCL unionists became uncritical collaborators with both capital and the state in an anti-communist crusade that claimed to protect democracy for workers, while using undemocratic and authoritarian methods to do so. They beat the drums of xenophobia, dividing fellow workers into patriots or traitors, us and them, good and evil. Even if some unionists, like those in the AMC, were privately dismayed by the ferociousness and irrationality of the Cold War, they joined in the public denunciations and mouthed the same
rhetoric. This is not, however, to idealize Communist-led unions, which could also play fast and loose with democracy, reflecting the earlier Stalinization of communism.

The Canadian IFLWU managed to remain viable after its expulsion from the CCL, only to be pushed reluctantly into a merger five years later, in large part due to Communist party pressure. This is a cogent reminder that attention to international and national leadership, and Party decisions from the ‘centre’ can not be excised from our assessments of communist labour organizing. Party politics, Al Hershkowitz recalled when explaining his exit from the Party, too often trumped trade union organizing: “it was more important [for the Party] to get 5 Tribune subscribers than 5 cents more for the workers.”

The Cold War in fur was distinct from other Cold War union contests because of the extent to which the merger became wrapped up in questions of Canadian nationalism and autonomy within the international—read American—labour movement. In the original expulsions from the TLC, argue Whitaker and Marcuse, anti-communism was used to curb Canadian attempts to assert some political autonomy. In the case of the IFLWU, autonomy was clearly sacrificed to the overall anti-communist goals of the international union.

Still, however compelling the IFLWU’s aspirations for autonomy from Taft-Hartley were, the way in which nationalism was used in this struggle underscores its many faces: it was not, in itself, a positive force for it could be used by radicals, democrats, anti-communists, or in this case, rather cynically by the Communist Party.

National autonomy may have been the most visible issue at the time, but in retrospect, the merger also had consequences for women in the IFLWU. The merger of the IFLWU, with some concern for women’s equality, into the larger AMG, with almost no interest at all in these issues, meant that an opportunity to address gender equality in the trade union movement was lost. The ethnic contours of the IFLWU inter-union and intra-union conflict were more complex, and somewhat distinct, since the Cold War in fur was fought out between two competing ‘cultural-political’ factions within one ethnic group. The struggle for union ascendancy between Jewish social democrats and communists is generally interpreted by historians as a destructive contest, dividing workers from each other and inhibiting trade union organizing. While dual unions certainly had negative effects, we should not dismiss this contest as only narrow sectarianism. For both social democratic and communists during the long Cold War in fur, winning over members to new political ideas was perceived to be a potent means of moving the process of social transformation forward. Both sides held passionately to their beliefs, linking them to different visions of socialism. Both sides represented competing notions of Jewish cultural identity: one secular, stressing class and internationalism, believing in the success of the multicultural Soviet project, and one more religious and Zionist, calling for a Jewish state, and deeply suspicious of the Soviet project. Politics shaped the Communists’ union agenda, but also
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Federman’s, including his Labour Zionism, and the emphasis he placed on practical bargaining and respectable unionism rather than revolution. Given the current union movement’s contentious debates about Israel and Palestine, we should probably be sensitive to the importance of foreign policy issues to these earlier trade unionists, and also to their commitment to political issues, at home and abroad, that went beyond bread and butter unionism.

In the aftermath of the merger, the social democratic victors wrote the history of the union. Every historical speech, newspaper article, and anniversary program Max Federman created either omitted all communist leaders or grouped them under blanket denunciations of their nefarious actions. Any chance to recount the union history was another opportunity to celebrate the victory of anti-communists over communist “conspirators” who tried to ruin and “destroy” the union. In Federman’s historical writing, events also hinged on his important interventions in the Cold War, so much so that in the 1960s, when he offered to create a public history for the international, Feinglass and Gorman, rather irritated, rejected his offer.

Communists on the losing side created their own personal histories in which they remained loyal to their communist pasts without really questioning the Party. Pearl Wedro and Muni Taub struggled later to rationalize the Party’s decision of 1955, finding some good in it, even though they were both upset at the time, and Wedro was sympathetic to secession in 1955. Having invested their lives in the Party, they were unlikely to confront the fact that the union they built had been sacrificed to a merger of questionable worth. Taub later claimed in an oral history that the merger as a way to protect a “little union” within the “larger family of labour,” but lamented the “undemocratic trampling” of workers rights with the removal of elected leaders—like himself—who were not even allowed to run again.

The destructive impact of the Cold War stretched beyond specific union battles, and left an imprint on the broader labour movement, even after McCarthyism had waned. Two decades of Cold War rhetoric, in which communists and those who refused to denounce them were endlessly portrayed as a “fifth column of traitors” had a dampening effect on left-wing dissent more generally. By labeling opponents traitors, spies, and saboteurs, trade union leaders were attempting to quell a fractious opposition, but this also became a much broader disciplining project that stifled rank and file dissent and genuine debate. In the current era, when Cold War-like fears are again prevalent, the need to make ample room for all forms of dissent, not giving in to a politics of fear, may be one lesson of the earlier Cold War in fur.

NOTES


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10 Nor is Stalinism simply defined as ‘Moscow control.’ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” American Communist History 2, no. 2 (2003): 139-73.

11 Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada, 341.


15 Whitaker and Hewitt, Canada and the Cold War, 43.


21 Cornell University (CU), Keel Centre for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives (Keel), International Fur and Leather Workers Union Papers (IFLWU), Box 25, Folder 29, Winnipeg Fur Workers Local 91 Membership List.

22 For a more detailed analysis of these divisions see Ruth Frazer, Sweatshop Strife: Class,
Sangster

*Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement, 1900-39* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 87-89.

23 Archives of Ontario (AO), *Multicultural History Society of Ontario* (MHSO), MU 9011, Interview with Al Hershkovitz.

24 This recruitment effort, supported by unions, businesses and the government sought primarily single men—in part due to a housing crisis and also a reflection of immigration policy which imagined women only as wives and maids. Of the 500, only sixty percent were supposed to be ‘of the same religious group.’ This quota, clearly anti-Semitic, was imposed behind the scenes by the federal government. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Dept. of Labour RG 27, Vol. 279, File 1-26-5-2, ‘Fur Workers’, AO, Interview with Al Hershkovitz.


29 CU, Kheel Centre, IFLWU, Box 25, Files 24, 25, 26, as well as Box 7, File 4. See also *Toronto Star*, 7 May 1937, and AO, AOHC, interview with Pearl Wedro, nd.


31 Ruth Frager argues that dual unions had negative consequences for fur workers in the 1930s, though Mercedes Steedman maintains that ‘breakaway’ communist unions in the garment trade had some positive implications for marginalized women workers: Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, and Steedman, “The Promise: Communist Organizing in the Needle Trades.”

32 Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 203.


34 Gerry Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 133. Harry Simon later became a staffer in the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and was active in the CCF/NDP, running for office under their banner. AO, AOHC, Interview with Harry Simon, nd.

35 For example, in one court case the CIO group sued the AFL one for office property: see LAC, Cohen Papers, Vol. 11, File 2688. This designation of social democratic versus communist unions oversimplifies, as some fur workers obviously did not fit those
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categories, but it is a useful way of distinguishing the two main leadership groups.

Gerald Tulehinsky argues that the communist-influenced United Jewish Peoples Order supported immigration to Palestine after 1948, and was simply critical of the “excessively Zionist character of the Canadian Jewish Congress” in Branching Out, 130.

36 AO, Hershkovitz interview.


38 AO, MHSO, Hershkovitz interview. For example, in the 1937 provincial election, communist J.B. Salsberg had been opposed by fur union leader and CCFer Harry Simon.


41 On the full charges and investigation see AO, MHSO, MU 9021 Muni Taub papers, File 8428; interview with Al Hershkovitz; and LAC, Cohen papers, Vol. 1, File International Fur and Leather Workers Union. This investigation is mentioned in Frager, Sweatshop Strife, 203. The belief that Federman was guilty intensified communist antagonism to him in the 1940s, preventing an effort made in 1946 to effect a peace treaty between the two unions.

42 AO, Taub interview.


44 AO, MHSO F 1405, FUR WORKERS, MS 1192, pamphlet, circa 1939.

45 Ibid.


47 University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBC), Trade Union Research Bureau Collection, Box 39, IFLWU, File 39-5.

48 University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBC), Trade Union Research Bureau Collection, Box 39, IFLWU, File 39-5.

49 CU, Kheel, IFLWU, Vol. 28, File 1, Haddow to Gold, 11 June 1954. Younger workers may have been drawn into anti-communist union efforts in part because they lacked the historic ties that older workers had to the union that initially organized them. See Gerald Zahavi, “Fighting Left-Wing Unionism: Views from the Opposition to the IFLWU in Fulton Co, NY,” in The CIO’s Left-Led Unions, 159-81.
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52 Cochran, Labor and Communism, 295.
54 A small trade union protest emerged around the Duplessis bill, but not because labour
leaders had any desire to defend the civil rights of communists. In Quebec, the
Catholic unions called for the ‘outlawing’ of communism. See CSN and CEA, The
History of the Labour Movement in Quebec, trans. Arnold Bennett (Montreal: Black Rose
Books, 1987), 166.
55 See CU, Kheel, ILFWU, Vol. 28, File 1, Haddow to Gold, 25 Jan. and 11 June 1954,
and to Abe Feinglass, 28 Dec., 1954.
56 LAC, Communist Party of Canada Papers (CPC), MG 28 IV 4, Vol. 51, File International
Fur and Leather Workers Union, Toronto Furrier, July 1955.
57 The post 1947 Cominform was made up of the more important European
Communist Parties. Norman Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond
(Toronto: Methuen, 1988), 218.
58 State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives (SHWA), Amalgamated Meat Cutters and
Butcher Workmen Records (AMC), Box 5, Folder 205, Officers Report to the Special
59 One reference refers to the nine million dollar “treasury” involved in the deal, but
another, which seems more realistic, refers to about $250 000 plus the White Lake
Camp valued at 1.3 million. AFL Executive Council minutes, 1-10 February 1955 and
2-4 May 1955; SHSW, AMC, Reel 159, Earl Jimerson to Pat Gorman, 20 July 1955. If
the 1.3 million is accurate, it is astounding the IFLWU (and by association, the
Communist Party) were willing to sign away so much.
60 AFL-CIO Executive Minutes, “Confidential AMC Analysis of Proposed Merger
61 WSHS, AMC Papers, Reel 160, Pat Gorman to Salvatore DiSano, President Local 328,
62 On HUAC [House on Un-American Activities Committee] see WSHS, AMC, Reel
159, Thomas Beale to Pat Gorman, 18 May 1955; Reel 158, Gorman to Donald
Appell, 30 Aug. 1957.
63 AFL Executive Council Minutes, Dec. 1954, Letter from Vice-President Beck
(Teamsters) to Meany, 7 Dec. 1954.
65 The fact that Feinglass had once taken the fifth before HUAC meant his loyalty was
continually questioned, but the AMC believed in his “conversion.”
66 AFL Executive Minutes, 2-4 May 1955. See also comment that Feinglass should be
judged very “sincere” in his anti-communism since he went to Canada to “get rid of
Haddow and Ferguson.” WSHS, AMC, Reel 159, Earl Jimerson to Pat Gorman, 20
July 1955.
68 WSHS, AMC, Reel 159, Simon list. This is found, both in typed and handwritten
entries, in many places in AMC papers, as a tally was kept of those “eliminated” (the
language usually used).
Cold War in Fur

Ibid.

72 They had earlier reassured Simon with this statement. WSHS, AMC, Reel 160, Pat Gorman to Harry Simon, 29 Dec. 1954.


74 For example in April Gorman told the AFL that “ten” in Canada had been eliminated from having any connections to the AMC, though they had not all resigned yet. Reel 160, Pat Gorman to George Meany, 25 April, 1955.


76 AFL Executive Council Minutes, 2-4 May 1955.

77 WSHS, AMC, Reel 158, Statement of Vancouver Joint Board, 4 June 1955.


80 LAC, Haddow Papers, Vol. 1, IFLWU file, Officers report to August meeting.

81 LAC, Haddow Papers, Vol. 1, IFLWU file, handwritten notes with two columns: 1. independence or 2. Federman: the independence column also had negatives, including the “suffering of workers in the trade,” and “need for unity.” In anonymous US correspondence, one writer also claimed that there was a “rackets” group within the AMC. WSHS, AMC, Reel 159, anonymous “My Analysis of the Situation.”

82 Al Hershkovitz remembers going behind-the-scenes, to persuade Communist Party leader Dave Kashtran that a breakaway union would be suicidal, but given the current line, Kashtran probably needed little convincing.

83 AO, MHSO, Al Hershkovitz interview.

84 Brody, The Butcher Workmen, 259-67; Levenstein, Communism, Autocommunism, 67.

85 Cochran, Labor and Communism.

86 Rejecting mainstreaming in the US, UE leader James Matles commented, “the mainstream is a sewer.” Quoted in Doug Smith, Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers (St John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1997), 221.

87 WSHS, AMC, Reel 160, Pat Gorman to George Meany, 24 Jan. 1957: “We have ‘watching Toronto’ to make sure communists on the ‘list’ do not run.

88 There a series of letters between Mitchell and Gorman, with the latter relaying Meany’s demands. WSHS, AMC, Reel 158, 7,12 June and 2, 19, 24 Oct. 1957.


90 WSHS, AMC, Reel 159, Pat Gorman to Father Charles Rice, 11 Feb 1955.


92 He used the fur union to endorse the political “educational” role of the Jewish Labour Committee, both its fight against discrimination in Canada, and its later support abroad of the state of Israel. LAC, UFCW, Acc 1992/0101, Vol. 4, Federman file.


95 “Ten Month Struggle Wins Pact at Humberstone Shoe,” The Fur and Leather Worker
Sangster

(FW), March-April 1952, “Richmond Shoe Strike in 14th Week,” and “Montreal Local 500 Shop Wins 5 cents Raise,” FIL, May 1950.
97 AO, AOHC, Wedro Interview.
98 My reading of gender politics is taken not only from Canadian sources, but also American ones: the IFLWU papers, convention reports, and a reading of their paper, The Fur and Leather Worker, though it contained a small amount of Canadian news.
99 CU, Keel Library, IFLWU, 1946 Convention Minutes, 217.
100 CU, Keel Library, IFLWU, 1950 Convention Minutes, 268.
101 Ibid., 1944 Convention Minutes, 209.
103 CA, Keel Library, IFLWU Papers, Vol. 25, Folder The Beaver (newsletter of the Toronto union)
106 AO, MHSO, Interview with Hershovitz.
107 Whitaker and Marcuse, Canada’s Cold War, chap. 14. This deals primarily with the Canadian Seaman’s Union case.
109 For both quotes, LAC, UFCI, Acc.1992/0101, Vol. 4, Federman file, 1972 Address to Convention and 1942 Annual Jubilee Banquet. In the former case, he also suggested that they they were involved in the shooting of Walter Reuther.
111 His history is “shallow and inadequate” and if anyone should write the history, it should be you, Gorman told Feinglass, WSHS, AMC, Rec 154, Federman file, Gorman to Feinglass 24 Feb and 4 March 1960.
112 AO, MHSO, AOHC, Interview with Muni Taub.
113 AO, MHSO, F 1405, MU 9201, Waxman to Fur Manufacturers Association, 27 May and 24 April, 1940.
Ethiopia Stretches Forth Across the Atlantic: African American Anticolonialism during the Interwar Period

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It did not take long to realize that it had not been the War to End All Wars. In heralding the end of formal European imperialism, however, World War I was nonetheless world-altering, though this would take longer to discern. W.E.B. Du Bois, as usual, was ahead of the intellectual curve in grasping the War’s significance. As one who had argued since the beginning of the century that white supremacy was a transnational rather than a US phenomenon, Dr. Du Bois was well placed to point out that the war was rooted in empire-building in Africa, and that the contributions of black troops during the conflict made a return to the status quo ante impossible. Du Bois’ arguments were but one expression of how the War and its aftermath meant days of hope and trepidation for African Americans. The leaders of Russia’s newly proclaimed workers’ state spoke in an admittedly foreign ideological idiom, but they nonetheless communicated a seeming willingness to fight for the rights of people of colour and against imperialism the world over. At the Versailles negotiations, Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points—his own white supremacist beliefs and policies notwithstanding—gave the concept of “self-determination” for all peoples new international respectability. Du Bois was also in Paris in 1919, where he reinvigorated the Pan-African Congress tradition by convening the first Pan-African Congress since Henry Sylvester Williams’ gathering of 1900. Taken together, these events had amplified the worldliness of the black freedom struggle in the United States, thereby raising the stakes regarding African American participation in global anticolonialism.

In the United States, it was a time of Red Summers and Red Scares, but also one of renewed defiance. Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association had become the largest mass movement in African American history, fueled by the recent black migration that created an exodus from the rural South. African Americans defended themselves with a new militancy against the white terrorism that characterized race relations across the country. This combination of circumstances provided the backdrop to a black refusal to endure the violence of white supremacy without an active response, a refusal to which poet Claude McKay gave voice in 1919. The last stanza of his popular “If We Must Die” read:
McKay gave notice that “fighting back” was to be the catchphrase of black resistance in the post-war period, and given the tumult of recent global events, it was unlikely that the struggle for equality and justice would be contained within a domestic framework.

Yet it was not until the Depression that these radical sentiments were fully mobilized in a wave of opposition that would confront racial capitalism in the global arena. Previous to the rupturing force of World War One, published African American thought about Africa often fell within the framework of uplift and civilizing missions. By the 1930s, a number of social phenomena created the conditions for an unprecedented response when Mussolini’s forces invaded Ethiopia; these included black urbanization, a significant African American academic presence, comparatively inclusive New Deal legislation, the crisis of capitalism, and a lively black press. The relative prominence of the Communist Party of the United States and the ascendency of Mussolini and Hitler in Europe also led to the development of an antifascism in which black and white leftists could make common cause. In the context of these developments the black reform elite, with its relatively restrained approach to racial progress, was criticized with renewed vigour in print by an increasingly leftist black intelligentsia, and in demonstrations by the black working-class and white left through public calls for an active response to Ethiopia’s subjugation.

The defence of Ethiopia marks a crucial chapter of African American and world history, in which black critiques of political economy and international relations became intertwined during the crucial interwar-era struggle against white supremacy. Moreover, this episode underscores the contributions that African Americans and some leftist whites made to both anticolonial struggles and to the rise of what later came to be known as the Third World. This brew of anticolonial internationalism, antiracism, and a critical approach to capitalism presented a significant challenge to US economic and racial liberalism that would continue into the Cold War.

To show how some of the groundwork had already been laid for the 1935 response among African Americans, in this essay I take up the symbolic significance of Ethiopia, the mass appeal of the UNIA, and the perennial intellectual force of Pan-Africanism. From here, I will emphasize the extent to which the mobilization against Mussolini’s aggression was a plebian phenomenon imbued with antiracist and politically leftist ideological content, a point to which the most
Ethiopia Stretches Forth Across the Atlantic

detailed treatments of these events have paid limited attention. In keeping with historian Glenda Gilmore’s argument that the radical left before 1950 “redefined the debate over white supremacy and hastened its end,” I want to add to our understanding of African American reactions to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by documenting how they were constitutive of an interwar confluence of opposition to racial oppression, economic exploitation, and empire. Like Du Bois’ own leftward drift between producing his wartime analyses and publishing *Black Reconstruction* in the year of Italy’s invasion, many African Americans forged their extant internationalist racial pride during this decade and a half into a potent, popular critique of white supremacy and its imbrication with global capitalism. Symbolic Ethiopia, Pan-Africanism, and the UNIA provided elements of this critique; the relatively open class war of the Depression enabled its mobilization.

**Ethiopia: A Transatlantic Symbol**

Ethiopia did not suddenly come to symbolize Africa when Mussolini’s military forces began their invasion, nor was African American interest in the country new in 1935. In the ancient Mediterranean world, Homer and Herodotus both at times used “Ethiopia,” or “aithiops” to refer to lands inhabited by people whose skin was darker than that of most Greeks and Romans. While European interest in “Ethiopia” may have been part of that increasingly rigid separation between Orient and Occident that for Edward Said “seems bold by the time of the *Iliad*,” the entangled trajectories of peoples and their cultures that characterized the Atlantic world gave Ethiopia perennial significance through both European and African traditions. When, for example, Vasco Nunez de Balboa allegedly encountered a “tribe of Ethiopians” in Panama in 1513, he was unclear as to whether this was a group of escaped slaves from Haiti. It was equally unclear from which region of Africa they originated. But Balboa’s terminology indicates that Ethiopia served as a geographic metonym for Africa from the earliest days of American-European-African contact.

For Africans in the Americas, Ethiopia continued to act as a symbol for Africa as a whole since the Christian Bible became a definitive influence on the enslaved peoples and their descendants. In Jamaica, where the name Ethiopia became identified with salvation, an ex-slave founded the Ethiopian Baptist Church in 1784, the island’s first Baptist church. In the United States, the biblical verse Psalms 68:31, “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God” became a scriptural basis for a prophetic interpretation of Ethiopia’s role in history. From Robert Alexander Young and David Walker in the Jacksonian period, to Henry Highland Garnet, Martin R. Delany, Edward Blyden, and Alexander Crummell in subsequent decades, influential black thinkers accorded Ethiopia great significance throughout the nineteenth century. By 1900, such awareness had spread well beyond the black intelligentsia to become
part of African American folk thought and popular history, and extant pro-
Ethiopian sensibilities were heightened in 1896 when Italy suffered a decisive mil-
itary defeat by Ethiopians under Menelik II at the battle of Adwa. This popular
interest in Ethiopia continued into the 1920s and 1930s, and ensured that when
Italian fascists physically threatened Ethiopia’s sovereignty, a good number of
African Americans considered their own homeland to be under attack.

During the interwar period, Ethiopia’s emblematic stature established it
as part of the African American imagined community’s cultural and historic mem-
ory. This historic memory jogged other streams of black internationalism in 1935,
from the “Resistance at home, resistance abroad” slogan promulgated by the nas-
cent black press in its abolitionist campaigns during the Civil War, to internation-
al solidarity campaigns and a general tendency among black intellectuals to per-
ceive and write about domestic phenomena from a global perspective. These
instances of black internationalism represented African American interest in the
global scene and white supremacy’s role in structuring it. Pan-Africanist, nation-
alist, and later antifascist influences also activated this memory of Ethiopia’s sig-
nificance into defensive action when Italy invaded in 1935.

On the interwar cultural front, Ethiopia was celebrated through a
renewed spirit of antiracist militancy and international solidarity. A variety of
black artists in 1920s Harlem utilized artistic media to supplant white society’s
derogatory stereotypes of African and African American cultures. The arts took
on strategic importance since whites had effectively blocked the doors to African
American economic and electoral participation in American society. Traveling
musical ensembles, such as the Salem Tutt Whitney and J. Homer Tutt Company,
who in 1920 presented a show advertising its tracing “the origination of Jazz back
to the ancient Ethiopians,” further demonstrating the reach of interest in Ethiopia
as well as the political content of cultural production.

Interwar black culture’s engagement with politics and the economy
becomes clearer when we recall that the New Negro movement was an intrinsic
component of migration from the South. Approximately two million African
Americans left the South between 1900 and 1930. These migrants sought new
opportunities bringing, in Alain Locke’s phrasing, “a new vision of opportunity, of
social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortion-
ate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions.” Toni Morrison’s
unforgettable image of Jazz’s characters Joe and Violet Trace dancing their way
into “the City” aboard a train captured Locke’s notion of seizing “a chance for the
improvement of conditions,” because the decision to move was not only a push
from the South but also a pull to a place where racism and poverty could be open-
ly opposed and perhaps ultimately overcome.

The cultural production of what became known as the Harlem
Renaissance was a part of this bold willingness to seize opportunities, however
limited, available in the US after 1918. The cultural bloom of the 1920s and 1930s
did not overturn the structures of oppression that surrounded it, but these decades were a time when new sites of resistance and spaces of relative freedom were carved out. Since Ethiopia constituted such a pervasive symbol, it makes sense to think of African American reactions to war in that land as one important instance of what literary scholar Huston Baker has called the “profoundly beneficial effects for areas of Afro-American discourse” in the Harlem Renaissance era. In the interwar whirlwind of cultural activity, political expectations, and global realities, the Pan-African movement, the UNIA, and the CPUSA attempted to address the concerns of the black community and participate in its mobilization against domestic and transnational oppression.

The Pan-African Congresses and the UNIA

In the shadow of the great power deliberations at Versailles, fifty-seven influential black delegates met in 1919 at the Grand Hotel in Paris for the convening of the first Pan-African Congress. The second Congress was held in London in August of 1921, with sessions in Brussels and Paris, and was followed by a third Congress in Lisbon in 1923 and a fourth in New York in 1927. These gatherings, with their attendant speeches and resolutions, achieved little in tangible terms. They were nevertheless a significant component of black internationalism in the years before Italy invaded Ethiopia: the fact that the meetings took place at all was an accomplishment. That the Congresses brought together figures of the African diaspora whose intellectual leadership would keep the international context on the agenda of the black freedom struggle is a difficult achievement to measure, but one that undoubtedly played a crucial role during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. One prescient resolution from the 1927 Congress, for example, demanded the continued independence of Ethiopia. The Pan-Africanism of the Congresses shared many of the same concerns of the more populist UNIA; each demanded equality for African Americans as part of an overall movement that sought justice for all the peoples of Africa and the diaspora.

Yet the elite character of the Congresses placed distance between their high-minded resolutions and the aspirations of the black majority. During the 1920s, they preferred to express their diasporic solidarity through the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Marcus Garvey rose to the fore of black politics in the US during the aftermath of the East St. Louis massacre of 1917, the Red Summer of 1919’s white mob attacks on twenty-six black communities, and the resulting growth of black resistance. African Americans enthusiastically responded to Garvey’s call for a mass mobilization of the peoples of Africa and the diaspora. His appeals to the black working class, his schemes to promote black wealth, his flair for pageantry and compelling rhetoric, his plans for repatriation, and his strong repudiation of the tenets of white supremacy brought Garvey respect and expanded the UNIA to as many as four million members worldwide.
The fact that the politics of the Garvey's organisation was more populist than that of the Pan-African Congresses did not by any measure mean that the UNIA was socialist in orientation. Indeed, as Colin Grant points out in his textured biography of Garvey, it was rather ironic that the Bureau of Investigation—who, thanks to the efforts of the young J. Edgar Hoover, saw Reds everywhere in the aftermath of World War I—attempted to pin Bolshevik labels on an individual so entrepreneurial in orientation.\textsuperscript{29} Black nationalism was not socialism, but as we will see, both would later intersect in unexpected ways.

The UNIA reached its zenith in the early 1920s, after which internal and external problems brought about the rapid decline of the movement and the downfall of Garvey himself.\textsuperscript{30} But many former UNIA members would still have been alive just over a decade later, and the racial pride that flourished at the height of this organization was sustained for generations. Garvey's emphasis on Africa, and particularly Ethiopia, laid the groundwork for the mobilization against Italy's invasion. As historian Alberto Sbacchi notes, "Ethiopia filled the vacuum left by the eclipsed Garvey movement."\textsuperscript{31} Ethiopia, though, had to share the stage in capturing and maintaining the attention of African Americans in the years following Garvey's 1927 deportation with one of the rising organizations of the period: the Communist Party of the United States.

Despite the apparent incongruity between the Marxism of the CPUSA and the black nationalism of the UNIA, there were important similarities between these outfits. Black nationalist ideas had enjoyed currency within US Party circles almost since its inception, as exemplified by Audley Moore, who became a Party leader during the 1930s while remaining a dues-paying member of the UNIA.\textsuperscript{32} Like one of its other main competitors, the NAACP, the CPUSA functioned as an unpredictable social movement as often as it did a highly disciplined institution, meaning that coalitions, factions, and individuals often formulated theory and praxis in ways that the leadership could not directly control.\textsuperscript{33}

Though the UNIA was undeniably dedicated to racial issues, it was also a movement that touched on class relations, since black populations throughout the Atlantic world were almost always of the working class. UNIA ideology, especially after the 1910s, could be quite conservative in terms of gender roles and economic programs, but even its entrepreneurialism was largely abandoned by what remained of the organization after the 1920s to compete with the Communists for African American working class allegiance.\textsuperscript{34} The Depression gave rise to new vocabularies of economic critique that made possible the specifically leftist orientation of the movement in the 1930s that was not yet emergent during Garvey's heyday.

"The Kind of Vast Support that Ethiopia Enjoyed Amongst Blacks Everywhere"

In the 1930s, when Italian statesmen began to follow public rumblings about
Ethiopia with specific pronouncements of its designs on the African nation, member states of the League of Nations were unwilling to act, even when threats and provocations proceeded to outright invasion in October of 1935. Italian designs on Ethiopia were longstanding; the prestige of colonial possessions and military revenge for Italian humiliation at Adwa in 1896 fit nicely into Mussolini’s visions of fascist grandeur and a new Roman Empire. The British, French, and US governments, like that of Italy, were motivated by imperial concerns rather than by international law. The British and French governments were also particularly worried about alienating Italy in ways that might strengthen Mussolini’s relations with Hitler’s Germany. As George Padmore put it, “[t]he drama which opened in Berlin ended in Addis Ababa,” and the Italian military dispensed aerial bombardments and poison gas on the Ethiopian people unimpeded by external diplomatic constraints.

For those who did not assume the logic of imperialism, Italy’s claims were unconvincing. But since no sincere attempts to halt Mussolini were forthcoming from powerful states, counteraction against Italian fascism worked from the bottom up. The CPUSA took an interest in these developments. During the Depression, the CPUSA had established itself as a significant ally in the struggle against white supremacy, imperialism, and capitalist exploitation. The Party also benefitted from the great extent to which the mobilization in defense of Ethiopia was a popular phenomenon that already shared an affinity with the CPUSA’s antifascist tactics and ideology.

As the Italian government’s invasion plans became increasingly evident, so did the anticolonial opposition throughout the Atlantic world; these activities comprised a transcontinental context for events within the United States. In South Africa, protesters in Durban burned Mussolini in effigy while others rallied in Cape Town. Walter Kumalo, an important Zulu chief who had served in France during World War I, tried to establish a military force to aid Ethiopia. Approximately 6,000 Africans petitioned the South African authorities for permission to enlist in Ethiopia’s army. These requests were denied because British subjects were forbidden to serve in armies warring against nations with which Britain was at peace. In West Africa, the Nigerian Youth Movement built on existing anti-imperialist sentiment to link calls for Ethiopia’s defence to demands for self-government from British rule.

There were also protest activities in the Caribbean. These activities were reported in the black press, and monitored by the British Foreign Office, whose agents reported on mass meetings and circulating petitions in places like St. Lucia and Jamaica. Not only did 1935 witness the Caribbean’s black population coming to Ethiopia’s defense. That year also saw the beginning of a massive strike wave, itself in part the product of existing pro-Ethiopia mobilizations, which spread across the islands and the African continent. These developments forced the labour question onto the British and French imperial agendas, ultimately paving the road to decolonization.
In the British imperial metropole, parallel pro-Ethiopia mobilizations were underway. Exiled in London, Marcus Garvey took up a spirited campaign against the invasion through his journal, The Blackman. In 1935, the International African Friends of Ethiopia was formed in London to consider sending a volunteer force to repel the invasion. The IAFE’s executive committee included George Padmore, with Jomo Kenyatta serving as secretary, Amy Ashwood Garvey as treasurer, and C.L.R. James as chairperson. Ras Makonnen, originally of British Guiana, joined the group after being deported from Denmark for his antifascist agitation there. Makonnen’s description of his experience with the IAFE provides an insightful example of the popular nature of the responses to the crisis:

It’s very important to put the response of the black world to the Ethiopian War into perspective, especially since it is easy to get the impression that pan-Africanism was just some type of petty protest activity – a few blacks occasionally meeting in conference and sending resolutions here and there. But the real dimensions can only be gathered by estimating the kind of vast support that Ethiopia enjoyed amongst blacks everywhere. We were only one center, the International African Friends of Ethiopia, but that title was very accurate. Letters simply poured into our office from blacks on three continents asking where could they register. “I’ve got money.” Letters simply poured into our office from blacks on three continents asking where could they register. I’ve got money. I can pay my fare across to Ethiopia and I’ll buy my own rifle even. Indeed, if researchers would care to consult the columns of a paper like the Chicago Defender of that year they would find countless letters from ordinary blacks all over North America.

Indeed, Makonnen’s portrayal of London also encapsulated the mood in the African American press coverage of the crisis. In the aftermath of Reconstruction’s broken promise and Woodrow Wilson’s narrow understanding of what making “the world safe for democracy” entailed, black newspaper readerships expected greater militancy from the publications that they supported. Early in the century, African American newspapers were more likely to reflect Booker T. Washington’s politics than those of W.E.B. Du Bois, but by the Depression, the black press entered its “golden age,” during which the economic crisis inspired renewed critical commentary on the events of the day. And as nationally circulated weeklies, the Pittsburgh Courier, the New York Amsterdam News, and the Chicago Defender represented the most cosmopolitan politics in black America.

In 1935, as during the entire interwar period, African Americans looked to the black press for information since papers produced across the colour line often reflected the perspectives of capital and white society. By the 1930s, when, as Cedric Robinson claims, “the rise of Italian Fascism occasioned a militant opposition among the Black American masses,” coverage of the Ethiopian situa-
tion in the papers of the black press and the white left occurred in an environment of extensive antifascist activism throughout the country. In response to the call to defend Ethiopia, groups such as the academic Ethiopia Research Council, the Popular Front’s Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, and the nationalist African Patriotic League and Pan-African Reconstruction Association were formed, as were numerous other US-based organizations. In addition to associations based in African American communities, some sectors within organized labour loudly criticized the Italian government’s actions. At a labour conference organized by socialists Frank Crosswaith and A. Philip Randolph, International Ladies Garment Workers Union Vice President Luigi Antonini denounced fascist aggression against Ethiopia to sustained applause. Others took direct action, such as refusing to load ships that could supply the Italian forces, thereby giving substance to labour's antifascist sloganeering.

Antifascist and anticolonial activism also took place on many college campuses. Howard University in Washington, DC, was one centre of activity for engaged students and faculty. Black intellectuals maintained campus interest in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular during the 1930s through the Ethiopian Research Council and through related activities. Within days of the invasion, Robert F.S. Harris, who led a Committee for Ethiopia with Atlanta University's Rayford W. Logan and the Abyssinian Baptist Church's Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., authorized Ralph Bunche, then a political scientist at Howard, to open a branch of the Committee in Washington, D.C. Washington's African American community beyond Howard was also interested in opposing Mussolini. Sensing the mood of his congregation, Frederick Brown Harris, minister of Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, offered Bunche “my name and any influence I may have in mobilizing public opinion against Italy and for Ethiopia.” Bunche was also part of the group who received Ethiopian diplomat Lij Tasfaye Zaphiro during his visit to Howard in 1936.

In New York, the Universal Ethiopian Students Association, an organization of high school seniors, college, and graduate students, was active throughout the 1930s. Inspired by Garvey’s UNIA, they corresponded with some of the central figures working on the Ethiopian issue. They also organized public community events such as evening summer courses in African history, a mock trial entitled “Africa vs. the Imperialist Issue,” and a “momentous debate” over the assertion that “Western civilization is detrimental to the black man’s progress.” Student demonstrations occurred in many parts of the United States during the crisis. On 8 November, campus rallies involving white supporters of Ethiopia took place at Columbia University in New York, Brooklyn College, New York University, the YMCA in Richmond, Virginia, Randolph-Macon Women’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia, Penn State College in Pennsylvania, Howard University, the University of Chicago, and at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

As Ras Makonnen indicated, letters to the editor are also an excellent
source of black opinion regarding the conflict. By no means did the Defender hold a monopoly on concerned subscribers. In his 9 May “Day by Day” in the Baltimore Afro-American, William N. Jones remarked that “Most impressive of all communications coming to this column this week are letters from young men and women throughout the country offering cooperation in any plan in which they can help in the Abyssinian situation.” Widespread youth interest in the crisis indicates that New Negro militancy of the post-World War I years continued to appeal to younger African Americans in the Depression. On the same page, the “Afro Readers Say” section printed letters entitled “Ready to Go,” “Ready to Fight,” and “We Await Word from Abyssinia.” The phrasing of one letter from Detroit clearly demonstrated the enduring legacy of the UNIA: “We have been told of what is happening in Abyssinia. We heard of this 15 years ago, but we didn’t believe it. Marcus Garvey told us of the very same thing now happening. There are millions of us, and if we can get there, we are willing to fight for Abyssinia. It is our country. We should have one God, one aim, one destiny.”

On 23 March, the Afro-American printed “Count Him In” from Brooklyn, “Would Die for Abyssinia” from Lancaster, PA, “How Ethiopia Must Win” from Philadelphia, “Six War Vets Ready” from Hampton, VA, “Wants to Help Ethiopia” from Cleveland, and “What Will the League of Nations Do About Abyssinia’s Protection?” from Baltimore. Washingtonian Mrs. J. Davis’s comment in the 12 October copy that “If money will win and preserve the independence of Africa, I am willing to do my part in the way of making a contribution,” and Philadelphian Edward Jones’s exhortation in the 28 September edition: “Long live our fatherland, Ethiopia! God save and aid the King of Kings!” were typical. Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which these were the views of individuals as opposed to those who might have been putting forward perspectives from particular organizations, these letters certainly illustrated a broad compass of concern. Such expressions continued throughout the year, finally dissipating in 1936 when it became apparent that the Italian offensive was irreversible.

This overwhelming concern over Ethiopia’s independence indicates the internationality of African American racial pride, which, taken together with the intense attention fixed on the Joe Louis-Primo Carnera boxing match of 26 June, gave credence to black nationalism and leftist antifascism. Louis handily defeated “Mussolini’s Darling” at their Yankee Stadium engagement, which translated into a symbolic defeat of Italian imperialism. This victory also propelled Louis as a black celebrity who would come to embody the hopes of democracy against fascism for many in the United States as Mussolini and especially Hitler sought to forcefully expand their spheres of influence. Although the major publications of the African American press had varying editorial positions on the issues of the day, they were uniform in their continued sympathetic coverage of the Ethiopian story. This convergence of reporting regarding the crisis was undoubtedly driven by the readership, especially in a
period when subscriptions were more important than advertising revenue. In the more conservative *New York Amsterdam News*, the readership similarly expressed its support for Ethiopia. Letters such as “Italy and Ethiopia” on 2 March, “Would Fight for Africa” on 16 March, and “Recruits Get Ready to Serve in Ethiopia” (a call for volunteers from Walter J. Davis, a Fort Worth, TX, veteran) on 20 July revealed not only readership disquiet but also a determination to actively thwart Mussolini’s plans if possible.

Predictably, the *Chicago Defender’s* subscriber correspondence exhibited a similar tone, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* also received a deluge of mail on the subject. In the 27 July “What the People Think” section of the *Courier*, for example, thirty letters about Ethiopia crowded the page. This outpouring of readership sentiment was reflected in, and helps explain, the extent of the coverage on Ethiopia in all of these papers.

Ethiopia was the story of the year in the black press in 1935. Articles from early in the crisis emphasized the view that Ethiopia had defeated Italy before, and therefore ought not to be written off as a military lightweight. A 16 February *Defender* piece on Ethiopia’s unwillingness to submit to Italian threats represented an editorial angle which became more common as war neared and finally arrived. These papers were persistent in their attempts to establish that Ethiopia, contrary to stereotypes perpetuated about all of Africa in the white media, was a “modern” rather than a “backward” nation. This sentiment was epitomized by a 23 November photograph of Haile Selassie in the *Baltimore Afro-American* accompanied by the caption “Nothing If Not Modern.” The *Chicago Defender* told readers that Mussolini ought to “watch his step” if he was seriously considering an invasion, and that Ethiopia’s artillery was prepared to repel Italian aggression, while the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported on the “flood of modern arms and ammunition pouring into Haile Selassie’s kingdom.”

In a related theme, the black press maintained a positive appraisal of Ethiopia’s military performance for as long as possible in the face of Italy’s ultimately superior forces. *New York Amsterdam News* readers were informed that Ethiopia was able to “thrash” its foes on the battlefield, the *Afro-American* carried a headline reading “3,500 Italians Fall as Ethiopians Halt Advances,” and *Courier* subscribers learned of a startling 14,000 Italian casualty figure within weeks of the invasion. Undeniably, inflated journalistic diction often obscured the realities of Ethiopia’s slim chances of victory. When Ethiopian defeat became manifest, however, these papers shifted focus increasingly to fascist brutality.

Apart from reporting on the conflict itself, the black press also highlighted support for Ethiopia from within the United States. Although the US government prohibited military assistance to Ethiopia, and the pecuniary realities of the Depression severely curtailed financial contributions, opponents of the invasion found venues in which to express their politics beyond the editorial page. Church congregations and their leaders lent their support to the cause. American Aid for
Ethiopia—a mostly white group led by prominent religious figures and philanthropists—raised an ambulance and a ton of medical supplies.68 Mass meetings, public talks, and demonstrations—often organized by the Communist Party—were reported in Boston, Birmingham, Pittsburgh, Mobile, Detroit, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Brunswick, Buffalo, St. Louis, Passaic, Omaha, Seattle, New Orleans, and Indianapolis.69 Two women chained themselves to a lamppost at the Italian consulate.70 Protesters splattered an Italian Vice Consul with ink.71

New York and Chicago were the natural nuclei of opposition to Italian fascism. As the two major terminus cities of African American migration from the South, these urban centers had witnessed militant antiracism during the UNIA’s zenith; that spirit lived on in the public expressions of rage at Mussolini’s imperialism. In Chicago, various actions were organized, the most dramatic of which was the 1 September march in which 750 police attacked the crowd and arrested 300 demonstrators, with Communists Harry Haywood and Thomas McKenna prominent among them.72 In New York, fundraising events, well-attended lectures, and mass rallies involving black and white participants took place throughout the crisis period.73 Sometimes the scale of these proceedings even caught the attention of the *New York Times*, which was generally unsympathetic to the left or the needs and aspirations of the black community.74

“Turn Your Guns Against the Fascist Leaders, Assassins and Robbers”

Ras Makonnen’s depiction of London could easily be transferred to the United States. Where, then, did the CPUSA stand amid this widespread configuration of pro-Ethiopian interest? Despite its undemocratic internal structure and political culture, the Party was not marginal to the popular pro-Ethiopia effort.75 Just as the UNIA appealed to working-class African Americans because its community presence differentiated it from the reformist impulses of traditional black leadership groups, the CP enjoyed a measure of popularity in the 1930s because of its confrontational posture and its willingness to take up significant “local” issues such as tenant advocacy in New York, sharecropper organizing in Alabama, and the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon cases.76 These efforts exemplified Communist concentration on African American cadre building, a task necessary to fostering meaningful proletarian unity, but also one that would require, in the words of one internal document, that “we must wipe out every shred of fascist white chauvinism from the ranks of the Party.”77 The point worth emphasizing here is not that the diverse black community adopted the CPUSA’s given line at a particular moment. Rather, the Party was one important institutional location through which, in Nikhil Singh’s words, black activists proved “remarkably flexible and nondoctrinaire in choosing the vehicles and instruments of their radicalism.”78 Furthermore, to think about the relationship between the CPUSA and the black community as a unidirectional one in which the former exerted its influence on the
latter is a misreading on two counts: it occludes the overlap of people and ideas between black and red constituencies, and it obscures how much Communists we re influenced by African American proximity to and participation in Party activities.

Although international analyses were not new to the black community in the 1930s, African Americans and their allies both within and outside the Party were elaborating the class content of their anticolonial critique after the Italian invasion. As Penny Von Eschen explains, “At the heart of anticolonialists’ core set of beliefs was a conception of democracy that embraced the struggles of colonial peoples and saw black peoples as part of the laboring classes of the world.”

Similarly, literary responses to the conflict by black writers such as Langston Hughes and Melvin Tolson moved from racial pride toward class consciousness. In Hughes’ case, his class analysis would inform his coverage of the Spanish Civil War for the Baltimore Afro-American in 1937, thereby contributing to the proliferation of antifascist politics within the African American community while also reflecting the increasingly pro-socialist perspective of the black press in the late 1930s. In general, a political economy approach to global white supremacy was a significant legacy of the mobilization of 1935. The attraction that the explanatory power of leftist ideologies held for African Americans during the Depression in part accounts for the vigour with which liberals and conservatives would attempt to curtail these ideas after 1945.

In keeping with their increasing outspokenness about the links between international and domestic systems of inequality, African Americans grew increasingly critical of economic hierarchies “behind the veil” within the United States during the Popular Front period. This is not to suggest that race receded into the background as class occupied the main stage. Instead, African American racial consciousness was augmented by greater attention to domestic and international class dynamics during the crisis, thereby meshing their perspectives with those of rank-and-file members in the CPUSA. Such heightened class consciousness was in part the result of straightened circumstances brought about by the Depression, but the Communist Party played a role in making available a particular articulation of resulting grievances. Black acceptance of class-based ideas and, more importantly, appreciation for the Communists’ willingness to combat white supremacy head on was not contingent upon Party membership. In Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. undoubtedly represented many in his congregation and community when he stated that regarding the Negro, “[I]t is the Negro, and he appreciated the Communists for their unceasing efforts on his behalf. He will support common causes, join willingly in united fronts, fight side by side in every crusade, but he does not join the Party.”

Overall, the CPUSA enjoyed some success in the black community because its outright contestation of the colour line resonated with the militancy of working-class, and some middle-class, African Americans.

Considering that antifascists incisively underscored the white supremacist links between imperialism in the global arena and the collective insult of segrega-
tion in the United States, it is hardly surprising that race constituted a fundamental lens through which black activists viewed the crisis. What is perhaps more striking is the extent to which a class analysis and indeed Communism itself was an element of black anticolonial discourse. CPUSA tactics of mass mobilization included African Americans in a type of bottom-up organizing that contrasted with anything that more established elements of the black community had to offer. And since the 1935 crisis arose in the aftermath of an elitist approach to US involvement in Liberia and Haiti that laid bare the NAACP’s class specific politics, African Americans were ready to embrace the type of popular mobilization that the CPUSA embodied. 

Building on the tradition of “uplifting the race,” the black middle class often fought racism through available means under unfavourable circumstances. Although they at times considered adopting the kind of analysis promoted by the CP, the African American leadership class’ emphasis on respectability ensured that the Party would continue to have a distinct, though never immense, appeal for the black working class.” Communist efforts in aid of Ethiopia did result in some recruitment among African Americans. Howard “Stretch” Johnson, an artist and intellectual who became a key cultural worker in Party circles, was introduced to the CPUSA through their work on the Ethiopian issue, which in turn led him to conclude that “the more Communists I met, the more I liked what they had to say and what they were doing. Because I saw that of all the people who were talking about solving problems and programs and so forth, when there was a picket line, they were out in front.” Johnson’s account was not representative, but also not entirely exceptional. 

Thus, African Americans were unwilling to join the party in large numbers, but the CPUSA did provide a style of leadership not available from traditional middle class leaders. The Party certainly squandered some of its support through Maxim Litinov’s silence at the League of Nations regarding Italy’s aggression, by covert Soviet oil, coal, tar, and wheat sales to Italy, and by the NAACP’s public exposure of both.” Just like the governments of Britain, France, and the United States, Soviet diplomacy was guided by “national interests” as the state defined them, which in Russia’s case meant containing Germany’s growing threat more than it meant opposing imperialism and maintaining a principled defense of a relatively powerless nation. The relationship between the CPUSA and the Comintern, however, was not always one in which the directives of the latter absolutely determined the membership’s behaviour in the former. In reality, the NAACP’s eagerness to expose Soviet duplicity at the League of Nations was not only a genuine attempt to show that Communist leaders did not always put black interests first, but was also as a strategic maneuver in the contest for black leadership, a contest in which the CP was a legitimate contender. 

The opposition to Italy’s imperialist enterprise regularly featured in the Communist Party’s Daily Worker, with coverage of the urgent situation brewing
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overseas and the reaction in the United States beginning early in the year. As The paper also encouraged its majority white readership to see Ethiopia’s struggle, and that of their fellow black citizens, as a central element of their own confrontation with capitalist exploitation. A 4 April editorial urged readers: “Every worker, every friend of the colonial masses and the people of Ethiopia, every enemy of Fascism, will rally to the support of the defensive actions of the Ethiopian government.”

The Communist Party of Italy, itself exiled in Paris during this period, was also developing an antifascism that opposed empire, as exemplified in one of its communications reprinted in the Daily Worker: “Keep away from Africa! Don’t shoot your brothers, the Ethiopian people. Embrace the Ethiopians as your brothers. Turn your guns against the fascist leaders, assassins and robbers.” American readers, black and white, were to consider this message as applying directly to them also.

But did any of the Party’s efforts have an impact on how African Americans perceived the conflict? If the black press is any indication, it seems that the CPUSA was moving into the black mainstream during this period. The Baltimore Afro-American was particularly friendly to the Party, and, like other papers, published stories that held the Soviet Union’s lack of segregation up as a model worth emulating. Such stories often featured an African American celebrity’s reception in Russia, or presented a photograph of racially integrated groups, but the editorial slant was generally positive, and such coverage continued after the NAACP’s exposure of Soviet betrayal at the League. Indeed, evidence of growing CP legitimacy during the Italo-Ethiopian confrontation could be found in the Association’s own publication, The Crisis. The monthly’s May, 1935 edition accorded prominent coverage to CPUSA theorist James Allen’s response to the question “Which Way Out for the Negro?,” part of a forum on solutions to living conditions under the Jim Crow order. Allen offered a standard reiteration of the Party line on self-determination in the Black Belt, which prompted a letter from NAACP Field Secretary William Pickens, indicating that he found the piece “very interesting and enlightening,” while its implications raised some doubts.

The African American press carried stories about the Party that were not directly related to Ethiopian defense activities, indicating the extent to which the CPUSA, in part because of the Scottsboro case, but also because of other local initiatives, had become part of black mainstream discourse during the Depression. There were also articles emphasizing the racial dimension of the crisis and of reactions to it in the US, and by no means were all African Americans enamored with communism. Indeed, racial violence between African and Italian Americans did take place in 1935 specifically because of international events. These incidents are not surprising, because historical investments in whiteness created such strong barriers to interracial solidarity, and because although there were numerous visible and vocal Italian antifascists, most Italian Americans supported the policies of their home country.

The debate about the CPUSA also took place in editorial columns and
letters to the editor. Views about communism were seriously discussed in the major papers of the black press, indicating that CPUSA ideology existed within a range of respectable, debatable ideas.\textsuperscript{55} Again, the point here is not that African Americans rallied behind the Party in droves, but rather that Party perspectives were an important aspect of debates within the African American community as to what strategies best suited the freedom struggle in this moment.

The CPUSA was also an important part of community organizing. In the Chicago pro-Ethiopia march that precipitated violent police reaction, Harry Haywood was a key organizer. In his account of the events, Party members on alternating rooftops would address crowds as they disembarked from “El” stations, and “every time we would outsmart the police, a great roar would go up from the crowd — and every time another arrest was made, they would jeer the cops.” It was because of acts like these, according to Haywood, that Communists “had become respected members — even leaders — in the Black community.”\textsuperscript{56}

The spirit of cooperation that Popular Front antifascism made more likely was evident in the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia. The PCDE was one of the first organized responses to the crisis, and it claimed a membership of 15,000.\textsuperscript{57} Although this number was probably inflated, the PCDE was a vital component of mobilization efforts; it arranged rallies, coordinated approximately thirty black health professionals into a medical committee, and sent Willis N. Huggins to Geneva in an attempt to urge the League of Nations to take stronger action against the Italian government.\textsuperscript{58}

The assorted elements of the PCDE had their mutual suspicions, but in the face of the overarching issue of Ethiopian defense, these suspicions were overcome to a surprising extent. Consider Abner Berry, a Communist and PCDE secretary, recounting his experiences when Party members approached nationalists to work together. When a UNIA leader was persuaded to attend an Italian Workers Club meeting, “[t]he Chairman called on him to make a speech. Well, he gave the regular speech that a nationalist would be expected to make, the whole business about Ethiopia, what it stood for, and when he got through, he looked at me indigantly and said, ‘Well, I told them.’ And then there was this burst of applause, they gave him money, and he never got through talking about it.”\textsuperscript{59} The episode revealed that although socialism and nationalism should not be conflated as interchangeable forms of resistance, the two were not always and only divergent. Although antifascism provided the movement advocating for Ethiopia with a common political denominator, every participant was not necessarily a self-identified leftist. But each of these political actors helped create a camp aligned around a political cause, within which leftist thinkers held considerable sway in articulating the relationship between opposition to racism, fascism, capital, and empire. These ideas had an effect, especially as they were being put forward by those who had shown themselves to be committed supporters of Ethiopia’s cause.

The PCDE brought together a very disparate cluster of organizations
and represented the potential of Popular Front cooperation. As the PCDE posters of 1935 indicate, their “monster” meetings drew crowds to such venues as the Abyssinian Baptist Church and even Madison Square Garden. At these events, liberals such as Walter White and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., nationalists A.L. King and Arthur Reid, the CPUSA’s Abner Berry and James Ford, and the unclassifiable Du Bois shared the stage. Within a decade, an attempt to assemble such a diverse group might have appeared naive or quixotic, but in the early days of the Popular Front, when the threat of fascism meant that choosing between liberalism, nationalism, and communism did not entail a fixed and final decision, possibilities were less predictable.

The Communist Party at times played an off-stage role in the larger black community, but it nevertheless remained influential. This was not only or even primarily because the Party’s class struggle ideology spoke to the class divisions in black life. Rather, the CPUSA won supporters because of rank-and-file sincerity in the struggle against racism and poverty. For the Party, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis occurred at a moment when it was reaching out to those with varying ideological proclivities to fight the threat posed by fascism. This confluence of factors placed the Party close to the center of the mass mobilization that occurred in that year. The CPUSA, occupying the political field in tension and coalition with the NAACP, nationalist groups, and liberal humanitarians, was not the only group that gave structured direction to the movement, but it was one to which African Americans of the period gave serious consideration for the purposes of Ethiopia’s defense. In the final analysis, a leftist mentality was an integral part of that coming together of Communist, Pan-Africanist, and nationalist elements that made 1935 such a pivotal year in United States, and indeed global, history.

1935 represents a crossroads in the African American freedom struggle. It was a moment that built upon an internationalist tradition that linked oppression at home with exploitation overseas. It built on these traditions, but it gave public expression to their sentiments like never before. 1935 also foreshadowed the struggles to come during World War Two, the Civil Rights Movement, and the colonized’s quest for independence. Italy’s aggression had a new fascist twist to it, but there was something very familiar about its themes of white supremacy and economic exploitation. Although African Americans had decried imperialism before, Italy chose to attack not only one of the last remaining independent African nations, but also one whose symbolic import was immeasurable. The scale of the African American response to Mussolini’s colonialist project was in keeping with the significance of what Ethiopia stood for.

NOTES

1 For their comments, suggestions, critiques, and words of encouragement, I would like to thank Karen Ferguson, Mark Leier, Marilyn Gates, Nelson Lichtenstein,
Christopher Newfield, Cedric Robinson, George Lipsitz, Jane Power, Jack O'Dell and the readers for Left History for sharing their helpful responses to earlier versions of this article.


5 For two overviews of the ways in which many black intellectuals privileged the explanatory power of economics over race during the Depression, see Jonathan Scott Holloway, Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919-1941 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and especially Nikhil Pal Singh's analysis of the lefward turn within the black community in the changed circumstances of the 1930s in his Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 58-100. For an alternative view, see Jonathan Rosenberg, How Far the Promised Land?: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 75-128. While it is important to note that the black elite was a heterogeneous group that did not speak with one voice or pursue a uniform set of interests, there was a leadership class in the African American community identifiable to social commentators within and outside it. See Kevin K. Gaines, Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Karen Ferguson, Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).


to the crisis, these works say little about the role of the organized left. Robin Kelley and Cedric Robinson have offered the most insightful analyses of this relationship, but not in works focused on documenting the black/left intersection amid African American opposition to this Italian imperial endeavour. See Cedric J. Robinson, “The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis,” Race and Class 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1985): 51-65; Robin D.G. Kelley, Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class (New York: Free Press, 1994), 123-132.


Munro


29 Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 155. Although a fuller discussion of the UNIA would take us too far from my argument, it is worth noting that the tensions within Garvey’s and the UNIA’s ideologies and program have led to quite contrasting historiographical accounts. In their important work of the 1970s and early 1980s, John Henrik Clarke, Tony Martin, and Lawrence Levine stressed the ways in which Garvey provided a timely and galvanizing articulation of a widespread black racial consciousness. Since then, Manning Marable and Judith Stein have underscored the social and economic conservatism of Garvey’s nationalism (especially after his visa status was threatened due to attention from J. Edgar Hoover), while Barbara Bair, Robert Hill, LaVerne Gyant, and Ula Taylor have highlighted the contested conventionality of the UNIA’s gendered hierarchies. For the purposes of the present discussion, these interpretations are all worth keeping in mind, though the central point I wish to keep in play is that UNIA nationalism put forward a transnational vision of racial pride that both held up an image of Ethiopia and enjoyed considerable appeal, and as such constitutes an essential part of the backdrop to the events of the 1930s. See John Henrik Clarke, ed., with the assistance of Amy Jacques Garvey, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (New York: Vintage, 1974), Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1976); Lawrence W. Levine, “Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Revitalization,” in John Hope Franklin and August Meier, eds., *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 105-138; Manning Marable, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), chapter 5; Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Barbara Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” in Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverb, eds., *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in
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36 George Padmore, *Africa and World Peace* (London: Frank Cass, 1972 [1937]), 121. The Italian military was no pioneer in deploying this particular innovation of empire, as Rashid Khalidi points out: “Iraq, Morocco, Libya, and Syria were the laboratory where the military high-technology of the post-World War I era was first tried out, and where the textbook on the aerial bombardment of civilians was written.” Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 27.


Cedric J. Robinson, “Fascism and the Intersections of Capitalism, Racialism, and Historical Consciousness,” *Humanities in Society* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1983), 325.


“Harlem Labor Centre,” 18 December 1935, 2, Frank Crosswath Papers, Box 3, Folder 6, Schomburg Center; “World Labor Called to Fight War,” *Daily Worker*, 9
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54 Robert E.S. Harris to Ralph Bunche, 7 October 1935, Ralph Bunche Papers, Box 24, Folder 12, Schomburg Center; Frederick Brown Harris to Ralph Bunche, 23 October 1935, Ralph Bunche Papers, Box 24, Folder 12; “Ethiopian Diplomat Visits H.U.,” Ralph Bunche Papers, Box 52.


60 “Ethiopia Defiant As Italy Plans To Grab Africa,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 February 1935.

61 The persistence of the black press on this point is undoubtedly the result of their having the laborious task of countermanding the hegemony of African stereotypes from white press outlets, such as the *New York Times*, who attributed Ethiopian guerilla tactics against Italy to Ethiopians being “ignorant of modern weapons.” See “Ethiopians
Munro


“Girls In Demonstration,” Chicago Defender, 29 June 1935; “2 Girls Chain Selves at
Italian Consulate in Behalf of Ethiopia,” Baltimore Afro-American, 29 June, 1935.


79 Penny Von Eschen, Race Against Empire, 42.
82 Bill V. Mullen, Popular Fronts, 11.
86 Howard Johnson, “Nite Class, Sound Roll #7,” [interview], 17 October 1979, Howard “Stretch” Johnson Papers, box 2, unprocessed, folder 16, Tamiment Library.
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89 “Defend Ethiopia!” Daily Worker, 4 April 1935.
90 “Communist Party of Italy Pledges Aid To Ethiopia,” Daily Worker, 14 August 1935. For a fascinating account of the nuances and contradictions in the PCI response to Italian imperialism, see Neelam Srivastava, “Anti-Colonialism and the Italian Left: Resistances to the Fascist Invasion of Ethiopia,” Interventions 8, no. 3 (November 2006): 413-429.
99 Mark Naism, Communists in Harlem, 139.
100 “Mass Protest Meeting!,” UNIA Records of the Central Division (New York), Reel 5, Box 15, Schomburg Center; “Ethiopia Attacked!,” UNIA Records of the Central Division (New York), Reel 5, Box 15; “Defend Ethiopia!,” UNIA Records of the Central Division (New York), Reel 5, Box 15; “War! Ethiopia Invaded!,” UNIA Records of the Central Division (New York), Reel 5, Box 13, c149; “Monster City Wide March for Peace,” UNIA Records of the Central Division (New York), Reel 5, Box 13, c149.

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**Introduction**

When, in 1935, the sociologists Helen and Robert Lynd returned to Muncie, Indiana to complete their second study of the community, *Middletown in Transition* (1937), they found a city struggling with the collective consequences of the Great Depression. Despite the manifest impact of the downturn in the business cycle, Muncie community leaders and the Republican dominated press consistently downplayed that impact in the years between 1929 and 1935. A brighter day was always just around the corner. And the causes of the Depression were often portrayed as primarily psychological. As one newspaper editorial put it early on, “If tomorrow morning everybody should wake up with a resolve to unwind the red yarn that is wound about his old leather purse, and then would carry his resolve into effect, by August first, at the latest, the whole country could join in singing, ‘Happy Days Are Here Again.’” At the same time, despite an upsurge of labour activity, the union movement in Muncie was decimated by a combination of factors, including the municipality’s open shop policy, a continuing welfare capitalism in some of the largest manufacturing firms, and perhaps most importantly the shocking inability of the traditionalist American Federation of Labor to use the continuing economic crisis as an organizing wedge. For Middletown’s “working class”, the city’s majority, this led to disillusionment with traditional labour organizations, and a general sense of fear and insecurity as the effects of the Depression made “getting a living” an increasingly precarious endeavour. Moreover, the ideological forces arrayed against workers, combined with a long tradition of American republican liberalism, led many and perhaps most workers to see their plight as an individualized phenomenon, the result of personal failure, and not the consequence of systematic processes at work. As the Lynds put it, “this fear, resentment, insecurity, and disillusionment has been to Middletown’s workers largely an *individual* experience for each worker, and not a thing generalized by him [sic] into a ‘class’ experience.”

But, as their title indicates, the Lynds’ own intervention was decidedly the tale of a city in transition. While labourers were disillusioned and isolated in 1935,
already by 1936, some Middletown citizens from the working class Southside
neighbourhoods began to show signs of a growing class awareness. “The fact
that, as one worker describes it, ‘We workers licked the big bosses here [in
Middletown] by our majority for Roosevelt [in 1936]’ may foreshadow some
increase in South Side morale.” Roosevelt became the symbolic representation
of a “working class” community, a totemic emblem of social solidarity. Americans
were increasingly willing and able to perceive society through the lens of class
and contradiction. A working class community was being forged; and this construc-
tion depended, at least in some part, upon the representations offered by mass
culture and mainstream cinema.6

Through public signs, working Americans learned the proper meaning of
cultural tropes like “masculinity” and “femininity”; through ritual, workers learned
how to act the part prescribed by these gendered norms. Just as in a small scale
society, interpellation7 begins with the collective mythic tales told to the tribe by
elders gathered about a night fire, so too the cinematic experience in 1935 still con-
tained the residue of ritual enchantment. True, the public theatre was a bustling
place, with babies crying, children chomping popcorn, and lovers in the back rows
exploring the limits of sexual license. It was in the darkness that powerful collec-
tive myths were elaborated; and the spectator, drawn in by the camera, learned the
lessons of gender, race and class, through the power of the camera’s projection.
Undoubtedly, these lessons would have little value were they not reinforced by
experiences beyond cinema’s three walls. Cinema was part of a broader representa-
tional apparatus, and the messages in the movie house were both reinforced and
at times contradicted by symbolic structures outside the theatre.8

In the autumn of 1935, a story appeared on page 22 of the New York Times.

Bitter personal animosities engendered by the rivalry between industrial and craft
unionists broke out on the floor of the American Federation of Labor
Convention today, resulting in a fist fight between John L. Lewis, president of
the United Mine Workers of America, and William S. Hitchens, president of
the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.9

This demonstration of a decidedly masculine prowess on the part of Lewis rep-
sents the birth pangs of the new vision of industrial unionism offered by the
Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Just a little more than a year later,
what began as a fistfight between two old men turned into a nation-wide wave of
sit-down strikes. For a brief moment, the CIO offered new possibilities of soli-
darity to workers who had been abandoned by the parochial business unionism of
the American Federation of Labor.10

The years 1935, 1936, and 1937 were pivotal years in the history of the
American working class. From the founding of the CIO and the Popular Front,
to Roosevelt’s 1936 re-election campaign full of rhetoric about monopoly capital
and “economic royalists”, and the sit-down strikes at General Motors, American labourers were gaining a new sense of confidence and forging new principles of hope.11 Within ten years, with the passage of Taft-Hartley in the wake of the 1946 strike wave, and the beginnings of the latest “red scare”, that hope would be decisively deflated.12 The defeat of this promising moment for American social democracy consisted of a complex set of interacting causes. These included the nation’s entry into the Second World War, with the resulting transformation of class-based “cultures of solidarity” into an imagined national community, as well as the American left’s complicated relationship to the Soviet Union and the American Communist Party. Racialized and gendered hierarchies at home, in neighbourhoods, and at the workplace were, as a consequence, perpetuated. While this retreat from social democracy had much to do with coercive practices produced by the state apparatus, workers themselves participated in the decline of their brief moment of relative power. In particular, attitudes toward racial others and women set limits that foreclosed the possibility of wider circuits of solidarity.

Since the 1930s seemed to so many at the time full of social democratic possibility, and since, within ten years, those possibilities ended in a tragic failure, I think it worthwhile to spend some time exploring the popular cultural representations of labour, race, and gender that both fueled this moment and limited its potential. Thus, I will examine two films from 1935 and 1936 that directly deployed images of labour struggles, Black Fury and Riff Raff, reading these films for the messages they conveyed regarding the politics of work, gender and race. Let me begin by frankly admitting that there is nothing “typical” about these two films. Indeed, the very fact that they represented the struggles of organized labourers made them atypical for the period. Between 1929 and 1949, only a handful of movies dealt with the struggles of working people, and fewer still directly addressed organized labour.13 Nonetheless, both films were successful at the box office, and both provide clues to the broader attitudes expressed by labourers in the United States and encouraged by filmmakers in Hollywood.14 Their very success suggests that they participated in a broader cultural matrix, producing a set of representational categories that corresponded to representations in other cultural fields. Furthermore, by dealing with these two films, I will be making two simultaneous, but related, arguments. This style of presentation is necessary since Riff Raff, the later film, can be understood as a dialogic response to Black Fury. In fact, the two films come from opposite sides of mainstream political discourse. Black Fury was a Warner Brothers production, and the Warner studio was well known for its “social problem” films and its sympathetic attitude toward the New Deal.15 Meanwhile, Riff Raff came from Louis B. Mayer’s MGM lot, a producer as well known for his conservative politics and virulent anti-communism as the Warner Brothers were for their liberalism.16 Thus, it is all the more remarkable that both films offer sympathetic portrayals of union activity. As we shall see, however, the grounds for that sympathy is very different in the two films.
“Hunkies,” “Gasbags,” & “Reds”

While *Black Fury* does take the side of New Deal liberalism toward unskilled unionized workers, its attitudes toward women partake of a kind of “radical paternalism” familiar to many in the labour movement, confining women to the household, and at best, to an auxiliary status in labour struggles. Thus, while *Black Fury* provides a sympathetic vision of industrial unionism, at the same time it sets imaginary limits to labour solidarity by excluding women from full participation in the movement. On the other hand, *Riff Raff* offers an economic justification for traditional AFL craft unionism, attacking militancy and communism with a visual rhetoric that employs a much more complicated notion of women’s gendered roles in the household and the workforce. In fact, perhaps because *Riff Raff* was largely the product of two powerful women screenwriters, Frances Marion and Anita Loos, it examines labour struggles from the perspective of the excluded woman and manages to pierce the veil of ideology that surrounded this male dominated discourse. The result is a picture that deconstructs the labour movement’s hegemonic masculinity, reveals “radical paternalism” to be a screen for masculine domination, and, consequently, rejects radicalism itself upon those grounds.

**Black Fury, Radical Paternalism, and the Limits of Labour’s Solidarity**

Following the lead of Eric Hobsbawm’s groundbreaking study, “Man and Woman: Images on the Left,” various labour historians and cultural theorists have explored the themes of “masculinity” and “femininity” in radical political discourse and in labour’s visual iconography. In *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, Elizabeth Faue devotes a pivotal chapter to “Gender, Language, and the Meaning of Solidarity, 1929-1945,” in which she finds women represented as part of the labouring community, but never as labourers. Examining political cartoons from labour newspapers, Faue finds women portrayed as proletarian republican mothers, adjuncts and necessary auxiliaries in the masculine confrontation between labour (or the “community”) and capital. Men appear as radical paternalists defending their community of “dependent” wives and children. Gary Gerstle’s study of the Woonsocket, Rhode Island labour press during this same period parallels Faue’s, and supplements her findings, adding the celebration of the patriarchal nuclear family to labour’s iconographic arsenal. These studies are animated both by the hope and the tragedy of this moment in American history: the hope for a socialist, or at least, social democratic, reorganization of the American polity and the tragedy of this project’s ultimate failure. While the collapse of social democratic hopes during the post-World War Two period had a complex, and in fact decidedly overdetermined set of interacting causes, these scholars suggest that among the various determinants was what might be called a failure of imagination. The inability of workers and activists to escape hegemonic gendered and raced norms, to see women and racial “others” as full members of the working class “community”, circumscribed the boundaries of solidarity and thereby restricted
possibilities for political agency and collective resistance.  

Radical paternalism thus simultaneously resists and helps to secure the reproduction of capitalist processes of exploitation. As a trope, this version of working class “masculinity” associates duty to the community (the labouring man as the protector of the weak, helpless and dependent) with both wage labour (through his hard work, he shelters and provides for his family) and with an invidious prestige that makes the man a lord within his household. Meanwhile, this version of the trope of “femininity” subordinates women, but validates that subordination by figuring domestic partners as essential supports in the manly struggle against capital’s assaults. Women are discouraged from participating in wage work and capitalist processes of exploitation even as they are encouraged to labour within the household. And while men are compensated for their efforts through wages, women labour within the household out of “duty” to their family and, perhaps, out of “love.” The radical paternalist household becomes a kind of feudal fiefdom, in which women serve their husband-lords out of a divinely ordained sense of duty.  

The day Black Fury opened at the Strand in New York City, Albert Maltz’s radical attack upon the coal industry, Black Pit, was continuing its run at the Theatre Union. “Although ‘Black Fury’ is immersed in the same materials as the militant Theatre Union melodrama ‘Black Pit,’” wrote the New York Times critic, Andre Sennwald, “you would be phenomenally naïve if you expected that it adopts the same bias as that angry product of the left-wing theatre of action.” Both Sennwald and Maltz recognized the rupture between the radical representation of class struggle in the Theatre Union, and the “conservative propaganda” found in the Strand. On the other hand, given our historical perspective, we need to be careful not to make too much of this rupture. While Black Fury did not offer a radical representation of class struggle, there was nonetheless a profound continuity between the systems of signs populating that film and the messages that constituted labour’s own self-representation. Whatever the overt political differences between Black Fury and the products of the labour press and Popular Front artists, on a symbolic level they shared a common set of constructions that often represented labour as inherently “masculine,” while women were represented as necessary adjuncts and subordinates in labour’s manly struggle with capital. In her iconographic analysis, “Gender, Language, and the Meaning of Solidarity,” Elizabeth Faue studied the gendered representations that populated the labour press of the 1930s. She writes:  

Conscious of their role in history, militant labor unions viewed their actions through a highly refined lens and recorded them in essay, iconography, and ritual. They forged a web of symbols which romanticized violence, rooted solidarity in metaphors of struggle, and constructed work and the worker as male.
Labour’s struggle was an industrial war, with labour’s forces led by manly proletarian generals against the effeminate bosses and child-like scabs. And, despite the centrality of women workers to many of the labour struggles in the 1930s, “What is noticeably absent from these cartoons is any representation of the worker (and especially the union worker) as female.” At best, women were adjuncts, auxiliaries, or, perhaps, proletarian mothers in need of patriarchal protection.

*Black Fury* is overtly a film about class and class struggle. But as a film about class, it is simultaneously and necessarily a film about gender, about the proper place of women in relation to working men. At the same time, as a film about class and gender, *Black Fury* is also (and perhaps necessarily) a film about “race” and racial constructions. The film appeared eleven years after the restriction acts that put an end to the great, post-1890 immigration wave that brought masses of Southern and Eastern Europeans to the United States. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these “new” immigrants were often represented in popular and scholarly discourse as racially separate from the native-born Anglo stock that made up much of the American labouring population. But with the influx of new immigrants, racial categories slowly began to change. A new language of ethnicity emerged to describe these foreigners who were not quite white, yet not entirely black. In the binary racial divide that had captivated the American political imagination since the eighteenth century, Italians, Jews, Greeks, and Slavs became what the historians David Roediger and James R. Barrett call “in-between peoples,” neither wholly white nor entirely “other.” For these “in-between peoples,” race-making was a “messy process.” Racial categorizations did not change overnight, but evolved slowly, in response to changing social, political, and economic conditions. By 1935, some representations of ethnicity suggested a conditional whiteness for the new immigrants (that is, if they were properly “Americanized”), while other representations continued to associate a racial alterity with the new immigrants. *Black Fury* takes a “progressive” position regarding these new immigrants. Although neither the words “race,” nor “ethnicity” appear in the film, the narrative posits an invisible boundary that separates white Americans from the immigrants who populate the coal fields, while, at the same time, criticizing that very boundary.

*Black Fury* begins with a shift whistle sounding and an industrial montage with images that dissolve and shift from a smokestack planted in a background of farmland; coal cars and company towns; miners, faceless in the shadows; to a scene of domestic support, as a mother and daughter prepare a meal for their men. Mike comes into the kitchen, yawning.

“Where’s Joe?”

“He’s not up yet,” Mike’s wife responds, “I woke him the same time as you. …Ah, that fella. Every morning the same thing,—Joe” she knocks, “he never want to get up.”

Joe Radek loves to sleep. His precious slumber might simply be the result
of his hard day’s labour, but there’s something else at work. As the film will shortly reveal, Joe sleepwalks through life, hardly aware of the labour struggles around him. He is a dull-witted “hunky” miner whose greatest hope in life is to marry his sweetheart, Anna Novak, and settle down on a pig farm. Like Radek, the workers in the mines are overwhelmingly “in-between peoples”: Italians, Slavs, Southern Europeans. African American extras are present at the union meetings and in the mines, but they have no speaking parts. Thus, the central concern of the narrative is with these “new immigrant” ethnics and their second-generation children. Anna Novak (Karen Morley), with her short hair and perfect English, represents this Americanized second-generation.

Later, in the bowels of the mine, the camera pans across lines of men moving about, working, hauling coal, while in the background Joe sings to himself as he digs. When a manager insists upon a speed-up, Joe’s happy to comply. But not all the workers are so pleased with their lot. Croner, a disgruntled miner with an Eastern city accent, begins to sound off.

“Here’s me shoveling gum, you yourself pulling down slate. They call that ‘dead work’ so we don’t get paid for it. Look at Pratt and Butch over there laying track. They’ve been breaking their backs all morning carrying rails and banging spikes...more dead work. And we can’t even begin to earn a nickel for ourselves until all that dead work’s done.”

As the audience will soon learn, Croner is an agent provocateur, trying to incite a strike so his Pinkerton agency can profit off the turmoil. Nonetheless, at this point in the film, the audience, like some of the miners themselves, is swayed by Croner’s argument and sees the obvious injustice of miners’ working for nothing. These lines and others scattered throughout the film clearly attempt to solicit the audience’s sympathy for the miner’s condition. Thus, despite his otherwise perceptive reviews, Andre Sennwald was quite wrong to claim that Black Fury “took the side of the coal operators against labor unionism.”28 In fact, the film offers a clear defense of what might be called a responsible unionism. In the film, the responsible, conservative union leadership serves an important function, protecting the interests of workers, although under the slogan “Half a loaf is better than none.” This decidedly anti-radical but pro-union perspective becomes clearly evident in the exchange between Mike and Croner.

The miners eat lunch, Croner sitting in the centre of their circle, sounding like an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World. “You know, I’ve been kicking around coal mines for years, and I never seen conditions worse than you got ‘em right here.” Although he begins by attacking the company, he soon turns his critical attention to the union itself. But Mike, the responsible unionist, takes offense at Croner’s attack upon the union.

The exchange continues until Croner leaps to his feet and flies toward Mike. Joe grabs Croner by the collar, and says, “If you touch Mike, I break you to
pieces. You want fight, come on, I give you.” In this sequence, several pivotal representations appear. First, Croner’s discourse persuades many miners, and the audience itself, that conditions within the mine need to be changed. Furthermore, Croner makes his appeal not just on the grounds of social justice, but on racial grounds as well: “They got you figured for a bunch of dumb hunkies.” At the same time, as the voice of responsible unionism, Mike resists Croner’s militancy, based on the principle that “things aren’t as bad as they used to be and they’re getting better all the time,” or, as the union’s vice president will put it later in the film, “half a loaf is better than none.” Finally, the conflict between ‘militant’ and ‘responsible’ unionism is settled not by arguments, rhetoric, or appeals to reason; rather, it turns into a display of masculine prowess, a contest of force between Mike and Croner. And when Joe intervenes, he succeeds because he is more powerful than the other two. Precisely because of his elemental masculinity, Joe garners the admiration and approbation of the other miners.

After the scene is set, a love affair between Joe Radek and Anna Novak drives the subsequent narrative forward; and, in particular, a racial dialectic of desire sets the plot in motion. Joe wants Anna; but Anna does not love Joe. Instead, she has a secret affair with a white, native-born company cop. As the incarnation of the Americanized “second generation” immigrant, Anna lusts after whiteness and cannot understand why, although she looks white, she is not. The scene opens with a close-up of a poster: “Auspices—Federative Mine Workers—Tommy Poole secretary—DANCE—Slovak Hall—September 22.” Inside, Joe laughs and drinks and waltzes with Anna to an old-world tune played by a band in lederhosen and feathered hats. As he hops from foot to foot, Joe says: “Old country dance more better than American jazzbo hot stuff mama, no?” Anna replies with a silent and sad smile. Three company cops come in the door.

The first says, “come on Slim, I’ll buy you a drink of that hunky bug juice.”

“Nothin’ doing,” says Slim, “one of us has got to stay sober in case these hunkys wind up in a brawl.”

As this exchange makes clear, whether the miners were conceived of as a separate race or ethnicity matters less than the fact that they are on the other side of the boundary demarcating “whiteness.” A cultural divide cuts across the community, with the cops, as white men on one side, and the “hunkies” and “hunkys” on the other.

As Joe goes off to the bar with his friends, to negotiate the purchase of a new farm for “my Anna,” he says “Slim, you take care for Anna, please…” Now alone, Anna speaks to Slim. Slim is leaving Coal Town for a new job.

“Oh Slim you can’t leave me here alone. You promised me, if you ever had a chance to get out of Coal Town you’d take me with you….You said yourself, if I stay here I’ll just be another worn out miner’s wife. Pinchin’ and starvin’. Tryin’ to raise a bunch of squealing kids. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life like that.”
This sequence illustrates the overdetermined meaning of racial categorizations. A series of binary oppositions structure and reveal this process. On one side of the divide, poverty, dirt, foreigners with old world customs; on the other side, abundance, cleanliness, American modernity. Slim is the symbolic incarnation of whiteness. He represents Anna’s escape from poverty, from degradation, from Coal Town. In this context, whiteness is more than simply a racial marker; it is, simultaneously, a class and a gender marker. Anna does not want to be “just… another worn out miner’s wife.” She lusts after the escape from “pinchin’ and starvin’” promised by a white woman’s identity and the freedom from the confined domesticity of a “hunky” woman “tryin’ to raise a bunch of squealing kids.” For Anna, Joe represents the “old world,” racial alterity, poverty, and patriarchy; while Slim symbolizes “Americanism,” freedom, abundance, and assimilation.

Anna Novak runs away to Pittsburgh, trailing Slim. When Joe discovers her betrayal, he breaks down and soaks his trouble in alcohol. That night, with Mike at his side, Johnny Farrell, Vice President of the FMW, speaks to the assembled miners.” Farrell’s talk echoes Mike’s earlier defense of a responsible unionism. Of course things are not perfect. But they are better than they were. And if the miners violate the contract, they would nullify the years of struggle it took “to make the bosses recognize” the FMW. “We’ll all lose.” But what’s equally striking in Farrell’s discourse is the fact that in the last analysis, he tries to hold the men to the agreement through an appeal to their masculinity. Men stand by their words. Men honour their agreements. Farrell ends his harangue with the question, “What answer are you gonna make to the men when their wives and children are starving?” Again, concealed in these words, is an appeal to the workers’ masculine identity. After all, a man takes care of his wife and protects his children. He does not let them starve for the sake of principle.

When Croner offers his retort, he also appeals to the masculine identity of the miners, and challenges the masculinity of the union leadership. In answer to Farrell’s challenge, Croner says, “We’ll tell ’em that if they wanna win, they gotta starve.” He suggests that if Farrell and his bunch were men enough, they would fight, and keep fighting until they won. “But they aren’t men. They’re leeches”. At this point, Joe stumbles into the meeting, drunk and angry. He hears fragments of Croner’s speech and says “Joe Radek not afraid to fight!” Mike tries to stop him, saying, “what’s a matter with you? Are you crazy?” But he is too late as Croner points to Radek and claims, “There’s your answer, Farrell. We’re through with your whole rotten outfit.” Then, saying, “take this back to headquarters,” Croner throws his union button at Farrell. Following his lead, half the miners in the room pelt Farrell and the other union officials with their buttons. As the barrage falls, Radek yells “betcha my life, fight! Everybody fight!”

The next morning, Joe awakens, hung over, in Croner’s room. What follows is a classic scene of cinematic seduction, with Croner playing Mephistopheles to Joe’s Faustus.
“You know, we got Farrell’s bunch on the run. Yeah, half the boys walked out on him and signed with us. Now we’re gonna form a real union, huh Joe?”

“What I care for union? What I care for anything?”

“I know what’s on your mind. You don’t have to tell me what it means to a guy when his girl runs out on him….Take it from me Joe. It ain’t worth it. It don’t get you any place. You gotta step out and be somebody. A big shot. Then she’ll be sorry she walked out on ya. Joe you’re a smart guy. You can be a big shot …. And don’t think the boys don’t know it either. Now listen kid”—a close-up shot of Croner whispering in Joe’s ear—“you stick to me and you’ll go places.”

Notice how Croner plays on Joe’s desire for Anna in his attempt to marshal the miner for his plan. In these lines, there’s an implicit recognition that Anna desired Slim for the status elevation that he would provide. Croner promised to make Joe more important than Slim, thus making Anna “sorry she walked out.” Joe’s desire for Anna leads to his desire for power and status. Later, after Joe’s been elected President of the new, insurgent union, he stumbles home in the arms of Croner, dead drunk again. Tripping over his words, he brings his face close to Croner’s and says, “President more better than coal policeman, no?” Joe took the bait. Whatever the merit of the grievances expressed by the insurgent union, Joe’s motivation comes from his love of Anna. For her sake, for her desire, he wants to be a “big shot.”

When the strike begins and scabs appear, Radek finds himself ostracized by his fellow workers. Meanwhile, the cinematic iconography of the strike evokes the “masculine” representations of labour strife, as angry miners charge the coal cops and throw stones and insults toward the scabs. The camera offers a close up of a miner’s wife, baby in her arms, careworn expression on her face, as she says to another woman, “I remember the last strike.” With those words the audience realizes that Radek was more than a fool, he was a traitor. He betrayed his community, and more than that, he betrayed his own masculinity and his responsibility, as a man, to protect dependent women and children. By trying to be a “big shot,” Radek lost his community, his job, and his manhood.

Scenes of eviction, poverty, and suffering follow as the miners’ families are driven from the company town. Meanwhile, Joe sinks deeper into drink and depression. But the final blow comes with Mike’s blood sacrifice. While attempting to protect the honour of a young woman, Mike is stabbed to death by a group of marauding coal company cops. Joe, who had come to his friend’s aide, ends up injured and in the hospital. While Joe recovers, Anna returns to Coal Town. She visits Joe in the hospital, but he does not respond to her pleas for forgiveness. However, when Joe learns that the miners had decided to end the strike, he is unable to stand the thought of Mike’s sacrifice being in vain. Sitting up in bed, Joe says:

“It’s no good they go back. Mike he didn’t want now they should go back. They got to win. Sure, it my fault. I got to fix. Sure fix for Mike. He fight
for them. Die. They don’t can do this to him. I stop. Sure, stop. I got all fig-
ured out. They no can go back. They got to win. What Joe Radek break he fix. I
promise Mike. Got to make good promise… They no go back. They got to win.”
Mike’s sacrifice serves to rouse Joe’s indignation. In fact, when speaking of the
miner’s community, Joe now says “they got to win,” “they no go back,” rather than
“we got to win,” or “we got to go back.” This is no longer “our” fight, no longer
“Joe’s” fight. It is “their” fight to be won or lost. But Mike’s sacrifice will bind
Joe once more to the community. And in the events that follow Joe will win back
his community precisely by winning back his masculinity.

After escaping from the hospital, Joe gathers a load of dynamite. Meanwhile, Anna discovers Joe’s plan and helps him plant the charges. Joe lays
siege to the mine, threatening to blow the shafts if management doesn’t settle the
strike. A stand-off follows, with Joe deep in the mines and, as the audience knows
from the montage of newspaper headlines that cross the screen, Joe wins back the
affection and admiration of his community. When Magee, the detective responsible
for Mike’s murder, tries to flush Joe from the shaft, Joe beats him to a pulp,
handcuffs him, and holds him hostage. Then, as Joe begins to blow some of the
charges, the mine manager begs Anna to talk Joe out of the mine, but she
responds: “This is Joe’s fight and he’s got to fight it his own way.” This is no
longer a collective battle for social justice, but Joe’s individual fight to win back his
manhood. Or, more accurately, the collective struggle has been subsumed by Joe’s
individual effort. He restores his place in the community through his masculinity.
“What Joe Radek break, Joe Radek fix.”

At the same time, by calling this “Joe’s fight” Anna effaces her own
labour, and ultimately, her own identity. After all, Anna helped lay the charges.
Her labour was an essential support for Radek’s siege. But Anna subsumes her
identity within Joe’s. And here, once again, there is a profound continuity between
Black Fury’s representation of the woman’s role within labour struggles and the
broader discourse of organized labour. It was as if Anna, during her sojourn away
from Joe, had stumbled upon these words from the labour press:

You too must realize that, in this struggle for a decent living, for the right to edu-
cate your children and give them a fair chance to continue to live peacefully
after you have passed on, you must take your place beside your husband. His strug-
gle is your struggle. His wages are your livelihood. Stand shoulder to shoulder with him
and fight.90

We do not know what happened to Anna while away from Coal Town. But whatever happened, she returned having learned the proper place of a work-
ingman’s woman. Because his wages are her livelihood, his struggle is her fight
too; but as an auxiliary worker in the important manly struggle for social justice.

When Joe emerges victorious from the mine and as the newsreels record
the cheering crowds greeting him at the gate, he takes Anna once more into his arms. Magee, Mike’s killer, leaves in handcuffs. “Mr. Radek, please say just a few words” begs the radio reporter, pushing Joe and Anna toward the microphone.

“I glad we win,” says Joe.

In the hospital, it was their struggle. Now, emerging victorious from the mines, “we win.” With these words, Joe rejoins the community. As Joe and Anna are carried off on the shoulders of the crowd, a miner cries out, “hey Joe, now you can raise them pigs and kids, uh?” Looking at Anna, he replies, “you betcha me life.” With the restoration of the ruptured community, Joe learns the proper paths for his desire. He no longer needs to be a “big shot,” just an ordinary Joe, wife by his side, trying to raise a bunch of squealing pigs and kids.

*Black Fury* is hardly a radical representation. Yet it did attempt to resist the dominant racial categories that excluded new immigrants from mainstream American society. Here I return to the theme of the “inbetweeness” of these new immigrant “hunkies.” They are clearly not white. Over and over again, we are reminded that they are “hunkies.” And yet by that very insistence (coming, as it does, from the mouths of the cinematic villains), *Black Fury* self-consciously indict the very racial categories it seems to be upholding. True the “hunkies” are not white. They are also, however, not black. Furthermore, Anna Novak, a woman who could pass as white, reveals the racial categories at work could equally be perceived through the lens of culture. In other words, the Hungarian director, Michael Curtiz, and the others behind *Black Fury*, may well be arguing that the children raised by Anna and Joe will be—or could be—white. If that was the case, then Anna’s domesticity, and the domesticity of the other women in the picture, could represent the movement from racial alterity to conditional whiteness.

*Black Fury*’s mode of representation is realism. It is a realism, however, that is purely stylistic. It is an historical document, not a documentary. And, as a document, it patently falsifies the reality of working peoples’ experience. During the 1930s, with male employment episodic at best among many in the labouring classes, women moved into the formal economy in record numbers, often becoming the household’s primary breadwinner. In *Black Fury*, however, not a single woman works outside the household. Rather, evoking a fictional and idealized golden age, men, and men only, worked in the “formal economy”, while women took their “rightful” place as domestic labourers, caring for children and cleaning up after the men. Remarkably, *Riff Raff*, a film that openly eschews the realistic mode common to the Warner Brothers’ social problem films, nonetheless comes much closer to the “reality” of women’s experience during this period.

**Riff Raff: “…just look after your wifely duties”**

When *Riff Raff* was released in January of 1936, it created none of the uproar that greeted the release of *Black Fury*. This despite the fact that, at least for the first
few reels, Riff Raff closely parallels Black Fury’s narrative but with some important differences. For instance, in order to situate the stories in decidedly working class contexts, both films begin with a shift whistle and a montage reflecting the early morning activities of the communities. But before the shift whistle blows, Black Fury sets the tone for its narrative with the soundtrack of a driving march, drums and horns creating an ominous aura. Before Riff Raff’s shift whistle sounds, the audience experiences a very different montage. After the Metro lion roars and the credits appear, pastoral and comic music introduces the caption, “Early morning on the waterfront,” followed by idyllic scenes of the white working class fishing community as it rises from an evening’s slumber. A man stretches outside his fishing shack. A woman lowers a beer bucket from a second store window to the cigarette stand on the first. Next, a close-up reveals a smoke stack shrouded in smog and the sounding of the shift whistle. Shanty tunes play as the montage continues, illustrating the work of faceless men around the docks, hauling nets and setting tackle then dissolving to a lush stumbling home to his shack on the dock. The scene then cuts to inside of the shack, where a blond woman stands before a washbasin, while the drunk stumbles in the door, stage left. The first lines of the film come from the woman as she rings out a piece of cloth:

“This is a way to talk to your father?”
“Where was you all night?”
“I was lookin’ for a job.”
“What was you tryin’ to do? Sneak up on it in the dark? Gee, if you was ever to get one, I’d drop dead.” The scene cuts to a bedroom, where two children are stretching. They shake Hattie (Jean Harlow) out of her sleep.

These opening moments of the film are so close to the introductory scenes of Black Fury that Riff Raff at first seems to be a remake of the previous film. But as the narrative unfolds, the audience realizes that the Jean Harlow/Spencer Tracy vehicle is not so much a remake as a response, dialogically engaged in a political and social argument with the prior film. The terms of that engagement are announced in the opening moments. Not only does the music suggest that Riff Raff is somehow less serious and less ominous than Black Fury, but the visual montage of white workers beginning their day on the docks tell the audience that this is a film about “our” community. If Black Fury was about “them”, new immigrants, foreigners, racialized others, Riff Raff was about an imagined “us”, skilled, white craft workers. Something else, more significant still, emerges from these opening scenes. While Black Fury’s montage ends with a shot of Joe Radek’s slumbering visage, thus communicating to the audience that this is his story, Riff Raff’s opening passage ends with Hattie’s peacefully sleeping face. This is her story. This is a version of Black Fury told from the point of view of the women in the working class community.

Hattie lives with her sister Lil, their younger brother, their father, Pop,
Lil’s husband and daughter. As we learn from the sequence above, the women in the household do the majority of the work. Pop is unemployed. Lil sees to the domestic chores in the household. Hattie works in a cannery. We never see Lil’s husband at work, though we know he is a musician and probably out of work or underemployed. Thus, at least in this household, women are workers, while men are represented as dependent wastrels. The first words in the picture, that comic exchange between Lil and Pop, offer a symbolic representation of a central social trauma caused by the Great Depression. Lizabeth Cohen argues that, “[u]nemployment among husbands forced many wives and children into the work force during the 1930s as the sole support of their families….When the male breadwinner suffered prolonged unemployment, traditional authority relationships within the family, between husbands and wives and between parents and children, began to break down.” Rather than taking this breakdown of patriarchal authority as a cause for mourning, however, Riff Raff’s comic presentation suggests that the loss of male authority is an occasion for celebration.

Riff Raff goes further still. From the first shot of Lil washing, women are situated as workers. True, Black Fury opens with a similar representation. While the women in Black Fury labour—“naturally”—for workingmen, however, Riff Raff’s women labour for lazy scoundrels. For instance, although Lil tells Pop to get his own morning coffee, she ends up pouring it for him. Moments later, in a parallel scene, Pop asks Hattie for “two bits.” Although she replies, “ah go ask the government,” she instantly reaches into her purse and gives him the quarter. In both cases, women’s surplus is appropriated by a man whose marginal authority carries only a vestige of prestige. He does not—and can not—order them to give him the fruits of their labour. They give out of love. They produce a surplus. He lives without working. The fact that the film offers parallel portrayals of women working—Lil labouring at home and Hattie in the cannery—suggests that both women are being exploited, though the form of exploitation varies. This focus on women’s labour in the household as well as outside of it highlights a central absence in Black Fury. By portraying women’s work as a natural duty, Black Fury essentially conceals the processes of exploitation that happen within the household. On the other hand, Riff Raff’s narrative offers an implicit critique of the “traditional” male dominated household. This household exploitation remains implicit precisely because no formal language exists to express its reality. Traditional Marxian discourse remained blind to non-capitalist surplus production within the household; and this blindness on the part of the traditional left had representational consequences. Perhaps the fact that the women behind Riff Raff—screenwriters Anita Loos and Frances Marion—did not recognize themselves in radical discourse influenced their dismissive attitude toward militant labour and political radicalism.

Both women had been writing screenplays since the days of silent cinema, and by the 1930s Frances Marion was among the highest paid writers in
Hollywood. In addition, both women were active in the re-formation of their craft union, the Screen Writer’s Guild, with Marion elected vice-president in 1933.34 Anita Loos’ experiences with organized labour began during the “red summer” of 1919, when the Actors Equity Association was transformed from a toothless guild into an authentic union. Loos’ husband at the time, John Emerson, helped lead the actors’ strike; and the labour strife had a significant impact upon the young writer.35 While she clearly admired the fact that “the actors’ strike of 1919 was one of the first ever to be organized by white-collar workers,” her account of the period takes an ironic, distinctly jaundiced form.36 Although the strike begins as a “struggle for better working conditions”,

…it soon evolved that the strike would give them [striking actors] a more imposing stage than they ever occupied before. And when strike activities began to give actors more publicity than they could earn onstage, the call to strike was sounded….Never had actors, en masse, attained so many headlines or had more fun, for the strike turned ever producer into a villain, and every striking supernumerary became a star:37

The strike was a stage; the strikers acting their parts for publicity and personal prestige. In the end, it was clear to Loos that the struggle was not for justice—but for power. “Actors were now entering into the twentieth century’s melodramatic switch of power; no longer underdogs, they now had their turn to trample on the boss, and this is only fair, considering the many centuries that the converse had been true.” And to this rather Machiavellian view, she adds a touch of anti-communism (seemingly via Ninotchka): “I had seen an early demonstration of the triumph of the underdog in Berlin, where Soviet commissars, ‘in town on business,’ were spending government funds on German baby dolls with all the abandon of capitalistic sugar daddies.”38 Loos’ ambivalent attitude toward the strike and the strikers plays out in Dutch Muller’s desire to use the coast’s labour troubles as a wedge to win personal status. And the film’s anti-militant attitude may have something to do with Loos’ experience of a strike that “split up families and old friendships” and divided a community of “artists” who fancied themselves beyond politics.39 Consequently, in Riff Raff Marion and Loos offer an ambivalent but sympathetic portrayal of craft unionism, from a woman’s perspective. While this perspective still largely depends upon an androcentric iconography, it also offers a veiled critique of labored paternalism.

On her way to the cannery, Hattie finds the men crowded on the dock, listening to a radical organizer’s harangue. The scene cuts to an office interior, with Nick, the dark-skinned Italian cannery owner, hanging his hat on a hook. One of his thugs, “Flytrap,” agitated and pacing, tells the boss that the workers are ready to strike. Nick, apparently more interested in the fox stole he just purchased for his girl, doesn’t seem to care. “…Look Flytraps, look. The men sign a five
year agreement with me to work on certain percentage without pulling walkout, didn’t they?...Is plenty tough for Nick, poor fellow. So what he gonna do? Nick is gonna for to bring in cheap labor and catch the fishes at half the price.”

This sequence stands as a stark contrast with the presentation of the capitalists in Black Fury. Here Nick’s image is much closer to the laboured representation of capital as effete, with his primping and vanity. To this, Riff Raff adds a distinctive racial cast. Nick is a racial other, and his accent and malapropisms, an echo of Chico Marx’s riff on Italian ethnicity, suggest an almost minstrel-like character. Moreover, the film plays upon the cinematic and cultural image of the Italian gangster, and Flytrap’s offer to “smoke” the union organizer solidifies the impression that Nick is somehow “connected.” So while Riff Raff almost approaches the historical “reality”—Nick wants to provoke the men into violating their contract so he can bring in cheap labour—the racialized representation of capital circumvents class critique.

The scene cuts to “Ptomaine Tony’s”, an eatery where Dutch sits at the counter flirting with the waitresses. The union leader, Brains, comes in, followed by Dutch’s side-kick, Lew. Like Flytrap, Brains is worried that the men are about to strike; and he’s particularly disturbed that his fellow workers are listening to the radical organizer. “He’s a red if I ever saw one.”

“Why that gas bag, I’ll break him in half. I’ll show them dumb-dumbs.”

Dutch pushes his way through the men and confronts Red Belcher. “Ah shut up and get offa that barrel. Where do you think you are, Roosh?” From the distance, Hattie watches with a group of women. As Dutch begins, one says “oh my, what a man.” Hattie mockingly rolls her eyes and the scene cuts back to Dutch. “When we was kids we used to fight like wildcats. But if an outside gang come in we stuck together and threw ‘em out. [Laughter.] Brain says that Nick wants us to strike. ...He thinks we’re suckers. But we ain’t. We ain’t gonna fight. And I’ll sock the first guy in the puss who says we are.” At that point, a riot erupts, with Dutch leaping into the fray. As a cop grabs Dutch and begins to drag him away, Hattie, in a balcony above, yells “watch out below, it’s a bomb” and throws a tuna can. The cop releases Dutch, grabs the can and begins to throw it to the bay before realizing the trick. As the men return to their boats, the “strike” over, at least for now, Hattie says “come on, Lil, I’m gonna show that big lug who saved his skin.” After the riot dissolves, a newsreel crew stops Dutch. “Mr. Muller, will you say something to the Metrotone news while we take your picture?”

The similarities between the opening minutes of this picture and the beginning of Black Fury are almost too obvious to mention. Like Joe Radek, Dutch Muller is a dense workingman, relatively indifferent to the union. Like Joe, Dutch has a close friend and advisor, a “responsible” unionist, Brains. Furthermore, an agitator, Red Belcher (“that gas bag”) goads the men to break a five-year contract and strike. Dutch, like Joe, takes the side of his friend, and through a display of masculine prowess, persuades the men to stay on the job.
Important differences appear in the framing of this conflict. In particular, Hattie’s narrative perspective orients the entire scene, and her consistent parody of Dutch’s “masculinity” and self-importance undermines the patriarchal iconography. Hattie sees through Dutch’s narcissism, and the audience sees Dutch through Hattie’s eyes. Like Anna Novak’s, Hattie’s efforts—in this case, her improvised “bomb”—are central to Dutch’s success and his escape from the police; but in this instance, Hattie resists Dutch’s attempt to erase her part in the process. Standing before the newsreel camera, talking about what he decided, what he did, Dutch is dumped into the bay by a fish Hattie throws. With that, the audience learns how to read Dutch’s masculinity and Hattie’s agency. She’s no demure product of old world custom willing to defer to male authority. Thus, from its first moments, Riff Raff inverts the typical iconography of a labouring community consisting of many workers and their dependent women and children. With the single exception of Brains, men in the picture are consistently represented as either dependent good-for-nothings or vain gasbags, while women support families and sustain the community, even as they are systematically blocked from formal participation in the union and the life and death communal decisions made by men.43

Riff Raff disrupts the normative system of gendered representations, but it does not do so by abandoning those gendered tropes. Rather, it re-orient s the spectator’s perspective by imagining gendered constraints through Hattie’s eyes. The film goes further still by envisioning women as workers, even industrial workers. After Hattie dumps Dutch in the bay, an industrial montage follows comprised of uniformed women working on assembly lines. Unlike Black Fury, where women work, but exclusively within the confines of the household, Riff Raff extends this gendered division of labour. The docks and the union hall represent the men’s world. The industrial cannery represents feminine space. The montage that precedes the dialogue offers a single male representation, and the man seems to be servicing a machine. In other words, men do the “skilled” craft labour, while women do the low status, and low paid “unskilled” line work. Furthermore, an exchange between Hattie and the foreman (“you’re gonna get the gate [get fired],” says the foreman) suggests that these women workers don’t share the union standards that protect the male dockworkers.

Hattie is led from the line to Nick’s office. She slams the door as she enters. Rather than firing her, Nick gives Hattie a new fox stole. This sequence introduces the racial dialectic of desire that drives the rest of Riff Raff’s narrative forward.44 Once again, as in Black Fury, there are indications that Nick lusts after Hattie because of her metonymic connection to “whiteness.” After all, Nick has money and power. But he lacks something. As he says to Hattie, “you got what it takes for Nick.” The audience doesn’t know exactly what “it” is. We do know that Nick socializes with the otherwise exclusively white workers who make up his tuna fleet. We also know that Nick is decidedly vain, vain enough to hang a picture of himself prominently in his office. Finally, despite Nick’s attempts to social-
ize with white workers and to put on a “white” mask—e.g., his attempts at rhetorical eloquence that come out as foreign malapropisms—he remains on the other side of a barrier. True, this “racialized” barrier has class overtones (after all, Nick is the capitalist); but it is hard not to see Nick’s desire for Hattie as a desire for assimilation, acceptance, and whiteness. And, at the end of the picture, when Nick has given up his desire for Hattie, we find him quite satisfied in the arms of another blond “factory girl”, adding further evidence for this reading. Whatever Nick’s racial ambitions, there is another aspect of his desire for Hattie that is unambiguously indicated. “You know, I like the way you dumped that Muller guy in the water. That was pretty good.” Nick desires Hattie because she put Dutch in his place. That is to say, Hattie becomes a prize in the symbolic and material struggle between Nick Lewis and Dutch Muller. In fact, the struggle between capital and labour that will consume much of the rest of the film is driven forward by Nick’s desire for Hattie, and Dutch’s desire to claim what Nick wants.

The next scene finds Dutch on a tuna boat, away from Hattie’s and Brain’s moderating influences. Now Dutch listens to Red. The filmmakers take this opportunity to attack and pillory Marxian value theory. Red tells Dutch that he “could do a lot” for the working men on the coast, and launches into an “explanation” of Marxian value theory.

“Wages are not the working man’s share of a commodity he has produced. Wages are the share of a commodity previously produced of which the employer buys a certain amount of productive labor power. That’s right, isn’t it?”

“Huh?…Oh sure, sure.”

“All right. The wage-worker sells labor power to capital. Why does he sell it?”

“Huh?…Why, because he’s a sucker, that’s why.”

“Now, look, is work an active expression of a man’s life?”

“Yeah,” says Lew.

“No,” says Red.

“No, you dope,” says Dutch.

By the time this exchange occurs, the audience already knows that Red’s loyalties lie with big ideas, not with the workers. Red uses Dutch’s ignorance and arrogance, his desire to be a “big man”, as a seductive wedge. In that scene of seduction, the audience recognizes only deception; and the claims made by Red represent an obvious inversion of the truth. According to the film, wages are the workingman’s fair share of what he produces. At least for the skilled craft workers on the boat, labour is the active expression of a man’s life. Here, again, let me suggest the possibility that this critical attitude toward Marxian discourse and the Marxian theory of exploitation, represented by the screenwriters as essentially meaningless, may have much to do with the blindness that traditional Marxists often showed toward women and household exploitation. After all, from the first shot of Riff Raff onward, it is women who do the lion’s share of the labour, both industrial and household production, while authority remains vested in the men
who exploit and appropriate that labour. Because the formal language of Marxian exploitation seemed to bypass the experience of domestically labouring women, Frances Marion and Anita Loos portray it as hollow rhetoric, one more empty exhalation from a male gashbag. While I do not mean to suggest that a more inclusive Marxism would have opened a larger space for radical representations within American cinema, I would like to suggest the possibility that Marion’s and Loos’ attitude might be symptomatic of a broader cultural perception among American women that Marxism did not speak to their reality.

Although Red appeals to Dutch with an obviously meaningless theory of exploitation, his seeds of seduction only take root once Dutch recognizes Nick’s desire for Hattie. And here, as in Black Fury, a racial dialectic plays out in the context of a communal celebration. The scene on the tuna boat ends with Red’s words: “We need you Muller, you’re a born leader.” And before the last syllable fades, the tune “You are my lucky star” frames the sign: “July 4th. Entertainment! Dancing! Fireworks! Come one! Come All! Celebrate the 4th on board the Fairy Queen.” Hattie enters with Nick on her arm and his brown fox stole around her neck. When she sees Dutch at a table with one of the waitresses from Pteromine Tommy’s, Hattie makes a bee line for the adjacent table, dragging Nick along, and clearly intent upon inspiring Dutch’s jealousy. On the bandstand, a man attempts to silence the crowd. A newsreel rolls. The narrator, “…Muller, a strong silent man, reluctantly offers his own modest comments on how he stops strikes.” The camera pans to a shot of Dutch standing atop his boat. Meanwhile, Flytrap says to Nick, “Hey boss, boss, you want me to knock his block off?”

“Ah leave him alone. He’s full of escaping gas.”

The scene then cuts back to Dutch on film, “Well what I done was no more than anybody woulda done who used their brains in the same situation…I wanna say that I don’t—” then Hattie’s flying mackerel slaps Dutch in the side of the head, he tumbles into the bay, and the audience in the dancehall explodes into laughter and applause. Dutch pretends not to care and leads his date out of the room, but Nick blocks his path. The struggle between Nick and Dutch over Hattie turns into a dice game as the men clear a table and begin to cast lots. At first, Nick wins cast after cast. When Dutch is busted, Hattie says “ah let him roll one more.”

“You better go downstairs,” says Nick.

“Hey, who are you ordering around?” asks Hattie. “I’m staying right here.” She moves close to Dutch and spits on his dice for luck. Dutch begins to win, taking most of his opponent’s cash. Afterwards, he and Hattie dance close on the floor while Nick watches, anger rising. Nick tries to break the two apart. “Hey listen, big shot,” Dutch says to Nick, “a little more respect outta you or I’ll tie up your whole dirty water front.”

At this point Brains intervenes, “You’re heading for trouble, Dutch.”

Dutch ignores Brains and downs Nick with a right hook. As the lights
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Hattie's anger melts when Dutch takes her in his arms and presses his lips to hers. Still in his arms, her voice almost a whisper:

“You don’t wanna marry me just ‘cause Nick does, do ya?...You didn’t dream about getting married ‘til I told you about Nick, did you?”

“Ah, don’t be screwy. I wanna marry you ‘cause you spit lucky.”

The audience knows better than to believe Dutch. Despite Hattie's clear affection, Dutch avoided her, or offered only flirtatious promises, until Nick provoked Dutch’s desire. In other words, Dutch wanted Hattie precisely because Nick wanted her. And this passionate circuit is further complicated by Nick's own ambiguous social status. On the one hand, he represents a capitalist, and so commands Dutch's obedience, if not his respect. On the other hand, Nick is a racialized other, a dark-skinned Italian who possibly desires Hattie precisely for her whiteness. Nick wants Hattie because normative American culture valorizes and validates her ethnicity. In turn, Dutch wants Hattie because Nick wants Hattie. And Nick has what Dutch wants. Nick is a “big shot.” What began as a scene of cinematic humiliation before the other members of the community, ends in Dutch’s public victory over Nick when he seizes Hattie, and in the subsequent scene marries her. And, when Hattie stands at the altar, she wears a pure white fox stole, this one a present from Dutch.

Like Anna Novak in the previous film, Hattie is offered a path out of poverty and away from her working class community. Although Hattie considers the possibility of an affiliation with Nick, the audience realizes that her central interest in her boss comes from his ability to inspire Dutch's desire. At the same time, like Joe Radek, Dutch is driven by the desire to be more than a simple worker, to be a big shot, a born leader, to have what Nick has. But Radek’s desire for prestige was derived, ultimately, from his desire for Anna. Prestige became a symbolic compensation for his lost love. In Riff Raff, however, that same circuit is inverted. Dutch's desire for Hattie derived from his desire to be a big man, his desire for authority and prestige; and Hattie, as the object of Nick’s passion, became a symbolic compensation for Dutch’s lack of authority over himself and his labour. Finally, unlike Anna Novak, Hattie refuses to be a passive object passed from man to man. Rather, she continually resists the authority and impositions of both Dutch and Nick (“Hey, who are you ordering around?”) and attempts to establish her own agency. Hattie's power is continually circumscribed by gendered norms, and her agency and resistance necessarily takes on a subtle and often concealed form.

After the wedding, Dutch takes Hattie home to their love nest, a consumer's paradise full of electrical appliances and new furniture. Although Hattie is impressed, she is shocked by the fact that Dutch bought everything on the
installment plan. And her shock turns to horror when Dutch tells her that he and the men have decided to strike. “Oh, come on squirt,” he pulls her onto his lap. “Don’t worry about the strike. Let me worry about it. It’s my business,” he says, nuzzling her neck, “you just look after your wifely duties.”

Another montage follows, beginning with a newspaper headline: “Muller calls strike.” Images of docked tuna boats; men fishing off the side of the docks for their family dinner, women and children moving through a bread line, close-ups of angry faces, women and men, yelling “scabs!”; along with headlines reading, “Strike reaches tenth week” and, “Scab fleet brings in tuna.” The montage concludes by dissolving to Nick’s office, with Brains and Dutch negotiating.

“Listen Nick,” says Brains, “those scabs ain’t fishermen. 50% of the load of tuna is spoiled already because they don’t know how to pack them in ice after they catch them….You need the men. They’re real fishermen. You’ve never lost a pound of fish out of their catches yet.”

The scene cuts to the words, FISHERMEN’S UNION, LOCAL NO. 14, the sound of angry male voices and, inside the hall, Dutch standing behind a table, Red at his side. The camera cuts away to the building’s exterior. Outside the window, women with worried faces watch the men’s deliberations, with Hattie at the head of the gathered crowd. Back inside, Dutch is pounding his gavel, trying to restore order. “None of you got a right to think,” yells Dutch, “I’m thinkin’ for you.” Cut to Hattie’s worried face.

Another voice is heard exclaiming: “I vote for a new leader. I nominate Brains McCall.”

Again, the parallels with Black Fury are striking. Like Joe Radek, Muller, pushed by his desire to be a big shot, forces a strike and loses. At the same time, a significant difference comes to light. In Black Fury, the sympathetic attitude toward “responsible unionism” depends upon an argument for social justice. After all, the miners and their families are mired in poverty, and, added to that, the audience learns about the “dead work” the miners do without any recompense. Riff Raff, however, stages a very different justification for “responsible unionism.” On the one hand, from the available evidence, it seems that fishermen and their families lead relatively comfortable lives. At one point, we see the interior of Brain’s home, and it is the ideal of lower middleclass domesticity. There is poverty on the docks, but it seems especially prevalent among the cannery workers. They have no union. On the other hand, when the argument for unionism is made, it is made on the basis of the skills of the tuna men. The scabs are ruining the catch. They lack the skills of “real fishermen.” The union makes sense because it promotes industrial efficiency and secures capitalist profit.

As in Black Fury, Dutch’s desire to be a big man severs his relationship with the community. At the same time, the differences with the prior film are also instructive. Despite the fact that the union decisions impact the entire community, including the women, the strike is men’s business. Dutch makes this quite
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expicit. (“Don’t worry about the strike. Let me worry about it. It’s my business.”)
Men are the community’s agents while women become passive observers, standing outside the window, watching the gasbags fight among themselves. Again, this re-orientation in perspective serves a critical purpose. For all his strutting and display, Dutch’s masculinity is revealed as hollow. As Brains puts it, “I don’t care whether you’re running the union or not. Our families are starving.” Dutch’s masculinity isn’t a shelter for the weak and the dependent; his paternalism is not a defence of community. Rather, machismo serves as a vehicle for personal ambition and Dutch is perfectly willing to throw the men of the union, as well as the community’s women and children, overboard in his narcissistic pursuit of personal power. By underscoring the self-serving character of Dutch’s masculinity, Riff Raff offers a veiled critique of the tired laboured paternalism that effaced women’s labour, made them subservient under the guise of “protection,” and left the life and death decisions that affected the entire community exclusively in the hands of men.

After Dutch breaks with Brains and the union, the parallels between Riff Raff and Black Fury largely come to an end. Dutch returns from the union meeting to find the furniture man repossessing everything he had bought on installment. Meanwhile, when Brains and Hattie attempt to bring Dutch back into the fold, they do not use a language of abstract or communal solidarity. That is, they do not appeal to Dutch’s loyalty to his comrades and his community. Rather, the appeal is closer to a form of blackmail. “Well you get in wrong with the union and you’ll see what you’ll be doing with that shovel.” The union is a vested interest controlling the most lucrative and high status jobs on the waterfront. It is not on the basis of class solidarity that Hattie and Brains make their argument; rather they appeal to Dutch’s pecuniary self-interest. Moreover, when Dutch refuses he says, again, “That’s my business.” But Hattie knows better, and from her perspective, “It’s my business, too.” Again, Dutch’s longing for status, prestige and power becomes a betrayal of his love for and solidarity with Hattie.

At the same time, both Dutch and Hattie remain prisoners of desire. On the one hand, nothing stands in the way of their happiness; nothing, that is, but Dutch’s pride. And in this context, “pride” is a synonym for “masculinity.” Hattie can go back to work and support the household. But Dutch cannot stand the thought of his humiliation. He cannot stand the thought of failing in the eyes of the other men or the thought of their laughter. In short, he remains imprisoned by their gaze, their expectations, and his own conception of hegemonic masculinity. “But Hattie is as much a prisoner as Dutch. “Dutch, look at me. I love you, honey. I’d do anything in the world for you.” He may be a gasbag, a blow hard, a swelled head “big I am,” but Hattie is unable to escape her longing for the man.

Dutch cannot allow Hattie to return to the cannery precisely because he is so invested in the traditional trope of the nuclear household. He sees Hattie’s participation in processes of capitalist exploitation as an implicit threat to his domestic authority; and the public display of his domestic authority is fundamen-
tal to his conception of masculinity. At the same time, Hattie is prepared to accept a “double shift,” both as a household worker and as a wage labourer, precisely because she loves Dutch. Her own attachment to a traditional trope and a traditional circuit of desire prepares her simultaneously for domestic exploitation and capitalist exploitation in the cannery. Unlike Black Fury, Riff Raff does not endorse Hattie’s attachment to Dutch and the forms of exploitation that come from her love. Rather, its critical and ironic representation offers an implicit critique of these circuits of social desire.

This theme of imprisonment by desire helps explain the extremely odd suspended resolution that ends the film. After Dutch and Hattie part, Dutch falls on hard times. When Hattie learns that he is sick in a hobo jungle nearby, she steals money from Nick Lewis to give to Dutch. Although she is unable to find him, the cops find Hattie, and as she is taken away, the arresting officer tells her “you’ll get twenty years for this.” The audience then learns that Hattie is pregnant, and she has Dutch’s baby behind bars. Meanwhile, Dutch comes back to the waterfront and begs to be readmitted to the union, to no avail. He learns of Hattie’s imprisonment—though not of the child—and formulates an escape plan. When he visits Hattie in prison and tells her his idea, she is insulted and leaves the room angry. Working in the institution’s kitchen, she has a conversation with two other inmates.

“Ah, what’s the use of kidding myself. I’ll never get over it. What a sap I was for sending him away….Oh, why do I keep on thinking about him? What do you do to forget a guy like that?” asks Hattie, rhetorically.

“I cut his throat,” responds her co-worker, “that didn’t do no good.” Fade to black.

These lines explain Riff Raff’s otherwise incomprehensible transformation into a women’s prison movie. The audience realizes that the prison house is a material embodiment of women’s desire. Like Hattie, the other women are trapped by their longing for men who are no good gasbags. The hegemonic masculinity that imprisons men through its constraints and demands simultaneously imprisons the women who love them.

When he returns to make amends with Brains, Dutch is a broken man. His suit is torn, his face dirty, his pride gone. Although Brains cannot get Dutch back in the union, he does manage to find him a non-union security job guarding the docks. This sets up the final parallel with Black Fury. Recall, in the previous film, Joe Radek ends the strike by dynamiting some of the mineshafts and threatening to destroy the entire works. Joe’s manly and violent resistance makes him once again a hero in the community. Riff Raff inverts Black Fury’s climactic moments. While Dutch is watching the docks, Red returns with two men from the hobo jungle. The three communists have come with a load of dynamite. They plan to blow the docks to pieces. Red says, “so if they aint going to let us work, we aint going to let them work.” Dutch plays along, pretending to agree to the sab-
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orage. At the decisive moment, though, Dutch turns against his former comrades, beats them, and seizes the dynamite. By foiling Red’s plot, Dutch saves the waterfront, and becomes a hero of the men, even winning the admiration of Nick Lewis.

Meanwhile, Hattie escapes from prison and Lil hides her from the cops. While Hattie’s hiding, the workers hold a party in Dutch’s honour, giving him back his union card. When he learns of Hattie’s escape, he rushes to her side. She is ready to flee with him to Mexico. But Dutch will have none of it. “There’s something I gotta tell you. I just want you to know that I ain’t the big shot I thought I was. See, Belcher kept telling me I was Trotsky or somebody, but I ain’t, see? I couldn’t be…I know what I am now. I’m just the best tuna fisherman on this coast. And I can still knock the nut offa anybody who thinks he’s big enough to say that I ain’t. And that’s all.”

Recall, once more, Black Fury. When the picture ends, both Anna Novak and Joe Radek learned important lessons. Joe learned the value of solidarity, and the limits of his capacity as a leader. He learned how to moderate his desires. Anna learned the proper place of a working class wife, as adjunct and support for the workingman’s struggle. Riff Raff, too, offers a tale of transformation. Dutch Muller learns that he is no Trotsky, no big shot. He is a skilled craftsman, and that alone should provide sufficient support for his masculinity. Dutch also learns the value of community. But the tone of that lesson is different. While Radek learns lessons of solidarity, Dutch learns that the union holds the power and without its privileges he is nothing. Where was Hattie’s lesson? What did she learn? How was she transformed? In fact, Hattie did not learn anything, because she didn’t need a lesson. From beginning to end, Hattie was the voice of the community, responsibility, and reason. Throughout the film, Hattie saw through the screens of masculinity and mocked and parodied Dutch’s blustering attempts to be a big man. Although Hattie saw through the cracks of Dutch’s self-presentation, she remained trapped in a world controlled by men, and, more importantly, by a hegemonic masculinity. Thus, we have the remarkably odd end of the picture. The cops wait outside her door to bring her back to prison where she’ll presumably finish her twenty-year sentence. Although Hattie pierces the veil of masculine ideology, there’s no escape from its constraints.

Conclusion

While Black Fury marks out the boundary separating white workers from “hunkies,” it simultaneously criticizes that boundary. The constant repetition of racial slurs by cinematic villains combined with the visible whiteness of Anna Novak signifies the irrationality and injustice of this racial division. The representation of African Americans as workers silently resists Hollywood’s “Jim Crow” standards. Thus the film both figures and resists the racial boundary that separates “hunkies” from whites. Riff Raff, however, offers an uncritically racialized world-
view and presents a working community made up of native born and unambiguously white low wage industrial workers and privileged skilled craftsmen. The portrayal of the union workers as both white and skilled had a clear political meaning at a moment in American history when the Congress of Industrial Organizations was attempting to build an industrial union movement with a largely ethnic and immigrant constituency.

At the same time, both films built upon a gendered rhetoric that places communal power primarily in the hands of men. But while Black Fury unambiguously endorses the laboured paternalism that portrayed men as the protectors of the dependent and helpless, Rif Raff, telling the same story through a woman’s eyes, deconstructs hegemonic masculinity and reveals labour’s paternalism as a screen for masculine domination. In particular, while Black Fury leaves women completely out of the industrial workforce, and represents household production as the natural duty of a loving wife, Rif Raff focuses squarely upon the question of women’s exploitation, both within the industrial plant and within the household. Men live off women’s surplus production, and women submit out of love and desire. During the opening moments of the film, Pop asked Lil for a cup of coffee, Hattie for two bits. Both women initially refused, and then silently surrendered. Both were imprisoned by their love. Traditional Marxian discourse remained as silent as these women on the question of the feudal household. Exploitation began at the factory gates. Perhaps it’s not surprising that women who did recognize this form of exploitation, yet had no formal language through which to express that recognition, might perceive talk about male worker’s exploitation as so much hot air.

Once again, I think that Rif Raff’s implicit critique of gendered norms, traditional forms of desire, and household exploitation, have much to do with its origin. Let me return to screenwriter Anita Loos’ autobiographical reflections upon gendered labour. Like Hattie, Loos faithfully fulfilled her wifely duties. For instance, her care work allowed John Emerson to pursue his organizing activities during the 1919 labour unrest. “Sometimes when he returned from late committee meetings John would be either too exhausted or too keyed up to sleep, so I spent hours ministering to him, treating his ailments, both real and imagined, listening to his outlines for the next day’s campaign, or reading aloud the countless fan letters he had been too busy even to open.” Without her material and emotional labour, Emerson’s strike might have failed. But Loos was hardly a traditional woman who surrendered her efforts with quiet fortitude. She was already an actress and writer, capable of supporting herself from her earnings. The fact that she worked in the formal economy as well as taking a second shift within the household helped fuel the anger she felt when others saw her as Emerson’s “inconsequential little doll.” After all, “John’s ‘inconsequential little doll’ was his nurse, secretary, masseuse, collaborator, and friend beyond all other friends, and had earned the better part of the family fortune.” Not only did she occupy mul-
tiple class positions, as an earner she proved superior to her household master. This over-determined perspective put her in a privileged position to critique the traditional household and the forms of desire that sustained it. Yet as the passage above suggests, even as Loos bridled under domestic exploitation, she herself remained a prisoner of the traditional gender expectations associated with love. And while I do not mean to psychoanalyze Loos, it is possible that the anti-radical, anti-communist, and generally anti-left tone of her film represents a reaction formation on the screenwriter’s part. Her uneasy relationship with labour, symbolically bound up with her uneasy and unequal relationship with her husband, perhaps provoked the portrayal of labour leaders and radicals as self-serving narcissists. Like Dutch Muller, John Emerson “frankly cared more for himself than for anyone else, and his main thought at all times was to see that he was comfortable and happy.”

During the 1930s, the labour movement continued the tradition of radical paternalism that had long animated much of its male constituency. In its public presentations, it tended to imagine women as dependent adjuncts in the manly struggle against capital, rather than as fully autonomous agents. That failure of imagination limited the labour movement’s potential by setting artificial boundaries to organized labour’s solidarity. True, women participated in the movement. But that participation was all but effaced from labor’s public self-presentation; and women in the movement were, for the most part, excluded from the highest leadership positions. At the same time, Marxian discourse seemed to have little to say to the experience of women, especially those outside industrial production. At best, it ignored the exploitation of women within the household; at worst, it endorsed the laboured paternalism that justified such exploitation as the natural outgrowth of a woman’s love for her family. Because of this exclusion, subordination, and blindness, radical politics and the labour movement came to appear to many women as “men’s business” and the screenwriters behind Riff Raff responded accordingly, offering a film that pilloried labour and the left for its continual refusal to burst the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity.

NOTES

1 Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Rick Wolff, David Fasenfest, Dave Roediger, Harriet Fraad, the anonymous reviewers, and especially, the editors at Left History for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay.
3 Ibid., 41.
4 Ibid., 44.

7 Althusser argues that cultural tropes and ideological forms function “by that very precise operation which I have called ‘interpellation or calling.” Ideology attempts to impose socially constructed and hegemonic patterns of behavior such that the subject experiences these social forms as “natural.” Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174. As I will argue below, two of the screenwriters behind Riff Raff, Frances Marion and Anita Loos, responded to gender’s interpelling call by using their film to subvert and deconstruct the hegemonic masculinity offered both by the labour movement and by Hollywood cinema.


12 George Lipsitz, Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
“Hunkies,” “Gasbags,” & “Reds”

13 In the earliest years of cinema, a broader range of representations existed and a number of films spoke directly to the experience (and the exploitation) of American workers. With the emergence of the powerful Hollywood Studio system, however, this range of political possibilities was considerably narrowed. See Steven J. Ross, Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).


16 Beauchamp, Without Lying Down, 353.


19 It is vital not to lose sight of the complex, often contradictory functions inherent in the discourse of radical paternalism. Radical paternalism, and radical traditionalism more generally, help shape narratives of class conflict that figured the forces of capital as enemies of the labouring community. For a discussion of E.P.Thompson and some of his American students on “radical traditionalism” see Graham Cassano, “Radical Critique and Progressive Traditionalism in John Ford’s The Grapes of Wrath,” Critical Sociology 34:1: 99-116; and Graham Cassano, “The Corporate Imaginary in John Ford’s New Deal Cinema,” Rethinking Marxism (forthcoming).

20 The postmodern Marxian economists, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, reject the notion that any single mode of production encompasses all the complexities of contemporary social formations. Thus, they offer a model in which various, competing, and sometimes contradictory class processes simultaneously exist together. “The feu-
Cassano

dal form is appropriate because it requires no intermediary role for markets, prices, profits, or wages in the relation between the producer and the appropriator of surplus labor.” Frad, Resnick and Wolff, *Bringing it all Back Home: Class, Gender, & Power in the Modern Househould* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 7


23 Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 71

24 See also Rabinowitz, *Labor and Desire*, 17-62.

25 Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 76

26 The term “hunky” was applied to many different ethnicities. But since the root of this particular slur comes from the term “Hungarian”, it’s worth noting that Black Fury’s director was the Hungarian born Mahala Kurtez, who, once in Hollywood, changed his name to Micheal Curtiz. Beauchamp, *Not Lying Down*, 306.


29 It’s worth noting that within the union hall, the “new” immigrant miners are portrayed together with African American miners. Although, as already mentioned, the African American extras have no lines, the director and cinematographer take particular care to emphasize the presence of “Negro” miners at the union meeting. This rare cinematic representation of inter-racial labour solidarity provides further evidence that Black Fury participated in a broader symbolic discourse of solidarity and a labour inflected iconography.

30 Quoted in Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 89. Emphasis added.

31 My use of “inbetweeness” follows David Roediger’s and James Barrett’s. The term “liminality” could also be used to describe the experience of the ‘new immigrants.” See David Roediger and James R. Barrett, “Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the ‘New-Immigrant’ Working Class”

32 Riff Raff opened to generally positive reviews and grossed over a million dollars, a tidy sum when movie ticket prices ranged from a nickel to a quarter. Beauchamp, *Not Lying Down*, 327.


“Hunkies,” “Gashags,” & “Reds”

36 Ibid., 253.
37 Ibid., 253
38 Ibid., 263
39 Ibid., 254
40 “Lew” is played by Vince Barnett, an actor who had previously appeared in Black Fury.
41 While it is true that Brains’ masculinity seems to be a positive counterpoint to the blustering vanities of both Nick Lewis and Dutch Muller, nonetheless Brains, too, is part of the androcentric power structure that puts agency and communal control primarily in the hands of men.
42 The racial dialectic of desire that I’m documenting was only one cinematic pattern among many. During the 1930s, the so-called “new immigrants” were represented on both sides of the racial boundary separating “white” from “non-white” Americans. This racial dialectic of desire also plays out in films that address the “yellow peril.” See especially Michael Rogin, “Making America Home: Racial Masquerade and Ethnic Assimilation in the Transition to Talking Pictures”, The Journal of American History 79:3 (December 1992): 1050-1077, and Gina Marchetti, Romance and the “Yellow Peril”: Race, Sex, and Discourse Strategies in Hollywood Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
43 In my use of “hegemonic masculinity,” I follow R.W. Connell’s definition: “In the concept of hegemonic masculinity, ‘hegemony’ means (as in Gramsci’s analyses of class relations in Italy from which the term is borrowed) a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of life and cultural processes.” R.W. Connell, Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 184.
44 Black Fury’s racial politics anticipate the imagery of Philip Evergood’s Wheels of Victory picture; and David Roediger’s analysis of Evergood’s work applies equally as well to the imagery in the Warner Brother’s picture. “Four centrally located and well-illuminated white workers huddle, exchanging words and the time of day. Looking wistfully at them from a carwalk is a patrolling black guard. The painting strikingly captures what civil rights leaders at the time called the need for a double V—victory over the Nazis abroad and victory over racial exclusion at home. But what the painting assumes is perhaps as important as what it argues. The four foregrounded figures, checking watches, stand for the included white worker. But just a quarter century before, during the World War I era, the dress and the sometimes orientalized and sometimes ‘hunky’ features of the four would have signaled their ‘inconclusive’ whiteness. ...Clearly important processes of inclusion were occurring, shaped by the continuing exclusion of people of color.” Roediger, Working Toward Whiteness, 134.
The Epigone’s Embrace, Part II: C. Wright Mills and the New Left

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Charles Wright Mills was laid in a lonesome corner of Oak Hill Cemetery, Nyack, New York, the last week in March 1962. A Roman Catholic service was performed at a nearby church at the request of his mother, Frances Mills. The International Fellowship of Reconciliation conducted a Quaker service over the grave. A grey tombstone marked the ground. Etched in the marble was an aphorism taken from his last book, The Marxisms: “I have tried to be objective. I do not claim to be detached.” He was forty-five.

Mills left behind a remarkable legacy. Just before he died, Ballantine Books printed 56,000 copies of his pamphlet, The Causes of World War Three.1 The Marxisms, published the week after, began brisk sales to college students in the rich countries even as Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba, was selling in Angola, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Laos.2 White Collar, The Power Elite, and The Sociological Imagination, the books that had made Mills the most widely read American sociologist in the world, were sowing discontent from New York to Tokyo.3

The complete bibliography listed seven books under Mills’s name, four more collaborative volumes, and approximately 250 briefer pieces.4 There was much more besides. In the office in Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall, where he had taught since 1945, the sprawling manuscript of The Cultural Apparatus lay alongside research for a multivolume work in comparative sociology, plus 350 pages of Soviet Journal and Contacting the Enemy. The archive later deposited at the University of Texas filled 88 boxes. Other materials troved in his home in West Nyack included diaries, letters, lectures, plans for work, transcripts, autobiographies, syllabi, and clippings, in addition to hours and hours of dictation recorded on reel-to-reel tapes. It was a large life to lose. The evidence was everywhere.

Mills remains today, more than 45 years after his death, a pivotal figure. A recent poll of the International Sociological Association ranked The Sociological Imagination the second most influential book in twentieth-century sociology, behind only Max Weber’s Economy and Society.5 American historians have been concerned to understand his influence as a practitioner of pragmatic cultural criticism and as a radical political leader.6 In 2004, writing in Playboy, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., identified The Power Elite as the leading alternative to the liberal theory of power in America and renewed his frequent attacks on the book and its author.7 Todd
Gitlin has pronounced Mills “the most inspiring sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century” and recommended him for “a new start for intellectual life on the left.”

Other examples of his continuing importance are scattered in the winds. In Achieving Our Country, Richard Rorty faulted the “Mills-Lasch thesis” for misleading generations of Americans on the threat of international communism. Robert Bork, in Slouching Towards Gomorrah, agreed with Rorty’s assessment from another direction, for different reasons. Bork ranged Mills with Elvis Presley, James Dean, and Jack Kerouac, “harbingers of a new culture that would shortly burst upon us and sweep us into a different country.” Far from the eccentric or isolated figure, Mills was a representative man, says Immanuel Wallerstein, a former student and colleague who carries on the critical spirit of his work. “If Mills failed, so have we all. If Mills is still relevant, so are we all. His ambiguities, his anxieties, his idealism are ours, in short, his biography is our collective biography.”

This article, the sequel to “The Epigone’s Embrace: Irving Louis Horowitz on C. Wright Mills,” establishes terms for a large-scale reassessment of Mills’s legacy. Here, as before, I am concerned less with advancing an independent interpretation of his social thought than with showing how and why various factions swirling around him after his death discouraged the possibility of an independent interpretation in the first place, how Mills’s biography, in short, became part of the political and cultural struggles of the 1960s. Since the evidential basis of received opinion about him is still nothing but a maw of apocrypha, partial truth, and provincial falsification, I have tried to supply complete, accurate citations to the extraordinary range of influence he commanded after his sudden death in 1962, much wider, indeed, than the received opinion indicates. These sources cast Mills’s story against a background at once social, political, intellectual, and international. They lay a fresh research trail around the many institutions, personalities, places, and movements through which he passed.

“Mills’s legacy is a summons, no secure possession,” Hans Gerth wrote in a eulogy for his former student, collaborator, and friend. In magazines such as New University Thought, Liberation, New Politics, Evergreen Review, Root and Branch, Ramparts, and Studies on the Left, a new generation of students and activists heeded the summons. Mills appeared in them as a political leader who perceived assumptions, exposed limits, clarified problems, and demanded solutions; as a writer who provoked them on multiple registers of experience; as a sociologist who taught that understanding the power of human character meant understanding the society that made certain characters possible and necessary. As the editors of Our Generation Against Nuclear War wrote in the summer 1962, “Wright Mills taught that our actions do in fact matter, and that we have choices presented to us every day—important choices—and we must accept their challenge and act accordingly.”

Lawrence Ferlinghetti turned him into a symbol of countercultural cool
in “A Parade Tirade (for C. Wright Mills),” a free-form poem appearing in Liberation in December 1962. “The America of the american legion isn’t ours,” Ferlinghetti wrote, mocking the “big phoney scene, having nothing to do with our america.”11 The two-Americas thesis, old as America itself, shot to the center of the radicalism that grew up around Mills’s example. In Desert Solitaire (1968) the anarchist writer Edward Abbey chronicled a secession from “the clamor and filth and confusion of the cultural apparatus” borrowing a key phrase.15 In the San Francisco Chronicle, the music columnist Ralph Gleason said “Mills had the effect on his colleagues that Charlie Parker had on the saxophone section of the Guy Lombardo band. He had the jazz mind.”16 Theodore Roszak compared him to Emile Zola, dramatist for the underclass.17 Even Norman Mailer, so jealous and so inventive a maker of rhetoric, borrowed “the power elite” when the time came in The Armies of the Night (1968).18

Intellectuals across Europe and Latin America hailed Mills as the representative of an indigenous American radicalism engulfed by the Cold War. The United States lost “a mentor and distinguished representative,” said the editors of El Mundo, in Havana.19 The Cuba Youth Union of Writers and Artists sent a sympathy message to the funeral. Carlos Fuentes called him “a man of action” and a “valorous knight of the truth” in Política, not long before the Mexican government forced the magazine out of existence.20 Fuentes dedicated his first international bestseller, The Death of Artemio Cruz (1962), “To C. Wright Mills. True Voice of the United States of America. Friend and companion in Latin America’s struggle.”

The list of friends and correspondents generated by Mills’s travels in the 1950s became, in the 1960s, a first-class roster and record book of radical thinking, a rallying point in the genealogy of the New Left. He was the elder figure they all knew in common. “He served in himself as a hyphen, joining the dissenting intellectuals of two conformist worlds,” E.P. Thompson wrote in 1963.21 Thompson praised him as a pioneer in using paperback books as counter-media and compared him to William Morris, no casual comparison in light of the fact that Thompson was the author of a 900-page homage on the man. But it was Mills’s attempt to throw open the Cold War to new voices that called out his highest praise. “His star stood above the ideological no-man’s land of orthodox emplacements of West and East, flashing urgent humanist messages. If we couldn’t always follow it, we always stopped to take bearings.”22

At home, a corresponding movement for “radical sociology,” the first in the history of professional sociology in the United States, widened the cracks he had made. Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich, editors of the influential Sociology on Trial (1963), reprinted a chapter from The Sociological Imagination and dedicated the book to him.23 G. William Domhoff pursued the power elite thesis in Who Rules America? (1976) and The Higher Circles (1970). Membership in the American Sociological Association more than doubled over the decade, and the radicals signalled solidarity at overcrowded, raucous conventions by pinning “C. Wright Mills
Lives” buttons to their suits. Apocrypha circulated about his academic career. In The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1970) Alvin Gouldner asserted that he had never made it to full professor.24 A German translator of Character and Social Structure claimed he had lost his professorship in the McCarthy purges. Then a Yugoslavian journal of social science repeated the error, adding that his Marxism had caused his dismissal.25 Columbia University students traded a rumour according to which his colleagues and adversaries Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton had conspired to murder him in the 116th Street subway station.26

Dusky Lee Smith flunked out of high school and would have quit college were it not for The Power Elite. Even before Smith completed his doctorate at the State University of New York, Buffalo, he mustered confidence enough to fire off intertemperate attacks on the sociological establishment.27 “I know I will never be as great a man in the intellectual world as your son,” Smith wrote in 1965, after making a pilgrimage to Frances Mills in San Antonio, “but I know I will try to follow in his footsteps to the best of my ability. (And in my own way). But I do find many similarities between Charles Wright and my self in many areas.” Mixing flattery of Frances Mills with promises to slay her son’s critics, Smith’s letter bared the resentment underlying radical sociology in these heady years.28

Mills’s reputation carried none of the metaphysical guilt of a communist past and at the same time exemplified unbroken radical commitment. Entrenched representatives of the political Left saw the entailments of his stature all too clearly. “Is the recognition that Marx was a great man and made lasting contributions to human thought the basic criterion for working in ‘the tradition of Marx?’” asked the official journal of the American Communist Party, in a sour review of The Marxists. “No, we are sorry, we cannot go along, for this is a stretch-hose so elastic that any foot could wear it.”29 Others went along in relief and gratitude. Jonah Raskin, a Columbia University student and activist, “read The Power Elite when it first came out, and was delighted that somebody who wasn’t a communist or an old school Marxist had come out and pointed to the powers-that-be in the USA.”30 Morton Horwitz read the book in the second semester of his junior year at the City College of New York. Horwitz had studied Marx in high school; his uncle was treasurer of the Manhattan Communist Party. “But I had never read anything like The Power Elite.”31 After 1956, Horwitz’s uncle fell into embarrassed silence while he was able to continue to think and talk radically about politics.

Mills’s criticism of leftist cant and dogma made his work available to rival groups within the new constellation. Stokely Carmichael read The Power Elite in a study group at Howard University.32 Soon after, he went south to participate in the Congress of Racial Equality’s “Freedom Rides.” The decision earned him jail sentence in the Parchman State Reformatory, in Mississippi. Part of the 49 days he spent in prison he spent reading more Mills. “You know how dumb them crackers are?” he told a Village Voice reporter after his release. “In jail they took away all my books—stuff by DuBois, King, Camus. But they let me keep Mills’s book
about Castro, Listen, Yankee, because they thought it was against Northern agitators.”

Carmichael’s odyssey from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Black Panthers, from nonviolent disobedience to guerrilla warfare, produced one of the decade’s most hotly debated books, Black Power (1967). Its main idea, “institutionalized racism,” satisfied Mills’s exhortation to locate personal troubles in the framework of public structures, though its whirlwind of separatist rhetoric drained off the analytical potential of the power elite thesis and left a residue of propaganda.

The most astute critic of “black power,” Harold Cruse, found inspiration in another corner of Mills’s work. Cruse resigned his membership in the Communist Party in 1952, dissatisfied with the unreflective form of Marxism it sheltered, and grew convinced of its irrelevance to the special problems of American blacks. In 1965 and 1966, in a course at the Black Arts Repertory School in Harlem, he made Mills a prominent part of the curriculum. The following year, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual acknowledged the largeness of the debt. “For me, the emergence of C. Wright Mills, with his critique of the policies, dogmas, and vanities of the old Marxist leftwing, was a landmark in American social theory,” Cruse wrote. He urged black intellectuals to reject the roles of guerrilla warrior, civil rights spokesman, and party operative and instead to seek influence as intellectuals working toward a biracial cultural democracy. He recommended Mills as the best place to begin. The “cultural apparatus” offered a “new method for a new radical criticism of American society,” since it concentrated attention on the social functions of communication machines from which blacks had been shut out. Mills had not addressed himself to race, but neither had black theoreticians engaged him in their problems, crippled as they had been by the Marxist distrust of mass society theory. If they looked at him anew, they would find a model that “contained the seeds of a Negro-White alliance of a new type.”

The fluency of Mills’s vocabulary was such that even single examples of his writings encouraged different temperaments and projects. Thus Abbie Hoffman, the American prankster, and Gabriel Zaid, the Mexican poet, had little in common other than a shared debt to an essay titled “The Cultural Apparatus.” Zaid was writing poetry when he encountered it in translation. From its daring terms and definitions he forged his own distinctive cultural criticism. Abbie Hoffman read the essay early in the decade, and soon made it the “theoretical basis of what was to come.” What was to come was a politics of culture that aimed, if not to repossess “the cultural apparatus,” then at least to bring it into the slums and streets, to expose it to counter-symbols that would disclose its underlying absurdity. Hoffman and fifteen of his fellow anarchists and hippies entered the gallery of the New York Stock Exchange, tossed three hundred dollar bills over the railing, and looked on as the stock brokers scrambled for money fluttering from the sky. Hoffman described this sort of gesture as “image war” or “symbol war.” It was as reasonable an adaptation of Mills’s sociology of culture as Zaid’s
soberminded contributions to *Letras Libres*.

Christopher Lasch made use of the “The Cultural Apparatus” in *The New Radicalism in America* (1965), where he advanced a sociology of literary success that read as a close paraphrase of Mills.29 Although Lasch had not met him at Columbia, where he attended graduate school in History in the late 1950s, the essays collected in *The Agency of the American Left* (1969) and *The World of Nations* (1974) moved into the “no-man’s land” between politics and culture, power and conscience, confrontation and withdrawal. Lasch did more than anybody to reconstruct indigenous forms of critical thought with the tools Mills had sharpened. His mature work, *Haven in a Heartless World* (1977), *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979), and *The Minimal Self* (1984) were sophisticated attempts to delineate the changing relations between personality structure and advanced capitalism, to connect “private troubles” with “public issues,” foreign policy with domestic, family life with government policy, from a position outside parties, cliques, classes, movements, and nations.

While Hoffman carried Mills’s ideas into the New York Stock Exchange and Lasch carried them into the *New York Review of Books*, Dave Meggyesy carried them into the locker-room of the St. Louis Cardinals. Meggyesy, raised on a pig farm in Ohio, had every reason to be grateful to football. He made All-American at Syracuse University, then joined the Cardinals, and eventually started as linebacker.

By this time, however, Meggyesy had begun to ask questions that his friends and team-mates found discomfiting. In January 1966, he enrolled in a graduate course in education in Washington University, St. Louis; it was there that he discovered *The Sociological Imagination*. “It influenced my thinking more than any other book up to that moment,” he remembered in his shattering autobiography, *Out of Their League* (1970).29 Meggyesy reported the racism, fraud, and brutality he had witnessed during his football career, arguing against the assumption that immoralities were isolated events. Meggyesy called them functional parts of a partially organized system according to which bureaucratic and commercial interests corrupted and exploited all social values in their path. Ever since high school his coaches had barked that football was “character-building.” *The Sociological Imagination* showed him how to turn this platitude on its head. In describing the qualities of human character recruited and formed by the professional football teams, Meggyesy paraded before an American public, a public used to glorifying its athletes, a roster of sadists, gamblers, drug addicts, cripples, and paymasters united by a puerile fear of losing. Asked by the *New York Times* how, then, he expected to put across his message, Meggyesy pleaded patience. “People don’t see the whole process; they have to learn to make connections, to make the hookup between personal biography and history, like C. Wright Mills said.”290

Then there were the leaders of the new Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)—the old SDS being an affiliate of the League for Industrial Democracy,
where ex-Marxists, liberals, and social democrats mingled in postures of disbelief.” The interest in Mills on the part of the SDS new leadership was distinguished by its personal intensity. Outstanding representatives of their generation, students in the country’s best universities, they read the “Letter to the New Left” and felt anointed. Mills once said that those who read him in the right spirit “often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house in which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar.” This became true, literally, in the experience of Todd Gitlin, Richard Flacks, Bob Ross, and Tom Hayden, whose initial encounters with his books first crystallized the unease they felt within the institutions that had raised and reared them, then inducted them into a brotherhood of radical striving. On the second day of the Bay of Pigs, these four staged the first campus demonstrations in the country. They looked to Mills like light behind the eyes and became, through him, spiritual descendents of Turgenev’s Bazarov and London’s Martin Eden, sons without fathers, non-party revolutionaries, the latest breed in a long line of “new men” who stole into mass society in the nineteenth century in Europe and America, and played havoc ever after.

Gitlin first read him in the autumn 1960. He was a student at Harvard. The anti-nuclear group, SANE, held a rally at the Boston Garden, where Gitlin picked up a booklet that contained an excerpt from The Causes of World War Three. “I read the book and it knocked me out,” he says. After debating with student friends over lunch, he put his thoughts in an essay and sent it to The Tocsin, a campus newsletter founded to encourage disarmament initiatives. “Can We Trust the Russians?” was a close paraphrase of The Causes of World War Three. Gitlin argued, as Mills had argued, that the Soviets believed they could win a peaceful competition in culture and economy, that they recognized the unique danger posed by the new weaponry of war, that there was not, in any case, any meaningful alternative to negotiation.

“Can We Trust the Russians?” ran in the December 16, 1960, issue of The Tocsin. During the Christmas intersession, Gitlin went home and brandished his new radicalism, “and my parents accused me of wrong-headedness for getting involved in politics.” Gitlin’s father, a Democrat, upheld the party’s view of foreign affairs. “I threw Mills’s arguments at my father and noted with satisfaction that he hadn’t a convincing comeback.” Gitlin spent the summer of 1962 studying defense policy at the Peace Research Initiative in Washington, DC. The next year he was president of SDS. For the remainder of the decade he filled underground magazines with defenses of The Power Elite against Talcott Parsons, David Riesman, Daniel Bell, and Robert Dahl. In 1966, he published a poem, “Mills the Cat,” so named because it was “almost red.”

Richard Flacks encountered him as a graduate student at the University of Michigan. The Sociological Imagination “hit me like a truck,” he said, echoing Gitlin’s experience of sudden conversion. “I thought that book was written for me.” Flacks completed his doctorate in sociology at the University of Michigan
and joined the faculty at the University of Chicago. In 1966, he and his wife named their first child Charles Wright Flacks.\textsuperscript{46} Bob Ross encountered \textit{The Power Elite} as a student in a political science honours seminar at Michigan. The professor, expecting to discredit the book, made the students check the footnotes. On Ross the lesson had the opposite effect.

Gitlin said Mills “knocked me out.” Flacks said Mills “hit me like a truck.” Bob Ross “was seized by the power of Mills’s language, by his craft, by his anger, by the power of the powerful he depicted.” Ross began reading \textit{The Power Elite} on a winter evening, and went all through the night. “Ann Arbor was cold and gray that morning, and I wandered the streets weeping. \textit{They were so strong; we were so small. How could we ever call them to account?}”\textsuperscript{47} He switched majors from political science to sociology. In 1963, he wrote a senior honours thesis on Mills: “The Power and the Intellect.” After a stint in London, where he studied with Mills’s friend Ralph Miliband, he followed Flacks to Chicago and entered graduate school in sociology. Mills was “the chief reason” for the decision.\textsuperscript{48}

Among these enthusiasts one stood out. Tom Hayden was a rising senior at the University of Michigan and the editor of the college newspaper when Flacks recommended that he read Mills. This was the summer of 1960. Hayden had gone to Los Angeles to report on the Democratic National Convention. He had spent some time in Berkeley, and he had undertaken fact-finding incursions into the South. The issues that welled up from his travels—civil rights, free speech—exposed him to the ambiguities in the professional liberalism he had inherited from his father, an accountant for Chrysler. “As I poured through Mills, I saw an image of my father, proud in his starched white collar, occupying his accountant’s niche above the union work force and below the real decision makers, penciling in numbers by day, drinking in front of the television at night, muttering about the world to no one in particular.”\textsuperscript{49}

The more young Hayden learned about Mills the more he thought he recognized aspects of himself. Both had grown up as Irish Catholics misbegotten into areas dominated by Protestants, in homes dominated by their mothers. Both had rejected their mother’s faith while still in high school. Both suppressed feminine sensitivities behind the roar of their motorcycles. Hayden’s eye-catching journalism had endeared him to Flacks and others at Michigan, and as he read Mills he decided that politics was to be his proving ground, just as it had been Mills’s. At the end of 1960 he published a “Letter to the New (Young) Left” in which he too dismissed the “NATO intellectuals” and stressed personal commitment.\textsuperscript{50} By the time he met a centre in his absorption, he envisioned Mills as a combination of James Dean and Albert Camus, “a model of a new kind of committed intellectual.”\textsuperscript{51}

Hayden graduated from Michigan in June 1961. Persuaded to join SDS by Bob Ross (and others), he moved to Atlanta to report on the struggle for civil rights. Over the next year, he solidified his status in the student movement by drafting a manifesto for the new SDS, a statement of belief that was to lay the
basis for discussion the following summer, when the membership of the fledgling new group was to convene at Port Huron, Michigan, for a conference. Hayden finished one complete draft when Mills's death pulled him up short. "I remember my whole body hardening when I came upon the obituary in The New York Times. It was as though his own powerful physical system, thrown relentlessly into the grinding process of his mission, broke down in desperation and futility. For me, it symbolized the shattering isolation and collapse of American radicalism against a fundamentally overpowering system." Three months later, Hayden, Ross, and Flacks joined with 57 students, activists, and intellectuals at the FDR Labor Center in Port Huron. They arranged themselves into small groups ("something like those which C. Wright Mills imagined") out of which emerged the most widely circulated leftwing manifesto of the 1960s.

Hayden enrolled in graduate school at the University of Michigan, where he wrote, in 1963 and 1964, a Master's thesis on Mills: "Radical Nomad." The introduction characterized it as "a frankly partisan work, which begins and ends with an enormous sympathy for the intellectual and political struggle of C. Wright Mills." The thesis was not uncritical. Hayden observed that Mills's portrayal of the "overdeveloped society" overlooked those areas of the country in which the actual problem was underdevelopment. Too little was said in Mills's books about the special problems of the poor, especially of poor blacks. Nonetheless, Hayden held, the radically sociological conception of power in these books described political reality in the South far better than the liberal theory of balance. What forces had countervailed against the fraud and violence perpetrated against southern blacks over the last century? Hayden ended the thesis in a reverent key. He wrote an imaginary dialogue as if Mills's ghost was speaking through him, illuminating the dark and lonely path ahead. In the summer 1964, he threw himself back into the world, "to see whether I could carry his lessons into practice, and whether practice might produce further evidence of its own."

Students for a Democratic Society grew into the largest and most important New Left student organization in America. Mills's influence continued in word and in deed. Hayden moved to Newark to work on SDS's Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), a community organizing project designed to repair links between intellectuals and poor people and to establish the political value of local action against the oligarchy of power. And SDS actively diffused his writings, printing mimeographs of the "Letter to the New Left" in great quantities. Of 25 new recruits interviewed by a Village Voice reporter in 1965, none could claim to have read Rosa Luxemburg, Max Weber, John Dewey, or John Stuart Mill. A few said they had read Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, or Karl Marx. Half had read Paul Goodman, Herbert Marcuse, or Frantz Fanon. Almost everybody had read Mills."

Enemies, equally attuned to the manysided significance of Mills's legacy, fired
from every direction in the months and years after his death. In Washington, Senator Thomas Dodd subjected his associates in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee to sharp questioning at a hearing of the Judiciary Committee.” In London, Labour MP Anthony Crosland complained to the BBC about the diffusion of his ideas in Britain. “Many people on the left see America as the arch-capitalist country dominated by a power elite of big industrialists, Wall Street bankers, military men and all the rest of it. And so, since they are anti-capitalist, they are inevitably anti-American. Personally, I think that this picture of America is terribly exaggerated. I do not think America is run in this crude way by a capitalistic power elite.”

In Rockland County, a group calling itself “True Friends of the Library” petitioned “citizens and taxpayers” to withdraw his books from the New City Public Library and to ban them thereafter. A meeting was held for the purpose on 18 February 1963.

Opponents of the new radicals treated their audacity as a psychological disorder. Arnold Rose, president of the American Sociological Association, wrote The Power Structure (1967) because, he said, “The Power Elite has become almost a bible for a younger generation of ‘new Leftists’ who have a deep-seated need to attack a society which they fail to understand.” Irving Howe assessed Mills’s enthusiasts as a clique of desperadoes whose stylized political gestures served chiefly to call attention to the loneliness of the over-organized society. For their interest in Cuba, for their diffidence toward anticommunism, Howe reprimanded and on due occasion humiliated the new radicals. Trenchant though his criticisms were, his most important points were available elsewhere, in the writings of Christopher Lasch, for example. What distinguished Howe’s stance was the absolutism in which he couched it. The same tone he had used in condemning The Causes of World War Three he now turned against its newest wave of readers. “In his last years,” Howe wrote in 1963, “Mills became the idol of an international political tendency, the authoritarian left. The sad truth is that he deserved the admirers he won.”

The fraternity Mills had enjoyed from his liberal friends in the 1950s, when he could be expected to do little harm, vanished with the return to liberalism to the executive branch of government. Charles Frankel had lived alongside him as friend and neighbour, had co-taught a seminar with him at Columbia College, had spoken judiciously at a Commemorative Meeting held for him in Harkness Theater. “He let you know him, and just as much to the point, he forced you to come to terms with yourself, to learn about yourself,” Frankel said at the meeting. Mills had wielded an “honest and fighting intellect” in the service of ideals for which he had proved his willingness to pay the highest price. “He was charitable with others, never charitable with himself.”

The closer Frankel came toward power the lower went his opinion. At the time of the Commemorative Meeting he was employed at the Brookings Institution on a study of the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and
Cultural Affairs, work that caused him to be appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs in the administration of Lyndon Johnson. Interviewed by Newsweek in April 1964, Frankel spoke viciously of his former friend. Mills, he said, was "very much a second-rate sociologist" whose judgments were quick, gross, and methodologically unsound. "He drove ahead hard all the time, and through and over people, unless they were as tough and big as he—then he'd stop and take notice." He ruined his wives, he knew little about culture ("he had no taste") and even less about the human beings whose company he both needed and feared. At the end of his life ("a clear case of suicide") the violence dwelling in his personal character escaped, turned against his country, and then against himself. Frankel said Mills reminded him "a great deal" of Lee Harvey Oswald.\footnote{132}

Nor was this the worst of it. Edward Shils represented liberal loathing at its meanest. Unlike Frankel, who resigned from the State Department in 1967 to protest the Vietnam War, and unlike Irving Howe, who stopped equivocating in 1968 and started calling for an unconditional withdrawal of troops, Shils supported the war all the way through. His third essay on Mills, appearing in The Spectator in London, had a lurid title, "The Great Obsession," though its contents merely restated its author's conviction to the effect that Mills's biography rested on a fraud all the more astonishing for its widespread acceptance. Shils allowed that the portrait of American civilization painted in his trilogy struck closer to reality than anything available in the writings of the postwar literati, though this was not much of an allowance. For the trilogy upheld another kind of confusion, according to Shils. Mills had jammed together images by German idealism, American populism, and Western Marxism. Echoes of Veblen, Weber, Trotsky, and Kafka were nothing more instances in a chaos that erupted against the background of a formless rage. Only his vainglory obscured his incoherence. "He liked to think of himself as an outlaw, a Prometheus, a last-ditch fighter, a lonely bull, an embattled hero who would never yield to coercion or seduction. He liked to put on the airs of a man who was attacked on every side by overwhelming odds but who would never give up." Shils saw through it all. "Of course, the self-portrayal was completely a self-deception, he was not a hero in any way."\footnote{133}

There was no gainsaying his influence. Shils thought he had aroused a global public greater than any sociologist in American history. But it was the complacency of liberal society, rather than any special genius Mills may have possessed, that allowed him "to play his rat-catcher's pipe" on a world scale. Like the Pied-Piper himself, who struck while Hamelin's citizens were in church, he had preyed upon the ugly features of society, baring his resentments by seducing its children.\footnote{134} "Now he is dead," Shils gloated, "and his rhetoric is a field of broken stones, his analyses empty, his strenuous pathos limp."\footnote{135}

As these comments suggest, memories of Mills reactivated the rivalry of leftists and liberals which had lain dormant since 1948, when New Deal political society
reconstituted around Cold War anti-communism. Liberalism in the 1950s, having abandoned the left to the red hunters and having discredited the radical right, had emerged victorious from the bloodletting. No longer confronting any real challengers on the plane of ideas and ideals, defenders of the liberal creed worried about growing soft. The election of Kennedy removed this worry even as it appeared to validate the strategic wisdom of Arthur Schlesinger Jr’s *The Vital Center*, a key tract in the ideological realignment of 1948. But Mills had survived the bloodletting as well. And now his legacy of non-communist radicalism presented an unexpectedly potent danger to liberals who found themselves staring at a resurgent Left at the very moment they had regained the White House. Those who assumed that liberal society had the manifest purchase on the world’s future naturally interpreted this development as sabotage, with Mills swinging the hammer from the grave.

Tom Hayden, the new president of SDS, drove with a colleague to the White House, right after the Port Huron conference. There he met with Schlesinger, who promised that he would bring the Port Huron manifesto to the President’s attention. Nowhere in *A Thousand Days* (1965), his 1000-page history of the administration, did he mention either the meeting or the manifesto. Hayden might have guessed. In 1948, Schlesinger had hailed *The New Men of Power* as “a brilliant, original, and provocative work, genuinely democratic and boldly radical in character.”

A decade later, however, he had sharply rejected *The Causes of World War Three* in the *New York Post*, and then, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, had congratulated Daniel Bell for “destroying” *The Power Elite.* Schlesinger professed to be puzzled that the book had achieved its wide currency. “President Eisenhower’s phrase about the ‘military-industrial complex’ always seemed to me an odd capitulation on the former President’s part to C. Wright Mills’ theory of the power elite,” he wrote.

There would be no kind of capitulation on Arthur Schlesinger’s part. In January 1962, in a speech before the California Federation of Young Democrats, he drew a disgraceful equivalence between the New Left and New Right. “When I hear talk of ‘the power elite,’ I know that I am in the presence of a mirror image of the John Birch Society. The notion that a conspiracy of bankers and generals controls our destiny is as nutty as the notion that it is controlled by Walter Reuther and the officials of the ADA.”

Schlesinger sent his speech to William F. Buckley, who reported its contents in the *Los Angeles Times*. Buckley had been chagrined to read of Schlesinger’s frequent attacks on the New Right. At a debate in 1961, Buckley had dared him to disassociate the New Frontier from the New Left and promised to publicize any such criticisms. Schlesinger, accordingly, reached two audiences with the same speech. He warned young Democrats against Mills and reassured established Republicans. Since Buckley found it easy to agree that the power elite was “a lunatic notion,” it is only fair to complete the logic of equivalence. To believe that Mills had something in common with the John Birch Society, it is necessary also
to believe that Schlesinger and Buckley shared a corresponding trait. Schlesinger, indeed, overcame his early admiration for Mills just as Buckley overcame his early admiration for the Birchers. Then, both men proved their willingness to wield the commissar’s scalpel, cutting out ideological undesirables like abscesses on the ripening flesh of The Party.

The portrait of Mills by leading liberals discouraged hope that public argument between the New Left and the New Frontiersmen could return much in the way of educative value. Frankel, Howe, Shils, and Schlesinger afforded no possibility of learning anything useful about him, advanced no good reason to explain his following. Then again, perhaps this was the wrong kind of knowledge to look for. By signifying a position in relation to Mills, they signified their position in relation to one another. Mills himself understood this need to take and hold a position against political enemies. (If anything, doing so was more important, and often more difficult, for an insurgency than for established traditions.) The effect of mocking Schlesinger and Bell by name in the “Letter to the New Left” was to force divisions into the open, to create a position from which the new radicals could define themselves. Even as he acknowledged that he shared many liberal values he attacked its social and political theorists pitilessly from the beginning of his career until the end, by which time he had turned the very phrase, liberal intellectual, into an epithet symbolizing ineptitude, flim-flam, and complacency. The more Kennedy’s liberalism showed itself anything but complacent, the more ferociously he hit. After the Bay of Pigs, he accused Schlesinger of defending “a New Frontier of thieves and murderers. What else can one conclude?”

Dissent he began calling “a shallow and cowardly sheet whose total political wisdom or formula seems to be: communism of all sorts is homogenous and eternal evil plus America is a mass society and this isn’t so good either.”

And yet Mills and Schlesinger had more in common with one another than either man had with Dissent. Mills’s books shared with Schlesinger’s The Age of Jackson and The Age of Roosevelt a concern not only to delineate the relations of morality and politics at the highest levels in America, but to influence them personally. Neither man hesitated when the chance arrived. Listen, Yankee exulted in the “revolutionary euphoria” permeating the “new men” of Cuba. A Thousand Days exulted in “The Hour of Euphoria” permeating Kennedy’s Washington, “the excitement which comes from an injection of new men and new ideas, the release of energy which occurs when men with ideas have a chance to put them into practice.” Both Mills and Schlesinger were engaged in an attempt to influence power in a humane direction at the moment when it was most open to their influence, and both men showed an admirable consistency in this desire over the course of their careers. Only one of them, however, lost his balance in a frenzy of intoxicated apologetics.

Imagine Mills had taken a leave of absence from Columbia and put aside his multivolume scholarly project in order to work for the Cuban govern-
ment, reporting directly to Castro. Imagine that, in this capacity, he had composed a public justification for an illegal, unprovoked paramilitary operation to be waged by Cuba for ideological reasons against a much weaker nation, and imagine further that this justification had been accepted without challenge in the press as a balanced appraisal of the exigencies of the moment. Imagine that he had registered his doubts about the operation privately, then had lied to the Cuban equivalent of the New York Times about its significance, after which, at the behest of Castro, he had suppressed a critical report in the Cuban equivalent of the New Republic. Now imagine that after it was all over he published a history in which he glorified Castro’s charisma, assumed the benevolence of his domestic policies, and connected the unilateral exercise of his power abroad to the salvation of the world. Had Mills committed any one of these acts, America’s liberals would have accused him of betraying his obligation to tell the truth. Schlesinger won the Pulitzer Prize.

So it was that Mills’s disciples in SDS, having searched contemporary liberalism with his critical eyes, and having concluding that it offered no theory of society or politics adequate to the age beyond ideology, mounted their challenge. The mildest form of this challenge held out hope that it could revitalize longstanding liberal values. Economic prosperity had instilled “quiescence in liberal hearts,” according to the Port Huron Statement.2 The greater challenge was changing a society currently inhospitable to those values. In America and the New Era, a sequel to the Port Huron Statement written in 1963, the liberal intellectuals manning the administration were presented as enlightened managers of the “Establishment.” Even when these managers could be made to acknowledge flaws and absences in “the going system” they deprived them of dialectical significance by a strategy of “aggressive tokenism.”3 The student movement stood for imperiled democratic values. The weapons of catastrophic violence and their place in Cold War affairs had “created a world in which virtually every human value was distorted, all moral standards seemed weirdly irrelevant, all hopes and aspirations appeared utopian.”4 Anger, not mere disappointment, direct action, civil disobedience, and mass protest, not mere electioneering, encompassed the proper range of response.

The New Frontier gave them much to be angry about. To judge the administration’s foreign policy in light of the Mill’s writings was to be struck again by the tragedy of his early exit. It was not only that the administration and its surrogates tried to assassinate Castro, nor that it matched its contempt for international law with a contempt for an independent and free press at home. The greater problem was structural, more difficult to see but consequential in all the ways that Mills had opposed. The Alliance for Progress, the centrepiece of Kennedy’s Latin American policy, showed the critical distance between liberals and radicals in the 1960s.
Meanwhile, in a part of the world far away from Cuba, another European empire was collapsing, and in the felt need for the United States to fill the vacuum the power elite made another people pay for its mistakes. Once again, liberal intellectuals mistook revolutionary nationalism for a conspiracy of communists. Once again, Congress abandoned its legal obligations to the self-agrandizement of the executive branch. Once again, the press declined to discuss open secrets. The war in Southeast Asia was prosecuted by four administrations from both parties, touched every organ of government, and proved to the horror of Mills’s admirers that Washington’s men of power were willing to wreak atrocities upon the most helpless enemies of state. In the end, the liberal consensus of the long postwar era wrecked itself on the very combination of benighted idealism and cynicism he had criticized in his writings.

Two weeks before President Kennedy was assassinated, he told a French journalist that the United States probably did bear a measure of responsibility for the Batista years in Cuba. But what could he do? He had purchased his power at the price of Cold War. The logic of its demands had held him hostage. “I am the President of the United States,” Kennedy observed, “and not a sociologist.”

Like Thorstein Veblen, who died in 1929, Mills died at the dawn of a decade whose most flamboyant features his vision was the first to illuminate. Yet neither his epigones nor his enemies generated anything like Joseph Dorfman’s Thorstein Veblen and His America (1934), no biography in the absence of which informed disagreement miscarries. Mills admired Dorfman’s book in college. Later, he added Ernest Jones (on Freud) and Isaac Deutscher (on Trotsky) to his short list of model biographers. But no equivalent has stepped forward to relate his life to the political and social issues he had advanced. Around Mills’s legacy instead appeared a false logic of venerating and debunking, one that took root almost immediately after his death.

“Shortly after his death,” Dan Wakefield complained in 1971 memoir, “Mills and his work were being claimed by various individuals and groups to support their own stances, whether sociological or political, and if in some ways he left himself open to this with his overenthusiasms and generosity, I don’t think he deserves it. Of all the men I have known, Mills was the most individual, the most obstinately unorganizable, the most jealous of his right and need to ‘go it alone’ and to fire at all sides when he felt so moved.” Wakefield’s own career showed that admiration need not entail imitation. His books, Island in the City (1959), Revolt in the South (1960), and Between the Lines (1966) resisted the role of political activist yet took their place alongside the best liberal journalism of these years.

Mills himself had held left-wing movements to be “as snobbish in their assignment of prestige as any national establishment.” Given the New Left’s
emotional urge and political need to monumentalize, given the number and variety of mythological personalities to grow in his shadow; instances of outright suppression were few.

Saul Landau had been reading him since White Collar. As a member of the Communist Party’s Labor Youth League at the University of Wisconsin, and as an early editor of the magazine Studies on the Left, Landau approached the “Letter to the New Left” with suspicion of its departure from Marxist dogma. But like other young leftists bewildered by the events of 1956, he laid himself open to new leadership. Landau met Mills in Havana. The next year, he accompanied him to Europe and Russia as his personal secretary. The months of intimate contact Landau enjoyed over the long summer of 1961 disclosed a quality of observation rare among Mills’s admirers. Landau co-wrote a satire of John Kennedy with him and saw it published in the London Tribune on the occasion of the president’s first 100 days in office.

But “The House That Jack Must Build” was Mills close to his worst, his natural optimism now disfigured by unbridled sarcasm. In a memoir of their time together, Landau depicted a man defeated to the brink of despair, a victim of a confrontation between the violent antagonisms in his character and violent world he had made his burden. Haunted by thoughts of vengeance for his enemies, petty, sometimes cruel with his friends, Mills’s daily conversation emanated statements no disciple could abide. He told Landau (whom he knew was Jewish) of a German friend, a former SS officer, with whom he enjoyed motorcycling. He spoke of the British as “imbeciles” and the French as “frogs.” He ate himself sick, and every day, in the early afternoon, he swallowed sleeping pills and cognac in quantities large enough to stun two men. When he was really soused he talked of suicide, of Hemingway’s suicide, and of his own. Before the trip to Europe, Landau regarded Mills as a prophet. Now he remembered him as a tragic figure worthy of respect, not of veneration.

Landau mailed a draft of the memoir to Mills’s widow, Yaroslava, on 6 June 1962, accompanied by a note that indicated he might hope to write a biography. Several days later, Ralph Miliband came to West Nyack for a visit. Miliband read the memoir and wrote Landau demanding that he suppress its unflattering features. Miliband confirmed that Mills had spoken with him in the same manner, about many of the same subjects. He agreed, moreover, that the debility of his final months had generated a caricature of his traits. But Miliband held, nonetheless, that enemies were sure to make use of the memoir. Landau capitulated. He deleted mention of the SS officer; reinterpreted Mills’s aggression as Socratic dialogue; cleaned up the vulgarities in his speech; and softened anecdotes about his drinking to the point that few readers could have inferred the onset of alcoholism. Landau, in his reply to Miliband, berated himself in a manner befitting the Party cadre he once planned to become. Sanitized versions of the memoir appeared in Root and Branch and Ramparts. Landau read a version over KPFA radio in Berkeley
on 7 September 1962. The biography never appeared.

The intimate knowledge Miliband possessed he laid away in a monitory
tone that did not educate younger radicals in the full range of honest responses to
Mills. Too close for critical detachment, he mourned “bitterly and personally” in
an obituary in the New Left Review, one of three short pieces he wrote on his
American comrade.84 Mills, in these pieces, appears as a political leader whose
anarchism never made a fetish out of opposition and as a critic of power who never
evaded its responsibilities. This poise, so rare among intellectuals, governed his
personal relations as well. “He was a singularly modest, unpretentious man,”
Miliband said. “He never made the vulgar mistake of taking seriously only those
who shared his view of the world.” About his weaknesses and failings Mills had
been acutely sensitive. If he had exaggerated his isolation, that was because the
United States lacked the kind of socialist parties and organizations to which he
warmed in Europe. If he had placed too much hope in the intellectuals, that was
because he had been quick to see that the older agents of change had collapsed.
“In a trapped and inhumane world, he taught what it means to be a free and
humane intellect.”

Miliband’s portrait reached its limits in its refusal to admit the legitimacy
of dissenting views. In a letter to Dissent, written in reply to a memoir of Mills by
Harvey Swados, Miliband rebutted its “inaccurate, offensive, and plain nasty” por-
trait without explaining its motives. Miliband simply accused Swados of jealousy.
“I have never met Mr. Swados but I have known him as an intelligent and sensi-
tive writer. Why then does his essay breathe spite and venom? There is of course
the fact that Mills had a very disturbing effect on many people—his vitality, his
intensity, the extraordinary diversity of his skills all seemed to pose a challenge to
friends and associates, and so did the recognition he gained in his last years.”85 In
1965, Miliband and his wife Marion named their newborn son David Wright Miliband
in honor of their martyred friend. Miliband dedicated to Mills his breakthrough
I have ever felt to any man, or shall ever feel again, I should think,” he told E.P. Thompson.86

The absence of biography, or many-sided assessment, was eloquent of
the larger failure of the New Left in the 1960s to generate the distinct theoretical
perspective for which Mills had called in the “Letter to the New Left.” As SDS
expanded and intensified over the course of the decade, it exposed the limits of
Mills’s influence. It was not only that he left unfinished The Cultural Apparatus,
which might have unified the SDS intellectuals, the bohemian counterculture, and
the civil rights intellectuals. Key issues he left unresolved, though not unacknowl-
edged. In notes and manuscripts for a book project he titled The New Left he
returned again and again to ruminate on two issues, in particular, he believed that
the new radicals would have to confront.

Violence was the first. Mills defended the owning of guns as “a funda-
mental human right” and advocated citizen’s militias. “I am a very old fashioned
conservative American—one man, one vote, one rifle, and one woman at a time.”

In a letter he was more explicit and more discriminating, yet faltering all the same.

“The truth is, I think, I’ve always believed in calculated, cold-blooded personal violence, one man at a time. Up against another man, or maybe even two, it’s something up to you who gets killed. Perhaps that is why I am so much against war, as it is nowadays absurdly conducted: you do not even know the people you are killing off.”

He began writing *The New Left* in January 1960; he added notes and outlines into 1961. Alongside statements of belief in violence he laid down equally fervid affirmations of the moral superiority of civil disobedience, such as this one: “Non-violent resistance is not merely a set of values and not merely a set of techniques. It is a new method of making history, perhaps the most radically innovative one in world history.” He was honest to confess that he had not worked out a position that satisfied him.

Communism was the second issue. To be anti-communist or non-communist? For intellectuals even to begin to think about the issue of communism was to become entangled in the paradoxical history of Marxism. Mills had unwound the tradition into threads he named “plain Marxism,” “sophisticated Marxism,” and “vulgar Marxism.” He had identified himself with the first and complained that the last two had tangled radicalism in modern America so badly that nobody could find a single first-rate thinker, nor any substantial new interpretations. Any movement that aspired to internationalism would have to do better. Everywhere communism had seized power it articulated its authority in the language of Marxism. Everywhere else communism was merely socialism, and socialism without the single most powerful theoretical armature devised for it was “merely a holier than thou moral doctrine.”

It was this moral core in American Marxism that had attracted literary figures in the 1930s. Since then, however, native Marxists had become “an obstacle” to new left thinking. “They must mend their intellectual manners and increase the clarity of their work by adopting a different vocabulary,” Mills contended in *The New Left*. “At present theirs has two deficiencies: it is full of stereotyped jargon and it is full of repelling invective of abuse.”

As the 1960s wore on, these ambiguities concerning revolutionary violence and Marxist communism tangled Mills’s legacy into a series of paradoxes at home as well as abroad.

In Czechoslovakia, for example, the Communist Party had ruled since instigating a coup in 1948; and one sign that the “thaw” was finally reaching here was that Mills showed up on the curriculum at Charles University, Czechoslovakia’s oldest, largest, most distinguished, and most closely monitored institution of higher education. Another sign was growth in sociology. In 1964, a department opened at Charles and a Slovak Sociological Society met for the first time. As in the other satellite nations of Eastern Europe, the discipline had been shrouded in Soviet Marxist philosophy. Now, in 1966, the new Czech and Slovak sociologists attended their first World Congress of the International Sociological Association,
the same year the Orbis Publishing House, in Prague, issued a translation of The Power Elite.

Communist translators often got more than they expected from the book. Because it attacked bourgeois illusions from within American society, it served the immediate interests of the Party. But because it advanced a model of power that was at odds with Marxist theory, because it rejected the concept of the “ruling class” in favour of “elites” and “masses,” it offered a vocabulary that served the interests of the growing number of dissidents clamouring for alternatives to one-party rule. In the introduction to the Czech translation, Miroslav Jodl noted “the theoretical stagnation here” and insisted that “it is necessary to point out that Mills was not a Marxist.” The value of The Power Elite rested on “extraordinary importance of the category of power, which cannot be simply reduced to the term ‘class supremacy.’” In creating a sociological model by which to understand the concentration of power in societies both capitalist and communist “Mills made the first steps to a world sociology,” said Jodl, a member of the new sociology section at the Czechoslovakian Academy of Science. “By translating Mills’s work we pay tribute to a noble humanist, who in the range of his capacities and limitations roused the conscience of humanity.”

In January 1968, Antonín Novotný, First Secretary of the Communist Party, resigned and was replaced by Alexander Dubček. Reformers led by artists, novelists, playwrights, and philosophers hoped, as the Poles and the Hungarians had hoped in 1956, that the change in Party leadership would bring about a more humane form of socialism, that the Party was capable of reforming itself. Stalinism had been especially terrible in Czechoslovakia, so the sweeping reforms that Dubček and his allies implemented in the spring and summer decisively altered the political temper of the country, stimulating hunger for more. “Truth provokes power,” said Ivan Sviták on July 18, in the first issue of Literární listy, a periodical founded by the radicalized Writers Union to express the discontent, “not because someone wants to provoke the power elite, but because a mere mental reproduction of the existing conditions is prosecuted by the power elite as a personal offense to the powerful.” On July 30, writing in Student, Sviták advised the protestors to remember that “the power elite has under all circumstances one overriding interest—to maintain itself in power.” A philosophy instructor at Charles University and a colleague of Miroslav Jodl at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Science before being expelled in 1964, Ivan Sviták was the most radically democratic of the dissidents, the man most willing to depart from the canting dogmas of Soviet Marxism. In calling for freedom of speech, competitive parties, and workers’ control over factories, Sviták did as much as any single figure in these extraordinary few months to rile public opinion. Czechoslovakia, he insisted, must transform itself from “the bureaucratic management of society and culture by the ‘cutthroats of the official line’ (an expression used by Wright Mills) to the realization of basic human and civil rights.”
Heads Against the Wall, a collection of Sviták's manifestos, speeches, and essays, went to press in August 1968, just before the Soviets brought the protests to heel with their largest military force since World War II. Jodl, Mills's translator, lost his job at the Czechoslovak Academy of Science and his membership in the Party and went to work as a typesetter. Sviták lost his citizenship and was indicted for treason. Out of the country during the invasion, he was tried, convicted, and sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison. The invasion finished off a decade of hope that a renaissance of socialist political culture could root in the aftermath of 1956.

In Havana, Mills's ambiguities concerning revolutionary violence and Marxism returned virtually the opposite consequence. Rather than encouraging creative dissent against tyranny, his writings ended in dogmatism and complacency. In January 1968, 500 delegates met for an International Cultural Congress in Havana on the theme of “The Intellectual and the Struggle for the Liberation of the People of the Third World.” Todd Gitlin, attending the congress for SDS, filed his impressions in two essays. Gitlin said he found everywhere in Cuba “willed commitments” forged in sympathy with free art and poetry. The entire society, he said, was moving toward the kind of “moneyless future” that American liberals could not comprehend. “Cuba stands as a model of what it is this system wants to discredit and destroy,” Gitlin wrote, without reporting any sign of political conflict or internal division on the island. Three weeks after the delegates went home, Cuban officials arrested 41 men for attempting to organize “microfractions.” Although the men were not permitted to speak in court, and although there was no law against “microfractions,” they were convicted, imprisoned, and sentenced to hard labour. On 13 March, while Gitlin argued that “Cuba is, of course, a lesson that the communal spirit is not always dependent on an active war-footing.” Fidel Castro announced the “Great Revolutionary Offensive” in order to combat a widely acknowledged decline in the communal spirit. The Offensive shut down thousands of bars, cabarets, and small shops, ended the trade in black market goods, reorganized agricultural production on the model of the army, and in general geared the country into emergency mode. On 2 August, six months after Gitlin argued that Cuba's foreign policy stood for the “liberation of humanity,” Castro endorsed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Gitlin worried that he had not looked hard enough for conflict within Cuba's new society, and when Castro backed the Soviet invasion, he felt disgusted, and said so. Indeed, as another inheritor of Mills's legacy showed even more clearly, Listen Yankee did contain the seeds of self-correction. K.S. Karol was a schoolmate of Leszek Kolakowski in Poland, a conscript in the Red Army, a prisoner of Stalin, and, after the war, a journalist. Mills's writings on the Cuban Revolution contained the seeds of self-correction, as K.S. Karol proved. A schoolmate of Leszek Kolakowski in Poland, a conscript in the Red Army, a prisoner of Stalin,
Karol drifted into journalism after the war. He reported on European politics for *New Statesmen*, making ample use of the five languages he spoke, and covered the Polish October of 1956 for a French newspaper, *L'Express*. Karol and Mills had little in common by dint of temperament or background. Nor were they brought together by foundation grants, university exchanges, or diplomatic programs. They met in the lobby of the Hotel Theresa in September 1960, during Castro’s visit to Harlem, and struck up a friendship. Mills used his influence in Havana to gain Karol a personal interview with Che Guevara. Karol used his influence in Paris to arrange lunch with Sartre and de Beauvoir. In the autumn 1961, Mills and Karol went on picnics together in the French countryside.

Karol recalls the pensive mood of these visits. “It made one sad to see this Texan—and I have never met anyone more typical of the free and independent American pioneer—up against a solid wall of hostility and vilification.” Solidarity was a strong tonic. “Mills was very well received by my friends,” Karol says, echoing the opinion in Copenhagen, Mexico City, London, and Warsaw. “He was a very friendly and likable man.”

Karol had returned to Cuba three times in the decade, enjoying Castro’s confidence, before publishing one of the best books ever written on the revolution: *Guerrillas in Power*. Karol cast it as a successor to *Listen Yankee*. “Eight years later, we can see how right his predictions were, and how shrewdly he discerned some of the obstacles on the Cuban road to socialism.” Mixing personal observation with political and historical analysis, Karol called the events and decisions during 1961, the period that had plunged Mills into the despair from which he never recovered, a period of “mini-Stalinism.” Since then, he said, the problems besetting the revolution had not been resolved by building voluntary organizations, nor by holding elections to generate political knowledge, but always by extenuating the executive powers of the state. Cuba remained freer than most socialist countries, but the quality of its journalism, literature, and scholarship was poor; information failed to circulate efficiently; and the intellectuals had responded to virtual cultural dictatorship by withdrawing from political affairs. The double-standards in private and public morality as well as the persistence of black markets and economic deprivation reminded him of life under Stalin in the 1930s. Karol concluded that primitive socialist accumulation almost inevitably brought authoritarian leadership and coercive public measures. When *Guerrillas in Power* was published, Castro, as if to prove the point, accused Karol of working for the CIA. Would they same fate have visited Mills?

Another kind of ambiguity showed itself in the student movement. The “Letter to the New Left” implored radicals to consider that “the cultural apparatus, the intellectuals” may be best positioned to subvert the social order and to initiate a new beginning. Mills’s success in spreading the message even he could not have anticipated. In September 1968, the CIA concluded a classified report, “Restless
Youth,” which identified Herbert Marcuse, Mills, and Frantz Fanon as the three leaders of the international left. Between Marcuse’s abstract Marxism and Fanon’s revolutionary violence, there was Mills’s ghost, chasing both action and ideas without acknowledging the need to choose. He challenged the youngest of the intellectuals to create new values out of the dialectic of thought and action, but he could not tell them how to tell the vital difference between thinking too long, and acting too soon.

SDS opened a chapter at Columbia University in 1965. Late though SDS was in coming to campus (51 chapters had opened elsewhere already) it was not long in making its presence felt. Over the next three years, its members staged a series of protests against campus recruiters, spoiling presentations by Dow Chemical Company and the CIA, and, once, hitting a Selective Service officer in the face with a lemon meringue pie. Columbia President Grayson Kirk responded to the militancy on campus by issuing a ban on indoor demonstrations. A group of students quickly violated the ban. Kirk suspended them.39

Here, as elsewhere, not only the decisions of the authorities, but the authority to make decisions drew the challenge of the students. University officials punished them for defying the rituals of dissent. The punishments spurred bolder acts of defiance. On 23 April 1968, SDS rallied 900 students on the steps of Low Library to protest the recent suspensions. About one-third of the rally peeled away and went to the site of a gymnasium the university was building over their objections. Arriving at the construction site, they tore down a fence. Then a group of students entered Hamilton Hall, let it be known they intended not to leave, and held the Dean of Columbia College hostage.

The events of the next few days plunged the university into the worst crisis in its history. Militants used a bench to batter their way inside Low Library, where they entered President Kirk’s suite of offices and discovered a cache of secret files. Students from the School of Architecture refused to leave Avery Hall. Another group, comprised of 50 graduate students in history and social science, barricaded the front doors of Fayerweather Hall, where Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld had their offices. Stokely Carmichael came to Hamilton Hall, now renamed Malcolm X Liberation College, and conferred with the black students inside. Elsewhere, red flags shot upward from the roofs. Five buildings had fallen in three days.

On 26 April 1968, Columbia closed.

Here, as in Prague, university officials met the nonviolent disruption of social order with an overwhelming display of physical force. At the request of President Kirk, 1000 policemen stormed the campus, arresting nearly ten percent of the students in the College. A general strike virtually halted the business of the university. Militants seized a nearby apartment building and were quickly ousted by police. On 23 May, several hundred students occupied Hamilton Hall in response to the administration’s decision to suspend four SDS leaders. When the
police arrived this time the students lighted fires and threw bricks. Seventy people were injured.

President Kirk and Provost David Truman soon resigned, having lost the confidence of the faculty as well as the students. For the first time in the university’s long history, a member of the faculty was asked to deliver the annual commencement address. Richard Hofstadter tried to find common ground in his remarks, given on 4 June in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. “Here at Columbia, we have suffered a disaster whose precise dimensions it is impossible to state, because the story is not yet finished, and the measure of our loss still depends upon what we do.” As soon as Hofstadter began speaking 300 students and faculty stood up, turned their backs, and walked out.

What would Mills have thought? He would have recognized the personalities and politics involved. Michael Klare, a former student, co-wrote a pamphlet, *Who Rules Columbia?*, that looked a lot like *The Insiders*, the pamphlet Mills had inspired in an earlier generation of student radicals at Oxford University. *Who Rules Columbia?* used the incriminating documents pilfered from President Kirk’s office to argue that the Board of Trustees ran the university like a factory, that it palmed off its financial resources to real estate interests in Manhattan, that it produced skilled technicians for the permanent war economy, that it struck secret deals with military intelligence agencies while neglecting the needs of the university’s poor neighbors. Fast was Columbia changing from a liberal college into an auxiliary of “the U.S. power elite.”

The evening before the bust, Klare sneaked out of Fayerweather Hall and spoke at the “C. Wright Mills Memorial Teach-In” in Ferris Booth Hall, a student center and dormitory that SDS was using at its headquarters.

Tom Hayden rushed from his office in Newark to Morningside Heights as soon as he heard news of the occupation. Hayden had showed in recent years a growing interest in guerrilla warfare and revolutionary politics. At Christmas 1965, he had traveled to Prague, Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi, “contacting the enemy.” He had co-published *The Other Side* (1966), a volume of interviews and reflections made in the image of *Soviet Journal* and laced with long quotations from the man himself. For four days at Columbia he presided over a spontaneous commune in Mathematics Hall, instructing teams of militants how to slick the steps with soap in preparation for the police. Writing in *Ramparts* after the bust, he dared students across America to create “two, three, many Columbias.” The phrase referred to Che Guevara, who had implored revolutionaries across Latin America to create “two, three, many Vietnams” four months before he was murdered in Bolivia. Hayden looked forward to heightened confrontations with faculty and envisioned radical students as a vanguard. “They are, in Fidel Castro’s words, ‘guerrillas in the field of culture.’”

Mills’s old adversaries responded to the occupation in terms first forged in their confrontations with him. The administration’s failures Bell attributed to cowardice and ineptitude, whereas the motives of the students he said had been
pervasive. Possessed by an “anarcho-syndicalist mood of rebellion,” they had proved incapable of the kind of responsible political action that would have remedied their discontent. Bell rejected the use of police power by the administration (he had led an Ad Hoc Faculty Group in its failed effort to mediate the dispute) and at the same time likened the atmosphere on the campus to a religious frenzy. Lionel Trilling told Partisan Review: “The nearest thing to a feeling that I can now recall or experience is my puzzled preoccupation with what the students are and want.” Bell conceded the same note of confusion, in spite of his expertise in the history of radicalism, and in spite of his intimate knowledge of the characters and events. “As I have studied this history, and reflected upon my own participation in it, I find the ‘outbreak,’ ‘uprising,’ ‘revolution’—none of these words is adequate—extremely puzzling.” Eight years earlier, responding to the “Letter to the New Left,” Bell had pronounced himself “bewildered” then too.

Mills would have recognized, moreover, the double standard in these responses. All along, liberal and socialist critics of the New Left demanded an unequivocal, unqualified statement against police power in one-party communist societies. Yet no such critic mustered any such statement against Columbia’s administration. Irving Howe, borrowing the logic of moral equivalence he deployed in the student radicals, argued that they had invited police violence by their provocative conduct. Charles Frankel’s Education and the Barricades (1968) took a high-minded tone, but insisted, like Howe, that the students should have expected violence. That none of the students had carried a gun or a bomb in the occupation, that they had engaged in a symbolic disruption only, that they had been easily and decisively routed, that New York’s Civilian Complaint Review Board recorded nearly 400 complaints of police brutality and 150 injuries in the aftermath, none of these considerations drained the collective response by Bell, Trilling, Frankel, and Howe of its reactionary sentiment. Hofstadter, in his commencement address, spoke eloquently of the university as “a citadel of intellectual individualism,” as an independent institution dedicated to the free play of reason in defiance of political pressures. But Hofstadter knew better than anybody that colleges and universities had never been independent of political pressures, that postwar higher education was deeply implicated in the Cold War. Even as he spoke in defence of the ideal, dozens of policemen, some uniformed, others distributed secretly in the audience, crept about the Cathedral.

Much like his fellow liberal professors, Hofstadter suffered bouts of confusion and disorientation. “If I get around to writing a general history of the recent past,” he told Newsweek in the summer 1970, “I’m going to call the chapter on the ‘60s ‘The Age of Rubbish.’”

Hofstadter had joined with Daniel Bell, Charles Frankel, Talcott Parsons, Phillip Rieff, David Riesman, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and David Truman in rejecting The Power Elite, The Causes of World War Three, and Listen, Yankee. Yet not of Mills’s critics had anything better to propose, no new ideas to take the full measure of the damage done to American institutions by the Cold War.
In explaining the “crisis of confidence” that followed the crises of Vietnam and Watergate, Schlesinger’s *The Imperial Presidency* (1973) interpreted the extraordinary arrogance of power in these years as the culmination of long-term changes in American society. Yet he stopped short of recommending reforms of a corresponding scope and significance. He held the line against proposals to transform the presidency into a more democratic institution, urging instead a kind of patrimonial solicitude for the Constitution which would reign in the office while at the same time preserving the singularity of its executive mode of action. But Schlesinger’s analysis was spoiled by the same easy conflation of law and morality in the public declarations of his Soviet counterparts. (In urging future presidents to “rehabilitate” the office, he said, revealingly, “I use the word in almost the Soviet sense.”) Declining to call into question the party-consensus on the Cold War’s ends, *The Imperial Presidency* skirted the greater question of whether the ends were inherently immoral, however well their institutional framework satisfied the Constitutional theory of power.

Meanwhile, the New Left uncannily reenacted Mills’s biography, completed the same short course from utopian speculation and experimentation to confrontation, escalation, crisis, and disappointment.

Hayden left New York for Chicago. There he conferred with Bob Ross and Richard Flacks, in whose apartment he stayed. “Columbia opened a new tactical stage in the resistance movement which began last fall,” he wrote. “What is certain is that we are moving toward power—the power to stop the machine if it cannot be made to serve humane ends,” he wrote, in the same vein of misbegotten prophesy. In Chicago, protesting the Democratic National Convention, Hayden found troops and tanks guarding the streets. He suspected (correctly) that FBI agents were following him. All this made him more eager for an armed confrontation. His speeches no longer glistened with the ideal content of democracy, as they had at Port Huron, but hinted at the redemptive value of violence. Arrested and assaulted by police agents, trailed by spies and threatened with murder, he began experimenting with guns and wearing disguises. He went underground, ending the 1960s as Mills had ended the 1950s: the most famous, the most isolated, and probably the most exhausted radical intellectual in America. Murray Kempton pronounced Hayden a candidate without a party, just as Hans Gerth had pronounced Mills an officer without an army.

Flacks and Ross fared little better. In August 1968 a crew of graduate students from Columbia joined with veteran radicals to form the Sociology Liberation Movement (SLM), an effort to drive the attack on the universities into the professions. They challenged the profession’s semi-closed system of hiring and promotion. Flacks organized for the SLM, as did Ross, who was now national director of the New University Conference, an instrument designed to forge from various leftist initiatives a permanent faculty and student organization.
Like Mills, however, they soon found themselves unexpectedly vulnerable to the disappearing distinction between their political, professional, and personal lives. Ross was suspended from the University of Chicago after chairing a mass meeting where the students voted to occupy the administration building. For years afterward Ross suffered from an acute anxiety, symbolized by a debilitating skin disease that made its appearance soon after he left campus. His injuries were nothing next to Flacks’s. On 5 May 1969, a man appeared at the door of Flacks’s office and lunged toward him. The stranger inflicted multiple head fractures and nearly severed his right hand before leaving him for dead. Just before the attack, the Chicago Tribune had named Flacks as a dangerous antiwar activist, and the FBI had sent a secret, anonymous letter to the university’s Board of Trustees, attempting to have him fired.

The Sociology Liberation Movement (SLM) suffered from wounds intrinsic to its project. At the 1969 convention of the American Sociological Association, in San Francisco, the SLM staged a counter-convention. A vanguard crossed the street, took over the presidential address platform and tried to raise a memorial to Ho Chi Minh. “Fat-Cat Sociology,” a SLM working paper, accused the assembled sociologists of serving as technicians of the Vietnam War, as guardians of “the occupied populace,” and as leaders in a “criminal” system of education. The Insurgent Sociologist, a newsletter, explained that SLM wished “to destroy the power structure of the profession, eliminate the power elite that controls the profession through its undemocratic structure, and redefine sociology to correspond to social reality.” The SLM soon broke up and reorganized itself into the Radical Caucus, which was not long in splintering into rival sects. Women sociologists formed their own caucus, as did Chicano sociologists, as did gay sociologists, as did black sociologists. Each met in its own convention session, attended its own party, coined its own slogans, and discovered, on its own, that it had more power within the profession, and less influence over it, than any of them hitherto had supposed.

As Mills’s epigones carried his legacy into the maelstrom of 1968, the meaning of his biography altered in response to events he could not have been expected to anticipate. He might have accepted his portion of responsibility for the psychodynamics of the New Left before it reorganized into terrorist cells, and the New Man degenerated into the Victim and the Survivor, the representative characters of the 1970s. Before this happened Mills might have regarded the student rebellions as a valuable opportunity to force liberals out of their complacency, to rebuild American colleges and universities as forums for critical thought. As his former student and colleague Immanuel Wallerstein said, “The student revolt has in many ways restored the possibilities for the radical intellectual to rise to his task and find his appropriate place in the movement.” Wallerstein, a member of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group at Columbia, co-edited The University Crisis Reader (1971)
Hofstadter himself was walking with Frank Friedel in front of the library at Columbia not long after the occupation. Freidel, remembering the time they had spent with Mills at the University of Maryland, said it was a shame he had not lived to enjoy the spectacle, for it would have been his glory. Hofstadter disagreed. “He said he could picture Mills standing on the steps of the Low Library calming down the students,” Friedel reported, “that Mills would have rather taken a serious view of the efforts to destroy the university and done what he could to rescue it. As I thought about it, I thought he was quite right.”

Had Mills lived long enough to choose sides, his experimentalism would have seen him through many contingencies, which would have improved his perspective many times by then. All along, his pragmatism would have tempered his exhortations. “Is anything more certain than that in 1970 our situation will be quite different?” he had written in his “Letter to the New Left,” where he counselled intellectuals to be “realistic in our utopianism.” Most likely, the choice of sides would no longer have been amenable to his definitions. In his independence he had declined to narrow the idea of radical commitment to a false choice between confrontation and withdrawal, yet in Havana, in London, and in New York, these were the only terms on offer by the end of the decade. His legacy torn apart by the very forces he had unleashed, he would have been marooned on no-man’s-land.

In the opening scene of *R.P.M. (Revolutions Per Minute)*, a film released by Columbia Pictures in 1970, a group of rabble-rousing college students is occupying the administration building. Apparently the school has endured several confrontations between student radicals and the college administration, each one more bitter than the last. Now a large number of respectable students has joined with the militants, and the militants are refusing to talk to the trustees. Only three men hold their trust: Che Guevara; Eldridge Cleaver; and the school’s own professor of sociology, F.W.J. Perez, known locally by his nickname, Paco.

Alone among the adults Paco Perez sympathizes with the radicalism of youth. Played by a broad-shouldered, tough-talking Anthony Quinn, Paco rides a motorcycle to campus. He wears an open shirt to class. He forswears the detached manner of his colleagues, quipping “cool” after he belittles Talcott Parsons in front of students. When the radicals on campus refer to the trustees as “absentee landlords in the ghetto of the mind” he does not object. And when they ask him to join their rally outside a local chemical plant, he agrees. Paco even keeps a young girlfriend, a sociology graduate student played in the film by Ann-Margret. The recent intensification of campus conflict, however, has strained his credentials. Paco is now 52 years old (the same age Mills would have been in 1970). A rumor accuses him of being sexually impotent. “I am a fake,” Paco says anxiously to his girlfriend, soon after he agrees to mediate the present conflict.

Quickly, disconcertingly, Paco discovers that he is unable to convince the
militants of the value of dialogue. Turning to address the rank-and-file, he assures them that he understands their anger, yet reminds them that John Dewey, “my spiritual mentor,” measured civilization by the efficacy of cooperative intelligence against brute force. The militants, in response to this, threaten to destroy the school’s central computer. Paco is thrown into a crisis. He has made his position clear to the trustees at the start: “One thing you never do on a college campus, I mean never, you never call the police.” What will he do now?

R.P.M. was produced and directed by Stanley Kramer, which should have been enough to make the movie a success. Kramer believed in cinema as a medium for articulating social conflict. His films included High Noon and The Wild One and Inherit the Wind and Judgment at Nuremberg and Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner. But R.P.M. was a commercial and critical bust, the least successful film he ever made. “I was as bewildered as most people by the seething confusion in society,” Kramer later explained; the student rebellions had left him “in torment.”

Paco Perez felt the same. Caught between rival absolutisms, he decides the conflict is unsolvable, calls the police, and hopes for the best. The students are savaged. The final scene shows Paco walking, eyes lowered, across campus. An angry crowd curses and taunts him, booing him off the stage of history.

NOTES

1 Print Order Book, Ballantine Books, in my possession.
3 Paperbound Books in Print, v. 7 (Fall 1962): 412.
4 A complete bibliography of published and unpublished writings may be found in The Politics of Truth: Selected Writings of C. Wright Mills, selected and introduced by John H. Summers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
9 Richard Rorty, Achieving Our Country (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998). Rorty did not tell his readers when or why Mills came to his call for a
“separate peace” between Cold War intellectuals, leaving the false impression that Mills was agitating for neutralism while Stalin still lived. Any attempt to grasp Mills’s neutralism has to acknowledge its first premise, namely, that things were changing in communist societies after 1956. In another polemic, Rorty further mangled this history by (mis)attributing the idea of a “separate peace” to Christopher Lasch. See Against Bases, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty, eds. Rorty, Derek Nystam, and Kent Puckett (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002), 50.

14 Drafts of the poem may be found in Folder 33, Box 1, Lawrence Ferlinghetti Papers, U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library, Manuscripts Collection.
20 Politica, 1 April 1962.
23 Sociology on Trial, eds. Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965). So completely did Mills dominate this movement that The Dissenting Academy, ed. Theodore Roszak (New York: Vintage, 1967) contained no entry for sociology. Mills, Roszak explained in his introduction, had already overthrown the orthodoxy; and no better criticism of sociology could be imagined. For the history of radical sociology, the best volume is Radical Sociologists and the Movement: Experiences, Lessons, and Legacies, eds. Martin Oppenheimer, Martin J. Murray, and


26 Dennis H. Wrong, “C. Wright Mills Recalled” in Wrong, Reflections on a Politically Skeptical Era (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 2004), 166. Rumours that Mills had not received a decent obituary from the sociology profession also were unfounded. See the notices in the American Sociological Review 27 (1962): 579-580; and American Journal of Sociology 68 (1962): 105-107.


28 Dusky Smith to Mrs. Mills, 5 July 1965. C. Wright Mills Papers, University of Texas.

29 Gil Green, “Marxism and C. Wright Mills” Political Affairs 42 (September 1963): 29.

30 Jonah Raskin, email to author, 13 July 2006.

31 Personal interview with Morton Horwitz, 6 March 2006.


35 Cruse, Crisis, 459, 467.

36 Zaid, email to author, 18 March 2006.

37 Abbie Hoffman, Soon to be a Major Motion Picture (New York: Putnam, 1980), 87.


42 Mills, Sociological Imagination, 8.

43 Todd Gitlin, email to author, 2 November 2006.

44 Ibid.

45 Gitlin, “Can We Trust the Russians?” The Yucatán, 16 December 1960: 1-3; Gitlin, “Deterrence and Reality,” Yucatán Forum 3 (October 1962): 3-12; Gitlin, “Afterword” to
Summers


Hayden, *Reunion*, 42.


Hayden, *Reunion*, 86.

Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 70.

Ibid., 58.

Newfield, 120-121.

United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Castro’s Network in the United States (Fair Play for Cuba Committee) 88th Cong, 1st Sess., Part 3 (Washington: GPO, 1963), 185.


Interview with Charles Frankel, 29 April 1964, *Newsweek Archive*, Box 282, Center for
American History, University of Texas, Austin.


63 Edward Shils, “Professor Mills on The Calling of Sociology,” World Politics 13 (July 1961): 621.


65 From the original 1948 edition book jacket.


69 Mills, Listen Again Yankee, 27.


72 Port Huron Statement, in Miller, Democracy in Streets, 344.


74 Ibid., 173.


77 Mills, “The Decline of the Left”.


80 Saul Landau, “C. Wright Mills: The Last Six Months” Ramparts (August 1965): 46-54. Also published in Root and Branch, no. 2. “The Causes of C. Wright Mills,” narrated by Landau and Elsa Knight Thompson, was recorded on 7 September and broadcast on KPFA radio on 1 October 1962. The recording may be found in Pacifica Radio Archives, number BB0281a-b.

81 The quotations in this paragraph come from Ralph Miliband, “C. Wright Mills” New
Summers


86 Mills, New Left, 8.11
87 Mills, New Left, unpaginated fragment.
96 Karol, Guerrillas in Power, trans. Pomerans, 10.
97 Ibid., 271.
100 Who Rules Columbia?, 10, 11.
101 Personal interview with Michael Klare, 10 July 2006.
103 Tom Hayden, “Two, Three, Many Colombias,” Ramparts 6 (15 June 1968): 40. SDS’s
The Epigone’s Embrace, Part II

official statement on the occupation, adopted 12 September 1968, echoed the logic of equivalence in Hayden’s essay. “If the Vietnamese could withstand the force of bombs, if the Blacks could withstand the onslaught of modern police, if Cubans could triumph over Imperialism, could we not also, in some tiny way, join the struggle for liberation? We thought we could.” See “The Columbia Statement” as reprinted in The University Crisis Reader, Volume 1: The Liberal University Under Attack, eds. Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr (New York: Random House, 1971), 23-31.

RESEARCH NOTE

McCarthyism on the Charles: The Life and Times of Labour Historian Ray Ginger before and After His Dismissal from Harvard University

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Born in 1924, Ray Ginger, the eminent labour historian, entered boyhood during the early years of the Great Depression, experiencing its ravages firsthand as a result of a family calamity. Spending most of his youth in Indiana, Ginger excelled academically in high school before matriculating at the University of Chicago as a precocious 16-year old freshman in 1940. During his two years at the school, Ginger came to adopt left-wing politics and upon reaching his 18th birthday in 1942, he enlisted in the military.

As the citizenry of the United States rallied around the war effort, the nation’s landscape looked drastically different than the decade before with Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal being extended to virtually every nook and cranny of American society. Through its work with the unemployed movement and its active role in organizing the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) during the Great Depression, the Left was clearly in its ascendancy in the United States with the nation’s largest socialist organization, the Communist Party United States of America (CPUSA), achieving a peak membership of 85,000 in 1942.

Returning to civilian life approximately six months after the war’s conclusion in 1946, Ginger resumed his academic course work, earning a Master’s degree in Economics from the University of Michigan while becoming increasingly active in left-wing politics. Because of his interest in becoming a working class organizer, Ginger obtained a job in a Detroit-area auto factory in the late 1940s while putting the finishing touches on his magnum opus on Eugene V. Debs, the distinguished labour leader and Socialist Party head who was perhaps the nation’s foremost radical political leader of the twentieth century if not of all time.

In 1949, when Ginger’s seminal biography, The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs, appeared, the country’s political climate had changed dramatically. With the onset of the Cold War shortly after the Second World War’s con-
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clusion, the CPUSA faced the start of an increasingly hostile environment with the rise of McCarthyism as initially evidenced by the CIO’s expulsion of eleven CPUSA-led unions in 1949-1950 and the conviction of ten of the eleven National Board members for teaching and advocating the violent overthrow of the U.S. federal government at the 1949 Smith Act Trials. Just as left-wing organizations were increasingly on the defensive in the United States, *The Bending Cross* hit the shelves. Reviews of the book in scholarly journals were glowing. Writing in *The American Historical Review*, for example, David Shannon remarked, “This book, the best biography of Eugene Debs yet published, is a valuable contribution to the history of American political and economic radicalism.” Shannon also praised Ginger for his methodical approach in gathering information on Debs claiming that his “energy and ingenuity in running down more than three score people who knew the socialist leader yielded rich rewards.” Moreover, W.M. Brewer's comments in *The Journal of Negro History* were equally effusive when he stated, “The warmth of revelation and dispassionate evaluation of the critical historian are ever present in such form that Debs seems alive and telling in his own words the story of adventures in behalf of labor and reforms ahead of his times.” And in conclusion, Brewer recounted, “Debs’ personality glows again in this biography whose message is necessary for understanding three generations of the American labor movement.”

With a first-rate book already in hand, Ginger attended the doctoral program in American Civilization at Western Reserve University, being financially supported by the GI bill. Upon earning his doctorate, Ginger was named a fellow in Business History at Harvard Business School in 1952 before receiving an assistant professorship of research in Business History. After less than two years at the institution, however, Ginger would experience the full brunt of McCarthyism's destructive power when he was forced to resign his position at the Harvard Business School because of his alleged ties to the CPUSA.

**The Continuing Significance of Ginger’s *The Bending Cross***

Although works penned about Debs span nearly 90 years, the book widely viewed as *The Bending Cross*’s most worthy rival is Nick Salvatore’s, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*, written some three decades later in 1982. As Melvyn Dubofsky aptly notes, Salvatore’s biography benefited greatly from the explosive growth in social and labour history publications during the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, Salvatore’s oeuvre covers topics neglected in Ginger’s account, with the former author providing a window into Debs’ private life, discussing his psychological weaknesses through an examination of Debs’ emotional crises and sporadic bouts of neurotism. Such an approach, for the most part, resulted in Salvatore’s biography garnering laudatory reviews.
In spite of enlarging our current knowledge of the popular labour and socialist leader through the inclusion of elements that are more likely to be found in a detailed psychological study or a psychobiography, in an extensive review of Salvatore's book, L. Glen Seretan argues that this work fails in “advancing much that is new” and “(t)he very purpose of the study, then, is dubious.” Moreover, he claims that “Debs is dwarfed by his own biography” and that “the author's writing (is) variously tedious, awkward, clichéd, muddled, repetitive, or purple.” In conclusion, Seretan is ruthlessly unforgiving in his analysis of Salvatore's study, viewing it as little more than a pale imitation of Ginger's classic. He contends that Salvatore's Debs is a far cry from the definitive work its dustjacket panegyrics proclaim it to be being “poorly conceived, derivative, and badly overwritten. Certainly, it is not a worthy successor to The Bending Cross.”

Why does Ginger's biography remain the seminal treatment of Debs' life some sixty years after its initial publication? Clearly, the book's politics continue to resonate at the end of the twenty-first century's first decade as they did when the volume first appeared less than a quarter-century after Debs’ death. In an era when left-wing politics have been decimated through the destruction of the Soviet and Eastern European nations’ postcapitalist regimes and the acquiescing of ostensibly social democratic parties and governments to the “realities” of neoliberal globalism, Mike Davis illuminates the continuing significance of Ginger's treatment of Debs in the introduction to the most recent edition of The Bending Cross published in 2007. Davis argues that Ginger's work provides “an antidote to jaded postmodernist cynicism,” a theoretical position that, unfortunately, passes for left analysis among certain segments of the academy and the intelligentsia who are far too willing to dismiss the continuing relevance of class analysis for understanding past and current sociopolitical developments.

And although many view Debs simply as the quintessential Midwesterner “more Midwestern than a worn and rotting plow-handle buried deep in the soil of a Kansas farm,” Davis celebrates Ginger's account of Debs' support for an array of worldwide liberation struggles in the first few decades of the twentieth century including, of course, the October Revolution. Because of this, Davis rightfully acknowledges Debs as “a central figure of international socialism, part of that heroic handful of prominent prewar leaders including Jean Jaures, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, James Connolly, Leon Trotsky, and V.I. Lenin who opposed the Second International's capitulation to war frenzy and mass murder.”

And the issues confronting the United States in 2008 are frighteningly similar to those facing the nation in 1918 when Debs was found guilty of delivering a speech in Canton, Ohio for essentially opposing the United States' participation in the First World War. During each of these two years separated by nine decades, the country was embroiled in fighting a foreign war, had a president lacking in popularity, and contained numerous politicians promising to promote
democracy abroad while enacting questionable legislation which limited civil liberties on native soil. Also in existence at both times were savage inequities in wealth, high rates of immigration, little (and declining) respect for workers and a seething bitterness concerning the devastation imposed by global capital. In the presence of such conditions, Ginger's biography of Debs remains a powerful statement of revolutionary commitment, resonating with readers dedicated to overturning a decaying social order that perpetually denies those who labour their rightful share of the wealth that they have created with their hands and brains. And in the final analysis, regardless of the historical era, Ginger's work will continue to be highly relevant as long as the class system remains the foundation of the United States' political economy.

**McCarthyism and Ray Ginger's Resignation from Harvard University**

Numerous written accounts detail the destructive effects imposed by McCarthyism throughout the late 1940s and 1950s among individuals found in the film industry, academia, and governmental service in addition to those from many white and blue-collar occupations. This phenomenon, attributed to Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, emerged during the Cold War's early years. However, the anti-Communist fervour that swept the United States during this era had its roots in immediate post-World War II political developments after Nazi Germany's defeat when America turned its attention to vanquishing the world's other super power, the Soviet Union, economically, militarily and ideologically.

No university or college in the United States remained immune from the pressure of McCarthyism to purge its faculty of known Communists, suspected Communists, or former Communists who refused to cooperate with either university investigatory committees or governmental commissions formed to ferret out such allegedly undesirable individuals from teaching at their institutions. Even Harvard University, long heralded by supporters as a bastion of academic freedom, succumbed to the virus of McCarthyism with the suspension of Medical School Assistant Professor of Anatomy Helen Deane Markham, the rescinding of an offer to Sigmund Diamond unless he “named names” of Communists he associated with as a former Party member, and making the awarding of a faculty appointment to Robert Bellah contingent upon his total cooperation with any governmental commission involved with the investigation of American Communism.

Harvard's dispositions of the cases of Markham, Diamond and Bellah have been prominently discussed in a number of academic arenas. Less well-known is the university's treatment of Ray Ginger who was suspected of being affiliated or having former ties to the CPUSA. In June 1954, Harvard Business School Assistant Professor of Research in Business History, Ray Ginger was dis-
missed from his faculty appointment when he declined to disclose whether he currently was or had ever been a CPUSA member. Assuming that the accounting of Ginger’s termination in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reports is correct, this is the first case to be made public “in which a Harvard professor was asked to resign because he refused to respond to charges that he was a Communist.”

According to FBI files, the university and the Bureau had a solid, close relationship with Harvard administrators continually supplying information to agents concerning Ginger’s first wife, Ann Fagan Ginger, in 1954. The events surrounding Ginger’s termination can be reconstructed from FBI files.

Harvard Business School officers were provided with a tip from an anonymous source on 14 June 1954 that Ginger and his wife could be called to testify in front of the Massachusetts Commission to Investigate Communism. On 15 June 1954, university administrators arranged a meeting with Ginger at 4:30 p.m. and asked him if he was being investigated by the commission. Ginger replied that he would be required to testify before the commission but “hedged” as to whether he would cooperate with its investigation.” At this time, Ginger was instructed to attend a 9 a.m. meeting the following day to provide additional answers.

At the 16 June 1954 morning meeting, Ginger reiterated his response from the day before concerning his cooperation with the commission. In addition, he refused to answer whether he currently was or ever had been a CPUSA member. Next, Ginger was questioned whether his wife, a lawyer who defended alleged Communists, was a member of the CPUSA and if she too had been called to testify before the commission. Upon declining to answer, Harvard officers informed Ginger that he would either have to respond to their questions or be required to resign his faculty position. Confronted with these two choices, Ginger immediately tendered his resignation.

Several days after Ginger’s dismissal, a Harvard official telephoned the Bureau, stating that the university’s records concerning the disposition of this case were available to the FBI. According to FBI files on this discussion, the official stated that he did not believe that Ginger “had any connection with the Communist Party or any sympathy with it” although the same could not be said with any certainty about his wife who was “believed” to have a relationship with the Party.

According to an article published in The Harvard Crimson in December 2000, in response to the question whether her ex-husband was a Communist, Ann Ginger replied, “Was he [Ray Ginger] a Communist? Was Eugene Debs a member of the Communist Party?” These things are fluid. They’re not a simple thing, like a card-carrying member of the KKK. People were in and around the Socialist party, the Communist party, the CIO.” Ann Ginger stated that “she does not know whether her husband was a member of the CPUSA” although she acknowledged that the two of them “were active in left-wing causes,” participated in Marxist study groups as well as attended the occasional meeting of the Communist
Party. By the time of Ginger’s firing in 1954, however, it is clear that Ann Ginger was much more politically active in left-wing politics than her husband. She was involved in the National Lawyer’s Guild and the Civil Rights Congress; the latter organization was on the United States’ Attorney General’s list of subversive organizations while the Attorney General was attempting to get the former group added to the list. In addition, the Gingers were close friends with several well-known Massachusetts left-wing activists such as Otis Hood, the head of the Massachusetts CPUSA, who gave Ann Ginger piano lessons.

In 2000, nearly fifty years after Ginger’s termination, inspired by the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation hearings in the 1990s, Ann Ginger wrote a letter to Harvard’s Board of Overseers insisting on an apology for the unfair treatment meted out to her husband at the time. In response to Ginger’s letter, Board of Overseers President Sharon Gagnon did not apologize for the firing of Ginger but replied in a letter, “I would not presume to…second-guess the motives or judgments of individuals in that difficult time. It seems clear, however, that Harvard took an action in the case of Mr. Ginger that many thoughtful people today, looking back, would not find appropriate.”

Arguing that Harvard’s reply was unacceptable, Ann Ginger responded by stating that the university needed to acknowledge that Harvard’s behavior was inexcusable and called on the school to put out a policy statement defending its allegiance to academic freedom. According to Ginger, “I can prove that Harvard violated academic freedom and constitution law at that time and has never studied what it did, has never apologized. What happened in the McCarthy period could happen again – there’s nothing in this letter that suggests that Harvard would not cave in again as they did before.”

An Oral History of Ray Ginger’s Life

While basic facts concerning Ray Ginger’s life have been identified, such as where he obtained his degrees and the universities that he eventually taught in after his termination from Harvard, there has been no journal article, book chapter or book, which has fleshed out the details on Ginger’s life. Thus, the purpose of this essay is to fill in the gap concerning Ginger’s life in order to understand his background and the events that ultimately shaped the emergence of his interests and his intellectual passions. To this end, two interviews were conducted with Victoria Brandon, his third (and last) wife. They covered his background, childhood, high school and college years, his service in the military during World War II, his time in graduate school, what happened to him during the six years after he was terminated by Harvard but before he obtained a teaching position at Brandeis, and his career at subsequent universities after leaving Brandeis. In addition, this essay also answers the question of whether Ginger had ever been, in fact, a CPUSA
member prior to or during his tenure at Harvard; it also addresses Ginger’s views on the CPUSA during the 1940s and 1950s.

The remainder of this essay is in Victoria Brandon’s words as based on my two telephone interviews with her. I have eliminated my questions and comments and have edited and rearranged the information given to me in order to provide a coherent flow to the narrative.

Ray Ginger’s Early Life

Ray Ginger was born in Memphis, Tennessee. His father’s name was L.D. Ginger; his mother’s name was Myra Fay Hatchett. She was from Mississippi. His father was originally from Illinois though of Southern background and it was very much a Southern family. Although he was born in Memphis, they had lived in Louisiana until rather recently. His father had made a lot of money in a way that I never quite got clear on. He bought a horse plantation down there in Louisiana which was the dream of his life. And then he lost it all because he was gambling on the Florida real estate booms.

And so at this point when Ray was born, he was the fourth of five children. He had three older brothers and a younger sister. When Ray was born, his father was the Southern regional manager of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. And they were a good solid middle-class family. So, I had gotten the very strong impression that it was not a happy family that there was a lot of tension between his parents. His mother, in particular, felt that she was a Southern belle and his father was kind of an up-start. Ray spoke, oh maybe fifty times, of how terrible it was to hear his mother call his father “poor white trash.” But they were prosperous enough.

Anyway, in 1929, just as the stock market was crashing, his father had a terrible automobile accident. I gathered he was drunk which I think was a fairly frequent event and I know perfectly well he was just a terrible driver. He was very badly injured and was in the hospital for something like a year and a half, two years. And during that period, the company paid his salary. But when he got out, they fired him because, naturally, they didn’t have a job for him anymore. It had been filled.

It was then 1931, and the absolute depths of the depression. So they all moved. I don’t remember where they were living during this period but I suspect it was somewhere pretty Southern. They moved to Greencastle, Indiana because Ray’s eldest brother, who was also named L.D., had been accepted to DePauw. So they moved there to make a home for him. They had no money at all. They lived for three or four years, finding empty houses and just squatting in them. And then moving on when they got evicted which took awhile. They were on relief and Ray told me, again repeatedly, about standing in line at the County relief to pick up a bag of flour. He was just a little kid at that point. But it was a very searing memory of life on the underside.
At some point along there, I think it was when L.D. finished college, which would have been about 1934-35, they all moved to Indianapolis. The family got to be a little bit more prosperous, chiefly because the boys were all working as much as possible including Ray from a very early age. His dad never did get another decent job. He was not home, I gather about ninety percent of the time. He was traveling around; he’d get traveling salesmen jobs on a very temporary basis. So it was very much a tenuous kind of precarious existence throughout his entire boyhood.

As a young boy, aside from just surviving, he was a real bright kid. He was a bright, angry kid. And he was reading everything he could get his hands on. The only story I remember him telling is how when he was something like seven or eight and a big handful at school because he was bright and mad and causing trouble, a teacher decided that the way to cope with him was to teach him French, and got him into a special kind of tutoring, strictly on a volunteer basis, and did teach him French. He never learned to speak it at all but he read it, and to an extent wrote it very well years later and he never learned it formally aside from that.

He also was crazy about bicycling as a young boy. I can’t imagine that he actually had a bicycle until after they moved to Indianapolis and got a little richer. But his father as I said was nuts for horses and so were his brothers. He felt that this was something he couldn’t compete in so he didn’t have anything to do with it. So he became quite avid about bicycling.

When they moved to Indianapolis, he attended Arsenal Technical High School. And for someone who was, even at that stage, obviously heading for intellectual-type pursuits, it seems like kind of a strange choice. I think that the decision came more geographically than anything else. But it was something that he was always very proud of that he had gone to this technical school. They did have an academic programme but he also learned all kinds of shop classes and most of his fellow students were there for vocational reasons. And I think he felt that sense of class solidarity about that.

With regards to academic interests in high school, he loved English. He loved words. He was getting to be a good writer already. I don’t think that he had any particular scientific interests then or later despite editing a science book at one point. I remember his talking about being part of a group that did bird banding for a fairly extended period. He also talked about that as a form of therapy in that you have to be very calm and deliberate in your movements. For someone who was, by nature, rather abrupt and still had quite a lot of hostilities, this was a good thing for him to do.

Ray Ginger’s College Years at the University of Chicago

He did very well in school. The evidence for that is that he was accepted by both Harvard and the University of Chicago. There’s a story in that he told many times
about himself. Naturally, he wouldn’t dream about asking anybody’s advice about anything. He didn’t even dream of going and looking things up on the map. But he had been accepted by these two major universities and he had gotten some financial aid offered from both of them. So he knew that the only way he was going to be able to afford to go to either of those schools or any school at all was by working pretty much full time while he was there. The reason why he chose the University of Chicago was his assumption that it would be easier to get student jobs in a big city like Chicago than in some hick New England village like Cambridge.

He went to the University of Chicago as an undergraduate student in 1940 and he wanted to be a sportswriter. If he couldn’t be a sportswriter, he assumed he probably wouldn’t make it; that was too heroic but that he would be some sort of journalist. He got the usual kind of jobs bussing tables and all of that. But then he got a job on the Chicago Tribune which he said was the moment that his father was the proudest of him because the Chicago Tribune was his father’s idea of really the world’s greatest newspaper as they called themselves. Well, he was just supposed to be on the copy desk or something like that, doing nothing that was not just routine. But the U.S. got in the war and all the reporters went to Europe to become war correspondents so he became a local journalist and covered all sorts of stories on the city desk. That’s where he was first writing really professionally.

At Chicago, he joined a fraternity there largely because it was a good way to get room and board. He was also just crazy about the city. This opened doors to him that he never even dreamt of. He spoke many times of first hearing live jazz and first going to the art museum and there was “Sunday on Grand Jatte Island.” This opened his eyes to possibilities in the world that he’d never even thought of despite all the reading.

Ray Ginger’s Military Years

He turned 18 in October of 1942 and I assume he went in the military then. I don’t think he was drafted. He knew he was going to go so he signed up so he’d have a little bit of choice in it. But, very soon after basic training, at that point, they gave all these recruits a whole battery of tests. He did very well on them and was selected to learn Japanese.

He was sent to the University of Michigan, for a year or eighteen months where they had a crash course in the Japanese language. He said he got good enough to read a newspaper in a kind of rudimentary way though again there was no matter of speaking it. And that’s where he met his first wife who was also a student at the University of Michigan and where he also met her family who became a very important influence on his life. And also, because it was at the university, he was getting course credit for it too which meant that later he had an extra leg up on his undergraduate degree.
In effect, his undergraduate education was almost finished between Chicago and Michigan. When the course was over, the whole crew of them was sent to Washington D.C. to decipher Japanese codes. For which he said the whole study of the Japanese language had been completely pointless. What it was about was statistics and knowing the Japanese didn't help at all.

But he found this very gratifying that people would come in and say, "You guys you deciphered such and so and therefore we saved such and so aircraft carrier or we won this battle or all of that." The rest of the crew that he was working with was also pretty bright stimulating people. And, of course, he wasn't getting shot at which was nice too.

So then at the end of the war, when Japan fell, he was shipped out to California to the Presidio of Monterey because the whole unit was supposed to go to Japan to perform a sensitive military assignment. But the way he told it, Douglas MacArthur didn't want people who weren't immediately under his control to do such a sensitive job. So, they just sat there in Monterey for what might have been as long as six months. Then MacArthur got his way and they were all sent home. He met Joseph Stilwell while he was there, sitting on the beach, and got to talk to him considerably about their various takes on life which turned out to be fairly similar.

Ray Ginger's Interest in Labour History and Left-Wing Politics

Ray's attraction to labour history emerged through his interest in Debs. I think at this time with regards to these interests, he was not thinking of himself as a historian. He was thinking of himself as a left-wing working class organizer. He started reading about Debs, who was, of course, the great hero of the left and of the labour movement. I think their common Indiana background had a lot to do with it. But I think more it was a sense of personal empathy and he got into labour history and a broader field because he wrote the Debs book.

In terms of his developing an interest in left-wing politics, I think that was earlier in Chicago that he started thinking of himself definitely as a left-wing person. When he was at Michigan, he became close to the Fagan family. That gave a great big boost because they were old-line, very solidly socialist intellectual people. The Fagan family was very much the hub of a left-wing political group in Michigan.

But then, seriously, yes, he wanted to be a union organizer. And after the war, that's what he intended to do. He had all sorts of various jobs and different things. But, at one point, he went to work in the Dodge plant in Hamtramck. It would have been about 1948 or 1949 or somewhere in there. Said he was positively the worst installer of driver-side door weather stripping that had ever been. His elder son bought a 1948 Dodge many years later, and Ray's first question was, "Is the weather-stripping any good? Probably not."

In terms of Ray's left-wing activities, he spoke many times of something
called the American Veterans Committee, which was a left-wing alternative to the American Legion. He was very active in that. I think he was really one of its founders. And everybody else he was associated with were extremely active in the Wallace campaign in 1948. Also, I'd heard of it a million times, a famous concert at Peekskill, where Paul Robeson was singing. And a group of right-wing violent-type thugs conducted a kind of a gauntlet. Well, he was there.

But at some point before he finished as a graduate student, actually up through the whole period, he and Ann were at the hub of a group of young, politically active concerned students. And they had all sorts of gatherings at their house. For example, once Pete Seeger came to sing on the campus or in some coffee shop and he came over to the Ginger apartment and sang until three o'clock in the morning. So there were a lot of informal things of that sort.

Ray told me of his involvement in the Communist Party. He spoke of it on various occasions to me. He told me he had actually joined when he was in the Army in Washington. It would have been in 1944 or 1945. That some Communist Party organizer was there and gave a speech. He and a friend of his whom later became a very straight-laced kind of academic lawyer had signed up together. It's hard to say exactly how long he was a member. But his active period came to an end around 1948 when he was finishing the Debs book partly because the Communist Party then seemed much less likely to be an agent for change. It had gotten to be marginal to a lot of left-wing activities because, well, it was full of FBI agents for one thing. But also because a group of Party leaders had come to talk to him about what was going in to his book and, in effect, tried to dictate certain lines and he would have absolutely none of that. They had a big fight.

Ray thought it was a good thing for him to have been a member of the Communist Party. And not a remarkable thing. He said that there were lots and lots of idealistic young people who joined the Communist Party as a way of changing the world. And they really thought for a few years there that they were going to do it. He was not a person to go along with Party lines on anything. He was very non-authoritarian. Well, he was authoritarian himself but he wouldn't accept other people's authorities.

So, whatever happened, I suspect he would not have been an active member of a Party organization for long where people have to toe the line, come to a group decision and then everybody stands, holds to it, etc. He resigned from every organization that he ever joined later like the American Historical Association though, for similar reasons, that he didn't want anybody telling him what to do. But I think he thought, for at least a few years there, his experience within the Party was very positive because it was so full of other people who were of a similar frame of mind. He thought it was, for awhile, effective.

As I said, Ray's membership in the Communist Party, I think, more lapsed than anything else. I know he had lots of friends who were either still
members or had been members or that they would think, “Well, I’m Communist in my belief but this structure isn’t getting anywhere so I’m going to do something else.” He always thought of himself as a Marxist and he called himself a Marxist.

Ray Ginger’s Graduate School Years and His Writing of *The Bending Cross*

As I said he got his BA kind of by default, he had gotten enough credits. Then he got a Master’s degree in Economics from the University of Michigan. His wife was in law school there. So he chose Michigan because it was handy. Also he had family there, her family. At this point, he was writing the Debs book. It was about this time that he had that job at Hamtramck when he was at Michigan. He was still writing the Debs book and Ann got a job at a law firm in Cleveland. He wanted to finish the book and naturally they were married and they wanted to be together.

So he went to Western Reserve on a doctoral program because he could get GI bill support. He still did not have any idea of being an academic. He was going to be a left-wing activist, a union organizer, something like that. So he finished the book, by that time he had done his coursework, gotten his orals and all of that and needed just the dissertation. As he told it to me, this decision came about in a casual late night conversation with friends there, other graduate students. He was saying, “What am I going to do now?” And they said, “Why don’t you finish your Ph.D.?” He said, “I don’t want to write some dissertation with one of these second-rate professors sitting over my head telling me what to do.” “Give ‘em your book. Tell them that’s your dissertation.”

He was studying in the American civilization department, not history. Ray had given the chairman of the American Civilization department a copy of the book when it came out and when the committee met to discuss this not normal proposition, this guy said, “I’ve read that book and I like it.” I guess, there was a little bit of a case when authoritarianism worked on his behalf because they let him get away with it. So he got a Ph.D.

What motivated Ray to write the Debs biography was the sense of association. I think also that he felt it hadn’t been done right. His left-wing connections in the Middle West were important too. He realized that he knew some of the people who had played a part in Debs’ life. He also knew that a friend of a friend of a friend was part of a network of such people. Getting to know them and finding out more was a motivating factor definitely.

It took Ray about four years to do the research and writing of *The Bending Cross*, from the end of the war until it came out but he certainly wasn’t working on it full-time. He was going to graduate school and also working occasionally at other types of jobs.

Ray was very pleased with the critical acclaim for his book. But I also think he took it as not exactly for granted but that he thought, “Yes, of course, it is a significant work in labour history.” So he took the acclaim as his due.
I believe that *The Bending Cross* has remained the definitive treatment of Debs’ life because of all the interviews; this is the main thing. This book is based on material which you can’t duplicate now. And so, it’s also a primary source as well as a secondary source. Also, it’s very well-written. You write something that somebody’s going to want to read, it’s likely to be around for awhile.

Ray, in particular, identified with Debs’ populism, his being a man of the people. Being a working class person and not being content with that. His international views not particularly I think.

**Ray Ginger at Harvard Business School**

Ray was hired to be the editor of the *Business History Review* which was a Harvard Business School outlet that was kind of moribund, and he was supposed to turn it into a first-class scholarly journal which he did. He really did a wonderful job with the *Business History Review*. He, incidentally, wrote a batch of really excellent formal scholarly articles in business history for the journal aside from the editing.6

Ray’s colleagues at Harvard Business School thought very highly of him. He was invited to be a visiting professor because he wasn’t supposed to be teaching. He started doing that and at the time that they fired him, was either right on the verge of getting or had just gotten, at least a half-time appointment as a teacher rather than just as an editor.

Ray did have close friends among the faculty at the Harvard Business School. There are only two names that I remember. One of them was a guy named Tom Navin6 who was the head of the Business History Department that we knew in later years. Another one was somebody that I remember meeting only once, named George Sweet Gibb6, who was a really eminent business historian. And there was another fellow I remember meeting years later which was the last year of Ray’s life; he was emeritus from Harvard at that point. But I remember the affection with which these people had for Ray, ten, fifteen years after they had last seen him. It was really obvious that they had thought very highly of him and vice versa.

Ray was a very good colleague when he thought that the person he was colleagueing (sic) with was bright enough and able enough. When he didn’t, he tended to let his low opinion show and so he had some definite enemies at various points. But when he had a colleague he respected, he was always very generous with helping the other person in their work, too, in conversation and in suggestions and in all kinds of things that a good university runs on. Ray liked his position a lot at the Harvard Business School. He thought he was really finding his niche there.

**After Ray Ginger’s Termination from Harvard University**

When Ray was terminated from Harvard, he was furious. He thought he had been
very ill done by. Ray and his family went to New York City immediately after his termination. My understanding is they got on the train that night. Harvard was afraid they were going to be subpoenaed by the state version of the Un-American Activities Committee. They wanted to get them out of the jurisdiction before that happened. So he was allowed to keep something like two months salary if he'd get out of town on the next train. Ann was very pregnant. Jim Ginger was born almost immediately. He was born in July and this all happened at Harvard in June.

I think they stayed with relatives. Ann had a sister who I know was living in the New York area with her husband. Ray got a job quite quickly, no problem, with an ad agency doing mostly public relations work. The contract clients that he spoke of most often with CARE, he was then trying to revamp a way that people could send packages of food to their soldier relatives overseas into a way of getting aid to European civilians. He was helping to design an ad campaign that would spread the word that this was a way to contribute. He stayed there for two years.

Concerning the breakup of Ray's first marriage, they were very short of money and it was all very stressful. I suspect there were strains in the marriage before because things don't break up real suddenly like that. I believe a kind of a political break or at least a perceived one in that according to him, Ann Ginger thought that he was retreating from his socialist ideals by becoming part of the New York Madison Avenue crowd.

And, in any case, there was some great big fight and he just moved out. This would have been when Jim Ginger was very small. My recollection is that it was over the holidays, Christmas of 1954, I believe. He just basically left the family. He had every intention of providing for them financially, but in his opinion, his wife was crazy. That's what he told me and that he just couldn't stand living with her anymore.

He lived in flophouses for awhile then. He basically had no money. Everything was going to support his family so he found these rooming houses to stay in. He couldn't even leave his wardrobe there so he hung his suits in his office at the advertising agency. I think that living in these flophouses gave him a better sense of how the real underclass lived. It also, I think, accentuated his feeling of failure and despair that he got fired and his marriage had broken up. He was living in these very substandard conditions.

I don't remember why his advertising job terminated. I think because he got a better job offer at Alfred A. Knopf where he was an editor in the college department. He was responsible for editing several extremely well-thought of textbooks.

His second wife was a woman named Evelyn Geiger that he had known from graduate school in Cleveland but just happened to be working as a secretary at Knopf at that time. She was originally from Louisiana. They had met when they were both graduate students at Case Western Reserve, and they met again at Knopf and hooked up together pretty quickly and got married, I believe, fairly quickly in 1956.
Then when he married his second wife, they lived in a more normal sort of way. She had a daughter and they lived in midtown Manhattan. He liked that very much. He found New York City a very stimulating place.

Ray stayed at Knopf for two years and I know they fired him and I don’t think I ever knew exactly why. He then got another job very easily at Henry Holt and Company where he was also a college department editor. He then took on as a special project designing a book format magazine similar to American Heritage but on current scientific knowledge, and one issue came out. Then they had no one else who would take that over so they dropped it after he left.

After Ray’s termination from Harvard, he more or less assumed that he would never land another university position. He’d applied and had not gotten any kind of positive response.

Ray’s firing from Harvard did not change his political views. It certainly had an effect on his opinion of Harvard College which went absolutely through the floor. It gave him personal input whenever the subject came up about academic freedom or the so-called McCarthy period, he had his own stories to tell. I say so-called because he refused to call it that. He said that the whole repressive period had started with Truman and McCarthy was just kind of a tail that wagged the dog.

Ray Ginger’s Return to Academia

Ray got back into academia when Brandeis University approached him. He had written two very good books while he was working in New York, Six Days Are Forever and Altgeld’s America. They both came out in 1958, and they had been well-reviewed, well-received. They were not light literature by any means. Somebody in the American Studies Department at Brandeis was quite impressed with these and thought this would be a real addition to their department. He got a letter and a phone call and an invitation to go visit and a job offer.

He was appointed to start in the fall of 1960. I believe as an assistant professor. It was a very successful part of his career. He did good academic work there, and also was really a superb teacher. They thought very well of him; he became head of the American Studies Department and a full tenured professor. He was also the coach of the tennis team. It was I think one of the really stellar episodes of his career.

The breakup there came ostensibly because he was having an affair with me. I was a student there. But neither one of us believed that that was the real thing because that was a pretty freewheeling place and all sorts of things like that happened. His viewpoint was that he had been involved in too many internal fights with the administration and that they were looking for a reason to get rid of him.

He was married to his second wife when they moved to Brandeis. Actually they were still legally married at the time that Ray and I got together. But Evelyn had moved out several years before that in ’63 or ’64.
They were threatening to bring some sort of legal action on “moral turpitude” grounds. They gave him an ultimatum: either he would resign or they would take steps to have him fired. But if he resigned and went quietly, they would let his sabbatical, which was coming up the next year, run so that he would have a year’s slack to get settled someplace else. Of course sabbaticals are supposed to be predicated on the persons coming back. So this was not really kosher but that’s the way they did it.

So he went to the American Historical Association meeting over the holidays of 1966 looking to see if he could find another job. He got together there with Alfred H. Kelly, he was the head of the department of history at Wayne State. They got to talking and they liked each other and Al was looking for somebody to fill a slot in the American history part of the department. So he recruited him, and we went out there for an interview. He also had an old friend there named Ed Lurie who wrote a biography of Louis Agassiz and was in the history of science. And Ed was really promoting this whole stuff.

Along about June or July 1967, he had another job lined up to teach summer school at Stanford. We went down there and he was teaching every day. Ray had a bunch of colleagues around that he really liked, a bunch of students he was getting a big charge out of. At the end of that period, I guess it was in August, before we went off to Michigan, he flew down to Juarez and got divorced from his second wife.

As soon as we were done in California, we drove out to Wayne, and then found an apartment and then we continued on to Brandeis where we packed up all his stuff in the apartment he still had there. Then we went back to Detroit.

He worked a deal at Wayne State where he could teach any three quarters he wanted with the idea that we’d be out of there in the winter but we couldn’t do that the first winter so we were there. We hated the climate; we hated the city. It was right after the Detroit riots, and it was a grim place to live. We were within walking distance of the university which was the reason we chose that particular place. His colleagues he felt were not nearly as stimulating as the ones at Brandeis. The students he thought were even worse, comparatively speaking. There were only a couple of them that he really felt were very promising that he wanted to spend time with.

So, anyway, we couldn’t stand Detroit. During the second winter we were there; we took the winter quarter off and went to Puerto Rico. I remember as we were flying back in there, we could see this red cloud of yuckety (sic) smog rolling down the Detroit River, he looked out the window and said, “I can feel my sore throat coming back already even though we’re still at 30,000 feet.” By that time, we’d already planned to leave.

Calgary was our escape hatch from Detroit. There was another encounter at a convention, the Organization of American Historians, and it would have been in the spring of ’69. He went down there and he had encountered, in
a bar probably, a historian named Marian McKenna. Anyway, she was headhunting too and he got to talking to her and she said, “How about Calgary?”

We flew out to Denver or someplace and we drove up there. And we saw the university and it seemed pleasant enough and it was sure a whole lot cleaner and more connected to the out-of-doors that we didn’t get in Detroit, and so it seemed like a good place to go, and we did.

His career at Calgary was not real great. Even more than Wayne State, he didn’t think much of his colleagues. I can only think of one student there that he was really involved with who later became, I believe still is, a professor of history at the University of Alberta. He felt unappreciated.

One of the reasons why it seemed attractive was that it was a beautiful place physically. Not actually Calgary but it was right on the outskirts of the Rocky Mountains. We were going to build a house in the mountains and we did do that. First we thought Banff but that turned out not to be possible for legal reasons. His feeling that he really liked things like hiking was largely a self-delusion. So we got out there and here we are sixty miles from even the colleagues that he thought were boring and all he really could find to do was to sit there looking out the window with a book and a drink.

He also was working as a scholar all this time. Aside from scholarly articles for various periodicals, he edited several books. *Age of Excess*, which is a history of the United States from 1877 to 1914, came out in 1965 when he was at Brandeis. He wrote a strange little thing called *Ray Ginger’s Joke Book About American History*, which came out in 1974. And then a general history of the United States called *People on the Move* in 1975.

If you had asked him during the six years he was in New York, he would have said that his firing from Harvard was a seminal event that had changed his whole career path and forced him out of what he had then become to think of as his true calling and had destroyed a lot of what he had hoped for. But then he got back into academia and that was no longer true. I don’t think it affected his life subsequently much more than it was the source of a whole lot of anecdotes to talk about at two o’clock in the morning when people were chewing the fat.

He thought Harvard had behaved very badly and that information should be promulgated. He hated the thought that Harvard was priding itself on its being such a defender of academic freedom, but he didn’t think that their activities had, well, yes, they’d harmed him personally; they cost him six years. But he said that after he got back into the academic world that his immediate sense of grievance was very much alleviated if not eliminated.

In the early 1970s Ray told me that he was considering coming forward to publicly state that he had been a Communist Party member. To the best of my recollection, we’d been sitting and talking with some people. I don’t remember if it was a public event. I think it may have been at least semi-public, a gathering of
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a dozen students at somebody’s house or something like that. The whole repressive period of the 1950s and the idealism of the left-wing in the 1940s were being discussed and, of course, he had a lot to say about that. After this gathering was over, we were both talking about how what he said seemed to lack a little *bona fide* because he didn’t come forward and state, “Yes, of course, I was a member of the Party too.”

And it was never something that he had ever been ashamed of. It was something he didn’t speak of because it could get you in hot water and cause practical difficulties. So we kind of went back and forth on that. I said I didn’t think that it would be a big deal, it might have been just naïveté on my part, that after so many years had passed and the political climate had changed several directions several different times. Plus, we were living in Canada and that there would not be any practical harm from admitting what was just the truth. I don’t know that the occasion ever came up though. This was just within a year or two before he died.

**Ray Ginger’s Alcoholism**

I don’t know exactly when Ray’s alcoholism began. I would think it was going on for a long time because my understanding is that one of the things that Ann Ginger was holding against him at the time of their breakup was that he was drinking too much. He certainly was, when he was teaching at Brandeis, kind of famous as being, not an alcoholic exactly, but a very heavy drinker.

When he went out to Berkeley to visit his sons during the first three or four months of 1967 on his sabbatical from Brandeis, where he ostensibly was doing research for something or other, all he basically did was drink, which I was too young and idiotic to realize was a big problem. Yeah, I thought it was sophisticated. My parents were fit to be tied. But there wasn’t anything they could do about it so they were very warm and welcoming to him.

Ray was a great talker. He loved to get together with people and chew the fat and throw around a lot of ideas, and these conversations could be very stimulating not only for him but for everybody else. As he got more and more drunk, the window of opportunity for this kind of thing got really narrowed because he wasn’t making sense any more. This was very true by the last couple of years of his life. But the thing is he didn’t know it. So he’d sit around and have these really kind of dumb drunken exchanges thinking he was being brilliant and wondering why people were not terribly eager to engage in this.

He kept a bottle in the bottom drawer of his desk at the university. When he was teaching I don’t think he would drink in the morning. He certainly did when he wasn’t teaching. He’d have a cup of coffee and then he’d start in on martinis. But I know he kept the bottle there and I’m sure he’d always had a drink at lunch. I never was aware of his appearing the worse for alcoholism in class, but at the time that I first knew him, when it was the time that I was observing him as
a teacher, it was much more under control.

He had all the symptoms of cirrhosis the last summer we were in Boston. I was not really aware of it though. I was certainly aware that his health was terrible. But it was a big routine getting him even to go to see a doctor. He managed to avoid that by never going to see one.

When I finally did get him in there, we were going through the whole routine, asking a whole bunch of lifestyle questions and so on. Then the doctor asked him to go into the next room and take his shirt off or something like that, so I took the opportunity then to tell Ray that one thing that you got to know is that you have been a very, very heavy drinker for many years and the doctor said something along the lines that things aren't right, and given the obvious symptoms at that point that all made everything fall into place. Ray died in January 1975 from complete liver failure from acute cirrhosis that had come from many years of big-time alcoholism.

NOTES

1 Named by FDR, the New Deal comprised a number of programmes started by the president between 1933 and 1936 with the goal of reviving the economy by giving work to unemployed workers and through restructuring business and financial practices. For two books providing relevant information on the New Deal, see Melvyn Dubofsky, ed., The New Deal: Conflicting Interpretations and Shifting Perspectives (New York: Garland Press, 1992) and Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).


4 Shannon, Review of The Bending Cross, 641.


6 Brewer, Review of The Bending Cross, 470.


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11 Ibid., 398.
14 Davis, “Let the “Red Special” Shine,” xvi.
15 Peter Richardson, Review of Democracy’s Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent by Ernest Freeberg, 15 June 2008, Los Angeles Times.
17 A comprehensive, and probably the best, treatment of McCarthyism’s effects on universities and colleges in the United States is Ellen Schrecker, No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Although the Communist Party vigorously courted Eugene V. Debs and in spite of Debs expressing much sympathy with the October Revolution, the Bolshevik regime in Russia and to the US Communist Party, it is a well-established fact that Debs never joined the Communist Party but remained a Socialist Party of America member until his death in October 1926. For a discussion of Debs’ views on the Russian Revolution and his complex relationship with the Communist Party through the end of his life, see Ray Ginger, The Bending Cross, 339-482.
24 Established in 1937 as a progressive alternative to the American Bar Association, the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is a bar association committed to modifying the US political and economic system through eradicating racism, protecting and extending the rights of workers, women and minority group members, and defending people’s civil rights and liberties. With McCarthyism’s ascendance, the NLG was charged with being a Communist front organization. Moreover, Federal Bureau of Investigations director J. Edgar Hoover continuously attempted, but was unsuccessful, in having Attorneys General classify the NLG as a “subversive organization.” For a history of the NLG from its founding through the Reagan presidency, see Ann Fagan Ginger and Eugene M. Tobin eds., National Lawyers Guild: From Roosevelt Through Reagan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).
25 Created in 1946 through a merger of the National Negro Congress, the International Labor Defense and the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) was a civil rights organization that was dedicated to struggling for, and expanding, civil liberties for all people in the United States. Unlike the left-
wing NLG, the CRC was declared to be a Communist front group and appeared on the Attorney General’s List of Subversive Organizations. Surviving until 1956, the CRC predominantly handled cases involving racist repression although it also vigorously defended Communists during the McCarthyite repression. While the CPUSA was involved and provided leaders for the organization, according to the only scholarly book on the CRC, its policies and tactics did not always coincide with those of the CPUSA. For an elaboration of this argument and a comprehensive treatment of the CRC, see Gerald Horne, *Communist Fronts The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988).


27 The South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a court-like organization created in South Africa in 1995, several years after Apartheid’s abolition. The TRC heard cases of individuals who felt that they had been victims of violence under Apartheid. In addition, people who inflicted violence on others could provide testimony in front of the TRC and ask for amnesty from prosecution for the crimes they committed. For further information on the TRC and its hearings, see Terry Bell, *Unfinished Business: South Africa, Apartheid, and Truth* (London: Verso, 2003).


30 Author’s telephone interviews with Victoria Brandon, June 18, 2004 and December 20, 2008.

31 The date of Ray Ginger’s birth is October 16, 1924.

32 His first wife was Ann Fagan-Ginger, a civil rights attorney and a founder of the Mklejohn Civil Liberties Institute who has authored or edited nearly 20 books and 30 law review articles.

33 Joseph Warren Stilwell (1883-1946) was a United States Army four-star general who is most widely-known for his military service in China. For more information on Stilwell, see Jack Belden, *Retreat With Stilwell* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943) and Eric Larrabee, *Commander In Chief* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

34 The Dodge plant in Hamtramck, Michigan had been represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 3 from 1937 until its closure in 1982. For a history of UAW Local 3 and union-management relations at the Dodge Hamtramck plant, see Steve Jefferys, *Management and Manager: Fifty Years of Crisis at Chrysler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

35 Established in 1944, the American Veterans Committee (AVC) can be characterized as a liberal veterans association which served as an alternative to the more conservative American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For a discussion of the AVC’s factionalism from an anti-Communist viewpoint, see Robert L. Tyler, “The American Veterans Committee: Out of a Hot War and Into the Cold,” *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 419-436.

36 Henry Wallace, the US Secretary of Agriculture (1933–1940), the US Vice President (1941–1945) and the US Secretary of Commerce (1945–1946), ran for US president on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948. CPUSA members occupied key leadership

From Victoria Brandon’s comments, it appears that she is referring to Ray Ginger attending the second Peekskill concert. At this concert held on 4 September 1949, which was guarded by left-wing union members, Paul Robeson, a CPUSA sympathizer, sang before approximately 20,000 to 25,000 people without incident. However, upon the concert’s conclusion, Westchester County police set up a trap by directing traffic away from the main entrance towards a little-used access road. Lining this thoroughfare were hundreds of irate residents who threw rocks at the departing vehicles resulting in 150 people being injured largely due to flying glass. For information on the two Peekskill concerts, see Joseph Walwik, *The Peekskill, New York, Anti-Communist Riots of 1949* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), Martin Baumi Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 363-380 and Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *Paul Robeson: All-American* (Washington D.C.: New Republic Books, 1976), 145-154.


For a discussion of FBI activity within the CPUSA during the late 1940s and 1950s, see Athan G. Theoharis, *Chasing Spies: How the FBI Failed in Counterintelligence but Promoted the Politics of McCarthyism in the Cold War Years* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002).


George Sweet Gibb wrote extensively in business history, and after Ginger’s forced resignation from Harvard University in June 1954, Gibb immediately became the editor of *the Business History Review*, serving in this position through 1961.


Alfred H. Kelly (1907-1976) was a professor of history at Wayne State University where he specialized in and taught constitutional history.

Edward Lurie (1927-2008) was a professor emeritus of history at the University of
Delaware at the time of his death. Author of the ground-breaking biography, Louis Agassiz: A Life in Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), the book was considered by the late distinguished evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould to be the “the best work on this central figure in the history of American biography and probably the best biography in the last fifty years on the life of an American biologist.”

Marian C. McKenna is currently a professor emeritus of history at the University of Calgary having retired from teaching in 1996. Her research interests have focused on legal and constitutional history, especially comparative between Canada and the United States. She has published widely including Franklin Roosevelt and the Great Constitutional War: The Court-Packing Crisis of 1937 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) and the edited collection The Canadian and American Constitutions in Comparative Perspective (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993).


The actual date of Ray Ginger’s death was January 3, 1975.
HISTORICAL NOTE

“A member of the prohibited class of persons…”: Or, My Modest Contribution to the Queering of Canada

John Kyper

Like many members of his generation, John Kyper first became politically active in the late 1960s. Joining the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) as a freshman at the University of Vermont led him to first question and then oppose the war in Vietnam. From his activity as a conscientious objector, Kyper moved to participation in the gay liberation movement, relocating to Boston in June 1969 and coming out six months later. For many years, John wrote for the city’s pioneering weekly Gay Community News, from Boston, San Francisco and Mexico City. During that period he was also a member of the Fort Hill Faggots for Freedom Collective in the Roxbury, MA, neighborhood where he still lives. In recent years he has been active in inner city public transportation issues and as a board member of the Massachusetts Sierra Club.

GCN, as it was commonly called, was founded in 1973 as a newsletter to link the diverse segments of the then emerging local gay community. It grew quickly to become a major organ for the movement, providing both news and commentary initially in Boston and New England, and then nationally and abroad. Like many other volunteer operations it led a precarious existence throughout its history, despite the often heroic support from the community, especially after a devastating fire in 1982. It ceased regular publication in 1992. Subsequent sporadic efforts to re-create the paper as a quarterly journal finally dissipated by the end of the decade.

Noon on a sweltering day, late August 1974. I had just hitched into Niagara Falls from Buffalo, on the final stretch of a trip from Boston to Toronto. I strode through the turnstile and across the ugly, double-decker bridge at Whirlpool Rapids, into the border station on the Canadian side. The Customs inspector, an authoritarian grandfather figure, asked what I had to declare. I replied that I was bringing in a couple dozen copies of Gay Community News to give to friends and to other interested people.

Unnecessarily so, as I did not need to declare something I wasn’t selling, yet perhaps also foolish as I had heard of incidents of Canadian gay activists being barred from the United States when publications were discovered. Despite having once been closely interrogated as a suspected vagrant and made to fill out a permit form, I had maintained a rather naïve appraisal of Canadian officialdom, since I had declared gay newspapers twice before without problems on trips to Toronto and Montreal. The previous year an immigration guard seemed genuine-
ly interested in a copy of _Fag Rag_, also published in Boston, that he had found in my pack. I almost offered him a copy.

This time the consequences of my candour were to be different. I was ordered to report to Immigration in the adjacent office. I was not especially concerned, as I'd been made to report to Canadian Immigration at least a dozen times before—it comes with the territory of hippie hitchhiking, I suppose. While I was waiting in the hallway, however, my grandfatherly friend informed the Immigration Officer, a young man named Welsh, that I was carrying the papers. When he called me in he asked to see one of them. After I showed him a GCN, he asked me if I was homosexual. I answered that I was.

Welsh explained to me that the Immigration Act prohibited the admission of homosexuals into Canada, even though the country's Criminal Code had been amended in 1969 and no longer outlawed homosexual acts between consenting adults. When asked if I had ever been arrested for moral turpitude or for anything else, I replied that my sole arrest had been for disorderly conduct at an antiwar demonstration in Washington three years before. After establishing that I had no criminal record, Welsh asked various questions about my family and personal background, whom I was planning to see, how much money I had with me, and how long I was going to stay in Toronto. Then, awkwardly, Welsh asked me how long I had “been homosexual.” I told him I had come out several years before in my early 20s.

After a lengthy wait in the hallway, I was again called into the office to be interrogated all over again by a superior officer summoned from the regional immigration command, P.J. Borelli. He began by informing me that I was barred from entering Canada due to my acknowledged homosexuality. All the questions were repeated, presumably to trap me for inconsistencies. He kept probing me about my money, which was sufficient for the several days I was planning to stay, and about the purpose of my visit. I sensed he was desperately searching to find additional grounds to use against me. Repeatedly, he pressed me about what I was planning to do with those twenty-four copies of GCN, seemingly very concerned that I would try to pass them out on the street to anyone who walked by!

The interrogation finally ended and I asked if I would be deported. Borelli replied that he was recessing the hearing, pending a decision on my status in Canada, though by whom he did not say. This was the first time I was informed that I was the subject of a hearing. I returned to sweat over stale issues of _Time_ in the hallway while he proceeded to call someone further up his chain of command.

Ten minutes later I was called back into the office. Borelli showed me Paragraph 5(e) banning the entry of pimps, prostitutes and homosexuals into Canada. He informed me that I was being deported forthwith, banned from Canada for life, and handed me a signed Deportation Order which declared:
"A member of the prohibited class..."

You are a member of the prohibited class of persons described in Paragraph 5(c) of the Immigration Act in that you admit that you are a homosexual and your admission to Canada has not been authorized by the Governor-in-Council.

He held out little hope that I could ever enter again, save for possible revision of the Immigration Act. Were I to enter illegally, he stated, I would be subject to deportation and criminal prosecution. For this I could be arrested by any police officer in Canada. Notwithstanding his warnings, Borelli did admit the irony in the discrepancy between the Criminal Code and the Immigration Act.

Borelli then proceeded to carry out the deportation, accompanying me to the U.S.-bound walkway and waiting while I crossed back. I had been held 2-1/2 hours. I had no complaints about the behaviour of the Canadian officers during my detention at the border. They were polite, their manner was correct, and I was subject to no duress. Excepting the initial Customs agent, they appeared to have no feelings towards me personally; they were simply following out orders because a transgressor had been called to their attention—and they had to enforce the law to protect their own positions.

The Immigration officers even seemed to accept my assertions that I was planning to visit for only two days, for which I had produced the necessary funds, that I would be giving away the GCNs (a newspaper legally mailed from south of the border), and that I would give them only to people who would be interested in receiving them. The focus of the investigation was upon my acknowledged homosexuality, which was sufficient to keep me out of the country.

I immediately returned to Buffalo and went directly to the Gay Community Services Center. Surely, I thought, they would know of the existence of other such incidents. But Donald Michaels, the Director, was shocked by my account. Neither he nor anyone else at the Center had ever heard of such a deportation. The following day I wrote friends in Toronto detailing what had happened.

Shortly after the initial letter to my friends, Toronto gay activists Elgin Blair and Gearld Moldenhauer had called to suggest I fly in and then surface, presenting the government with an embarrassing dilemma: Arrest and deport me or ignore my illegal visit. After considering the risks, I decided to go, and I returned to Canada three weeks later.

I spent three days in Toronto as an illegal alien, sponsored by the local Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE). The purpose of my visit was to dramatize the injustice and absurdity of the law, especially after a 1966 White Paper on immigration had recommended elimination of all references to homosexuality from the Immigration Act. Perhaps not surprisingly, this suggestion was soon forgotten.

One of the earliest demands of the Canadian gay liberation movement, from its founding in the early 1970s, had been the removal of all bars against gays entering the country. Gays of Ottawa (GO) had repeatedly requested a meeting with
the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Robert Andras, to obtain official repeal of the offending Paragraphs 5(e) and (f), only to receive the evasive response, “Of course, we never enforce these ancient laws any longer.” Such official apathy seemed to assume that gay oppression in Canada had disappeared with decriminalization: “You didn’t thank us in 1969!” Prime Minister Trudeau snapped when confronted by a gay zap during the federal election campaign shortly before my deportation.

But of course, anachronistic laws will occasionally be enforced when it suits someone’s purpose. Victims are understandably reluctant to come forward with evidence of discrimination, and GATE knew of several incidents at the Canadian border. Now it had caught the government with its pants down; it had a victim who was more than willing to talk. GATE distributed a press release, and Toronto’s Globe and Mail picked up the story. The Toronto Star then followed up, quoting an Immigration official that my deportation was the first he had ever seen on the grounds of homosexuality. The lover of a close friend, a native of New Brunswick, was so incensed that he called Andras’ office from Boston, demanding to know if they considered him an undesirable citizen. Gay Tide of Vancouver published my Deportation Order on its back cover.

GATE spokesperson Terry Phillips and I were both interviewed about the inequities of the Immigration Act. We even appeared on CBC Radio with Barbara Frum. “Banned homosexual sneaks into Canada,” the Star headlined. Though the article quoted Department spokesperson Ron Bull [sic] that I was subject to arrest (what else could he say?), I was never bothered during my 4-day stay.

In the meantime GO had again pressed for a meeting with Immigration officials. After a month and no response, even after my illegal visit, they scheduled a picket outside its headquarters, not far from Parliament. Once the press release had gone out, they were quickly called by an Immigration official who invited three GO representatives to a meeting on the morning before the action. The timing was completely coincidental, he insisted. The picket was held, nevertheless, attracting a dozen supporters in one of the city’s first gay demonstrations cited by Ottawa gay activist, Ron Dayman, to be evidence of “a more militant movement.”

At the meeting one of Andras’ assistants assured the three that the minister considered the anti-gay sections of the Act “antiquated” and “medieval,” promising that immigration would press for their repeal in an upcoming revision of the Act. He also informed them that I could write for permission to enter Canada, and it would be granted. I immediately wrote, expecting a quick resolution.

My involvement with the immigration bureaucracy, however, had just begun. Autumn led to winter, and only to a continued silence from the ministry. I sent another copy of my letter to Ottawa, via registered mail as before, with cc’s indicating everyone in the movement who was working on my case. It was not until
January that I received a response, nearly three months after my initial request, and it appeared that my entry to Canada was still bound by limitations. Each time I wished to visit I would have to apply to the Minister one month in advance, specifying the date and place of entry and the length of time I desired to stay in Canada. A permit would be presented to me when I entered. “The Minister’s Permit is necessary for two reasons,” the letter explained: “(1) as you have been deported from Canada, you require the Minister’s consent to return, and (2) you still come within the prohibited classes in the Immigration Act.”

Resigned to such limits, I applied to visit Montreal and Ottawa late in March 1975. I was duly informed that the Permit would be waiting for me as requested at Philipsburg, Quebec, the main border crossing north of Burlington, Vermont. After arriving as promised on the specified date and in a Greyhound bus, my presentation of my Deportation Order and letter from Ottawa was met with confusion rather than a Ministry permit. I waited for over an hour at Philipsburg, having missed my bus and pondering the thought of having to hitchhike back to Burlington in a steadily worsening sleet storm. When my permit was located at Blackpool on the other side of Lake Champlain, an Immigration officer had to drive me ten miles back into Vermont, across the Lake and in through Rouses Point where the Northway from New York crosses the border, so that I might achieve legal entry and get to my final destination.

I arrived in Ottawa as a guest of GO shortly after the government had released its long-awaited Green Paper on proposed changes to the Immigration Act. Despite official promises, the sections regarding homosexuality received only the suggestion that they were anachronistic. At the same time GO received a letter from Andras stating that any specific change of these sections would be inappropriate while a new act was pending. As Ron Dayman put it, “He’s afraid changing the rules for gays would cause a public outcry. It would be easier for him to wait until they could be hidden in a large bill where other things would attract people’s attention.”

I continued to visit Canada several times per year. My entry soon settled into a routine pattern, where I would apply and the Permit would (usually) be waiting for me when and where I had specified. And I was determined to test my Permit in as many different ways as I could. I crossed the border a couple of times on the train and once spent three weeks traveling to Vancouver. Two years after acquiring my initial permit, it was again misplaced at Philipsburg. Fortunately, the officer in charge was sensible enough to write out a permit on the spot. Shortly after this incident I informed the minister that I intended to arrive aboard the boat from Bar Harbor to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and expressing my mild annoyance with the previous misplaced Permit. Garvin, the Chief of the Non-Immigrant Control and Special Cases Section, replied that the new document would be awaiting me at the Canadian Consulate in Boston, and that I would henceforth apply to that
office. I still wonder why it took them so long to think of such a sensible arrangement?

In the meantime a new Immigration Act had been formed from official proposals and was slowly making its way through Parliament, eliminating the offending Paragraphs 5(e) and (f). During the summer of 1975, gays had testified at a series of hearings held across Canada by a special Parliamentary committee on immigration. The federal government finally introduced the proposed act in early 1977, which passed through both the Commons and the Senate at mid-summer.

I wrote to Immigration several times to clarify my status under the new act, but found it difficult to obtain a satisfactory response. In August, H.J. Johnson of the Non-Immigrant Control and Special Cases section wrote to me that “the new Immigration Act has been passed…but the effective date that it becomes law and operative, has not yet been announced. It is expected that the implementation will be likely sometime between January and April 1, 1978, however, this is not definite.” It continued:

The particular clause under which your deportation was issued will no longer be part of our new legislation and it is debatable at this point as to whether or not, when the Act becomes effective, you will continue to require the Minister's consent to enter Canada. It is not felt that you will need such consent and at the time of the Act becoming law, which will be advertised, and at your request, steps will be taken on your behalf to cancel the present requirement, which will remain during the transition period.

April 10th was finally declared the date, eight months after its enactment in Parliament.

Closer to the appointed date I again wrote to Ottawa only to hear back several weeks later from G.P. Schroh who assured me, “You will receive a reply shortly.” His title was almost as long as the text; I was now in the domain of the Western Hemisphere Bureau, Foreign Branch. A brief but verbose insert informed me that Manpower and Immigration had shed its sexist name in bureaucratic consolidation, and was now the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

My reply arrived, at last, at the end of May to reveal that: “A person who has been ordered deported from Canada may not reenter Canada without the consent of the Minister. This consent is a requirement even though the reason for deportation under the prohibited classes of the Immigration Act (1952) is not included in the inadmissible classes of the Immigration Act (1976). This consent may be applied for at any Canadian Embassy or Consulate outside of Canada or to the Manager of any Canada Immigration Centre, including immigration posts at Canadian ports of entry.” Seemingly, there was no change in my status, after all
the hassle.

I then applied to visit Canada during the first week of July, to attend the National Gay Conference in Halifax. Instead of the Minister's Permit, however, the Consulate issued me a new form regarding the "Minister's Consent pursuant to section 57 of the Immigration Act, 1976." "Consent is hereby granted," it read, "from time to time, subject to compliance with the Immigration Act and Regulations." I was told I no longer needed to apply for the permit, and I could enter whenever I wanted. The person at the Boston Consulate was not certain, however, whether I would ever need to renew it.

Upon entering via the St. John, New Brunswick, airport I presented the Minister's Consent to the Immigration officer, as instructed. After a brief series of questions—how long was I visiting Canada, where was I staying, etc.—he made out a Visitor Record, Form 1097. He had me sign it, then gave me a copy to keep.

In response to my letter of inquiry seeking to clear up the remaining ambiguities, I was informed that "the prohibition imposed when the deportation order was made against you has been removed insofar as visiting privileges are concerned. There is no need to apply for such a form each time you wish to visit Canada; you should carry the one you have with you, however." Evidently the form was permanent. Resolution, of a sort.

The anti-gay sections were removed from the Immigration Act, but such action was, at best, a victory qualified by the more restrictive nature of the new law. As before, an alien arrested in a raid on a bathhouse or a cruising area could still be barred from the country. As a regular bathhouse habitué while traveling, I was more than aware that the police in Canadian cities were periodically raiding the baths during this period. The most infamous of these incidents was "Operation Soap" when Toronto's finest raided all of the city's bathhouses on one night, arresting hundreds of patrons, leading to massive protests the following night. Even more troubling, Section 14(3) allowed an Immigration Officer discretion to exclude a visitor for no reason at all, and Section 19(1)(d) empowered the government to exclude anyone it suspects may commit a criminal offense, even if it possesses no evidence that a crime is to take place. Thus while gays might no longer be barred merely for their homosexuality, the new Act allowed for added prejudice and capriciousness on the part of individual officers to ban individuals whose looks or lifestyles they might not approve; and the possibilities for appeal were correspondingly diminished.

I visited Canada half a dozen times over the ensuing decade, including trips to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Once while driving from my mother's home in northern Vermont through the Eastern Townships of Quebec with my then lover, a Puerto Rican, we were detained at U.S. Customs on reentry for half an hour, until officials were finally satisfied he wasn't the smuggler of the same name
who was listed on their rolls. Initially, of course, I made a point of bringing the Minister’s Consent and other documents with me when I entered Canada. But as time passed and the memory of my deportation receded, I wouldn’t always remember—an oversight that would ultimately create more than just a minor inconvenience.

In mid-April 1988, ten years to the week after the new Immigration Act had finally gone into effect, I was driving to Montreal for the weekend. Once again, I went through the border at Philipsburg. This time I was driving a battered old station wagon whose tailgate and rear bumper were festooned with stickers including “Dump Reagan,” “The Moral Majority is Neither,” and “El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam.” I arrived at the border on a Friday evening at about 10:00 p.m. and was directed to report to Immigration. I parked, entered the building and presented my passport at the front desk. After a brief wait I was called in to see the supervisor on duty, who informed me that a computer check had revealed the Deportation Order, and that I could not be admitted to Canada without the consent of the minister. I replied that I had been deported under a section of the law that had been subsequently repealed several years later when the new Immigration Act went into effect.

The officer stated that, the new law notwithstanding, I still needed a Minister’s Permit or a waiver of the Deportation Order to enter the country. I stated that I had applied for and received a Minister’s Permit on various occasions prior to the change of the law, and that I had been issued a Minister’s Consent once the law had been changed. Unfortunately, I had left the latter document at home, and he said they no longer had any record at Philipsburg of my being allowed to enter. I could not come into Canada.

Before returning to the United States, I requested and received a copy of the written report of my exclusion, which included the statement:

He is a member of the inadmissible class of persons described in Paragraph 19(1)(j) of the Act in that at Niagara Falls, on August 28, 1974, a deportation order was made against him, he was removed from Canada, and is seeking to come into Canada without the consent of the Minister as required by subsection 57(1) of the Act.

Once again, I found myself in the anomalous situation of being excludable from Canada solely because I had previously been excluded—but now for an incident that had occurred many years ago and under a statute that had not been in force for a decade.

I immediately wrote Barbara McDougall, the Immigration Minister, to clarify my status under Canadian law. Was the 1978 Minister’s Consent still in effect, or had my exclusion affected its validity? If the latter were the case, how could I rectify the situation? To avoid any future misunderstanding, would it be possible
to add notice of the Minister’s Consent to the computer record of my deporta-
tion? As with my initial correspondence with the Ottawa bureaucracy back in 1974, the return of the registered return receipt would for a while be my only acknowledgement that the letter had been received, while I awaited a response. Five weeks later I followed up with a second query to McDougall, again via registered mail. Folks in the movement, joined by several members of Commons from across the country, had been prodding Immigration to address the issue. At least one gay activist, Denis LeBlanc of GO, had worked on my case the first time around; another, Christine Donald of the Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO), lived in McDougall’s Toronto riding and wrote her to request a meeting about my case. At long last, just a couple of days after the Fourth of July, I received the reply I’d been waiting for:

A temporary notice regarding the Minister’s Consent has been entered on our computer records. A permanent entry will be made shortly. Notwithstanding, it is recommended that you carry your copy of the IMM 1204 (Minister’s Consent) each time you seek entry to Canada, as there are times when examining officers at ports of entry are unable to gain access to computer records and those held at this office.

I would like to point out that the Minister’s Consent issued to you is valid for temporary entry to Canada only. The deportation order issued to you in 1974 still bars your admission to Canada as a permanent resident. If you applied to live in Canada, Minister’s Consent would have to be sought to overcome this barrier.

Although you were reported at Philipsburg on April 15, 1988, the matter did not proceed to an immigration inquiry and the issuance of an exclusion order. You were simply allowed to withdraw your application for temporary entry and allowed to leave Canada. There is no exclusion order against you….

M.J. Light, who signed my letter, was identified as the Acting Chief, Western Hemisphere Bureau, Case Review Directorate, Immigration Program Management Branch. In response to his stated hope “that the above information will clarify the situation for you,” I had at last found out what I needed to know: I was apparently free of border-crossing constrictions.

I didn’t get to go to Canada again for another five years. By then I had long since junked my old car, and the shiny rental I was driving up the Northway in upstate New York for a weekend in Montreal would seem less likely to attract the attention of a Customs officer. This time my documents turned out to be redundant, and I was let into the country after only a few perfunctory questions.

But I had learned my lesson and a year and a half later in March 1995, was thankful that I did. Passing through the I-91 crossing at Rock Island, Quebec, I was again instructed to report to Immigration. Upon presenting my passport to
the officer, I again found myself handing him the Deportation Order and Minister’s Consent. Incredibly, there was still no record in Immigration’s database of my being allowed to enter the country. He placed a notice of the consent into my passport and stated that he would have the computer system updated to reflect my correct status.

A year later my partner and I decided to visit Cuba, traveling via Montreal. Because we were determined to go without requesting permission from the U.S. government, we had to face down a ham-handed effort by Customs officials to confiscate our tickets before we even left town, leaving us just two working days to find political and legal assistance. We flew north as scheduled, without any further problems. When we arrived at Dorval Airport and Canadian Customs asked the purpose of our trip, we replied that we were taking a connecting flight out of the country from Mirabel Airport and they let us through without stamping our passports. I had recently renewed my passport but I had to bring along the expired one since it contained the notice.

We returned to Mirabel Airport a week later as planned. When we went through Customs again, our passports were scanned and stamped (the first time they had been stamped during the journey, as the Cubans had placed their visa on a separate piece of paper), and I was instructed to report to Immigration. I presented my passport to the officer, who entered my name and data into the computer. Several seconds later, responding to what had appeared on the screen, he remarked, “You have a long history with us!” I handed him the relevant documents. After he had inspected these, he gave them back, advising me, “You should keep this (the Minister’s Consent) close to your heart.” Believe me, I told him, I know.

It took one final misadventure to confirm that Immigration had indeed updated its database. I’d traveled to Detroit on the October 2004 Columbus Day weekend to attend my niece’s wedding, planning to visit Toronto for several days afterwards while en route back to Boston. On Monday morning my brother and his friend dropped me off at the tunnel entrance to take the bus to Windsor. I realized, too late, that I had left my backpack with documents, passport, and reading glasses on the back seat of his car. I decided my best option was to continue on; the worst Canadian officials could do would be to turn me back, and then I’d have to head home from Detroit.

At Customs the only identification I could produce was my Massachusetts driver’s license and my credit cards—this time I’d forgotten to put copies of my passport picture page into my luggage. I was, however, easily able to answer all the officer’s questions, including the location of my bed & breakfast in Toronto since I’d stayed there three years before. I had the sense that he felt I was telling him the truth.

He then had me report to Immigration, where I handed that officer the interrogation report plus my license, informing him what had happened with my
pack. He put me into the computer and a minute later asked me if I’d ever had any trouble getting into Canada. I of course told him about the 1974 deportation and the subsequent waiver allowing me to enter once the law had been changed. He confirmed the Minister’s Consent and allowed me to enter, confirming that finally they had updated my status in their system.

My next concern was getting back into the United States three days later, despite being (temporarily) *indocumentado*. Fortunately, I had happened to bring along a t-shirt from a Montpelier, Vermont, bookstore, which I put on before I set out early Thursday morning. I then boarded Amtrak’s “Maple Leaf” Toronto-New York train for Rochester, which VIA Rail Canada runs and staffs up until the border—before it rumbles over the upper deck of the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge into Niagara Falls, New York. I completed the Customs form, leaving blank only my passport number which of course I didn’t know, and handed it along with my driver’s license to the Customs agent when she came down the aisle. She only asked me how long I’d been in Canada (three days) and where I was born (Vermont), and that was that.

Whether I would fare quite so well again, now that passports are required for entry to the United States and given the vagaries of the Homeland Security apparatus, is an open question.

As it’s turned out, I have not had occasion to visit Canada in the four years since that last incident, though I expect to drive up to Montreal in the very near future—especially since I’ve recently started dating a retired middle school French teacher. But I trust the consequences of my original hapless adventure will likely continue to pop up from time to time, to remind me yet again of my inadvertent, if modest, contribution to the queering of Canada.
REVIEW ESSAY

Reading Haunted by Empire in Winnipeg: The Politics of Transnational Histories

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It is hard for a historian of northern North America and Canada to know what to make of Ann Laura Stoler’s 2006 edited collection, Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History. Here, Stoler and her able contributors call on historians to rethink what they term North American history through the double optics of intimacy and imperialism. To historians of women or Indigenous peoples in Canada, this argument is at once inspiring and disconcertingly familiar. What Stoler has so influentially dubbed intimacies of empire have, in one form or another, been central to both women’s and Native histories in Canada since the 1980 publication of Jennifer S.H. Brown’s Strangers in Blood and Sylvia Van Kirk’s ‘Many Tender Ties’. Brown’s analysis placed family and kinship at the centre of fur-trade life, and Van Kirk’s argued for the centrality of women—both Indigenous and European—to the work and politics of the nineteenth-century western Canadian fur-trade.

In different ways, Brown and Van Kirk’s works were both early examples of women’s history as well as feminist interventions into the new social history of the fur-trade that was taking shape in the 1970s and 80s. Read in wider terms, these books also reflected the shifting politics of Aboriginal womanhood in twentieth-century Canada. Indigenous women’s insistence that they were legitimate subjects of history and that the history of the West needed to be understood as both gendered and colonized was increasingly visible. Just as ‘Many Tender Ties’ and Strangers in Blood were finding their readership, Indigenous women were launching an ultimately successful federal court challenge to the constituent sexism of Canada’s massive, panoptic instrument of racial classification and exhaustive social regulation, the Indian Act. That Van Kirk and Brown were putting the questions of marriage, women and family into the historiography of colonialism in the history of eighteenth and nineteenth-century North America as Sandra Lovelace and the women of Tobique were laying bare the entanglements of race, gender, and political membership in modern Canada were surely related.

The scholarship on marriage, gender, and women in the fur trade of the
North American west that developed in the 1970s and 80s did not, of course, go unchallenged or uncritiqued. In the early 1990s Van Kirk’s work particularly garnered some sharp post-colonial, anti-racist, and post-structuralist critiques, ones that made clear how wedded ‘Many Tender Ties’ was to a Eurocentric, celebratory sort of liberal feminism.” For all this, Van Kirk’s and Brown’s symbiotic arguments about the centrality of women and family to the Canadian fur-trade has never been cast into serious doubt. It has inspired some remarkable film-making, including Christine Welsh’s investigation of her own family history. Brown and Van Kirk’s initial forays have given shape to a second generation of studies of family, gender, and the fur-trade. Van Kirk’s work in particular has the relatively rare distinction of having garnered a fairly extensive readership outside Canada, even being reprinted in an influential volume on multicultural “American” women’s history. North of the border critical aspects of Van Kirk and Brown’s historical vocabulary have been integrated into mainstream Canadian history and public programming. Visitors to state-funded historic sites and first-year students are more than likely to know something about mariage à la façon du pays and 'women in between,' if only in a predictably celebratory and selective manner.

Van Kirk and Brown helped to give historians key tools for constructing a history of intimate relations between men and women, children and parents across presumed racial lines and one forever imbricated with imperial politics and colonial economies. That this history was not simply a local or national one was clear from the outset, and became clearer as a subsequent generation of feminist historians provided new interpretations of the relationship between gender, contact, and colonialism in Canada and more particularly its Western parts. This literature, within which my own work has squarely been located, found its analytic feet in part from development of a vibrant international literature on gender and colonialism that has flourished since the late 1980s, and continues to do so. The special impact of anthropologist Ann Stoler’s work on this new historiography of gender and colonialism in Canada can be easily gleaned from a perusal of its footnotes. I remember the intellectual excitement I felt when first encountering Stoler’s essays on the Dutch East Indies as a graduate student in the early 1990s. These articles placed sexuality and identity at the centre of the colonial enterprise and prompted readers to think in radically new ways about how colonies managed themselves through making bodies, children, and citizens. They wedded the best of postcolonial studies to history from below and trenchant feminist insight. Stoler went on to argue for a rethinking of Foucault’s ideas of sexuality through the optics of empire, the need to put colony and metropole into a single analytic field, and the significance of intimacy to colonial relations in general and South East Asia in particular. This powerful analysis was first extended to North America in substantial essay entitled “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” published in the Journal of American History in 2001. It generated enough historiographical
traction in the scholarly review process that the editors of the journal published it
banked by five responses.14

Reprinted in full, “Tense and Tender Ties” and more particularly its dou-
bble call to comparisons between North America and the colonial world and greater
attention to how intimacy “figure[s] in the making of racial categories and in the
management of imperial rule” (25) provides the analytic focal point for Haunted By
Empire. It is joined by a preface and introductory essay by Stoler and fourteen
essays of varying length. Each of these is written by a US based scholar, most of
them relatively junior historians. Three “refractions” by more senior academics
cap the volume.

The result is a provocative, challenging, and wide-ranging five-hundred
plus pages. As Stoler notes, the contributors do not share a common definition of
intimacy. Most share her tendency to register it most acutely and often in the over-
lapping realms of sexuality, marriage, family, and the body. Nayan Shah uses two
legal cases from the early twentieth-century United States to show how definitions
of intimacy “calibrate liberal societies’ legal definitions of the capacity of self-pos-
session and for the ownership of property” (116). Kathleen Brown analyses the
politics of bodies and boundaries in the writing of a nineteenth-century free
African-American male servant. Laura Briggs’ discussion of transnational adop-
tion and United States’ foreign policy brings the centrality of familial intimacies to
the making of race and nation squarely into the present day.

The essays in Haunted by Empire are at their best when they are the most
unexpectedly comparative and far-reaching. Damon Salsa’s insightful analysis of
“half-castes” in nineteenth-century Samoa both provincializes the United States’
experience and speaks to the enormous influence of its empire in this part of the
Pacific. Lisa Lowe’s thoughtful treatment of the links between colonial labour
regimes and modern humanism treats intimacy as “spacial proximity or adjacent
connection” (193). Warwick Anderson probes the body politics that were shared
by Australian institutions for “half-castes” and Filipino leper colonies. Martha
Hodes uses the story of a mixed-race family in the British West Indies to cast new
light on the making of race in the United States Census of 1890. In a discipline
where national and super-national “fields” continue to define much of how
expertise is acknowledged and managed, having a scholar whose work has been
focused on Asia turn her head to the United States is a brave and, I think, reward-
ing choice.

In many ways Haunted by Empire meets its goal of recasting the history of
the United States. The literature on contact, colonialism, and mixed-race social
formations is much stronger in some American regions—the Southwest, the
Pacific Northwest, and the northern Plains—than in others. Only Shah’s essay and
Linda Gordon’s ‘refraction’ cover these better-known terrains. Instead, contribu-
tors here write on Russian Alaska, urban St. Louis, and African-American mission-
aries in Cherokee country. The essays that are the least compelling were those
aimed primarily at demonstrating the utility of analyzing American history as colonial or otherwise unexceptional history. It is not that these essays fail to convince: it is that they could hardly do otherwise, especially in the wake of a solid decade of scholarship arguing for transnational history.

This collection represents a new kind of American history, one that can only be welcomed by those of us who are looking for new ways to think about the settler world in general and North America in particular. The richness of the comparisons made, the frequency of the borders crossed and the analyses attenuated to the highly localized and variant politics of imperialism make this volume’s slip-page about “North America” in Haunted by Empire especially perplexing. The book’s sub-title refers to “North American history” but it is unclear what this means for the editor or the contributors. In her introduction, Stoler refers to “United States history” and “American history” seemingly interchangeably. For her, as for most of the contributors, the term North American seems to function largely as a cognate for the present-day United States projected backwards in time. The bulk of North America that lies north of the 49th parallel and south of the Rio Grande—present-day Mexico and Canada—quietly slide out of focus. Mexico receives scarce attention beyond Alexandra Minna Stern’s discussion of the movement of psychometric testing between the United States and Mexico and Gordon’s use of Mexican-Americans as an illustration of internal colonialism. Canada hovers around the edges of Haunted by Empire, never entirely in view but never entirely absent. Stoler acknowledges that “Tense and Tender Ties” owes its title to Van Kirk’s germinal work, but her engagement with the rich and comparatively long-standing scholarship on marriage, women, and colonialism in Canada goes no further.

The irony of Canada and Mexico’s place—or rather lack thereof—in a volume dedicated to exploring “the shadowy pull of U.S. empire over those of my generation who have studied the colonial and found U.S. intrusions to subjacently shape their intellectual choices and academic lives”(xi) would go entirely unnoted if not for Catherine Hall’s astute reflection. I am not the first to draw attention to the awkwardness of the particular erasure of the work and spaces most commonly associated with “Canadian” history here. In very different ways, Dirk Hoerder’s thoughtful response to the original publication of “Tense and Tender Ties” and a letter to the editors of the Journal of American History that followed it both spoke to the oddness of Stoler’s treatment of the Canadian scholarship.” Hall’s concluding reflection in Haunted by Empire does not belabour this point, but does draw attention to the troubling equation of North America with the present-day United States with particular care and, I think, to special effect. As the only contributor “writing from outside U.S. studies and the U.S. context”(452), Hall acknowledges the complexity and significance of Van Kirk’s work and uses the example of western Canada to suggest how the analytics of intimacy might be cast in wider and more critical lights.

Haunted by Empire sets out to question the politics of nation and empire
and how they shape the writing of history, but in critical ways it ends up reinforcing the hegemony of the United States as a subject of history and Americans as authors of it. My point here is not to take up the mantle of the wounded national subject or, in this case, historian. I have elsewhere argued that historians of northern North America have been ill-served by a framework of nation that essentializes an ahistorical and state-centric notion of present-day Canada. ¹⁶ I very much welcome Stoler’s vision of a wide-ranging historical scholarship that “refuses the comfort of discrete cases, highlighting instead those uneven circuits in which knowledge was produced and in which people were compelled to move” (6). Nor is my point to suggest that Stoler has a burden of representation that she or her contributors have failed. *Haunted by Empire* makes no claims to representativeness of any sort, and there is no reason that it should do so.

My point here is that in invoking North America but defining it in practice as the present-day United States this collection fails itself and reinscribes the very problem it sets out to write against. It is worth noting that *Haunted by Empire* is not alone in this. Another recent volume shares the stated purpose of using postcolonial scholarship to query the constitution of “America” and the same result of shorting it up in revealing ways. ¹⁷ The particular and never total elision of Canada and Mexico in critical scholarship on North America is, of course, only one example of how shiny new historical rubrics can be applied in alarmingly shopworn ways. As Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has pointed out, histories written in the name of “Atlantic” history too often look a lot like those written in the name of the “North Atlantic Triangle” that was fashionable earlier in the twentieth-century. ¹⁸

Yet *Haunted by Empire*’s failure to push its critique of the constitution of American history to its logical conclusion seems especially unexpected and unfortunate. Stoler’s collection, and her scholarship more generally, have and will likely continue to offer so much to those of us who work on the margins or outside the borders of *Haunted by Empire*’s ultimate purview. As a feminist historian of colonialism in nineteenth-century northern North America I was inspired and disappointed in turns by this collection. I imagine that historians of Mexico and perhaps even scholars working in the vein of the “new Western history” might have read the book with a not dissimilar mixture of recognition and abjection. ¹⁹ Do we rejoice that some of the issues that have been so central to our scholarship are being taken seriously by historians of the United States, or despair that this work has been ignored, glossed, or selectively used?

Winnipeg is a complicated place in which to read new transnational histories like Stoler’s. As Australian historian Ann Curthoys has astutely argued, those of us who work within the parameters of marginal historiographies have a necessarily ambivalent relationship to calls to think outside the nation. ²⁰ Her colleague Marilyn Lake is surely right to point out that the histories of colonies and former colonies are most readily included in comparative and transnational analyses when they serve to illuminate the experience and politics of one metropole or another. ²¹
But clinging to the nation does not solve these problems. What sociologist Nandita Sharma calls the “artificial homeyness”\(^2\) of the Canadian nation masks complicated and oppressive alignments of race, class and gender in both the present and in the past. English-speaking settler colonies located in the Global North like Australia or Canada cannot claim a space of special historical exclusion or vulnerability. While marginal in comparison to the super-power historiographies of America and Britain, they command meaningful institutional support and recognition within their current borders if rarely beyond them. For these reasons and more, there is enormous potential in the wider, more provocative and more rigorous terrains offered by transnational histories to shift and enrich the histories written from places like Winnipeg. Surely it is time that historians of the parts of northern North America that were later territorialized as Canada seize the opportunities of a genuinely transnational and far-reaching scholarship. Likewise we might also reasonably ask that prominent proponents of transnational histories like Stoler do the same.

NOTES

1 I would like to acknowledge Karen Dubinsky for pushing me on the arguments made here. This would be a very different piece if it wasn't for her intervention and conversation. Discussions with Mary Jane McCallum have been critical to the development of my thinking on some of these points, and I appreciate Antoinette Burton’s feedback. I should also say that while I began reading Haunted by Empire in Winnipeg, I wrote this essay at Clare Hall, Cambridge, England—a very different place from which to ponder transnational histories. I also thank the Canada Research Chairs programme for their ongoing support of my work.


4 Of course, they were not entirely alone in this. See also the work of Olive Dickason, Jacqueline Peterson, John Foster, and Irene M. Spry. Some of their critical work was printed and reprinted in Jennifer S.H. Brown and Jaqueline Peterson, eds., New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1985). Michael Payne discusses this context in “Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Future Circumstances, and a Hint of Future Prospects,” in Binzema, Ens, and McLeod, eds.


Review Essay


See Adele Perry, “Nation, Empire, and the Writing of History in Canada in English,” paper submitted to Chris Dummitt and Mike Dawson, eds., “Contesting Canadian History”, manuscript in progress.

Also see Maline Johar Shuller and Edward Watts, eds., Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies (Rutgers, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2003) for a work which aims to rethink “Early America” but ends up defining it as the present-day United States while including unexplained material on New France.


Nandita Sharma, Home Economics: Nationalism and the Making of ‘Migrant Workers’ in Canada (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006), 30.
BOOK REVIEWS


The immigrant workers who built the railroads and dug the coal were not always welcome in industrializing Canada. This is a useful study of the attitudes of organized labour leaders on the issue. In some respects this is a rather narrow study. Goutor does not set out to document the attitudes of the rank and file, the immigrant workers themselves, or, for the most part, radical organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). He relies largely on union convention proceedings and the labour press. Within these parameters, the study is well conceived and researched and well situated in the literature on the subject and Canadian labour historiography more generally.

The parallels with the US are apparent, but there are also contrasts. As in the US, the Canadian movement’s position on immigration was remarkably consistent over half a century between the 1870s and the 1930s: they were against it. They believed the newcomers would contribute to unemployment, raise the price of land, and reduce wages. But Labour also saw itself as a guardian of Canadian virtue, fearing that some of the immigrants, notably the Chinese, would degrade those famous Canadian morals and contribute to public health problems. In explaining the extreme reaction against the Chinese, Goutor notes that the Canadian workers formed their own impressions and positions in the 1880s at a moment when the US anti-Chinese movement was at its height. They were subject not only to their own prejudices but those emanating from the US. The much larger proportion of immigrants in the US served as a constant threat to Canadians.

Employers and the state were equally consistent: they refused to enact measures against immigration, refused to enforce those that were enacted, and facilitated the process in a variety of ways. Their motivation was even more straightforward. Particularly in the era when state and capital were pursuing the trans-Canadian railroad and other vital infrastructural projects, the Chinese and later Italians, Galician Ukrainians, Doukhobors, and other immigrants provided a ready low-wage labour supply. The profits realized from these ventures went a long way toward assuaging any moral concerns. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Goutor’s story is what little effect organized labour had on immigration legislation and policy: no Asian Exclusion Act, only a head tax on the Chinese, and no effective restrictive legislation until the Great Depression. The severe restriction came a decade later than a series of US laws that increasingly reduced the flow of immigration from 1917 until it was all but extinguished with the 1924 Native Origins Act. The contrast is remarkable and Goutor might have further developed the reasons for Canadian labour’s striking failure to achieve any substantial restriction.
One possible part of the explanation is that the Canadian experience was also different with regard to the composition of the immigrant waves. Long after British emigration to the US had receded, Scots, Ulster people, and English workers were still coming in large numbers to Canada. This shaped the relative volatility of the reaction because these immigrants were harder to objectify. While they were certainly not welcome, they looked and acted more like most Canadians and often even had familial relations to them. They still caused unemployment and helped to lower wages, Canadian Labour argued, but they blended in more easily.

Canadian Labour could be quite nasty, but they never seemed to match US workers’ penchant for anti-immigrant invective and violence. Riots ran the Chinese out of one industrial town and mining camp after another throughout the US West; the only serious Canadian riot caused embarrassment to many. Canadian labour turned a skeptical eye toward Italian and Slavic “new immigrants,” but their reaction paled in comparison to that in the US where the newcomers were classed as distinctly inferior “races” and viewed with contempt by native born workers and organizers. As in the US, the so-called “new immigrants” were held to be un-organizable. Instead, they poured into unions and launched many of the revolts in both countries in the First World War era. In the US this caused employers and the government to lose a bit of their enthusiasm for immigration. Canada had its own Red Scare with a close equation between the foreign born and radicalism, but immigration soared in the twenties, even as it plummeted in the US American productivity might also have been significant. While the US economy was expanding throughout the twenties, the proportion of workers in manufacturing was actually shrinking. Canadian industries were relatively more labour-intensive and might have suffered more from any drastic reduction in the supply of unskilled workers.

When Canadian immigration was finally cut off in the early Depression, this had little to do with Labour’s efforts and more to do with massive unemployment and increasing social unrest. Again, calls for immigration restriction intensified amidst economic decline. David Goutor’s study of the roots of these sentiments reminds us that a great deal remains at stake in the challenge of creating a multi-ethnic labour movement.

Jim Barrett
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign


Having read extensively on the history of US government repression of political dissent, I received a rude awakening to the thing itself when, protesting the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in 2000, I saw police round up dozens of demonstrators in the now-famous puppet house. They were put on
dangerously hot buses, packed into tiny jail cells, psychologically and physically brutalized, and indicted for things they had not even planned to do. The tragedy of Philadelphia, methodically planned by national and local authorities, was reenacted in the even more vicious assault on protestors of the proposed Free Trade Area of the America’s in Miami in 2003, and, with greater subtlety, the mass arrests of those at the Republican National Convention in New York City in 2004.

To anyone involved in or who has tracked such episodes, a disturbing reality is apparent: that repression, which played a notorious role in the response to the social movements of the 1960s, has made a comeback, and must figure anew into the calculations of dissidents of all kinds. In this light, Jules Boykoff’s *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States* is a great service, both to dissidents and to our besieged democracy.

Intent to “shine a light on the underbelly of US history,” Boykoff shows that repression is a constant in state responses to dissent. (10) To organize his study, Boykoff’s parses repression’s differing forms, from “direct violence” to “public prosecutions,” “infiltration,” and “harassment arrests,” and documents their application at different points in the American past. He also broadens our understanding of repression—favoring, in fact, the more capacious term “suppression”—to include not just actions of the security apparatus, but those of the media, who affect social movements by how they frame the issues and the movements themselves. In short, Boykoff wisely includes discursive hegemony in his understanding of state power.

Boykoff implicitly addresses two communities. One is those scholars of social movements who have intermittently described state tactics in their narratives of individual movements but have not, by and large, factored suppression into conceptual models of social movement dynamics. Suppression, Boykoff asserts, matters, and should not be seen as an idiosyncratic quality of American state power. Boykoff also enriches our sense of how and why it matters by, in the first instance, defining suppression as “a process through which preconditions for dissident action, mobilization, and collective organization are inhibited by either raising their costs or minimizing their benefits” (12). Significantly, this model sees the “why bother” attitude among dissidents, often adopted as they see their actions ridiculed or ignored, as an effect of suppression. Boykoff’s insight is especially illuminating with respect to opposition to the Iraq war. Peaking before the war even started, the movement withered and bogged down—one may argue—largely as a result of the indifference of the Bush administration and, eventually, the media, to it.

The second, presumed audience is contemporary dissidents. Boykoff provides them a trove of evidence that that state has used and will use suppressive tactics, as well as a valuable inventory of the state’s arsenal. Activists would do well to look for and actively combat its use against them. However obvious, this imperative has been repeatedly ignored (e.g., four years after the Philly RNC, officials again used the pretext of fears of violence to conduct mass, illegal arrests and pro-
tracted detentions, so as to get protestors off the streets and preserve the partisan media spectacle). Boykoff’s study, which lays suppression bare, only compounds the “fool me twice” quality of activists’ subsequent neglect of state and media machinations.

The book’s dual voicing, however, also creates problems. Chiefly, it contributes to a “neither fish nor fowl” cast to the book that may leave scholars and activists alike disappointed. With respect social movement studies, Boykoff mostly provides a taxonomy of different kinds of suppression; he offers, as a result, little specific guidance as to how suppression can be operationalized as an analytic variable. His descriptive/schematic approach, moreover, provides little sense of change over time, either with respect to what ideologies drive suppression and which tactics are favored in what circumstances. And there is no good reason, in a study on suppression as constitutive of state power, to restrict oneself, as Boykoff does, to the suppression of the political left. Perhaps an account of the suppression of the right by the American state, or an analysis of suppression by left wing regimes, would cause Boykoff to broaden or reshape his model.

Finally, Boykoff proceeds from a flawed premise: that in democratic societies raw physical power is both rare and largely unnecessary, given the efficacy of forms of soft power; in “totalitarian” societies, by extension, repression functions through direct violence. But in totalitarian societies as well, suppression often works through the voluntary servitude to or complicity with power, whether in the form of ideological compliance, inertia, the lure of personal gain, fears of personal disadvantage, and so on. Boykoff’s model is antedated, and makes no use of what has been learned about power’s operation since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc.

With respect to the activist audience, the problems are more straightforward. First, Boykoff spends so much time labeling and documenting suppression that he offers little in the way of overt advice on how to combat it. Activists must draw practical lessons largely by inference. By the same token, his synopses of historic episodes of suppression remains too clipped to be viscerally compelling. Indeed, the devil is often in the details, and thicker historical descriptions of state power would likely do more to awaken in readers the sense of horror and “emergency” Boykoff clearly favors.

Finally, there are weaknesses in Boykoff’s presentation that may trouble equally academics and activists. Boykoff’s most original section is an analysis of media coverage of global justice protestors, both those at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle in 1999 and at the World Bank/International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington, DC in 2000. Chiefly, Boykoff contests the research of other scholars asserting that provocation at least attracts media attention and that this attention, even if initially negative, at least gives publicity and legitimacy to the protestors’ cause. Boykoff’s content analysis of “prestige media” suggests that their coverage remained largely negative, mitigating or altogether voiding the benefits of attention.
One could easily conclude from Boykoff that protesters should play by the rules, as provocation yields little apparent gain given the power and practices of the media. This is an extremely awkward lesson, given Boykoff’s militant commitment—evident especially in the book’s last section—to radical change. Boykoff seems, in short, stuck by his own research with a case for moderation. But one can also challenge his core analysis. Whatever Boykoff’s data, the global justice movement’s critique of neoliberalism quickly moved from the margins to the mainstream. Indeed, ample evidence indicates that the neoliberalism is now in real trouble, for which demonstrators on this and other continents can likely take significant credit. By this long view, the breaking of Starbucks windows in Seattle may still have been effective.

Boykoff ultimately falls prey to the danger of imputing too great a power to his object of analysis. Trained on the suppression, he is scarcely able to understand how and why state and elite hegemony sometimes fails, whether in the case of neoliberalism or the Iraq war. As a corollary, he gives dissidents too little credit in understanding structures of power and adapting their protest to these structures. Hyperconscious of media tropes, the Billionaires for Bush styled themselves during the 2004 campaign in deliberate contrast to leftwing archetypes. Packaging their serious message in glamorous and abjectly clever political theatre, they resisted dismissal as a dangerous fringe or shaggy nay-sayers. The result was incessant and remarkably favorable coverage; four years later, their critique of class domination has found at least mild expression in the populist rhetoric of a new election cycle.

Boykoff misses the dynamism not only of social movement actors but of the media context in which they exist. The web and various forms of user-generated content have provided unprecedented means for creating multiple and alternate narratives, of proliferating different facts and frames. This greatly complicates the work of ideological hegemony, if not limits the power of the weapons of suppression Boykoff describes. To be sure, there is something refreshingly “old school” about his attention to state and media repression; but at times the approach is so “old school” as to risk the subtle miseducation of those he means to enlighten.

Jeremy Varon
Drew University


There are so many books now appearing about the 1960s that some are bound to be dreadful. This one is not the worst, because the author does not seek, as some neoconservatives do, to repudiate practically everything interesting. (Bill Kaufman, noted paleconservative, is among the most insightful, stressing anti-corporate localism and opposition to military globalism that young people in parts of
the Left and Right could share, without sharing much more.) Still, *The Sixties Unplugged* is among the most tediously familiar, as it seems to lack any insight derived from primary research and because no cliché or banality uttered by liberal supporters of the Cold War and corporate governance goes unpeated. We have heard it all before—not only in books of the early 1970s, but in real life, when in the middle of the next decade, the purported Great Thinkers of the 1950s suddenly seemed very stale, indeed.

DeGroot’s central thought, reiterated whenever he pauses to step back from detail, is nearly identical to that of liberal professorship in the day, often articulated with the most intensity by intellectuals who actually attended the lavish global conferences, purportedly on behalf of free expression, paid for quietly by the Central Intelligence Agency. The Vietnam War, for them, was terribly unfortunate; the existence of racism in American institutions and some parts of the public mind was perhaps even more unfortunate (it was terrible for US prestige abroad). But the takeover of the campuses by students interfering with business as usual was worse than either war or racism. It made professors and administrators so nervous, especially when embarrassing details about university connections with the war machine happened to be aired. Sometimes these events undermined seemingly brilliant careers in the throne room ruling ivory towers. Just as embarrassing, for the prestigious liberal intellectuals gathered around Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell, was the uncovering, by *Ramparts* magazine in 1967, of the quiet but massive cash flow beneath the pomp of what New Leftists dubbed “Corporate Liberalism.” Horrible!

DeGroot sometimes appears a bit better here, because he suggests that students might have had a point or two in their idealistic hopes. But their utopianism overwhelmed their good judgment and ruined everything. He is unable get to the commonplace insight that the self-destruction of a civilization, through militarization of society, nuclear arms race or ecological devastation had been so dramatized that large numbers of young (and other) people demanded that the process be stopped! Or he believes that good liberals themselves were against all these things, too, and might have stopped them, if only given the chance. He wants to believe in a mild modification of things and that any attempt more drastic can only spoil everything. The happy multiversity of Clark Kerr’s dreams, preparing students for corporate life running the country and the planet, had shown its ugly sides too vividly. The police frame-ups of nonwhite activists, the outright murders, the abandonment of Southern African-Americans to their white rules were acceptable to Democrats as well as Republicans, and cheerfully rationalized by both.

We see in these pages once more, among so many familiar liberal notions and claims, that the US invasion of Vietnam, the napalming, the oceans of Agent Orange and such, were actually an intended antidote to the devilish Cult of the Viet Cong. How silly, how awful that students would chant “Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh,
Vietnam Is Going to Win!” They, I should say “we,” somehow became convinced that the US would not end its gory occupation until it lost the war. Behind such misunderstandings by young people was the badly mistaken notion that the US was actually a colonial power (leaving aside, though unmentioned here, Puerto Rico and various other islands in the Caribbean the Pacific) because the US had already urged European powers to leave their colonies once and for all. Neocolonialism, the effective economic, social and political authority conducted by the US over nearly all Latin America for what is now well over a century, apparently doesn’t count. As for Patrice Lumumba, murdered by intelligence forces in alliance with the CIA, he would have just become one more corrupt African ruler if he had not been assassinated. So why the outcry?

Remarkably calm on this and related scores that seemed to outrageous at the time (made rather worse by government falsifications, in speeches so often written—before Nixon—by well-groomed liberal intellectuals), DeGroot is as angry as a wet college president and the long list of other things that he is angry about would take many hundreds of words here. He is angry at black people for being angry enough to rise up in cities, especially after the assassination of Dr. King. Race as a social problem was becoming steadily less important but somehow the seeming short-sightedness of the ghetto residents left them incapable of understanding that. DeGroot is naturally indulgent toward King himself, but makes no mention of the late anti-imperial blasting of the US as the “most violent country in the world” or King’s veering toward a version of socialism. Malcolm X, honored by a postage stamp in later decades, is neglected—except for a comparison to Mohammad Ali in which Malcolm becomes a political simpleton if not a downright charlatan. Ali, moreover, despite losing his best boxing years, was much better off than those who actually acceded the draft and went to Vietnam to kill or be killed. What in the world was he complaining about? (DeGroot adds insult to injury by insisting that Curt Flood, the baseball player who lost his career fighting racism, was after all merely an agent of greed—demonstrating that DeGroot is completely baffled by the role of baseball in American social history.)

It would be unfair to the author to say he was smugly pleased by the outcome of all this and so much more. If American, he might be properly seen as a Truman Democrat who experienced personal upward mobility, believed heartily in the Cold War despite some unfortunate gaffes, and was certain that a Kennedy or L.B.J. style of balancing domestic reform with global empire could go on and on—if only things didn’t fall apart so badly, with so very many irresponsible young people seizing a stage of history that belonged properly to their elders. It is so hard to account for the Carter Doctrine as the memorable act of the most notable liberal in the White House since L.B.J.

That Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Ariel Sharon and his Arab counterpart Saddam Hussein, among other
mass murderers and downright repulsive figures have dominated so much of history since the 1960s is at least as unpleasant as DeGroot imagines and, in this reviewer’s opinion, a great deal worse. Ecology is only a passing thought in The Sixties Unplugged, but he stops long enough to say that corporations supply consumer goods, so any attempt to blame them must have been misguided! Thereby, he misses the eco-logic aspects of the decade along with the defeat, however temporary, of Empire as dominant principle in the globe. More importantly, DeGroot misses the pulsating beat of the mass movements themselves, which by seeking to supersede corporate rule and the limits of representative democracy with forms of direct democracy, helped develop the kind of world upon which Dr. King insisted was reachable.

What remains of the 1960s as a glamorous, rebellious era? The sense that an institutional and militarized society dependent upon the vision of a permanent enemy is not invincible. And that global democracy, repudiating the redirection of natural resources and local economies by neo-colonialism away from the hopes of early independence days into corporate ledgers, can still happen. These are ideas so simple, so revolutionary, that practically anyone can grasp them and the urgent need for them if we are to survive. Not, of course, our Professor DeGroot.

Paul Buhle
Brown University


The Cold War era continues to fascinate North American academics and two recent studies by US historians explore complementary aspects of educational change in this period. Linda Eisenmann focuses on a coterie of female reformers who sought to expand post-secondary educational opportunities for women in the twenty years following World War II, and Andrew Hartman takes up the “battle for the American school” among progressive educators, political activists and anti-communists during the same era. While the two books, written from very different perspectives, do not uncover much that is new in the history of education, they raise interesting historiographical and methodological questions that future students of this period (and others) would be wise to consider.

Eisenmann seeks to recapture and acknowledge the work of liberal reformers, those middle class professionals who contributed to educational and social change without ever eliciting the acclaim and notoriety of Betty Friedan, author of the extraordinarily influential, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the feminist activists who followed in her wake. She provides case studies of several
organizations: The American Council on Education Commission on the Education of Women, the American Association of University Women, the National Association of Deans of Women, and the President’s (Kennedy) Commission on the Status of Women. She also examines women’s continuing education initiatives in several American universities during the 1950s and 60s.

None of the leaders of these associations could be considered radical; indeed most would have eschewed the label “feminist”. They understood that women in the post war period (including themselves) were enveloped by the home and hearth mythology that pervaded post-war America. The iconic housewife nurtured her children and husband, engaged in volunteer work, and, if she had time, pursued educational and other pursuits. The nuclear family was perceived as the social bedrock of the nuclear age.

In reality, women were increasingly working and pursuing post-secondary education. The participation rate of married women in the American labour force rose from 22 to 31 per cent between 1950 and 1960, and organizations such as the American Association of University Women sought to smooth the path from home to work for career-oriented women. Their advocacy was “adaptive,” incrementalist and focused on individuals not collectivities. The pursuit of full gender equality appeared neither possible, nor for some reformers, advisable. The author suggests that, like the previous generation of material feminists, they attempted to secure recognition for women’s distinctive social sphere, and then expand its boundaries in ways that served female aspirations and interests.

Perhaps their most noteworthy accomplishment was the establishment of path-breaking continuing education programs for women at four American universities. While falling off the radar during the student uprisings of the late 1960s, such programs, which addressed the needs of part-time, mature, and married students, were replicated in later decades. The President’s Commission on the Status of Women promoted better child care standards and tax deductions for families with children in day care, and the American Association of University Women, consisting of alumni from liberal arts colleges, provided an important network for the discussion of social issues.

But as the author also notes, two important issues that the middle class liberal reformers largely avoided were race and class. They confronted neither the particular challenges of working class women, nor the systemic racism in education, including in some of their own organizations. The latter issue was politically explosive, and the reformers’ relentless respectability left them with little to say, at least until the civil rights movement took hold.

This is a meticulously researched, though exceedingly repetitive study. The author bends over backwards to place the concerns of her subjects in historical perspective, which is why, in the end, she finds reason to praise their labours. The Cold War era was especially hostile to the kind of radical activism that erupted in the late 1960s, and the efforts of reformers, including those with “limited”
vision and aspirations, merit serious historical attention, which they certainly receive in this book.

As a self-described Marxist scholar, Andrew Hartman would undoubtedly be dismissive of Eisenmann’s cast of politically moderate players. This book traces the journey and fate of advocates both of progressive education and more radical versions of educational change. In short, virtually all of these individuals either suffered ideological repression or betrayed the cause of enlightened, democratic education. In his original writings on education and philosophy, educational philosopher John Dewey, according to the author, provided the framework for genuinely progressive schooling, but the conservatism of many of his supposed followers, in combination with rampant red-baiting which spanned several decades, derailed the grand plan.

Indeed, apart from the young John Dewey, Theodore Brameld, a radical utopian educational theorist, and Willard Goslin, a Pasadena education superintendent who attempted in vain to desegregate the city’s schools, this study is dominated by intellectual villains. Ex-communists turned anti-communist, George Counts and Bella Dodd; historian Richard Hofstadter; educators James Bryant Conant and Robert Hutchins, among others, all apparently played a role in marginalizing both radical thinking and genuinely progressive educational policy.

The latter point, however, is merely speculative. One of the major weaknesses of this book is its failure to explore what actually happened in American classrooms before and during the Cold War. Like some of the commentators he cites, the author asserts but does not demonstrate that progressivism, or at least some version of it, was the dominant pedagogical paradigm in American schools of the 1930s and 40s. (This is a source of continuing historiographical controversy, creatively addressed in Ronald Cohen’s, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary Indiana, 1911 to 1961*, which does not appear in Hartman’s bibliography). Some of the author’s statements are sweeping and stunning in their simplicity. “Whereas most administrators once thought of themselves as schoolmasters dedicated to enhancing the liberal curriculum, by mid-century most considered their work akin to running a business. Their primary duty was to tailor their young charges to fit the economic order” (62). The world of American schooling was far more complicated than this assertion implies.

Unlike Eisenmann’s study which is drawn from original sources, Hartman’s is derived almost entirely from secondary writings and the events he chronicles, particularly the anti-communist educational purges, will be familiar to readers of modern American educational history. Nor with its turgid, complex prose, will his volume reach a broader non-academic audience. And even within academia, both of these books are likely to have a limited readership, Eisenmann’s because of its highly specialized focus and Hartman’s because of its ideological heavy-handedness.
A final historiographical question provoked by both books: is it possible for historians of social activism to avoid the heroic (or anti-heroic) treatment of their subjects? Do there always have to be retrospective political winners and losers? And shouldn’t historians (whatever their political biases) serve as investigators, narrators, and storytellers of lives and times rather than as moralists and judges? These questions are not entirely rhetorical.

Paul Axelrod
York University


In the triumvirate of New Deal-sponsored cultural initiatives, several studies have examined the Federal Writers’ Project and the Federal Theater Project; however, a comprehensive survey of the third artistic component of the WPA, the Federal Art Project (FAP), has been largely absent. Fortunately, there is now Laura Hapke’s *Labor’s Canvas*. For over two decades, Hapke has sought to place at centre the lives of labourers so often on the margins of American culture. This is evident in her previous works, such as *Labor’s Text: The Worker in American Fiction* (Rutgers, 2001) and *Sweatshop: The History of an American Idea* (Rutgers, 2004). *Labor’s Canvas* emerges as a continuation of these studies, seeking to again place value on working-class history and culture. This text, at once an examination of art, history, politics, race, class, and gender, emerges as a seminal work for scholars of history, labour studies, art history, and American Studies.

What is evident from Hapke’s study are the diverse and complex nuances that permeated FAP art. Divided into two main parts, Part One, “Male and Pale: Unionism and Art,” and Part Two, “Catching the CIO Spirit: The FAP and Multicultural Workers,” *Labor’s Canvas* explores the complicated notion of “a WPA artistry both responsive to and ambivalent about labor” (8). This statement makes clear the thorny nature of the job for many WPA artists: “artists saw themselves as cultural workers who had much in common with the blue-collar workforce. Yet artistically, they struggled to reconcile social protest and aesthetic distance” (2). Whether seeking a way to accurately depict the “self in industrial work” or balancing their radical impulses with the aims of a government-subsidized arts program, artists found themselves in complicated and often contradictory positions (9). Yet these intricate political and cultural subtexts, Hapke observes, provide the rich undercurrent of FAP art.

Another important focus of Hapke’s project, made especially apparent in Part Two, is the attention given to diversity and multiculturalism in WPA art. Many
FAP artists, as she contends, worked hard to represent race, gender, body, and labour accurately in their art. Hapke is astute in her observations about FAP artists and their accomplishments, particularly in that they “recognized that the American labor force was not monolithic” (2). She acknowledges that these artists produced works that recognized and celebrated the very diverse nature of Depression-era labourers and were integral in providing an alternative to mainstream America’s view of the blue-collar labourer as essentially male and white. Instead, these artists depicted workers, both male and female, and in “varying racial hues” (90). In this way, FAP artists sought to expand the country’s notion of what it meant to be working class.

One of the many accomplishments of Labor’s Canvas is its recovery of WPA artists whose names have been largely excluded from American Studies—Reginald Marsh, Dox Thrash, Isabel Bishop, and Raphael Soyer, just to name a few. Hapke offers in-depth analyses of their works, as well as context for how these artists fit into the larger, Depression-era cultural zeitgeist. Alongside this examination are the powerful images themselves. With over thirty illustrations accompanying Hapke’s study, the reader can see firsthand some of the complicated images from the FAP. Moreover, exploring these depictions calls for a repositioning of FAP art, which has traditionally been maligned: “from the New Deal era to our own, well-heeled art critics have often sneered at the simplified or brutally expressionistic figures who man concrete mixers, build bridges, chafe on or mournfully occupy breadlines, crowd factory gates, or swarm into mega-factories” (4). This is a common attitude towards working-class culture, whether it appears on canvas, in print, or on the stage. Labor’s Canvas forces critics and scholars to reconsider their previous dismissal of such works as well as their aesthetic notions.

Hapke focuses attention on this often overlooked segment of American labour history, emphasizing that “of crucial importance is the ‘bottom-up’ story of the common experience of company towns, family and community hardship, industrial speedups, grassroots activism, government relief jobs, and breadline homelessness” (2). In this way, Hapke’s work becomes part of the tradition of other “bottom-up” approaches, such as Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States and Studs Terkel’s Working. Much like Terkel and Zinn’s projects, Hapke’s Labor’s Canvas underscores the vitality and intricacy of working-class culture in a time that was wrought with political, aesthetic, and classed concerns. Hapke has succeeded amply in this endeavor, producing a work that is superbly researched and thoughtfully written. In exploring these complicated and important issues, Hapke has produced a truly significant work in Labor’s Canvas, one that solidifies her reputation as one of our most important labour studies scholars.

Lisa A. Kirby
North Carolina Wesleyan College

Tom Goyens’s study of New York’s German anarchist scene from 1880 to 1914 seeks to explore not only the movement, its ideological underpinnings, press, and players, but also the physical and ideological spaces within which they thrived. It was in the smoky back rooms of taverns and saloons, Goyens writes, as well as in lecture halls, reading rooms, and in parks throughout Greater New York that German anarchism found its full expression. Goyens aims to show how German “radicals inscribed anarchism in … urban space,” and he does so by “mapping” the movement’s geopolitical “topography” (2, 7).

Judged by this intriguing and ambitious thesis, *Beer and Revolution* delivers both more and less than it promises. More, in that Goyens offers also a rich portrait of the complex ethnic culture of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anarchism in New York. Its characters include the familiar (Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and of course the indefatigable German firebrand Johann Most, longtime editor of the anarchist newspaper *Freiheit*), but also less well-known figures: Austrian anarchist Josef Peukert, for example, “Most’s arch-enemy for life” (114). So blinded was Peukert by his animosity towards Most that he refused to heed his rival’s warnings regarding a police spy whom he unwittingly allowed to infiltrate the smuggling operation that delivered *Freiheit* into Germany, resulting in the arrest and death behind bars of chief smuggler Johann Neve (128-33). Other controversies causing strife within the movement included the 1884-85 “firebug” affair, in which overzealous Most followers set their heavily insured tenement buildings on fire in order to donate the insurance money to the cause, a scheme that claimed the lives of a woman and two children and that cost Most much support for his refusal to denounce the perpetrators (119-21). Such episodes as well as the sometimes-obscure figures who played roles in them are well described, with an eye for telling detail.

Also commendable is the manner in which Goyens navigates the complex history and ideological subtleties of the movement. Although he claims “not [to] present an intellectual or philosophical treatise on revolutionary anarchism” (7), he ably walks the reader through the movement’s historical and ideological origins from the Marx-Bakunin rift leading to the latter’s expulsion from the International in 1872 to the later tension between Bakunin’s collectivist- versus Kropotkin’s communist-anarchism. Goyens deftly traces the origins of German anarchism, its historical roots in the German socialist movement, the impact of Bismarck’s 1878 Antisocialist Laws (whose expulsion clause led to a flow of radicals to New York via London), and the growing rift between German socialists and the so-called Social Revolutionaries later associated with anarchism. He persuasively argues that similar developments in the United States led to a comparable state of affairs there. Throughout, his command of the
 minutiae of anarchist history as well as his exhaustive reading of the anarchist press is impressive.

Where Goyens falls short of his own stated goal is precisely in the mapping of the New York movement’s geopolitical space announced in the introduction. Despite an effort to do so in the opening chapter — in which he invites the reader “to follow the German anarchist inside the beerhall … and proceed into the back room to join a discussion” — the promised “topography” of anarchism never becomes vividly clear. Notwithstanding Goyens’s claim that his focus is “as much on places and spaces as on ideas and ideals”, he proves himself a more able historian than a geographer (34-35, 7). Indeed, there is an element of tedium to the demographic statistics and street addresses crowding his “Radical Geography” chapter. Although the argument he makes about German anarchist meeting spaces is persuasive — in a nutshell, that they “mirrored the anarchist sensibility” (37) — the spaces themselves, even the best-described (including the editorial offices of Freibit and Justus Schwab’s famous beer hall on the Lower East Side) rarely take on clearly discernible contours.

This is partially the case because the spaces are as obscure as German anarchists themselves, and most have long disappeared. Also, the oft-persecuted movement was itself frequently on the move, an element of impermanence that complicates the task of mapping the loci of anarchists’ experiences. In a much later, excellent chapter on “German Anarchists’ Political Culture in New York,” Goyens acknowledges this transience and, with far greater success, maps German anarchists’ experiential orbit by exploring recreational groups and activities including picnics, outings, rifle clubs, and music and theater performances. It is in this as well as in his concluding chapter, charting the final decline of the movement on the eve of World War I, that Beer and Revolution breaks new ground, offers new research, and thereby earns its place alongside the works of Paul Avrich, Bruce C. Nelson, and other staples of anarchist historiography.

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CUNY-Queens College


Thistle traces the demise of the domestic sphere over the past century and a half, focusing particularly on the implications of the transformation in women’s relation to the paid labour market since the 1970s. She argues that as women entered the workforce, the social, political, and legal supports for domestic labour collapsed. Likening women to landless peasants and pre-industrial labourers, Thistle suggests that women lost their traditional “way of life” (25). This loss, she argues, created new hardships as the gendered division of labour broke down. In a discussion
that leaps through time and largely ignores specific historical context, she argues that some women fought to reclaim the old hierarchies while others embraced the new context for their work. The transformation in women’s work created “great material gains,” laying the foundation for the new economy of the twenty-first century—but these gains did not always benefit women themselves.

The transformation of domestic labour, in Thistle’s formulation, took place in three periods. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she argues, industrial work did not lessen women’s domestic duties. Rather, those duties were supported by what she calls agreements (marriage, the family wage and federal obligations like mothers’ pensions, and later, Aid to Dependent Children) “between fathers, employers, and the state.” While some women became wage labourers, household work remained essential. Thus “male workers repeatedly demanded a “family wage” that could support their wives…and most working-class women preferred marriage…” (25). If the author looked more closely at historical studies of working-class family economies, however, she would have to question how many men actually earned a “family wage.” By the early twentieth century, Thistle says, a few women began to realize “the connection between the performance of household tasks under men’s control…and exclusion from economic and political power”, but most “sought instead to preserve, defend, and, among the more progressive, reform, their domestic economy” (25). That certainly is one way to read the social feminism of women like Jane Addams or Frances Willard. Neither woman, however, romanticized industrial work nor did they accept uncritically the traditional gendered division of labour.

The second phase of historical transformation, Thistle argues, occurred after World War II when women enjoyed a “golden age” of breadwinner and state support. Industrialization decisively entered American homes in this period not only in the form of household technology but via the introduction of technology into the realm of motherhood—birth control and bottled formula—as well. Marriage remained a central, stabilizing pillar in the gendered division of labour, supported, most notably, she says, by ADC and the family wage. (One must seriously question her claims for both of these as significant factors in the lives of most working-class women, black or white.) The baby-boom generation, Thistle argues, did not actively challenge the division of labour. Indeed, most women “fought to prevent its alternation” (57). The implication here is that conservative women in the anti-ERA and anti-abortion movements suffered from a “false consciousness,” and did not comprehend the “real” forces affecting their lives. But feminists too, she says, failed to understand the “true” nature of the domestic realm. Thistle points particularly to the National Organization of Women (NOW) which she says “did not actively challenge the division of labour between the sexes or recognize its role in women’s absence from the labour force” (45). While NOW can be criticized on many fronts, a look at its founding statement clearly suggests that this may be a mis-reading of the organization’s agenda which
included demands for day care and equal pay along with the suggestion that men take greater responsibility in the home.

The final phase of transformation in the domestic realm came in during the waning years of the twentieth century. The unprecedented entry of women—including mothers—into the wage labour market finally loosened the ties between women and domesticity. Thistle’s argument is at its strongest when she addresses the implications of these most current developments. She suggests that the move from household to paid work shifted women’s central means of support from their husbands to themselves. This meant that marriage became less valuable as both women and men could now purchase domestic services. However, the decline in marriage without a corresponding opening of lucrative employment opportunities for women, created a new realm of poverty. While the media focused on race and the “feminization of poverty”, Thistle argues that the real dynamic was the withdrawal of support by employers and the state (and husbands as well) for women’s domestic labour. Employers no longer cared about paying a family wage, the state no longer had an interest in welfare, and husbands could buy the services they required. Thistle argues that all lingering legal, economic, and even cultural, supports for domestic work disappeared. (One must question her claim that there had ever been a strong “belief that women’s household work deserved government support” [71].) The consequences of the decline of support for domestic work affected women differently depending most notably upon educational level, race, and single motherhood, as marriage no longer carried with it any social or legal benefits. Indeed, she argues, women’s poverty used to be caused by an absence of a husband but now it is women’s inabilitys to support themselves that creates most female/family poverty.

Ultimately, Thistle’s thesis, while intriguing, is weakened by the unspecific and ambiguous nature of historical evidence. For example, she ignores issues of age and life cycle in shaping opportunities and expectations for women, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, while she contrasts the work, family, and educational experiences of black and white women, she largely ignores questions of immigration and ethnicity. Finally, her explanation for contemporary political alliances seems contradictory. She asserts that women “are coming to perceive their interests as wage workers more clearly” (153). I’m not sure where the evidence for this statement comes from or, similarly, what is behind her assertion that men now “have wives in the labor force and therefore see policies that ease the difficulties of combining home and work as being in their own interests” (154). At the same time she attributes the rise of conservative politics to, again a false consciousness in which “many white male workers formed alliances not with African American men or with the growing numbers of women workers of either race, but with employers and the New Right” (64).

The book ends with a very general overview of the global economy and calls for a “revolution in social policy” that would include new ways of commit-
tory employers and the state (as well as husbands) to child care, new definitions of citizenship that would recognize the right of every adult to “both a good job and to time for caregiving” (165). She insists that women’s rights should be based not on their difference from men “but on the fact of the movement of labor out of the domestic realm” (142). Her points are well taken, but more work needs to be done to give those goals concrete shape.

Susan Levine
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In Susan K. Cahn’s imaginative exploration of modern Southern history, if 1960’s student sit-in movement represents the New South’s coming of age, the decades prior represent its adolescence. And what better way to study the adolescent South, she posits, than through the history of Southern adolescents, or more specifically its female adolescents? In order to understand the growing pains of the New South, as modernity battled with cultural traditions and legal structures, Cahn navigates the terrain of young womanhood, a stage on which played out dramas over not just sex, but race, class, and modernity itself.

Cahn argues that adolescent women were a flashpoint in the struggles of a developing New South since “the sexuality of teenage girls struck an important political nerve, one connected to a larger regional crisis of identity” (20). Cahn’s study runs from the “problem” white flappers of the 1920s up to the black teenage girls who desegregated white schools in the mid- to late 1950s. Cahn makes her argument decade by decade through a series of disparate case studies that explore both the lived experience of black and white adolescent girls and the social management of their sexuality. Chapters are devoted to eugenic sterilization programs, adolescent consumers, reform programs for sexual delinquents, dancing, World War II pickup girls, and the young women who were part of the first wave of black students to integrate formerly white schools. It is a wide-ranging landscape that Cahn covers well, marshalling an impressive array of evidence including diaries, court records, and oral histories. Her strongest work, such as that on the eugenics program, is that in which she can dig her teeth into a case study rather than trying to diagnose larger and more diffuse sociological patterns, like black female sexuality.

Cahn begins with the movement of rural black and white women into the urban workforce in the 1920s and 1930s, and the fear this engendered on the part of ruling men. While this phenomenon was not unique to the region—much has been written about the similar situation of mill girls of Lowell, Massachusetts—Cahn argues that the South was different because its “moral panic about adoles-
cent sexuality grew, in part, from an unstable foundation of interracial dependency and proximity” (27). Southern society functioned according to strict rules governing race, class, and appropriate gender roles and mill girls and other young rural transplants threatened this order by blurring the lines between child and woman, poor white and poor black and spirited youth and modern decadence. Cahn does note one important class distinction; where whites in the late 1920s were mostly concerned with policing white working girls, blacks focused on middle class girls, education, and uplift. Both races were concerned with sexual “delinquents” and Cahn devotes a chapter each to black and white girls reformatories. Whites seemed to police adolescent white sexuality out of a fear of “social disorder and racial degeneracy,” while the uplift and reform efforts launched by black clubwomen were meant to argue against natural racial inferiority, since a reformed girl was proof that degeneracy was not a fixed condition (49, 70).

Cahn admits that her later chapters on rock n’ rollers, pickup girls, and high school students focus on whites, though she argues that the specter of black female sexuality is always present and is frequently invoked, either as a contrast against white virtue or as a castigation against all too similar white sexual deviance. But the conversation shifted over time from a focus on class distinctions to racial interest. By the 1950s, teens of both races had “developed a more autonomous and widely shared culture,” in which boys and girls mixed freely, and racial mixing was a constant threat (308). With the social order thus challenged, white leaders—and who exactly they are could be better defined—struggled to restrain and constrain female adolescent immorality. As the New South grew through its own difficult adolescence, Cahn argues, the teenaged girl came to represent the instability of families, class distinctions, gender roles, and especially the systems of patriarchy and white supremacy. It is a provocative argument and Cahn adds greatly to our understanding of sexuality and adolescence during a pivotal period of Southern history.

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Concluding his superb study of the largest African-American local in the Industrial Workers of the World, Peter Cole underscores the main theme of the book: “Local 8 demonstrates what can be accomplished when workers overcome racial and ethnic differences... (even in the face of) the myriad, powerful forces that can defeat such efforts” (176). In order to probe the conundrum of how Local 8 sustained itself for over a decade (from 1913 to 1922) as a bulwark of IWW unionism in the face of powerful racial divisions and massive political
repression, Cole incorporates the important case studies of Eric Arnesen and Bruce Nelson on racially mixed dockworkers, local histories of Philadelphia during the Progressive Era, primary and secondary works on African-American history, and national and international examinations of the Wobblies and syndicalism during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Acknowledging that his focus is the “institutional history of Local 8” (6), Cole, nonetheless, provides exceptional insights into the job, class, gender and racial/ethnic identities of those workers who laboured on the docks and inside the ships in the busy port of Philadelphia during this period.

In addition to exploring the interracial dynamics of Local 8, Wobblies on the Waterfront does not shy away from one of the most persistent paradoxes associated with the IWW, that is, in Cole’s words, “how to form a strong, well organized union fighting for important albeit not revolutionary gains…while striving to overthrow the economic system” (4). Developing a pragmatic approach to job control and facilitating a radical sense of solidarity and oppositional politics makes Cole’s book a fascinating and significant addition to not only histories of the IWW but also studies of working class social and labour movements. The story told in this excellent study is further complicated by other issues he highlights related to the role of local control and leadership. That leadership, exercised by the Philadelphia-based African-American Ben Fletcher and national IWW organizer George Speed among others, confronted constant challenges from the persistent racial animosities stoked by job competition and the on-going harassment by the racially segregated AFL unions, often in collusion with employers seeking to snuff out the militancy of Local 8.

In examining the growth and eventual collapse of Local 8, Cole renders a critical and valuable investigation of how the IWW was able to capitalize on working class mobilizations and strikes, especially of dockworkers in the US (and in other places such as New Zealand and Australia). From the successful organizing effort in 1913 to the 1922 lockout and demise of the IWW on the Philadelphia waterfront, the book charts how the union contended with the arrival of ever new unskilled immigrants, whether from Eastern Europe or increasingly from the West Indies and the South, as immigration from Europe was curtailed during WWI. In particular, Cole notes the disruptive addition of Southern blacks whose regional background often “further complicated the union’s efforts” (98). Especially during WWI and its immediate aftermath, racial tensions only exacerbated the difficulties of keeping up class and revolutionary solidarity. The book is particularly revealing in laying bare how the themes of “anti-German/immigrant hysteria, anti-Bolshevism, and the open shop” (103) became critical weapons utilized by the government and employers to challenge and eventually destroy Local 8’s control of the Philadelphia waterfront.

In light of the incisive and subtle reading that Cole provides of the interracial unionism of Local 8, it is unfortunate that he continues the established tradition, dating back to the seminal work of Dubofsky’s We Shall Be All, of misreading the IWW’s
resistance to WWI and, in particular, the draft. Without belabouring all of the egregious errors of such a misreading, it is important to note that Cole relies, as does Dubofsky and so many other studies of the IWW, on what those Wobblies and their supporters said during the 1918 trials for treason about their wartime records, especially on the draft. One example of this is the claim that “fully 100% of Local 8’s members registered for the draft” (82). The only empirical evidence for this comes from the testimony of Local 8 and national IWW organizers Walter Nef and E.F. Doree, both of whom were under duress because of the government’s indictment on treason. Given the documented evidence of Wobbly resistance to the draft from Irish miners in Butte to Finnish and Austrian miners on the Iron Range to whole locals, such as that in Rockford, Illinois, marching against registration, it seems reasonable to suggest that the record of Local 8’s participation with the draft and its anti-war activities is more mixed and more contentious than Cole proposes.

While Cole is not oblivious to the contradictory nature of Local 8’s political activities during WWI, his use of the highly contested term “patriotism” is definitely suspect in its less than tentative application to the black rank-and-file of Local 8. Given the illuminating insights into the dominant African-American role in Local 8, Cole seems to falter in the exploration of contradictory tendencies among those African-Americans during WWI. Certainly, the influence of W.E.B. DuBois in urging blacks to get behind the war effort is noted by Cole. On the other hand, he completely overlooks those voices challenging Du Bois on this question within the black activist community, whether from William Monroe Trotter or A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, editors of the militant and IWW supporting journal, The Messenger. In fact, a November 1917 editorial in The Messenger made very explicit their opposition to war-manufactured national chauvinism: “Patriotism has no appeal to us; justice has.” Thus, although there were obviously black dockworkers in Local 8 who followed Du Bois’s lead and joined the Army, there were countless others for whom wartime patriotism was just another “shuck and jive” of a white supremacist political order.

On the other hand, in navigating many of the extant contradictions on Philadelphia’s waterfront and in Local 8’s Herculean pains to foster racial and class solidarity while under constant economic, social, and political pressures, especially in the dire circumstances of the 1920’s, Wobblies on the Waterfront manages to tell a very inclusive and important story of interracial unionism. As a probing rendering of the intersection of IWW revolutionary objectives with the grinding realities of defensive unionism, Cole’s book is essential reading not only for understanding working class self-activity during the first two decades of the twentieth century but also for recognizing the on-going difficulties of generating and sustaining a social and labour movement for a diverse and often divisive working class.

Francis Shor
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Book Reviews


*What We Want: What We Believe: The Black Panther Party Library* is a ground breaking collection of film footage, videographies of the top BPP leaders and video oral histories of the members of the News Reel who worked to publicize and support the work of the Black Panther Party, movement organizations and individuals in general. This collection of four DVDs is unsurpassed in its breadth and knowledge of those most closely associated with the inner workings, growth, development, and decline of the BPP. It is a welcome addition to the rapidly growing research on civil rights and black power now being conducted by scholars throughout the US and around the globe. Roz Payne’s thoroughly researched and well-edited video collection is one that will be indispensable to those seeking to understand the phenomenon J. Edgar Hoover chose to dub the “greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.”

Included in this collection are well-known short documentary films like *Off the Pig!, May Day* and *Repression*. These short films, often less than twenty minutes in length, cover the early history of Black Panther Party and the major events that brought it headlines in the late sixties and early seventies. One sees footage where an imprisoned Huey Newton speaks candidly about why there was a need for the BPP. Viewers witness party co-founder Bobby Seale read Executive Mandate number one on the steps of the Sacramento Capital where he called for blacks nationwide to take note of the “racist California legislature” that was preparing to pass a law to “disarm” blacks and take away their second amendment rights to bear arms. This spectacle swelled the group’s numbers from thirty to nearly 4,000 in a few months time. Minister of Information and infamous author Eldridge Cleaver chimes in with a few choice four-letter words and explains why it is important to blacks and their white, brown, red, and yellow allies to make the police feel the same fear that blacks had grown to know over the centuries. While all of this is classic footage that makes for excellent teaching tools, the newsreel team made it clear that their task was not only to document and preserve the history of this radical organization but also to use their films to educate “the people” and to recruit new members into party. In other words, they were scholar activists long before the term became popular in the late twentieth century.

Newsreel’s role in the life of the BPP is the part of the collection that makes it so unique. The stories that the newsreel film team and the lawyers who fought for and supported the party through uncounted legal battles tell are at the same time heartbreaking and courageous. The members of the newsreel family from New York to California lay bare their hearts in an attempt to tell their individual stories of how they came to know, love, work with, and finally to leave the BPP and carry on with the rest of their lives. Movement lawyers follow suit with stories of intrigue, betrayal, innovative and new defenses, and plain old good luck.
Bob Blume, Bob Boyle, and Jesse Burman paint a picture of this radical organization that most have never seen.

Never before seen video interviews with Panther Field Marshal Don Cox in his home in France round out the collection. Living in exile for the better part of forty years has left this movement stalwart worn but not defeated and certainly not bitter. His exposition on the Panther’s foibles, defeats, and victories provide a fresh inside view of the party that one rarely sees from those on this side of the pond. His counterpart, FBI special agent William A. Cohendet is juxtaposed with Panther leaders to show how the powers that be saw the Panthers, and more importantly, how they saw themselves and their roles as keepers of the status quo. Despite hard hitting questions and candid comments from Roz Payne who interviewed Agent “WAC,” one still comes away feeling that there had to have been more to the overkill in strategy and tactics the FBI used to destroy the BPP. Nevertheless, the collection is useful because it allows the viewer to make up his or her own mind about the Panthers, the movement, and the work of local, state, and federal government agencies that participated in this dance of death and doom with this radical group. This in itself would have been sufficient to carry us into the next millennium, but Payne had the foresight to realize that no collection of this caliber could have been fully complete without a photo gallery that carried the viewer through the short life of an organization whose legacy continues to be manifested in free breakfast programs, access to healthcare for the poor, and charter schools that do much better jobs at educating the young than do most of the nation’s public schools.

Scholars, students, and lay people will find something of value in this collection. Community people who were “there” will be taken on an unforgettable trip down memory lane and would-be revolutionaries and future activists can learn a lot from those who have already been there and done that. They might start by watching the amazing footage of the first ever conference (at Wheelock College in Boston) held solely on the subject of the Black Panther Party. They might get even more clarity by analyzing the footage from the BPP’s 35th Reunion, which took place in Washington, DC and marked the first time in thirty years that East Coast and West Coast Panthers sat down as a group to discuss the legacy of the party and what went wrong along the way. What We Want What We Believe is going to be used for years by high school teachers and college professors who want to share with their students the tragic but grand story of radical change in the 1960s. For this reason, this collection is recommended for all who seek to know why the United States is the way it is in terms of race relations and social stratification. They will find in it the answers they seek to know about America’s tragic past. More importantly, they will be forced to ask those questions that most of us are afraid to ask: Where do we go from here? And what do we do after we get there?

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People make their own history but not, as Karl Marx noted, in conditions of their choosing. Seldom has the truth of that observation been more clear than in the brief life of the German Republic which was born in the wake of war and revolution. Known as the Weimar Republic after the city of its formal birth, this republic lurched from crisis to crisis until being murdered by the Nazis. In this remarkable introduction to the German republic’s all too short existence, Eric Weitz successfully brings to life Weimar Germany’s innovation and richness woven into the tapestry of German history.

For a time Germany, most particularly Berlin, was arguably the most exciting, vibrant society on the planet. Weitz does a superb job of showing Weimar in all its nuances, from art and architecture to the sex reform movement. Above all, the reader can feel the sense of possibility that permeated Germany in those years (1919-1933). Change was in the air and even in the worst of times artists and artisans, proletarians and painters could all feel something unprecedent-ed might soon happen. That this was to be Hitler’s murderous Third Reich was not preordained. As the author of *Weimar Germany* makes clear, the republic did not die a natural death but was viciously murdered.

Nor was this institutional republicicide the result of a majority of Germans clamoring for fascism. As the author documents, Hitler received less than two out of every five votes cast in the last truly free election. Significantly, that was at the peak of Nazi electoral support and soon after the Nazi’s vote began to fall sharply. In refuting the widely-held myth that Germans freely chose Nazism, Weitz corrects a widespread, racist, misunderstanding that “Germans love taking orders thus…”

The circumstance that left the republic defenseless against Hitler was the fact that, in the words of a leftist saying popular in the 1920s, “the Kaiser went, and the Generals remain.” Although the author is plainly reluctant to underline this fact, the German Social Democrats (SPD) bear a deep responsibility for this situation. Virtually handed office after the Kaiser fled into exile to Holland, the SPD failed to purge the old monarchical governmental apparatus, most of all the Imperial German army. This meant that the party in effect gave a pass to the old, embittered ruling classes who bided their time until they seized on Hitler as an unpleasant but reliable weapon to wield against democracy. Fixated on their enemies to the left, the Social Democratic Party that led the early Republic failed to democratize not only the army but also the courts and the civil service, not to mention the capitalist economy. Curiously, Weitz presents damning evidence to this effect yet hesitates to develop the logical conclusion of his own research.

There are other flaws in this generally excellent work. For example, the author has a curious (American?) antipathy toward the Weimar Republic’s demo-
cratic system of proportional representation, repeating without evidence that this was a major source of weak governments. (What about, say, runaway inflation or the Great Depression?) Could a stronger government have changed the world economic crisis, let alone the devotion of the right to the use of violence to enforce its will? Weitz seems to make the common mistake of confusing being in office with being in power. Even a Social Democratic-led majority government did not change the fact that when the old ruling families, like the Krupps, felt the moment was right, the old order stuck back with violence, using Hitler as their instrument. This was possible as they had remained the ones truly in power.

It could be that, on some level, the author felt his story needed a hero. Once he ruled out this role as impossible for the Nazis, and politically incorrect for the Communists to fill, all he was left with was the SPD and those (few) bourgeois parties loyal to the republic. To steal a formulation from Bertolt Brecht, pity the author who needs heroes. Nonetheless, these are relatively minor flaws in an otherwise brilliant survey of Weimar Germany. Weitz is sensitivity to the nuances of Weimar culture and politics all too rare in many treatments of this period. It is a tribute to the author that readers can feel they are actually walking through Berlin, not merely reading about it three-quarters of a century later. The strengths of this work far outweigh the imperfections and thus it is to be highly recommended.

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“Class analysis of radicalism has not, so far, proved productive” (64). Thus writes Glenn Burgess in the recent collection of essays on English radicalism he co-edited with Matthew Festenstein. Burgess aimed this barb directly at the British historians Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson; it lands wide of the mark. Hill and Thompson’s work placed class and radicalism at the centre of British and many other historiographies for much of the last century, and continues to shape scholarship today despite the lingering and effete post-modernism heralded by Burgess and other contributors to this volume. With notable exceptions, Burgess’ misguided observation sounds an emblematic note for the tone and quality of the scholarship in the collection. Inspired by the rise of the ‘linguistic turn’ in English political studies, Burgess and Festenstein take an agnostic approach to radicalism’s existence and a cold-eyed look at the concept’s historiographic record. First, compelled by the scholarship of contributors J.C.D. Clark and Conal Condren, the editors question the legitimacy of writing about ‘radicalism’, an allegedly modern concept, in the early modern period. Secondly, they question
whether those called “radical” by scholars “have anything in common with one another” (2). Lastly, confronting Hill and Thompson directly, they ask if English political culture contains a “radical tradition” of “radical ideas” transmitted across time (2).

To varying degrees and with minimal success, the contributors reflect upon and respond to these questions and often reach conflicting conclusions. The disagreements turn most visibly on the question of whether radicalism truly existed in the early modern period. Richard Greaves’ essay on Restoration-era sectarian politics and J.C. Davis’ theoretical epilogue on radicalism in traditional societies both accept that radicalism, defined in functional terms by both authors, made significant contributions to seventeenth-century English politics. Ultimately, however, Luc Borot’s article responds best to this question by providing a historical case study on an understudied but nonetheless indispensable figure of the English Revolution, the Leveller Richard Overton. Borot describes how Overton tried to bolster the revolution’s popular appeal by advocating merriness, mirth, and jollity alongside religious toleration and republican political principles. This strategy signaled Overton’s disgust with the Revolution’s ascension of self-professed ‘saints,’ who used their new found power to exclude from the nation’s political life those who did not pass their godly litmus test. Thus, as Borot shows, radicalism proved real and protean enough in the seventeenth century to absorb traditional popular culture within a larger revolutionary project founded upon religious liberty and democratic popular sovereignty. This kind of nuanced work, recognizing that early modern radicals tried to transcend the status quo through a political revolution that could also cultivate beloved tropes of traditional culture stands in stark contrast to J.C.D. Clark’s myopic essay. Clark, haunted by the specter of anachronism, embarks upon an ill-conceived crusade to exorcise early modern scholarship of its alleged radical demons. According to Clark, radicalism assumes validity only when it achieves the monumental status of ‘noun’ in the political lexicon of modern men living the leisurely life of the mind. For Clark, legitimate histories of radicalism must therefore begin in 1820 with Jeremy Bentham’s proscriptions for atheism, political democracy, and Ricardian economics. The appalling rigidity of such a view pales only in comparison to the empirical deficiencies of Clarks’ linguistic determinism. Early modern English revolutionaries explicitly used the term ‘radical’ to describe their programs for systemic constitutional and social change, notably the New Model Army mutineers of 1649, some of whom paid for their lives for what we can logically, and without anachronism, call their ‘radicalism’. Clark, as well as Burgess and Condren might have made more persuasive cases for their own views had they responded to Jonathan Scott’s most recent books and articles on the radicalism of the English Revolution. Rather than engaging with Scott’s deeply theoretical body of work, the authors instead position their own arguments against a Marxian tradition that Scott himself has rejected in favor of taking radical scholarship into the fold of the linguistic turn.
Ultimately, all the contributors explicitly or implicitly agree that the place of class in the analysis of radical politics obscures more than it reveals. These conclusions might be taken more seriously had their authors actually engaged with the concept of class instead of dismissing it out of hand. For instance, Condren asks us to explore class and radicalism within “Russellian terms”, alluding to the methodology of revisionist historian Conrad Russell, who argued in several influential books that the English Revolution erupted accidentally in a consensus-based, deferential society with no ideological divisions or class-tensions (312). Following this short-cut allows Condren to reject both radicalism and class a priori. When Condren does bother to discuss class, he out-vulgar so-called vulgar Marxists, presenting an impossible to achieve class-consciousness; i.e., that all the members of what are called the working-classes need to espouse the same socially-determined political positions for ‘class’ to assume historical reality. While ham-handedly attempting to pound Hill and Thompson’s ideas into submission, Condren also neglects the award-winning scholarship of James Holstun, whose positions his richly researched and profoundly theoretical work on class and the English Revolution against the linguistic turn. Also missing are any discussions of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s field-altering analysis that argues the English Revolution left an Atlantic-wide legacy of understudied, class-based, radical politics that shaped both the American Revolution and the abolition movement. Again, those who launch the fiercest polemics against radicalism and its class components refuse to engage with their most formidable critics. For this book to be deemed a success, confronting living, radical historians practicing either linguistic or marxian analysis should take center stage; instead, understudies such as Condren shove the main historiographic stars into unwarranted obscurity.

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The opening line aptly summarizes Kathy Davis’ latest publication: “This is a book about a book: the feminist classic on women’s health, Our Bodies Ourselves (OBOs), and how it ‘travelled’” from 1969 to the present (1). “The Book and Its Travels” is the focus of Part I. The reference to “travels” is literal as well as figurative, and the story of the book’s travels is a fascinating and valuable one. It involves individuals and collectives, and crosses historical, geopolitical, cultural, and ideological borders. In Part II, “Feminist Politics of Knowledge,” Davis focuses on what she terms “the myth of the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective,” (85), the lines between colonialism and critical epistemology, and the creation of “feminist subjects” (142). Part III, “Transnational Body/Politics,”
looks at translations and imagined communities, transnational knowledge and politics. The target groups for OBOS have changed since the 1970s. For example, its earlier validation of lesbian sexuality was later replaced by an appeal to older women, women with disabilities and, most recently, younger women, women of color and low-income women. In the 1970s, a key component of the collective mythology, Davis claimed, was “the image of women loving women and sharing an intimacy with one another, while at the same time avoiding any suggestions of homosexuality” (99). Not surprisingly, the “lesbian chapter” has long been contested terrain, not only when the book travelled from the United States to countries with more conservative traditions and/or religious practices, but also within the collective, when younger members wanted to replace the term “lesbian” with “queer” (37).

A section called “OBOS Abroad” discusses the book’s international distribution; the terms “global dissemination,” “decentering OBOS,” and “global localization” are also used (77-9). As an aside, one wishes the author had come up with a less dissonant term than “dissemination” when the subject at hand is women’s health! The world map titled “Dissemination of Our Bodies Ourselves, 1970 to 2006” is somewhat difficult to interpret (53). Three stages of the book’s dissemination are represented by three kinds of shading, and some countries in South America, Europe, Asia and Africa are left unshaded, presumably because the book was not distributed there. It is puzzling to find Canada, Australia and New Zealand left unshaded, since OBOS has been available in these countries for decades.

Davis’ classifications of translations and adaptations, and the numerous examples she provides, are interesting and useful. As she explains, women in some developing countries translated parts of the book, while at the same time changing certain content to make it more culturally appropriate, and in some cases, less controversial and more likely to be accepted by the target readership. In another variation, some women developed “inspired” versions—women’s health guides inspired by the OBOS model (68-77).

In the second part, “Feminist Politics of Knowledge,” Davis grapples with the difficult issue of colonialism, and the trap of western superiority inherent in exporting an American product to the rest of the world (arguably exacerbated by the 2001 terrorist attacks on the US). From the outset, OBOS reflected the mainstream American women’s movement, and as such was not necessarily meaningful to women in developing countries, or even in other western countries like Canada and Australia. Discussing the version of the book developed by women in Cairo, Davis explains how they drew on “a critique of Western modernity and traditions of opposition in their own context, adapted and transformed, but also distanced themselves from, Western feminist ideas and practices that do not reflect the realities of their lives” (72).

It took courage, no doubt, to attempt to deconstruct the history of the collective and its founders—what Davis variously calls “the myth” (85), the “hero-
ic tale” (98), and the “family saga” (102). Although she is clear about her motives for doing so, I remain uncomfortable reading this section. As she notes, the internal rifts and conflicts, the shifting alliances, the often unsuccessful attempts to deal with issues of sexual, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity all constitute a history that many white, middle-class women involved in early feminist collectives will undoubtedly recognize. And it is, of course, vital that feminists take responsibility for past mistakes and learn from history and experience. At the same time, I feel some sympathy for the women whom Davis interviewed, especially the older women. They cannot undo what they did in the 1960s and 1970s, and at times I feel that their story is being held up as a kind of negative moral exemplar, and their actions scrutinized through a twenty-first century lens—and, unsurprisingly, found deficient.

Chapter four presents a valuable discussion of the ways in which OBOS could bridge the gap between feminist body theory and feminist health activism—a gap that Davis and other feminist theorists aptly attribute to postmodernist body theory and its abstract and esoteric concepts. She makes a convincing argument for the future role of OBOS in “contributing to a transnational feminist body theory and a transnational feminist politics of health” (141). Overall, I would strongly recommend this book for university courses on women’s health, women’s history, transnational feminism, and feminist activism.

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In *History and Cultural Theory*, Simon Gunn provides a grand overview of theoretical issues that historians have been faced with from other disciplines over the past three to four decades, as well as issues which theoreticians from other disciplines have identified as having to do with historians. Therein, after a general discussion in the first chapter about the nature and character of these issues, Gunn addresses narrative, culture, power, modernity, identity and postcolonialism on a chapter by chapter basis. Laudably, Gunn’s approach in discussing these topics is to address them not only as individual thesmatics, but also as interlinked issues constituting the milieu of late twentieth and early twenty-first century human scientific theorizing. In *History and Cultural Theory*, many if not all the important figures are present: Foucault, Ricoeur, Bourdieu, Geertz, Said, Bhabha, White, Derrida, Butler and so on. Indeed, Gunn explains their ideas in a very straightforward, readable manner. The scholarly level is high in *History and Cultural Theory*, but Gunn is concerned to keep his vocabulary direct so that the historian who might be a bit less-attuned to the philosophical and otherwise interdisciplinary issues surrounding historical studies might be able to follow them and be brought up to
date. Gunn has thus produced a highly useful volume.

There are some issues with Gunn's book. Firstly, he does not make it clear whether in fact he is targeting such an audience, or whether he imagines his book as a more dramatic theoretical statement in itself. The general manner of the book's presentation—that of a kind of topography of “theory” issues with which the historian might come into contact—suggests the former. Gunn's conclusion to the book—that theorizing about history will lead to a heightened sense of the past's relevance for the present—is simply too weak to be satisfactory if his goal is the latter, i.e., adding in a meaningful way to the theoretical debates surrounding historical studies themselves.

Secondly, one might wonder a bit at Gunn's use of the term “cultural theory.” Generously, Gunn defines his book's central concept (cultural theory) as the larger collection of theories related in various ways to postmodernism: (x). As it turns out, however, culture as such is but one facet of what he terms “cultural theory,” as opposed to being the object that a specific set of theories from a wide variety of disciplines attempts to define. Depending on one's own academic background and (inter)disciplinary positioning, this can give *History and Cultural Theory* a bit of an odd ring at times. Having spent time myself, for example, considering the relationship between cultural studies and history, my own expectation with the term “cultural theory” is that the book would have to do with the more philosophically oriented dimensions of the cultural studies movement—i.e., the now more or less globalized field whose origins lay in the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the University of Birmingham. Gunn certainly mentions cultural studies, and many of the thinkers he addresses have been influential in cultural theory as practiced in the context of that field. However, Gunn has something broader in mind whereby, again, “cultural theory” is perhaps better understood as just “theory,” or a broad swath of issues that theoretically-minded historians and historically-minded theoreticians have been discussing since the late 1960s.

Finally, given this point, there are a couple of issues and figures that might be considered as surprisingly absent from *History and Cultural Theory*. The non-presence of Hans-Georg Gadamer is one example. As such, Gadamer may not fit as neatly under some of the different section headings Gunn uses as other thinkers (would he be best placed, for example, as contributing to “narrative,” “culture” or “identity”?); however, if phenomenologically-influenced and hermeneutically-concerned figures such as Ricoeur may be included in a survey of theoretical issues surrounding history, surely Gadamer deserves to be there as well. Moreover, Frank Ankersmit—elevated to the status of Dilshey and Collingwood as a philosopher of history in Martin Jay's *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (2004)—would be considered by many to be one of the premier theorists of narrative in historical studies. As such, he plays a surprisingly minor role in Gunn's section on the issue; indeed, many would consider him second to none, even in a line-up including White and Ricoeur. And
though he points a bit to the issue by way of his address to postcolonialism, Gunn does not devote any explicit space to intercultural comparative historiography—an increasing theoretical concern in historical studies brought largely to the fore by Jörn Rüsen, and justly so, given the increasingly globalized state of humanistic academics, including historical studies.

Nonetheless, Gunn covers an impressive amount of theoretical ground in *History and Cultural Theory* and has generated an eminently useful book for both beginning graduate students and established scholars looking to ensure that their theoretical fluency is more or less up to date and in tune with scholars who specialize in such issues. *History and Cultural Theory* should thus have a place on the bookshelves of many historians and on more than a few of their colleagues’ in other departments who see their interests as related to theoretical issues in historical studies.

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