

## Reviews / Comptes Rendus

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Volume 42, 1998

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt42rv01>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

(1998). Reviews / Comptes Rendus. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 42, 243–318.

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## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996).

IT IS AN OLD STORY. As soon as any trade perceived as marginally profitable, low-status "women's work" becomes economically attractive, it becomes men's work. Women then leave what was once "their" work, and find new "women's work," which, if changed in form, is nonetheless substantially the same old work: undesirable and poorly paid. It is one of the most historically consistent formulations of the relationship of male advantage to female disadvantage, or what is more popularly known as "patriarchy."

Judith Bennett's richly documented and lucidly written book on *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* draws attention both to the obviousness of this fact, and to historians' astounding lack of attention to its significance as a historical problem. The fundamental paradox of women's history is this: the experience of women, like everything else in history, changes enormously, but the status of women stays stuck. That women's work is low in prestige and poorly remunerated was true in 1300, remained true in 1600, and still is true for the overwhelming majority of the world's women as we hover on the brink of 2000—even though the jobs themselves have changed. How do

we account for this stasis in women's condition? To put it another way, how can we historicize patriarchy?

The involvement of women in the commercial production of ale and beer in late medieval and early modern England furnishes an exceptionally interesting laboratory in which to explore this problem. In medieval England, ale was a dietary staple. Cheaper than wine, safer than milk or water, it was brewed both for domestic consumption and sale, and drunk by all ages and social classes. In every community, the supply of ale offered for public sale had to be reliable in quantity and quality, and priced in a manner perceived to be consistent, fair, and accessible. Thus ale, like bread, was closely supervised by local authorities, notably the "assize of ale" which set prices, the "aletasters" which inspected commercial brewing operations, and the courts which fined dishonest brewing practices. The abundant records these institutions generated show that before the Black Death of 1347-1349, almost all commercial brewing was done by women. Thereafter, women progressively disappear from the trade, and by the end of the 16th century are barely visible, save as widows of male brewers, continuing the business in their husbands' name. What happened?

What happened was that the commercial production of ale became much more profitable after the Black Death. Rising wages and urbanization meant that more people were drinking more ale, and now doing so in commercial drinking establishments as well as in their homes. They were increasingly more likely to buy than

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to brew themselves. Moreover, the introduction of hopped beer from the Low Countries into England in the 15th century made brewing even more profitable, since hopped beer kept better than unhopped ale, transported better, and required less grain per gallon of drink. In short, a new economic climate and a new technology changed brewing from a small-scale, localized, domestic by-industry, often practised intermittently, into a highly profitable, heavily capitalized, large-scale business. It also replaced the medieval female brewster by the early modern male brewer.

Why did women lose control of "their" work when economic and technological change transformed the brewing trade? Why could they not take advantage of emerging opportunities? Bennett rejects the notion that biology, or the demands of reproductive work, inherently disabled women from continuing to participate in brewing. Local authority records show that in the 14th century, when "cottage" brewing was still the norm, women worked in the trade at all stages of the life cycle; moreover, the old cottage brewing required more physical labour than the new, more "industrialized" brewing of the 15th century, with its larger work-force of servants. What in fact kept women from continuing in the trade was a whole array of disabling circumstance, none of which were consciously designed to keep women away from brewing. But that is exactly what they did.

Bennett's main argument is that patriarchy survives because it is "amorphous": that is, it is diffused throughout a broad spectrum of social institutions, and invisible because unintentional. For the brewers of late medieval England, patriarchy was the product, for example, of a legal system which defined women as dependents. This meant that the contracts and credit arrangements on which the new style of commercialized brewing depended were in effect inaccessible to women, without ever being explicitly denied to them. The new technology of

hopped beer was also beyond their reach, and again, for reasons which had nothing to do with overt misogyny. Hopped beer was an imported technology, brought to England by immigrants who, for various reasons, were mostly men, and who came from a region where this kind of brewing was traditionally a male occupation. When male Flemish brewers eventually took on English partners and apprentices, these were men as well. Fortunes in hopped beer were made by exporting the drink around England and abroad, and particularly by selling to military victualers. Here again, women lacked the capital and the contacts necessary for success. Nothing formally barred them from the new brewing industry; but everything silently conspired to keep them out.

Consider, for instance, the role of women in the earliest brewers' guilds. The exceptionally detailed registers of the London Guild of Brewers between 1418 and 1438 reveal that about one-third of the guild's members were women — a highly unusual circumstance. However, gildswomen, though they paid full fees, did not have access to all the guild's ranks and privileges. They were discouraged, and eventually excluded, from wearing the Guild's livery. Livery was an important social marker in the context of public display and ceremonial in the medieval city. The Guild marched in its livery on important public occasions, advertising its solidarity and respectability. Livered women, it seems, would have detracted from both. Moreover, women did not hold office in the Brewers' Guild. No statue on the guild's book forbade women to do so: they simply were never invited to the annual "power breakfast" where the officers were elected. They were never invited, because it was inconceivable that women could exercise public authority over men, and on equal terms with men, even in a craft traditionally theirs.

The force exercised by such assumptions leads us to what is perhaps the most interesting dimension of Bennett's argument: the role of ideology. What silently

guaranteed all the legal disabilities, economic inequalities, and social barriers was a culture of misogyny. Misogyny not only sanctioned gender hierarchy; it also identified women with disorder, disobedience, and trouble. Hence the medieval public focused its anxieties about the intoxicating effect of ale, and its real and imagined social consequences, exclusively on women brewsters and tapsters. Literary works like *Piers Plowman*, satires like Skelton's *The Tunning of Elynour Rummyng*, works of art like the *Holkham Bible Picture Book*, depictions of Judgement Day on the walls of churches, and popular entertainments like the Midsummer Day processions and mystery plays, consistently depict the female brewer — and only the *female* brewer — as dishonest, impious, and promiscuous. As new beer challenged old ale, she also became slovenly, fat, aged, and ugly. Beer was a clean, modern, upscale drink, brewed by prosperous — male — citizens; ale was an unhygienic, old-fashioned beverage brewed and sold by women. Again, Bennett is careful to note that none of these literary or pictorial images were conceived or received with vicious intent. But they possessed a cumulative power to create as well as reflect social realities. And it is certainly the case that 16th century English authorities moved more aggressively to exclude women from all aspects of the drink trade, in the name of both public order and consumer protection.

Women were neither the "victims" nor the "agents" here. They never were formally forbidden to brew, nor did they choose to "desert" the brewing. But they ceased to be the visible producers of the product, and eventually, ceased to be producers altogether. The women of the London Gild who ran the most successful breweries were married women, who could use their husband's legal independence and commercial credit to benefit their business. They joined the Gild with their husbands, even when they alone brewed, and their husbands worked

in another trade. Eventually, the women ceased to join the Gild altogether, though there is evidence that they continued to work in, and in some cases direct, the production of ale. Their husbands, some of them only nominal brewers, stayed on. Brewing, in short, assumed a masculine public face. Widows and the unmarried, without menfolk to sign contracts and borrow capital on their behalf, rapidly dropped out of production, and switched to retailing ale and beer. In particular, running an ale-house was seen as an acceptable way for a poor widow to earn a modest living and stay off parish relief, and licences were granted to widows on precisely those grounds. Making brew, once fairly good work, as woman's work went, had now become very good work by anyone's standards, and therefore it became men's work. Selling brew, a low-wage occupation tainted with immorality, was the new "women's work."

In the brief space available here, it is difficult to do justice to either the impeccable historical method or the subtle and measured arguments of this remarkable book. Medievalists work with meagre evidence which is difficult to interpret, and in no field is this more true than social history: the Middle Ages was not a statistically-minded culture. Bennett exploits intensively the records of local courts for infractions of the assizes of ale in a sample of about two dozen villages, towns, and cities, large and small, agricultural and pastoral, and covering all areas of England. Her methodological appendix on the problems of interpreting these records is a model. But she also casts her net wide to take in gild records, administrative documents at every level of jurisdiction, and literary and artistic documentation. The result is a convincing picture of what "patriarchy" actually means. It is certainly not what undergraduates frequently imagine it to be, or as anti-feminists satirize it: an organized conspiracy of wicked men against innocent women. Rather, its production is an effect of institutions (law codes, commercial practices,

gilds ...) which serve essential social functions, none of which explicitly involve excluding or disadvantaging women. Yet in its diffusion and amorphous character lies the extraordinary flexibility and durability of patriarchy. Confronting women at every turn, its cumulative effect is to permit strategies of exclusion, segregation, and division to operate in favour of men, and to the disadvantage of women.

Bennett's book is rich in implications, and challenging to received wisdom. Her brewsters, for example, testify against a popular modern thesis that the Middle Ages was somehow a "better" time for women, because capitalism was weak, and because the family was much more powerful than the state. The cottage brewers of the pre-plague era certainly lived in a world very little effected by capitalism, but the work they did was still the work that men, save the poorest men, did not want, because its profits and prestige were low. The family may have been a formidable competitor with the state in medieval and early modern England, but both supported the power of men. In short, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters* should be required reading for labour and women's historians, as well as medievalists. Its clarity and anecdotal detail — to say nothing of the natural appeal of its subject matter — will also make it suitable for undergraduate instruction as well.

Faith Wallis  
McGill University

Ian Ross Robertson, *The Tenant League of Prince Edward Island, 1864-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1996).

IN SHARP CONTRAST to the rest of Canada, Prince Edward Island history continues to be closely associated with the land question. That the struggle against the leaseholding system remains fresh in the folk memory of PEI well over a century after it

ended may not be not surprising, given the political importance that issue once had, but absentee proprietorship was not confined to the Island. As late as the 1848 census, 45 per cent of Upper Canada's landholders were identified as non-proprietors. Lower Canada's census for 1844 presents a similar picture for the Eastern Townships. While I suspect that the majority of these families were squatters rather than tenants, it is clear that the independent freeholder image of British North America requires modification. Upper Canadian historians might consider re-examining the rebellions from this rural perspective, much as Allen Greer has recently done for the seigneuries of Lower Canada.

Greer's interpretation actually echoes Rusty Bitterman's stimulating work on Prince Edward Island's escheat movement of the 1830s, for there are strong similarities in the radical agrarian ideology of the rural patriot leader, Dr. Cyrille Côté, and the Island tenants' spokesman, William Cooper. In his exhaustive study of the second wave of rural protest on PEI known as the Tenant League, Ian Robertson fails to give Cooper much credit, dismissing him as a rather duplicitous character and the escheat movement as hopelessly unrealistic. But Cooper actually proposed to the British government that if it could not stomach reclaiming the proprietors' holdings for failure to conform to settlement conditions, it should either buy them out or impose a more onerous wild land tax. This does not seem so unreasonable, or even so different from the Tenant League's demands. Indeed, the greater success of the 1860s movement may largely have been a matter of timing. And even if Cooper was disingenuous or deluded, it is obvious that the remarkable sense of unity and determination that the members of the Tenant League displayed was fostered by the education and experience of the earlier generation. That the Island had recently been split politically along religious lines by the school ques-

tion makes the solidarity displayed by the tenants even more remarkable.

If Robertson shortchanges the escheaters, he certainly does not underplay the significance of the Tenant League. He boldly claims that it represented "in numerical and political terms, the most important constituency of progressive forces in British North America and then the Dominion of Canada until at least the First World War." He even goes so far as to state that "it is difficult to name another extra-parliamentary movement for radical change, willing to resort to civil disobedience, which was as successful as the league," (284) specifically discounting the Winnipeg General Strike because of its failure, but neglecting to mention the Riel uprising of 1870.

In explaining the PEI tenants' insistence on land titles even though the Island was prospering and they enjoyed more security and lower rents than their counterparts on the British Isles, Robertson points to the process of carving a homestead out of the forest. This, he suggests, resulted in a stronger sense of ownership than renting a property that had been fully operational for generations. Still more important, PEI's farmers were only asking for what was widely available to their counterparts elsewhere in North America. Even the seigneurial system of Lower Canada had been abolished a decade earlier, due more to the pressures of industrial capitalism than to peasant protest.

But the landlord system of PEI did not present the same obstacles to railroad construction and industrialization as did seigneurial tenure, with its feudal monopolies and mutation fines. As a result, the local bourgeoisie — many of whom profited as middlemen or even owned small estates themselves — tended to favour a slow incremental alteration of the *status quo*. Furthermore, because the seigneurs of Lower Canada had not "owned" the censitaires' farms to begin with, the demand that PEI's large-scale landholders be forced to sell their estates at government-determined prices was a more radical

challenge to property rights than was seigneurial abolition. Even the Liberal champion of responsible government, Edward Whelan, was a vociferous opponent of the Tenant League. Indeed, no dominant tenant leader emerges from Robertson's narrative, perhaps largely due to the clandestine and quasi-legal nature of the organization and in contrast to the escheat movement which became a political party. The main figure in the story is actually the machiavellian William Henry Pope, brother of the premier and mastermind of the government's shrewd anti-League strategy.

The Tenant League was clearly a genuinely populist movement, and Robertson provides a useful discussion of how it employed traditional tactics such as arson and animal-maiming to intimidate its opponents without resorting to beatings and murder. Only when 135 troops arrived from Halifax did the movement collapse, but not before convincing a number of the soldiers to desert, and only after the extensive Cunard and Montgomery estates were offered for sale. Robertson claims that these sales marked the turning point in the struggle against the landlords, though he leaves us in the dark as to the sequel.

This book has obviously been a labour of love, with exhaustive research, painstaking attention to detail, excellent illustrations, informative maps, and a useful bibliography. It is a pity, then, that while *The Tenant League* is also well written, with very few typographical errors, it was not given the skilful editing that would have cut its length and made it more accessible to the wider audience that such a rich and interesting story deserves.

J.I. Little  
Simon Fraser University



Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 1997).

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, the writing of British Columbia history has become increasingly sophisticated. Removed finally from the absurdities of "western exceptionalism," historians are now moving beyond the parochial search for difference and are placing this province's past within international contexts.

Cole Harris has been the well-spring of much of this renewed vigour. As supervisor to a number of excellent graduate students and as the co-editor of *BC Studies*, Harris has facilitated the development of new, more theoretically engaged scholarship. His own writing on British Columbia, cumulatively presented here in *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, documents his intellectual development and his efforts to work in the conjuncture of theory and empiricism. Most of the chapters are reprinted essays although many have been reworked and updated. Nevertheless as a collection they mark changes of thought which Harris, to his credit, self-reflexively foregrounds.

As a historical geographer, the land is central to Harris's thinking, particularly the ways in which it is marked by the social forces and the power relations of those who live upon it. In this book, Harris' focus is on the spatial dynamics of modernity and on the physical, social, cultural, and intellectual construction of "British Columbia" as primarily a place of immigrants. The essays follow a dotted chronology and begin by showing how the land had been emptied by epidemic disease using a proposed 1782 smallpox epidemic on the south coast and Fraser Valley as a case study. Specific moments and places in British Columbia's past are treated to scholarly snapshots which, it is implied, speak to general trends in British Columbia history: the Fraser Canyon, the year 1881, Idaho Peak. Through these richly crafted and heavily detailed por-

traits we get a clear sense of the shape Harris sees British Columbia taking.

In each essay, Harris engages with a broad literature. The earliest essay, "Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak" grapples with Innis's staples theory to show the role that commercial economies attendant to the staples trade played in many Canadian settlements. The essays written in the 1990s show the influence of reading Foucault's perspective on the transference from sovereign power to bio-power which Harris sees manifested in land policy in the Lower Mainland and throughout British Columbia. Writings in colonial theory and, to a lesser extent, post-colonialism inform Harris' discussion of the ideological underpinnings of British Columbia's immigrant society. This level of engagement with such a historiographical range is impressive and exactly what we need to show our students as they work out their own understandings of British Columbia's past. Harris's work, here, promises to bring British Columbia history out of its provincial confines and into a world literature on colonialism. Both empirically and interpretively, *The Resettlement of British Columbia* marks an important contribution to the field.

The two main problems with the book are contradictory ones. On one hand, as a collection of tightly focused essays, the book lacks unity. It is episodic. Each chapter reveals rich detail, a stunning sweep of data that engenders a desire for more. Yet there is little explicit connection made between essays and little intertextuality. The introduction and the final chapter suggest larger patterns into which the essays might be placed but between and among the essays there has been no attempt at connection — even if only to highlight the dizzying array of specific factors, locales, perspectives, societies which emerge from the study of British Columbia history.

On the other hand, the metanarrative that emerges from the text is over-determining. The "making of an immigrant

society" presupposes Harris to limit his discussion of resistances, of failures, of exceptions to showing how these prove his general argument. For instance, since the goal is to outline the development of immigrant societies, Harris's inclusion of First Nations history is directed primarily towards accounting for their limited involvement with "modern British Columbia." For Harris, the crucial relationship is between capital and labour where alternative modes of production (including indigenous ones) and their associated spatial organization are reduced to interesting lacunae in the modernizing process. Agriculture, Harris argues, was never viable economically and so its social structures were never predominant nor was its associated discourses destined to shape British Columbians' views of themselves significantly. Though the processes by which European-born immigrants gained hegemony (the strategies of power) are deeply probed, there is still a disturbingly "liberal" sense of inevitability in the book overall. First Nations will be displaced because colonization as a world process ensures white supremacy; the staples of British Columbian economy (fur, minerals, and timber) will determine the spaces, landscapes, and societies that those involved in their extraction will form. This inherent liberalism in the text provides the only link between the essays and is one which threatens to undermine Harris' commitment to uncovering diverse perspectives.

Similarly the style of writing promotes this view as well. Without a doubt, Cole Harris is a very good writer. His prose is engaging and intellectual without being overly specialized. Yet poor referencing within the articles (more than once I wondered where he got his information) and a tendency to flippancy contributes to the overall picture that the resettlement of British Columbia was inevitably one in which white British Columbians would be transcendent. We can scarcely believe, for instance, that committees of miners working on the Fraser River in 1868,

"broke the back of Native resistance." (114) This simplifying prose and the shortage of footnotes in particular sections naturalizes the processes which Harris seeks to depict as complex and contested.

Still, *The Resettlement of British Columbia* has all the makings of a classic. We have seen many of these articles before but updated and drawn together in this way they highlight the contribution that Harris has made to the writing of Canadian history. Taken as a whole, *The Resettlement of British Columbia* encapsulates much that is encouraging and challenging about British Columbia history and the way it is currently being written.

Mary-Ellen Kelm  
University of Northern British Columbia

A.A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1997).

HISTORIANS have long recognized the essential role played by railways in the affairs of 19th-century Canada but, as is the case with a good many other general themes in our country's past, no single book exploring the role has been written. This recent work of den Otter's goes some way towards filling the gap, but its scope is quite narrow (as the subtitle reveals) and the book ultimately falls short and founders in its author's efforts to squeeze the chronicle into an over-arching paradigm.

The philosophy of railways as defined by den Otter (oddly, without any initial reference to Keefer's classic *Philosophy of Railroads*) might be described as a "faith" in railways and all the good things they were supposed to bring — economic growth, modernization, moral improvement, and such. This faith, den Otter observes, was a complex and not always rational thing. Its origins were di-

verse — the industrial revolution, political liberalism, and the evangelical revival — and it was both international (it happened in many countries) and trans-national (its adherents advocated railways regardless of national boundaries).

The premise of this study is that the philosophy was espoused by most of the businessmen and politicians of British North America in the 19th century. And from this the author goes on to show how remarkably influential this set of ideas was in government policies and actions in British North America from the 1840s to the 1870s. Den Otter studies the passage of the 1849 Guarantee Act in Canada, the debate over government railway policy in Nova Scotia in the 1850s, the Canadian government's decision to assist the Grand Trunk, New Brunswick's struggles with the route of what became the Intercolonial, John A. Macdonald's first effort to build the Pacific railway (ending in the Pacific Scandal), and his second and successful attempt to do the same (with its ties to Macdonald's so-called National Policy). In all of these public issues den Otter, using published speeches, legislative debates, and newspaper accounts, carefully identifies and shows the philosophy of railways at work.

One of his points in doing so is to demonstrate how widespread was the consensus in support of railways at the time. The passage of the Canadian Guarantee Act, for example, was nearly unanimous — 62 to 4 — and was "a unique harmonious moment in a divisive session." (33) And the debate in New Brunswick over whether to build the Western Extension railway to the US or the Intercolonial to Canada, while significant in exposing competing views about the economic future of the province, should not mask the fact that both sides believed in the philosophy of railways. The argument is taken even farther by pointing out that New Brunswickers shared a "mutual belief in the philosophy of railways" with Canadians as well, "which did much to overcome geographical, cultural, and po-

litical differences" (157) and to pave the way to Confederation. Another of the author's intentions is to show the absence of nationalism, or nationality, in the philosophy of railways. The Guarantee Act, an act of the Canadian parliament, was intended to secure investment into railways that were obviously part of the growing US rail network. Twenty-five years later Macdonald and Cartier were quite willing to support a Pacific railway scheme that ran partly through the US — until chastened by the Pacific Scandal. (170-2)

Some readers might find this a little tedious, for it is not all new. Much of it has been covered before in other contexts, and den Otter is not always clear on what he is adding to our understanding of the events. And his exploration of the ideas of the "philosophers" themselves (such as Hincks, Howe, and Tilley) sometimes wanders rather far from the matter at hand. But there is something gained by looking at all this familiar ground through the railway lens — it is remarkable how much of the political agenda of the Confederation era was taken up by railways — and the author deserves credit for having done so.

Where the study falls short, in this reviewer's opinion, is in its effort to move the analysis to another level into the realm of what he calls "technological nationalism." This concept, which appears to have been drawn from the work of Maurice Charland (9, n. 12), is brought forward to help explain why railways, the CPR especially, are so central to our national identity. Canadians, apparently, have often defined their nationality on the basis of technology — railways, or radios, for example. Without reading Charland one can not judge this concept on its own merits, but in the case of the philosophy of railways it leads to trouble. The philosophy as defined by den Otter is explicitly non-national, and for much of the book the author argues that since railways in Canada were built according to this philosophy they never had a national purpose.

The CPR as national undertaking is thus a false myth. But then in the second-last chapter one learns that Macdonald's experience in the Pacific Scandal changed his beliefs (184), and that when he returned to carry out his successful CPR scheme in the 1880s he did in fact seek to present it as a national undertaking — thus the CPR myth was Macdonald's deliberate creation. This, while logically consistent, is rather confusing, for the book is cast as an argument against the truth of the CPR myth, not as an account of how it arose. The author seems to be caught between a study of myth and a study of reality.

Even more problematic is the choice of what to argue against. Surely this CPR myth, although perhaps resident in popular imagination, is not taken very seriously by professional historians. To say historians believe that "the CPR's primary mission was the creation of a nation-state and ... the earning of profits was but an incidental objective" (8) is rather extreme. Do Berton and Creighton, cited as popularizers of the myth, even go that far? Perhaps some politicians thought they were building a nation with the CPR, and perhaps among the consequences of the CPR was an expanding western economy and a more closely-knit country (as the author explains on 228-31), but would anyone argue that the CPR itself — its investors and managers — was doing anything other than seeking profit?

Readers of this journal looking for something about labour in these early railway projects — a subject we could all learn more about — will be disappointed. So too will those wanting analysis of the class aspects of the philosophy, or something from the perspective of the history of technology or business. This is an intellectual and political history, rooted more firmly in the traditional history of Canada than in any thematic specialty.

All in all, den Otter has given us a useful book, one which clearly portrays the enthusiasm for railways in Confederation-era British North America, but one

that is unlikely to excite many of its readers.

Richard White  
University of Toronto

Mercedes Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940* (Toronto: Oxford University Press 1997).

TWO OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS reproduced in Mercedes Steedman's fine book illustrate the larger story she tells. Young, fashionably dressed women march across the cover of *Angels of the Workplace*, participants in a strike against Montréal's Rose Dress Manufacturing Company sometime during the 1930s. Inside, another image from the same period presents a striking (no pun intended) contrast. Middle-aged men in suits sit around a long table, the invited guests at a reception for David Dubinsky, then president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. They include representatives of labour as well as management; in appearance and demeanour, little distinguishes union men from their erstwhile opponents. Only one woman — a rare female union official — has a seat at the table.

Women workers, Steedman tells us, were indispensable to whatever success Canadian garment unions achieved. After all, they accounted for a majority of needle trades workers, 80 per cent in 1881, a slightly lower 68 per cent by 1941. Labour leaders generated dramatic tales of women's workplace exploitation to gain public support for union demands; unions valued women for their militancy and exuberance on the picket line. But when representatives of labour, management, and eventually, the state, sat down to bargain, women, with very few exceptions, were not invited. Their absence had important consequences; collective bargaining agreements in which women had no voice reinforced preexisting sexual divi-

sions of labour, gendered definitions of skill, and gender and ethnic hierarchies within the industry.

Drawing on oral histories, union and manufacturers' records, government investigations, and correspondence, Steedman asks why and how this came to be. Rejecting the notion that women workers' inferior position in the garment industry and their relegation to the periphery of union governance was "natural" or fore-ordained, she emphasizes, as her subtitle indicates, the social construction of gender relations. Steedman is at her best in analyzing questions of skills. While the general outlines of her argument will be familiar to historians of women and labour, her sophisticated and nuanced discussion is nevertheless fascinating. Steedman sees women's place in the garment industry as the result of a complex array of causes: judgements about the "worth" of people from particular ethnic groups, working men's understanding of their patriarchal rights and responsibilities, capitalists' search for ever-cheaper labour, and an assumption that women's ultimate destiny lay in marriage and motherhood — a conviction shared by employers, male workers, and working-class women themselves.

In the early years of the industry, all of these people conceived of women's jobs as mere extensions of their household labour — work for which women were "naturally" suited and for which they received no pay. According to this line of thinking, women brought no skill with them to workplace; nor, given the widespread belief that their wage work would be temporary, could anyone justify training them for "skilled" jobs once there. The needle trades met the challenge of mass production, not with mechanization, but by investing in a flexible and expendable labour force whose members could be hired during busy seasons, fired during dull times. Their labour defined as temporary, women — and children — filled this demand. And given that late 19th- and early 20th-century employers

in an intensely competitive industry often turned to home work as a means of cutting costs, the very location of work defined the skill it required; the home, disproportionately inhabited by women workers, became a site of unskilled or semi-skilled labour, the factory, disproportionately inhabited by men, the domain of "skilled" workers. As home work declined, gendered notions of skill followed women into garment factories. In the circular but powerful logic embraced by employers, male wage earners, and women workers themselves, the skill ascribed to a particular job reflected less the actual difficulty of the labour it required than the sex or ethnicity of the worker who performed it (French-Canadian women, less "skilled" than Jewish or native-born workers, received lower wages than their counterparts). Cultural prescriptions concerning the meaning of women's work became self-fulfilling prophecies; since "unskilled" workers "naturally" merited less pay than skilled ones, women workers earned as little as half of what men did, circumstances that reinforced their dependence on their families. Recognizing that men also have gender, Steedman shows how constructions of working-class masculinity predicated on bread-winning informed a politics of the workplace by which men defined their own jobs as those that deserved permanency and high pay; as fathers and providers, they also asserted the right to speak for the working class, including its female members. Thus when collective bargaining agreements and government policies formalized job classifications and pay scales, they also codified gender and ethnic hierarchies.

But the reader gets little sense of the process by which male unionists relegated women to all but supporting roles. Surely, as Steedman notes, "gendered relations learned at home" (259) extended to the workplace. But one wonders whether this translocation left patriarchy unchanged or unscathed; one wonders how daily interactions at home and on the

shop floor shaped and perhaps continually modified — however subtly — men's and women's notions of themselves as gendered beings. Finally, one wonders how — if at all — working-class ideals of masculinity and femininity changed over time.

In the end, *Angels of the Workplace* is less an analysis of the "construction of gender relations" in the garment industry than a thorough and convincing history of its successive (and often competing) unions and their exclusion of women from channels of authority and places of power. Too often this larger outcome determines the structure of Steedman's narrative; as a result we may miss the instances where women's agency mattered — even if women lost in the long run. Steedman offers tantalizing glimpses of the shop floor — a place where she affirms that women exercised greater control — but only glimpses. We learn for example that women actively participated on workshop price committees and that therefore their power declined when negotiations over wages, hours, and conditions moved from individual firms to industry-wide negotiations. But if as several scholars of women's labour history in the United States have suggested, women's activism tended to take place, not in union halls but on the less formal terrain of work culture, we learn relatively little from Steedman's account about garment workers' day-to-day interactions with their employers and co-workers. Indeed, Steedman seems to accept without qualification Leslie Woodcock Tentler's conclusion in *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930* that wage work merely reinforced women's marginal status as temporary sojourners in a male-dominated labour market — an argument that many historians would challenge or at least qualify.

Yet given the long-term persistence of a sex-segregated labour market, unequal pay for comparable work, and male domination of union bureaucracies, per-

haps it is time for a more sober assessment. By demonstrating that unwritten laws of sex and skill became official policies that govern garment workers' lives even today, Steedman's book is an eloquent and powerful indictment of gender at work.

Wendy Gamber  
Indiana University

Bob Hesketh, *Major Douglas and Alberta Social Credit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1997).

CANADIAN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS have long been fascinated by Alberta's embrace in 1935 of the fruitcake economic theories of Major C.H. Douglas as adapted by his Alberta follower, "Bible Bill" Aberhart. Much of the existing literature deals either with the class character of the movement and of the province of Alberta at the time or with the mass psychological disturbances that the Depression induced. Historian Bob Hesketh argues that scholars have paid too little attention to Social Credit ideology itself as a motivating force throughout the history of the movement.

Social Credit ideology, for Hesketh, means far more than the monetary theories which mark out Social Credit from other movements in popular understanding of the Social Credit phenomenon. It means also the movement's understanding of "social dynamics" in which the interests of individuals and organizations are balanced to enhance the former. Above all, it means the complicated conspiracy theories that the movement's leaders both in Britain and Alberta believed fervently. While Hesketh gives too little credit to C.B. Macpherson for covering some of the same ground, he emphasizes more than earlier scholars the extent to which not only Major Douglas but his Alberta followers believed that they were fighting a centralized conspiracy of unscrupulous men who wanted to create a

world dictatorship that would snuff out all individualism. Douglas, in particular, was fixated on the idea that these men were all Jews. For him, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fairly silly tsarist forgery in which the world Jewish leadership was conspiring to corner the money supply in order to control humanity, was a real document. His belief in the near-omnipotence of the cunning Jews, except in the face of his own genius, was so absolute that he argued before, during, and even after World War II that Hitler was put in power by the Jewish conspiracy. Not a Holocaust denier, he simply argued that the Jews were so demonic that they would sacrifice anybody, including many of their own "troops," in order to establish world domination. As Macpherson wisely observed, with reference to Douglas's contention during the war of a Bolshevik-Jewish-banker-Nazi alliance, Douglas seemed to see himself as the saviour of mankind and regarded all opponents of Social Credit as somehow in an alliance whose whole purpose was to defeat the only theory that could save mankind.

Hesketh tries hard to connect the ravings of this lunatic with the party and government of Alberta without making the latter appear to be equally lunatic. He is clear, however, that the people running Alberta were Douglasites, who mainly disagreed with Douglas' identification of the conspirators with a single ethnicity and with Douglas' less than whole-hearted commitment to parliamentary democracy and peaceful change. In reality, however, the Social Crediters had no evidence of a "conspiracy" of financiers against "the people." The moderates may have been less racist but they were, like Douglas, the victims of paranoid delusions.

The strength of Hesketh's work is his focus on what leading Social Crediters believed they were doing throughout their history, first as a social movement, then as a government. The weakness of his work, a common, if avoidable, weakness

in a history of ideas, is that he divorced their ideas from material realities. Not only does he ignore shifting class alliances as a causal agent of change in Social Credit ideas and the behaviour of Social Credit governments, he even ignores economic changes from period to period and their impact on Social Credit thinking and policy. He is so wedded to the view that Social Credit ideology, particularly the canon of C.H. Douglas, served as a Bible for Social Crediters, that he believes that a history of the movement in Alberta can be written solely with reference to the discussions among leading Social Crediters of what their movement-government was all about. The result, I would argue, is that he is unable to explain how the Social Credit movement and government changed over time, and indeed he ends up largely denying that change occurred.

Hesketh believes that Social Credit's evolving notion of "social dynamics" explains whatever changes in emphasis may have occurred during their long period in office in Alberta. What Hesketh sees as remarkable about Social Credit in Alberta is its overarching continuity of ideas, the very thing denied by most authors. He believes that while Social Credit was strongly influenced by the shared fundamentalism of Aberhart and Manning, it was Douglas's Social Credit that was the constant point of reference for Aberhart's ideology and government policy. While the methods to achieve Social Credit were revised over time the goal remained the same. As only the people could free themselves it was the government's job to ensure they had the opportunity.

Such reasoning helps little in evaluating a longstanding government. Marxism-Leninism was the constant reference point of Communist ideology and government policy in the Soviet Union from Stalin through to Gorbachev. The goal, if stated flabbily enough —and language such as "only the people could free themselves" is pretty flabby — did not change. Yet, most serious assessments of Soviet history would not conflate the Commu-

nist Stalin and the Communist Gorbachev, even if they had nothing good to say about either of them.

Hesketh is quite clear about how Aberhart initially understood Douglas' ideology. "I argue that Aberhart recognized that Douglas Social Credit involved more than monetary reform, that it included an apocalyptic vision of world history and called for a radical revision of capitalism, a wholesale redistribution of the ownership of the means of production, and widespread social reform." (289-9) But he really has almost nothing to say about the Manning period. Only one chapter is devoted to post-war Social Credit and this chapter almost completely ignores government policy, outside of an all-too-brief description of how the treasury branches made disastrous loans because Social Credit policy believed in the almost unlimited power of finance to create money. How can he square Ernest Manning, the lapdog of American oil companies, friend of the bankers, and vitriolic anti-communist with "wholesale redistribution of the ownership of the means of production," never mind "widespread social reform?" No doubt the gap between Aberhart circa 1935 and Manning circa 1965 was somewhat smaller than the gap between Stalin and Gorbachev. But it was a significant gap nonetheless that cannot be papered over by saying that both thought they were following Douglas' prescriptions.

Unfortunately Bob Hesketh is unwilling to use any social science theory, Marxist or otherwise, to analyze why Social Credit ideas were attractive to certain groups of Albertans. His book allows Social Credit's founders to tell their own story and lets their vacuous theory of "social dynamics" substitute for scholarly analysis of who these people were, how they interacted with various social groups, and what they actually did in office to implement their core beliefs. Hesketh seems uninterested in the similarities and differences between Social Credit and other movements led by the petit-bourgeoisie, and oscillated between

alliances with workers on the one hand and the big bourgeoisie on the other.

*Major Douglas and Alberta Social Credit* does demonstrate that the Aberhart government was mainly influenced by the disturbed and disturbing founder of Social Credit rather than by pressures from below. But by removing all social actors from the account other than Douglas and his henchmen, along with Aberhart, Manning, and other Alberta Social Credit leaders, he makes all the more puzzling the question of which Albertans and why, at various times, embraced a party whose view of the world was as much pathology as ideology. This is a book mainly for those who want to understand the wacko ideas of C.H. Douglas and his Alberta fans, rather than those with an interest in the evolution of public policy or of social class relations in the province.

Alvin Finkel  
Athabasca University

Jeremy Mouat, *The Business of Power: Hydroelectricity in Southeastern B.C. 1897-1997* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press 1997).

THIS STUDY begins with the dawn of the electrical age and the critical role hydroelectricity, particularly West Kootenay Power, played in the Kootenays and Boundary regions of southeastern BC. The story begins with the transfer of ideas and debates over modes of transmission and the earliest attempts to develop hydro sites on smaller creeks of the region, their limitations, the early problems of capital development, and the eventual removal of power developments to the Kootenay River. While Americans dominated the earliest hardrock mining and smelting ventures in the West Kootenays, it was the South African Sir Charles Ross who drove the formation of West Kootenay Power (WKP) and a Canadian, Lorne W. Campbell, who pioneered engineering



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and growth of the Company from 1897 to his death in 1947.

Mouat portrays the early and tense relations between the new CPR ownership of the Trail smelter as new manager W.H. Aldridge adapted the newly acquired smelter to use of the Betts electrolytic process to allow handling of the diverse silver/lead metals of the Slocan as well as the copper/gold of Rossland. Early difficulties were due to overpricing as American lead markets ran a surplus and erected tariffs while strikes between 1899-1902 disrupted production. In 1905 the CPR consolidated the War Eagle and Centre Star Mines in Rossland and St. Eugene Mine in Moyie, then bought WKP to ensure those supplies. Power production expanded four times by 1900 and an audit suggested that WKP expand to the many mining camps of the boundary region.

This period of expansion was not without stress both from its business rival, the Great Northern Railway, owner of the Granby smelter and the major transportation supplier in the Boundary, and from the city of Nelson which had its own power generation facility since the mid-1890s. Personalities were vital elements in these rivalries as James J. Hill of the Great Northern contested CPR dominance by buying lines into Rossland and Nelson, Grand Forks, and Greenwood. West Kootenay Power expanded to supply power needs that were inadequately supplied by the Cascade Power Company who pressured government to deny WKP a license. Mouat makes the important point that longevity of Cominco's operations in Trail and Kimberley have overshadowed the size and importance of Boundary mining and smelting which in 1905 was the largest and most important in BC. Mouat also argues that it was the Great Northern that provided the threat that pushed the CPR into buying the Rossland Mines to form Consolidated, Mining and Smelting. Another factor was the declining production of the mines in Rossland, St. Eugene and the Boundary.

The other contest which challenged the expansionistic aims of WKP came from the city of Nelson and John Houston, the peripatetic mayor, owner of the original plant on Cottonwood Falls and applicant on behalf of the City of Nelson for a license on the Upper Bonnington Falls across the river from the WKP #1 plant. Conflicts between Nelson and WKP were not entirely due to Houston as the sometimes cantankerous Lorne Campbell made moves to block a Nelson City Power fund raising issue.

West Kootenay Power's prosperity was never more obviously tied to the resource industry than during World War I. This was reflected in 1916 when Cominco took over direct control of WKP, initiating a period of expansion from World War I to World War II almost entirely in relation to the needs of the smelter. Key to expanding of power generation was a solution to the zinc problem; the high proportion of zinc which occurred in low grade galena. Mouat describes well the early attempts to concentrate galena by A.G. French, the Canada Zinc Company, and then Cominco itself which from 1915 on were contracted by the government to expand zinc production in the throes of war. An inducement for Cominco to acquire WKP from the CPR was to adapt the flotation process, which had been refined in Australia, to concentrate the low grade Sullivan ore. Development of this process strengthened Cominco's position as the leading smelter in BC and the British Empire, yet as reserves of ore were bought up to provide for possible future needs, there was a built-up resentment about the Company's connection with the government and their role in the decline of small communities and mines.

Between the wars, mainly in response to heightened power needs to concentrate zinc, the generation capability increased fifteen times; 70 per cent of power produced in 1925 was consumed by the electrolytic zinc plant. This rapid expansion brought attention to the problem of increasing emissions. Cominco had ob-

tained smoke damage easements for most Canadian residents, many who were dependent on the company for work. This was not so of US residents beyond 10 miles to the south of the smelter. Raising up stacks to 400 feet just spread the emissions more widely along with resentments. American government litigation through the International Joint Commission led Cominco to eventually initiate sulphuric acid recovery. Transformed into fertilizer, it became very profitable, and indirectly expanded the power generation needs from WKP.

Expanded debate about the role of big business led government to move to regulate public utilities in 1938. Demands placed on Cominco during the war would free the Company from regulation. Production of lead, zinc, ammonia, nitric acid, and ammonium nitrate depleted power generating capacity. This led Cominco to take over construction of the Brilliant Dam, 1940-42, since as an ammunition supplier the parent company escaped wartime government restrictions not available to WKP. Late in the war Cominco entered into a contract with the US government to produce heavy water, an outgrowth of the pollution control program. This was again a heavy energy user and the US committed two million dollars to build the heavy water plant while Cominco committed to sell the heavy water to the US for use in its plans for atomic warheads at cost.

Mouat shows how, after the war, extension of regulations through the expanded BC Power Commission worried Cominco which saw WKP as mainly a supplier of power for the mining and smelting industry; until 1947 domestic sales totalled only about 1 per cent of WKP production. These apprehensions led to restructuring, with West Kootenay Power keeping No. 1 plant, while No. 2, South Slocan and Cora Linn along with Brilliant were kept by Cominco. Rapidly expanding domestic power consumption, driven by the population boom in the Okanagan Valley, by pent-up consumer demand af-

ter the war and by affluence, were not foreseen in the above structuring and were not adapted to very well by WKP. By 1962 the populist and interior based government of W.A.C. Bennett was motivated by expansionistic plans. Bennett formed BC Hydro to take control of all power generation facilities in the province, except for WKP, when BC Electric, a mainly Vancouver based private company, and the Canadian federal government threatened his plans to sell the downstream power benefits from the Columbia River Treaty in return for cash to build his Peace River project. This facet of the Columbia River Treaty, one of the most controversial in recent Kootenay history, also involved construction by the US of dams in Canada to provide flood control and storage; this pondage affected expanses of arable land and a number of communities.

Mouat ends his study by looking at West Kootenay and Cominco's problems in the 1980s, a period of rapid inflation; by this time rates were under the control of government. Cominco's problems included low metal prices and ballooning debt, so it began selling off assets, one of which was WKP, which was sold to an American utility, Utilicorp. Cominco itself passed out of the hands of CPR to Tech Corporation, a mining conglomerate. West Kootenay Power, to the surprise of many critics of the sale, was invigorated as service was improved and upgraded. In a bid to assuage antagonistic public opinion to BC Hydro and the provincial government in the Kootenays over denigration caused by Columbia River treaty dams, the government formed the Columbia Basin Trust with apparent ample funding in 1995 to ameliorate social and environmental impact. The Brilliant Dam was bought in 1996 and plans are in the works for equipping the Keenleyside Dame for power generation.

The history of WKP by Mouat provides a picture of the role capital and key personalities played in the web of change in the Kootenays, the connection of elec-

tricity with the adaptation of mining and smelting technology. Though not dealt with in this study it indirectly provides a window on the demographic changes taking place in the region as the mining towns of the turn of the century were abandoned in preference to demographic centres within proximity to power, to the Trail smelter, or in close proximity to large bodies of low grade ore accessible to cheap transport and near the centres of stable, amenable work forces of Trail and Kimberley. It is apparent that Mouat downplays the notion that Kootenay mining, smelting, and power developments, proposed by H.A. Innis, were part of a "national" strategy of industrial development based on cheap transportation (the "Crowrate") and protectionism. Local personalities and local industrial competition and community rivalry are elevated in importance.

This book is caught up with WKP and its role in the infrastructure of its parent company, Cominco. That picture is quite complete until the 1950s. It does not deal very well with other infrastructure changes that occurred after formation of BC Hydro and particularly the modern highways built by the W.A.C. Bennett government in the 1960s which had a major impact on the expansion of forestry. Indirectly this led to construction of pulp mills, also heavy users of hydroelectricity, but dependent on expanded, efficient road systems to facilitate the close utilization standards demanded of the practice of forestry after 1957.

Technical style of the book could have been improved. Lengthy quotes could be broken down, analyzed and integrated into the text. (104-5) Use of side bars (102-5), sometimes revealing, are as often a distraction from the narrative. Analysis of the Columbia River Treaty and the political debate surrounding it (no mention is made of Section 92, BNA Act and the "declaratory clause" whereby the Dominion could "declare" a local work to be for the general advantage of Canada, or two or more provinces) divert attention

or range away from the focus of the study which is the story of hydro-electric development in the region. A few errors of fact detract; the Kootenay River does not cross the border several times, but twice, before Trail. (97)

W.A. Sloan  
Selkirk College

Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1996).

IN THIS PRODIGIOUSLY RESEARCHED and sophisticated study, Bruce Kidd, a former Canadian Olympic athlete and highly regarded sport historian and sociologist, analyzes the complex relationship of sport to national identity in Canada. The story of sport and the making of the nation, of course, is a story of conflict and contestation, not just on the playing field, but among those classes, individuals, and organizations that offered competing visions of what an appropriate national sporting culture should be. Kidd outlines these competing assumptions by focusing on four national sporting organizations: the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU); the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF); the Worker's Sport Association of Canada (WSAC); and the National Hockey League (NHL). In recounting the histories of these associations, the author inquires into the debate over amateurism and professionalism, the social construction of gender identity, the struggle of women to secure a more equitable place in competitive sport, and divergent bourgeois and working-class assumptions about sport's social purposes. Beneath all this, moreover, rests a plea for a more democratic and inclusive sporting culture. Unabashedly nationalist and influenced by contemporary currents within Marxist thought, Kidd promotes sport's use value over its exchange value, and laments the capitalist organization of sport where profit takes precedence over

more democratic and humane social and national purposes.

Although finely crafted and presented in rich detail, the first half of the book focuses upon relatively familiar struggles involving sport and gender inequality. It begins with the AAU, a bourgeois and mostly English-speaking organization formed in 1894 which enshrined contemporary Anglo-Canadian assumptions about masculinity, character building, nationalism, imperialism, rational recreation, and gentlemanly amateurism. Though critical of the AAU for its anti-labour bias, its neglect of women's athletics, and its limited attention to sport in Québec and the Maritimes, Kidd argues that the AAU's commitment to amateurism, notions of fair play, and public responsibility contributed to the conviction that sports were essential to the building of Canadian nationality.

Kidd then turns to the WAAF, and the struggle to expand the field of opportunity for women athletes. In the face of prevailing notions about respectable femininity, inter-war maternal feminists such as Ethel Cartwright, and less compromising advocates of female equality such as Alexandrine Gibb, debated the most appropriate ways to advance women's athletics. While Kidd is obviously uncomfortable with the stance of the conservative feminists during these years he is by no means dismissive of their efforts, and deals with them judiciously: "We should not allow the advances of recent years," he writes, "to dim the light of their accomplishment." (141)

In the last half of the book Kidd moves away from gender issues to those relating to capitalist development and class conflict, and it is here that he is both most innovative and provocative. If the AAU and WAAF dramatized debates about masculinity, femininity, middle-class respectability, and nation building, the WSAC and the NHL symbolize the tensions between a socialist and internationalist vision of sport, on the one hand, and the professional or capitalist organization of

sport, on the other. The chapter on the workers' sport movement places Canadian workers' sport in the context of an international socialist sporting tradition which, prior to the USSR's defection to the "bourgeois Olympics" in 1952, provided a systematic critique of capitalist sport and an alternative sporting culture for workers throughout the world. The concerns raised within the WSAC about the exploitation of athletes, the destructive nationalism of the Olympics and the ubiquitous influence of the capitalist marketplace, moreover, resonate throughout Kidd's study. In this regard Kidd's critique of the National Hockey League and the capitalist sport model provides a logical conclusion to the study.

Ironically, if Kidd's focus on these four organizations contributes to the book's conceptual coherence, it is also the source of its major weakness. Kidd's emphasis on these supposedly "national" sporting organizations leaves him little time to address the vitality of sport at the local, regional, and community levels. As a result, readers will find little here dealing with sport in either the Maritimes or Québec, whose involvement in these organizations was marginal at best. Furthermore, had he not decided to exclude baseball, which by the 1880s had unquestionably become the summer sport of choice across the country, and had he dealt in a more serious way with the amateur or community-level alternative to the NHL's form of "brand name hockey," Kidd would have presented a more comprehensive picture of Canada's sporting culture. Even despite these omissions, however, this is a ground-breaking work and will be must reading for anyone interested in the making of Canadian sporting culture and of the nation itself.

Colin Howell  
Saint Mary's University

Maggie Montesinos Sale, *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press 1997).

IN THE PREFACE to *Notes of a Native Son*, James Baldwin observes that the conundrum of race is the "inheritance of every American." The complex fate of being an American, who is a black American, as he describes it, is trying to locate oneself within "a specific inheritance and to use that inheritance, precisely to claim the birthright from which that inheritance has so brutally and specifically excluded [one]." Who is permitted to and prohibited from laying claims to the discourse of rights and citizenship is the focus of Maggie Sale's *The Slumbering Volcano*. In this important book, Sale examines "the systematic institutionalization of racial constructs as part of a discourse of national identity" by looking at representations of slave ship revolts, the *Amistad* (1839) and *Creole* (1841), in the popular press and the literary representation of the rebellion on the *Tryal* (1800) in Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* and the *Creole* rebellion in Frederick Douglass' *The Heroic Slave*.

*The Slumbering Volcano* wrestles with the contradictions of liberalism — racists' exclusions and universalist ideals — by analyzing the contestation over US national identity and the "production of foreclosure of subject-positions from which to claim the trope of revolutionary struggle." (7) In examining the emancipatory potential of liberalism as a discourse of natural rights and national identity, Sale provides a historical chronicle of white supremacy and black exclusion within the United States. She locates the origins of white supremacy in the shift in the discourse of national identity that occurred by the insertion of the word "white" into state suffrage requirements that took place in the 19th century. Sale argues that this shift should be read as "actively constructing and instituting a

new category 'race,' as the most important mode of differentiation between a newly configured national body politic and its own (racialized) others." (4) Yet, if we are to believe Sale, the word "white" restricted the universalist embrace of liberalism, not the four million enslaved Africans outside the purview of the "all men are created equal" of the Declaration. Certainly the primacy of property and the protection extended to property by the Constitution racialized notions of man, liberty, and equality. One would expect a book devoted to slave rebellion to interrogate the links between the sanctity of property, the racialization of liberty and the vision of freedom held by those considered objects of property. To the contrary, Sale endorses an interpretation of the Constitution as colour-blind and proceeds as if the division between slave and free is not a mode of racial differentiation already dividing the body politic.

What is disturbing is Sale's reliance on the explicit marking of "whiteness" in order to explicate the racial genealogy of man and citizen, especially since white normativity generally extends and fortifies itself by virtue of its transparency. Moreover, processes of racialization are not limited to or exhausted by explicit forms of racial codification. The foundational character of racism in the republic is actually undermined by Sale's belated narration. Clearly, this is not her intention. While I differ with Sale's narrative of origins, she persuasively demonstrates the significance of the category of race as the most important mode of differentiation within the body politic and one that undergoes transformation and evolution.

The goal of *The Slumbering Volcano* is not simply to provide a critique of liberalism, but rather to restore or actualize the promises of liberalism by looking at those moments in which the discourse of national identity is extended to and taken up by those generally imagined as beyond the pale or, more specifically, outside the confines of the national community. By exploring liberalism as a discourse — an

open-ended, polyvalent, and heterogeneous assemblage of statements, rather than ideology — a set of values, statements and practices fixed or unified by the interests of the ruling class, Sale strives to establish the emancipatory potential of liberalism. Her defence assumes that the heterogeneity and polyvalence of discourse safeguards liberty and equality.

By examining the contested meanings of national identity from the perspective of those marginalized and excluded from the national community and by focusing on shipboard rebellions, Sale offers a provocative and original reading of US national identity. As she contends, the discourse of national identity “illustrates not the existence of a particular national identity, but rather the importance of the *idea* of national identity to a diverse and divided population.” (57) Sale focuses on the liminal space of the ship, not to transcend the nationalist project, but to revitalize it and to demonstrate “the inclusionary potential of the discourse of national identity.”

Sale skilfully and persuasively reconstructs the public debate about these events and illustrates the ways in which they were utilized to meditate on national identity. The chapters on the *Amistad* revolt and *The Heroic Slave* are especially successful in this regard. However, by interpreting slave ship revolts within the framework of national identity, the extranational dimensions of these events as assaults on slavery are ignored. As a consequence of this approach, we learn more about the representation and reception of these revolts than we do about the captives’ conception of freedom. Are there narratives of liberation other than those of liberalism and nationalism? It is the extranational and international character of the *Amistad* revolt that enabled the captive’s struggle for liberty to be recognized and, according to Sale, then to be considered as “worthy to claim the trope of revolutionary struggles” and as a “separate national entity” different from those enslaved within the US. (97) It is precisely

because of their status as Africans and as outsiders that their right to liberty can even be recognized by the nation and that determines the differing responses to the *Amistad* affair and the revolt on board the *Creole* which was conducted by captive Africans born in the US. In both cases, the captives were able to secure their freedom because a nation other than the one claiming them as property was adjudicating the matter.

In the afterword, Sale, considering the import of liberalism and its legacy toady, concludes “masculine individualism was more fundamental to liberal theory than white supremacy.” (200) In the closing pages of *The Slumbering Volcano*, the question of equality solely concerns gender relations. Racism and the extant legacy of slavery are neither mentioned nor addressed. Is this meant to suggest that racism is no longer a problem or is this due to the primacy attributed gender? Throughout the book Sale asserts that liberal political theory has been significant for African Americans, yet no where does she evaluate its ability to redress racial domination or material inequality. Does not one need to ask if liberalism has or if it can remedy racial domination, class exploitation, and gender inequality, or if the discourse of rights is not also the purveyor of forms of domination, subjection, and exploitation? While Sale’s project of reconceptualizing liberty for the 21st century is commendable and the contributions of *The Slumbering Volcano* are numerous, she has cast her net too narrowly by not considering other narratives of liberation. Despite its limitations, *The Slumbering Volcano* sheds light on our “national inheritance,” which, as Baldwin reminds us, is a legacy of dispossession.

Saidiya Hartman  
University of California-Berkeley

Mark M. Smith, *Mastered By the Clock: Time, Slavery and Freedom in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1997).

EDWARD THOMPSON and Herbert Gutman certainly convinced historians that time is of the essence. One indispensable element turning peasants into a modern proletariat, they demonstrated, was breaking them from rural or artisan "natural" time to the industrial clock time upon which modern capitalism was based.

Less clear in this dramatic historical rendering of the great disciplining transformation was the meaning of time in preclassical mercantilist capitalism; as if Adam Smith and the marketplace had invented clock time, which of course they did not. First there was the sun, the argument goes; then there was the clock. Although he notes that clock time was an innovation of 18th-century capitalism and not of later industrialization, Mark M. Smith does not make enough of this keen observation.

If slavery had been late feudalism rather than any form of capitalism, then the clock time of the factory would have been anachronistically ahead of its time if used to regulate labour in the fields. Eugène Genovese, for one, simply assumed that masters employed "natural" time and not clock time. Now Smith, in an argumentative and brilliant first book, winner of the Avery O. Craven Prize of the Organization of American Historians, takes a close look at clock time in the plantation South, and finds its use so pervasive that his whole essay amounts to one long inferential argument that large scale ante-bellum plantations were factories in the field, and that any paternalist feudal remnants were merely incidental.

Of all 19th-century societies, Smith argues, "only the free-wage-labour North managed to inspire [northern] country dwellers to adopt ... clock consciousness," and southern slave masters were not far behind: they were in fact the second agricultural society to "embrace"

clock time. After around 1830, they competed with northern agricultural and industrial producers as clock-driven rationalizers of production. Adopting clock time "satisfied simultaneously their drive for profit, their desire for discipline and social order ... and their claim to modernity." Thus, the distance between northern and "ante-bellum planter capitalism was more apparent than real." (2-5)

To be sure, Smith argues, this was capitalism with a difference, as planters coupled the clock to the whip in order to render production more efficient. But they timed and delineated field work, "groping" toward a proto-Taylorism (123); and they used clocks atop barns, as well as bugles, bells, and whistles regulated by their own watches, to set and control not only work tasks but the down time they allowed their slaves. Theirs might have been "a muted, garbled, bastard capitalism," but it was going along the same path as northern capitalism, and not lagging far behind. (175)

Smith's empirical work is quite astonishing — thorough almost to the point of obsessiveness. Using, with considerable panache, probate, census, tax and sales, and watch repair records as well as letters, diaries, and plantation journals, Smith establishes quite convincingly the wide spread ownership and use of watches and clocks in the ante-bellum south. Ownership by 1860 was even higher among whites in rural than in urban districts, 80 per cent to 65 per cent in the South Carolina counties he samples. This implies, interestingly enough, that artisans may have been less time conscious than slave owners and their overseers.

Not only were watches widespread, but consciousness of their application to many facets of life as well as to field work abounded, as Smith demonstrates. Slave births and deaths, for example, were recorded to the hour in many plantation records. The post office, steamship and railroad and telegraph schedules all deepened time consciousness, South as well as North, in the late ante-bellum period. The

demonstration of the mechanical transformation of time in Smith's monograph gets a bit repetitious as he goes after proofs like hounds after a hare, but he cannot be accused of skimping time and energy in the archives, and his discovery and use of evidence is quite impressive.

The net result of this drive to implement clock time in the fields was that, by the eve of the Civil War, "masters had simply been too good at aping [northern capitalists] to avoid joining their ranks." If they were a "distinct and dying *political* class," they were gravitating inexorably and enthusiastically to capitalism as an *economic* class. (176, emphasis added) Politically at odds with the North, they were simultaneously moving, "sometimes uncomfortably, toward the so-called Yankee ideal of time thrift," in what amounted, politics notwithstanding, to an "economic and cultural rapprochement" with the North. (126)

African Americans too, from their own needs and understandings, learned to introject clock time. Reminded by the whip, they knew only too clearly that they should jump to clock time work rules. CPT became a conscious mode of resistance to time discipline, and sharecropping, which was their employment of choice after the war, was a means to regain control over time. If they were compelled into wage labour in much of the postwar South, African Americans, like workers everywhere, learned to bargain hard for better hourly wages, thus internalizing "the logic of timed labour [and] effectively joining the ranks of a burgeoning industrial proletariat." (174) Any failure to compete successfully in the postwar marketplace was due not to their "putative inability to learn the rules of the capitalist game," ascribed to them by racist whites, but stemmed instead from their forced "exclusion from access to the means of production and genuine, enduring political power." (175)

With this essay, Smith joins the emerging counter-Genovesian consensus that slavery had not created two separate

and distinct American societies, one neo-feudal, one marketplace capitalist, but that instead, slavery notwithstanding, there were southern and northern variants of marketplace capitalist economic development.

Eventually I believe that this argument will lead to the reintroduction of the thesis that a blundering generation of politicians exaggerated sectional differences and led the nation to war. Or perhaps the argument will become more sophisticated, basing the reactionary revolt of secession mainly on the divisiveness and panic caused by specific violent events, which took place in the political vacuum created by that radical decentralization which characterized developing American capitalism and democracy. The inability to establish a strong state or other mediating apparatuses meant that American capitalism outran weak political forms when two groups of capitalists exaggerated rather than compromised their differences as they had earlier. All that is now wanting is an American Conrad Russell to write this book.

Smith himself is not very interested in the Civil War *per se*, but he certainly does not find it to have been an economically revolutionary event. Improving on their fathers in their "exactitude of labour measurements," many post-war planters "conducted their New South plantations like northern factories." (171) Subtract the myths of Southern honour and sectional puffery, and you find variations on one powerful capitalist theme developing over time, with the Civil War essentially put aside. Perhaps, the unstated neo-Beardian implication goes, the Civil War was an ultimately trivial diversion, economically speaking.

I hasten to add that Smith does not enter these historiographical minefields at all — come to revise Genovese he is exclusively eager to dispute the two economic cultures argument: political divisions are simply not his topic. But he does in his fashion separate politics from economics, incidents from the *longue durée*.



This is, of course, part of a very old game — the definition — or was the bottle half full or half empty — game. Eugene Genovese finds evidence of paternalism and economic neo-feudalism in many places (and ignores the issue of clock time). Kenneth Stampp before Genovese and James Oakes afterward find variant capitalism. While Smith is extremely polite to Genovese, as he is a neo-Marxist rather than a left liberal like Oakes, he comes down squarely on the variant capitalist side of the argument. On the issue of time, Smith suggests and then drops the proposition that the introduction of clock time was part of mercantilist capitalism which preceded industrialism in significant ways. Perhaps this is where the discussion might head, if one wished to avoid arguing from the simplistic construction of a “first feudal, then industrial capitalist” divide. Smith suggests that approach, although he usually accepts definitional dualism.

In addition, Smith himself almost fetishizes the question of clock time to the exclusion of other issues. One might have thought that he would also have been interested, for example, in the widespread use by masters of cash incentives, the most telling finding, after the dust has settled, of *Time of the Cross*. One factor taken out of the context of other issues, even this extremely important one, does not lead to asking all relevant questions about the work relationships of masters and slaves, owners and workers. And yet Smith on the whole convinces me that he has found a fruitful and innovative means of comparing South with North, the United States with Europe, and that much of this line of analysis will tend to diminish the exaggeration, which comes so easily to American historians both of the economic differences between the antebellum American sections, and the degree to which the Civil War produced a Second American Revolution.

Michael Fellman  
Simon Fraser University

Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1997).

IN THE LAST DECADE, historians of African America have excavated the “lost” history of the black freedom struggle. Before being destroyed by anti-Communist forces and virtually erased from the historical record, a diverse group of labour and civil-rights activists from across the left-liberal political spectrum forged a popular movement in the 1930s and 1940s to remake American society based on economic and political justice for all. Penny Von Eschen deepens our understanding of this period by uncovering the anti-colonial pan-Africanist movement which paralleled and, in many ways, informed this period of the black struggle. In a breathtakingly sophisticated analysis which combines intellectual, diplomatic, labour, and even jazz history, Von Eschen illuminates the anti-colonial moment in African American history and its implications for Africa and the United States.

Von Eschen traces the development of a broad pan-African movement which joined intellectuals, journalists, and labour leaders from across the African diaspora and unified them in a wide-ranging anti-colonial project. In the United States this activism centred around the Council on African Affairs (CAA), led by Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alphaeus Hunton, and Max Yergan, and by the black press, which in the 1940s regularly published the advocacy journalism of Caribbean and African-born activists like George Padmore and I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson.

Leninist critiques of imperialism were the ideological starting point for these leaders, all of whom were luminaries of the black Left. They defined race and racism historically as constructions built to serve the demands of capitalism and imperialism. For these intellectuals and journalists, a common “racial” history linked all people of African descent,

not by blood or culture, but by a shared experience of imperialist exploitation through slavery and colonialism. They sought to destroy imperialism as the only possible end to racist exploitation in African and its diaspora, and indeed, in the entire colonized world.

While this anti-colonialism may have been grounded in leftist ideology, it was never a central concern of the American Left. Instead, a politically ecumenical group of black leaders embraced and sustained diaspora politics during World War II. African Americans struggling against racial exploitation at home and segregation in the armed forces identified strongly with wartime anti-imperial movements in Asia and Africa, and joined them in condemning Allied leaders who fought against fascism while continuing to ignore or defend colonialism.

By interpreting their situation in the context of a global struggle of subjected people against the exploitation of empire, Von Eschen argues that black anti-colonialists' membership in the African diaspora began to take precedence over their identity as Americans. Openly critical of American foreign policy and economic imperialism, even moderate liberals like Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) condemned American meddling in the Caribbean and the Philippines, and pushed the Roosevelt Administration to act on its rhetorical commitment to anti-colonialism. This criticism reached its peak in the early days of the United Nations when African-American leaders joined the emerging "third world" in fighting to make the international body a force of anti-colonialism and civil rights enforcement. In battles over South Africa's internal racial politics and its annexation of South West African (Namibia) which would prove crucial in determining the United Nation's jurisdiction, power, and mission, African-American anti-colonialists lined up on the losing side against the United

States and the forces of nation and empire it represented.

Of course such ideological heterodoxy could not be sustained with the advent of the Cold War. Von Eschen notes that black criticism of American foreign policy dropped off sharply in the black press after the Truman Doctrine in 1947. Black liberals who once felt comfortable attacking the United States and European colonial powers while remaining staunchly anti-Communist found these two positions to be mutually exclusive by the end of the 1940s. They abandoned the CAA and, more importantly, the wartime diaspora identity which had allowed African-American anti-colonialism to become a diverse and potent movement. Those who did not submit to the new bipolar world view, including Robeson, Du Bois, and Hunton, became marginalized among African-American leaders and faced government persecution in the 1950s Red Scare. These figures were silenced for far more than their radical ties. As Von Eschen notes, American officials felt they had to silence these leaders' continuing articulation of the links between Africans and African Americans lest they threaten the government's ability to control the civil rights agenda at home and the Cold War battleground Africa had become.

Rushing to prove their anti-Communist Americanism, liberal black leaders redefined racism as a dehistoricized aberration which, like Communism, was anti-American and weakened the United States' Cold-War position. African-American leaders thus uprooted racism from its origins in slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and severed crucial historical links between Africans and African Americans. Embracing the rhetoric of American imperialism, they now interpreted Africa's problems as matters of economic, political, and social "primitivism," and uncritically supported American economic investment and political meddling in Africa as progressive forces of modernization and anti-Communism.

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By the time of Ghana's independence in 1957, this historical amnesia had also weakened the ideological basis of the African-American civil-rights movement, and narrowed its focus to purely political aims.

Like all pioneering works, *Race Against Empire* raises many questions. One wonders, for example, how far diaspora politics permeated the consciousness of the African-American community writ large. After all, the CAA organizers and journalists Von Eschen highlights formed an unusually elite and cosmopolitan group, many members having only arrived in the United States in adulthood. And while she emphasizes the importance of international labour alliances like the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in forging a vital pan-African movement in the 1940s, American support for this development came almost exclusively from middle-class organizations, not from the black labour movement flourishing at the time. Conversely, her engrossing coverage of Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong's State Department tours suggest that not all black public figures in the 1950s had forgotten or were afraid to articulate the historic ties which bound together Africans and African Americans.

These questions suggest the enormous scope of this book. By casting her net wide, and handling her catch with such analytical deftness, Von Eschen has both broadened and sharpened our understanding of the ideological and political challenge posed by the 1940s black freedom struggle and of how much was lost by its destruction.

Karen Ferguson  
Simon Fraser University

Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago 1995).

THIS SURVEY of the public discourse on class in American society and politics from the colonial era through the Gilded Age begins with the premise that class is a contested concept and goes on to examine "how Americans have conceptualized and contested it." To that end, the author not so neatly sidesteps the unremitting debates about theoretical alignments and definitions and proceeds by means of distinguishing a learned and literate elite which reflected and shaped powerful cultural images in public communication and had the power to disseminate those images widely. Burke's study, as he acknowledges, is guided largely by the principles of *Begriffsgeschichte* — history of concepts — as advocated by Reinhart Koselleck. Ideas about historical analysis of political language and thought formulated by the "Cambridge School" — J.G.A. Pocock, Anthony Pagden, and Quentin Skinner — also guided Burke's labours.

The result is a mixed bag. Burke presents a rich diversity of data which, while fascinating, does not hang together in the absence of a theoretical perspective on class and class formation. In sidestepping the problems of definition and theory, Burke's analysis, such as it is, has been overpowered by his pile of data. One is left to puzzle over what guided the selection. For example, one is tempted to ask on what basis Burke decided exactly who would be appropriate for inclusion into the elite of editors, politicians, ministers, and professors from which he derives his material. One thing is clear: it does not include women, other than a brief mention of Victoria Woodhull in an endnote. Surely the numerous women who were published in one form or another contributed something to the question at hand.

In a simple, perhaps too much so, periodization scheme, Burke's book fol-

lows the shifts in rhetoric in the early republic from the older notion of orders or ranks to the difficulties of "delineating, much less agreeing upon, a classification of the citizenry of the young republic." In a republic of putative equals, some means of differentiation had to be found. The first answer was to distinguish by socio-economic factors and with this the term "classes" actually does make its appearance in the discourse. John Taylor, writing in the first decades of the 19th century plumps for a distribution of the citizenry into productive and unproductive classes. This reflects his belief that America was a "naturally classed" society.

Burke traces the public discourse from productive labour to the rhetoric of reconcilable class conflict. The Jacksonian era comes in for extended discussion, particularly the political debate between Democrats and Whigs which stimulated and then was shaped by lively disagreements about what should be the attitude of national government to productive and unproductive classes — and whether these distinctions were in fact naturally occurring. Jackson's view was that such distinctions would always exist under every just government: the role of that government would be to see that equal protection and equal benefits were restored so that "the otherwise 'conflicting interests' of the republic could again be harmonized." (96)

Burke's era-by-era treatment does contain a black hole which is as complete as it is startling. His survey — for it often takes on the case of an encyclopedic survey — leapfrogs from the 1840s and 1850s to the 1870s. That such a conflict, which stressed all aspects of American life and social relations, can be omitted, is astonishing. How can a book about class in America ignore the class antagonisms that arose during that period? Those seeking a word of explanation from the author will not find it in his text.

Since the Civil War is absent, we may as well note that any discussion of the impact of race or ethnicity is lacking as

well. As such, one can only term the book incomplete. It certainly has its strong points — extensive notes, wide familiarity with both the original sources and the analytical literature, and intelligent elucidation of the changing notions of class for segments of American history. With a few significant additions, the book could have been markedly improved. Nevertheless, it is worth close examination and will challenge its readers to rethink about what some Americans in the 19th century pretended was their "classless" society.

R.P. Stoddard  
University of British Columbia

Francis Robert Shor, *Utopianism and Radicalism in a Reforming America 1888-1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1997).

ONE HAS TO ADMIRE the chutzpah of an author who in the late 1990s begins a book by quoting the *Internationale*. That he couples this quote with another from the Sioux Ghost Dance suggests Francis Shor's imaginative reach, and his desire to cast new light on texts not usually considered in tandem. Shor's purpose in this book is to re-examine the role of utopianism in certain examples of American radical thought and practice from 1888 (the publication of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*) to World War I, and to determine "how significant utopianism and radicalism were in the reforming of America." (xv) He draws at different points upon a wide range of theoretical tools, but builds mainly on the insights of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams to analyze instances of utopianism (fiction and communal experiments), and of utopian-inflected radicalism (socialist, anarchist, black nationalist), as each developed within a dynamic "hegemonic field." (xv) Like other recent historians of radicalism, Shor demonstrates linkages between radical and mainstream ideas, and shows how oppositional cultural for-

mations operating in an era of proliferating reform initiatives could simultaneously challenge and replicate features of a constantly-shifting hegemonic order: hence utopian communities welcomed blackface minstrel shows but no African-American residents, and Emma Goldman's transformative call to sexual liberation could be reduced to "a quest for mere self-expression" (126) and reincorporated into the dominant reformist milieu.

Part of Shor's project is seemingly to break down the classical Marxist distinction, especially as articulated by Friedrich Engels, between "utopian" and "scientific" socialism, and to locate a utopian urge or desire within authors and movements that might overtly reject the label. He therefore must maintain a finely-tuned sensitivity to the historical contingency and permeability of his key terms: utopianism, radicalism, reform, America. This approach opens up for his analysis not only the striking African American utopian fiction of Sutton E. Griggs and Pauline Hopkins, as well as lesser-known works by Bellamy and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, but also texts not always thought of as "utopian," such as Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1907) and the 1913 *Star of Ethiopia* pageant inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois' novel. Most readers will benefit from encountering here sources they had not known at all or had not associated with utopianism.

Yet Shor's commitment to contingency can also prove problematical when one wants to make distinctions. Because utopianism has had specific meanings and implications within socialist and radical discourse at various historical moments, it seems reasonable that the author would engage that genealogy and locate his own approach with respect to it. He does describe utopianism as a "critique of dominant values and norms" coupled with "a longing for a society based on harmony," (xvi) but this language could encompass the fondest hopes of both Karl Marx and Russell Kirk. Shor might more helpfully

have begun by defining clearly what he means by utopianism, rather than introducing piecemeal throughout the book, in the service of explicating specific texts and social initiatives, various authors' definitions or descriptions of what the word can mean. It might then be clearer, for example, how (or whether) "anarchist utopianism," with its emphases on "non-coercion, non-authoritarianism, and decentralism," (12) differed from regular old pure-and-simple anarchism. How does the adjective "utopian" change the meanings of the nouns to which Shor attaches it? How can we achieve Shor's goal of knowing how utopianism inflected or changed radicalism and reform without knowing precisely what utopianism is, and how these movements would have looked without it? The reader senses that utopianism, when applied for example to the Paterson pageant, implies a particular emotional tone, an air of hope, an *élan*; but one also suspects that the term can, and sometimes should, mean something more particular and concrete. One need not lapse into ahistorical essentialism by insisting that political terms carry some minimal specific freight. Because Shor appears to reject Engels' dichotomous rendering of the possibilities of radical thought, and because that dichotomy was so thoroughly enfolded in radical discourse (though often in a form far cruder than the one Engels articulated) during precisely the period that Shor addresses, he might have better served his readers by beginning the book with that set of issues. After discussing Engels's ideas if only to explode them, Shor might have drawn together the best insights of the more recent theorists cited throughout the text to demonstrate his own view of just what characterizes the utopian and how it has inter-penetrated historically with the scientific.

Though clearly a sympathetic commentator, Shor does not hesitate to point out the contradictions and failings within utopianism, showing how in most instances a combination of internal and ex-

ternal factors undermined utopian projects. He does sometimes haul more theoretical baggage than seems necessary to give shape to his empirical data: a thoughtful and well-supported reading of London's *Iron Heel* seems no stronger for the language of deconstruction and reader-response theory in which it is draped; nor do Shor's views on culture and ideology gain force or authority when he links them to Werner Heisenberg's theory of particle interaction. Further, individual chapters do not always effectively advance the book's overall argument. By the final chapter — an extremely interesting discussion of the Llano del Rio colony in California, with especially provocative material on the debates sparked by architect Alice Austin's designs for a socialist city — one wonders what has happened to the claim that counter-hegemonic experiments (of which this would seem to have been one of the more fully-developed ones) were not simply constrained by, but also partly reshaped, the larger hegemonic order. The reader learns a great deal about the colony's inner workings and about the external constraints it faced, but is left wondering how this provoked shifts or reconfigurations in broader hegemonic processes. This most extensive discussion of a particular utopia also seems the most self-contained, compared to analyses of the Bellamy Nationalist movement or the pageants, which engaged directly with contemporary political culture. Lacking a clear understanding about just what constitutes the "utopian" element in any given cultural formation or movement, we can only notice that when Shor focuses on classically utopian initiatives such as colonies, his argument becomes less dialectical; when he writes about phenomena that do not immediately present themselves as "utopian" but that he thinks embody utopian elements, such as the pageants, then he more successfully shows how these events did affect the hegemonic field upon which his actors played their parts. Thus Shor seems not

entirely to have achieved his goal of assessing the significance of utopianism and radicalism for reforming America. While we can learn much from the discrete discussions in each chapter, Shor's readers might have benefitted even more had he thought of this work less as "essays" (xv) and more as a singular, fully-articulated entity. Still, if Shor is sometimes less clear than he might be on matters of definition and argument, he is nonetheless quite convincing on the proposition that we need not see utopianism as limited to the realm of impossible dreams, separate from the lived reality of Americans during (and since) the years 1888-1918.

Mark Pittenger  
University of Colorado

Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 1997).

IN THIS FINELY CRAFTED STUDY of migrant farmworkers on the American Atlantic coast, Cindy Hahamovitch details how changing agricultural markets and production practices combined with labour distribution efforts of private, government, and union agencies to create a permanent migratory labour force deprived of power and mired in poverty. In the process, the migrant workers and the fields they worked became the testing grounds for competing views about immigration, nationalism, race, unions, and ideologies, as well as for power struggles among various levels of government, public, and private agencies and unions.

Hahamovitch's most persuasive material is her contribution to the debates about the relative autonomy of the state in its relations with labour and capital. In the case of growers, farmworkers, and all levels of government, she argues for a complicated relationship, insisting that the

state was neither the partner of capitalism nor completely autonomous. Rather, the state took on the role of *padrone*, regulating labour distribution and mediating between workers and growers to the strict advantage of neither. Increasing government intervention in the relations between migrant farmworkers and the east coast growers who hired them had ambiguous results, and by the New Deal era, she argues, "liberal reforms ... ultimately did farmworkers the most good and the most damage." (10)

Hahamovitch begins her examination of migrant farmworkers as the late-19th century American economy underwent dramatic change. Industrialization and urbanization in the northeast, combined with western agricultural expansion and technological developments, led to a shift in eastern agriculture to truck farming for the growing urban industrial workforce. Labour needs became increasingly seasonal, with sharply concentrated harvest demand, and areas such as the New Jersey berry fields witnessed the beginning of the migratory stream and attempts to regulate it. Reformers targeted the recent Italian immigrants who relied upon *padrones*, took their entire families into the fields, and resisted Americanization.

The reformers' concern with children in the fields transcended labour issues — it distilled the tensions between Americans and newcomers, between rural and urban ways of life, in the context of burgeoning industrialization and the closing of the western frontier. At stake was not simply the working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers, but notions of citizenship, the strength of the agrarian myth, and the role of the state in social and economic development. When reformers failed to induce growers to provide educational facilities and better housing, they called on state officials to intervene. At the same time, growers' increasing reliance on migratory workers led them to appeal for state intervention to ensure a steady labour supply.

Progressive governments shared reformers' goals to protect and assimilate the immigrant migrants, to solve urban ills, to guard against radical influences, and to keep the wheels of commerce turning smoothly. With a shared vision of agrarian life and farm ownership as the foundation of nation and citizenship, federal and private organizations addressed the problem of labour distribution while urging an end to migrant labour. But the ideal of yeoman-style agriculture, based on a small full-time labour force working its way up the agricultural ladder, was already in decline. By 1914 the Commission on Industrial Relations saw agriculture as one more industrial enterprise, relying on a transient and impoverished workforce. In attempting to meet the needs of growers and workers, it recommended an extensive federal labour distribution system to coordinate labour needs with supply, and it urged migrant workers to organize for their own protection.

But with the outbreak of World War I, labour distribution became a matter of national interests and government intervention increased. As immigration halted, labour demands and wages rose, and southern African-American workers quickly moved to fill the gap. Migrant workers became defined by race, and labour distribution became a struggle between North and South. In the conflict between the federal Departments of Agriculture and Labor for control of labour and wages, the large, populist and southern based Department of Agriculture won out. African-American farmworkers were the real losers, with their wages kept artificially low and their movements strictly curtailed through extraordinary measures such as work-or-fight laws and coercive vagrancy legislation.

After the war, a dramatic drop in farm prices combined with large scale commercial agriculture in Florida to make it both possible and necessary for thousands of southern African Americans to become permanent workers, outnumbering all

other groups in the migrant labour stream on the east coast. The migrant farm labour market became truly nationalized during the interwar decades, with factory farms and concentrations of labour demand, and a general levelling and lowering of wages and working and living conditions. During the 1930s, the collapse of cotton prices and federal crop reduction programs led both workers and employers to become more dependent on labour contractors and crew bosses. Fewer jobs, reduced wages, and employer-fostered competition between African Americans and West Indians resulted in even greater exploitation of migrant workers.

Meanwhile, the federal government not only continued to regulate the migrant labour supply for the benefit of growers, it exempted migrant workers from early New Deal ameliorative legislation and relief measures for transients, and denied them the right of collective bargaining under the National Industrial Recovery Act. When migrant workers began to form unions and strike, the US Conciliation Service refused them recognition. Instead, after a particularly hard-fought strike at Seabrook Farms in New Jersey in 1934, and the subsequent passing of the Wagner Act in 1935, migrant workers emerged *not* as workers entitled to the rights of collective bargaining, but as wards under the protection of the federal government.

Falling under the jurisdiction of New Deal programs designed to fight poverty, migrant farm workers became eligible for assistance under the Migratory Camp Program, which provided food, shelter, and medical care, and attempted to educate migrants in such matters as hygiene, thrift, and self-government. Benefits of the program were clear to the minority of migrants who sought shelter in the camps, and at times organized strikes, but Hahamovitch points out the "dangers inherent in policy of individual, without collective, empowerment." (162-3) During World War II, the government as *padrone* shifted its emphasis from improving mi-

grant workers' lives to maximizing farm production. The strategic strength of farmworkers in the camps was again undercut as the Farm Security Administration used the camps to house farmworkers imported from Mexico, the West Indies, and Puerto Rico. And as in the previous war, farmers and government agencies used wartime exigencies and race as justifications for artificially low wages, regulated labour distribution, and strike-breaking.

Since traditional union tactics were clearly unsuccessful, a new relationship between migrant workers and unions emerged with a collaboration between the southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen in 1943. The union emerged as *padrone*, regulating labour distribution and protecting migrants. Union-supervised migration, particularly of African Americans from the south, benefitted growers, government labour supply agencies, the unions, and even the migrant workers, but the task was simply too large. When unions could not supply growers' labour needs, distribution returned to government hands, and migrant workers faced the perennial problems of relying on state power that could not be neutral.

Hahamovitch's study is a convincing argument for the uneven results of state intervention in improving farmworkers' lives and work. Although she concentrates much more upon the state and other regulatory agencies than upon the migrant farmworkers themselves, she contends that farmworkers' fate is in their own hands. In her epilogue, she insists that if they are to rise above their poverty and "enforce their own bargains," migrant workers must do so through their own organization and vigilance. (199)

Cecilia Danysk  
Western Washington University



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Paul Buhle, *From the Knights of Labor to the New World Order: Essays on Labor and Culture* (New York: Garland 1997).

THIS INSPIRING collection of essays, written over a period of twenty years, highlights those moments in the history of United States working class insurgency when the promise of emancipatory solidarity broke through the stifling ethos of bureaucratic domination endemic to much of labour. From the reformist hopes of Rhode Island Knights of Labor in the 1880s to the radical aspirations of Wobblies and anarchists pre-World War I right up to the self-management experiment of a Madison, Wisconsin newspaper in the 1970s, Paul Buhle illuminates the role of social movements, whether local, national, or international, in raising the banner of militant idealism. In addition, he casts a critical eye towards key activists from Daniel DeLeon to H.L. Mitchell to Oscar Ameringer in order to assess their contradictory contributions to that working class insurgency. Drawing on the work of Oscar Ameringer, "the socialist Mark Twain," Buhle incisively asserts, "three-quarters of a century later, radical historians are still seeking an elusive balance between the hypocrisy they uncover and the radical democratic ideals that various sectors of society continue to make their own." (209) In charting a course between uncovering hypocrisy and radical democratic ideals, the essays in this volume not only set a challenging standard for fellow historians, but also offer important lessons for labour activists and their academic allies.

The thirteen essays included in *From the Knights of Labor to the New World Order* are arranged in a rough chronological order and divided into three subsections. While the majority of essays have been previously published in a wide range of journals, all the material has been updated with a focus on determining the roots of a culture that offered democratic possibilities in the past and for the future. Moreover, it is the arena of working-class

culture that these essays shine their most "ever-lovin' light." Whether exploring the influence of the Yiddish-language press or Wobbly cartoons, Buhle demonstrates a deft hand in analyzing the constituent components of the radical discursive community in a multi-cultural United States. Yet he never loses sight of the difficulties encountered by radicals in constructing a counter-culture and an alternative order. His understanding of the failure of the Knights of Labor to sustain their movement suggests a common thread or theme running through the efforts of working-class reformers. "Too trusting in the power of the electoral process to correct industrial exploitation, naive about the capacity of small-scale cooperatives to supersede the giant corporations and unable to mobilize the political potential of the poor," Buhle argues, "the Knights were beaten." (5)

On the other hand, the underlying message of these essays is not about inevitable failures, but of valiant struggles and missed opportunities. Central to those missed opportunities is, of course, the legacy of ethnic/racial competition and conflict in the United States. Not unlike the work of other new labour historians from David Roediger to Robin Kelley, Buhle deploys the insights of C.L.R. James to note the impediments to transcending ethnic chauvinism and embracing a multiethnic/multiracial movement. Even attempts to realize such a movement by radical workers among the IWW or the Southern Tenant Farmers Union ran aground not only because of repression by the state and vigilantes, but also because of the hardships of sustaining organizational formations that could manage daily labour relations in the factories and the fields.

If the essays in this volume underline the hardships of constructing an inclusive democracy from the ground-up, they also provide the reader with a hefty dose of hope based upon what Buhle calls in one of his most combative pieces, "the persistence of rebellion." Much like Mike

Davis in his masterful book on contemporary Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, seeking an alternative future in the shards of a socialist experiment (Llano del Rio) of the past, Buhle contends that "anyone who sees a hard-fought struggle up close, win or lose, sees also a fragment of a possible future." (143) Among those recuperations of the past that offer a possible future, Buhle chronicles the moral force of anarchist and syndicalist involvement in American labour. Understanding that the demise of communism opens up the space for a re-evaluation of anarcho-syndicalism, Buhle ultimately links the US past experience with anarchism and syndicalism to an international transformation fueled by contemporary Nicaraguan and Mexican inheritors of anarcho-syndicalism.

In effect, *From the Knights of Labor to the New World Order* mobilizes a treasure-store of historical moments for critical reflection and future action. Uncovered with a brilliance that only a practitioner of weaving together oral histories and popular culture with social movements can achieve, Paul Buhle realizes what he set out in his introduction: "At best, we newer labor historians and our successors have a research basis for knowledge and insight vastly beyond that of any previous generation. As social conditions and institutions return in surprising ways to nineteenth century levels of contrasting wealth and poverty ... the insights of the labor historians have a mighty potential contribution to make to the future of democracy." With these essays Paul Buhle makes his substantial contribution both to our understanding of the past and future of democracy.

Francis Shor  
Wayne State University

Mark Aldrich, *Safety First: Technology, Labor, and Business in the Building of American Work Safety, 1870-1939* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1997).

THIS HISTORY of work hazards and their regulation lies at the intersection of several academic disciplines but at the margins of each. Labour historians, for example, have concerned themselves with struggles for control over the labour process, but have not systematically considered the impact of these conflicts on the creation and control of risks in the workplace. Similarly, economists have considered the role of market forces on employer and worker behaviour, but often failed fully to contextualize their analysis in ways that were sensitive to the social, political, and ideological environment in which decision-making by real men and women occurs. Perhaps because of the need to absorb the insights from a variety of disciplines, researchers have limited themselves to narrow slices of the story, focusing on some particular industries for some short periods of time, or on specific regulatory initiatives. While these studies generated important insights and illuminated chapters of the story, the bigger picture remained obscure. Quite simply, there was no comprehensive account of how and why work hazards changed over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Mark Aldrich's *Safety First* is the first book that begins to fill this gap. Relying extensively on statistical data, but also incorporating an impressive reading of primary and secondary sources, Aldrich has written an account of safety in mining, railroading, and manufacturing in the United States from the first industrial revolution to the outbreak of World War II. His basic approach is economic in that he views work hazards as the product of market forces that change over time. More particularly, he argues, convincingly I think, that work became more hazardous between 1870 and 1910,

but that there were significant safety improvements across much of the economy in the inter-war years. His explanation for these developments, however, is more controversial.

The book is basically divided into two parts. The first three chapters examine deteriorating safety conditions in railroading, mining, and manufacturing during the first and second industrial revolutions. While there are variations from sector to sector, Aldrich argues that more hazardous safety conditions were the product of what he describes as the American system of production. This was developed in response to conditions of capital and labour scarcity and the comparative cheapness of natural resources. The role of labour scarcity in Aldrich's analysis is somewhat problematic since, all else being equal, this condition would be expected to provide an incentive toward safer production. But, Aldrich emphasizes, liability rules so favoured employers that deaths and injuries to their workers were not seen to have an economic cost to them. As a result, the intensification of production that was a feature of the first and second industrial revolutions proceeded in an environment in which employers largely were heedless of the resulting safety carnage to their employees.

More controversial to many labour historians will be Aldrich's treatment of workers' responses to the horrific conditions they frequently encountered at work. Although he recognizes that the evidence on employees' views is thin, Aldrich is a bit too quick to conclude that workers (and the public in general) accepted, without much protest, that extraordinarily risky work as to be endured. This claim is difficult to reconcile with the trade union lobbying and widespread public support for direct state regulation of unsafe working conditions and the adoption of more generous workers' compensation systems. On the other hand, most will agree with Aldrich's conclusion that early state health and safety regula-

tion was largely ineffective, as were efforts to improve employer safety performance through exhortation and education. In the absence of effective coercion, economic self-interest led most employers to resist investing in safety.

The second part of *Safety First* is the more controversial and revisionist. With the exception of Rosner and Markowitz, historians have paid comparatively little attention to the inter-war period, and none have taken the "safety first" movement seriously. Based on his calculations of injury and fatality rates (thankfully for the nonspecialist, the data is contained in three lengthy appendices) Aldrich argues that safety improved in many, but not all, significant sectors of the American economy. He attributes this to a variety of causes including shifts in the employment mix away from dangerous jobs. But Aldrich also claims that the "safety first" movement, led by a group of safety professionals who promoted the idea that safety was a management responsibility, should be credited for its contribution to this development, particularly in sectors dominated by large employers. Indeed, these are the heroes of his book. But, consistent with his economists's outlook, Aldrich does not view the motivation and success of the safety movement in altruistic terms. Rather, safety became an issue for employers only after the advent of workers' compensation laws shifted more of the cost of work injuries and fatalities onto the shoulders of the employers. In short, without being able credibly to claim that safety paid, safety experts would not have been as successful in promoting and institutionalizing safety work as a managerial responsibility. Workers' contributions to these improvements, although indirectly acknowledged, are marginalized in Aldrich's account.

Aldrich's analysis raises many questions and undoubtedly will be subject of further research. For example, many will question the reliability of the data used to construct injury and fatality rates. Economic incentives in workers' compensa-

tion systems often produce changes in reporting behaviour, rather than safety practices. As a result, extreme caution must be exercised in the interpretation of reported injury rates. Another controversial claim is that, contrary to some earlier studies (for example, Derickson) safety improvements were achieved by reducing worker control. Indeed, this argument builds from Aldrich's claim of worker indifference to unsafe conditions. As a result, safety improvements had to come from the top down, often in the face of worker hostility. This certainly was management's view of things, but one wonders whether there is another side to this story that Aldrich does not fully tell. The assertion of employer control over production was contested by workers, but not merely because of culture and custom. For many workers, the transformation of the labour process intensified their work effort and reduced their standard of living. While older forms of job control may have become dysfunctional from a safety point of view in larger and more mechanized and integrated production units, Taylorist management techniques were not the only rational option. More, not less, worker control might have been at least as effective in improving safety, but this alternative was foreclosed by the choice of corporate employers to assert their control over the production process in order to maximize returns on their large capital investments. In short, while it is likely that safety conditions ameliorated from this transformation of the production process, employers were keen to capture as much of the benefit of that improvement and to bear as little of the cost as possible. Although this theme is touched on by Aldrich, especially in his treatment of coal mining, it is often lost in the "safety first" story.

One other limitation of Aldrich's study is that he has chosen to focus on safety exclusively and to ignore health issues. While it is understandable that he did not wish to expand an already long work, it would be useful to juxtapose the

picture Aldrich paints of the safety first movement with the contemporaneous lack of employer interest in occupational health issues and their opposition to compensation for industrial diseases. Perhaps this contrast would further emphasize the centrality of the struggle between workers and employers over the distribution of the costs and benefits of work-related death and disability.

In sum, Aldrich should be commended for undertaking the daunting task of producing the most comprehensive account of the history of work safety to date. The story he tells is a complex and nuanced one that usually avoids sweeping generalizations. While labour historians will find that workers' voices and perspectives are not heard as fully as they should be, the burden is now on them to take up where Aldrich leaves off.

Eric Tucker  
Osgoode Hall Law School,  
York University

Colin J. Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1997).

ACCORDING TO HISTORIAN Colin Davis, the shopmen's strike that swept the United States in the summer and fall of 1922 was a "titanic struggle among union workmen, railroad managers, local state authorities, and the federal government." The confrontation took on special significance because, unlike many of the other strikes of the period, shopcraft workers were well organized within their craft unions. Therefore, Davis argues, this struggle was perceived from all sides in the dispute as a test for the AFL as a whole. If the unions lost, their defeat would weaken the entire labour movement. Ultimately, the 400,000 shopcraft workers suffered a devastating defeat in their national strike, and predictions about a sub-

sequent decline of the labour movement proved all too accurate. The shopcraft workers' defeat marked the end of their bid for control of the labour process in the railroad industry, the issue which had been at the heart of the confrontation. Collapse of the 1922 strike also marked the final demise of the post-World War I labour revolt. The shopmen's strike was a significant event, and it is remarkable that *Power at Odds* is the first full treatment of this major episode in American labour history.

*Power at Odds* begins with a helpful description of work in the railway shop. During the era of steam engines it was one of the most complex workplaces of its time. The skills of the workers were as diversified as was the work itself. Davis provides a good portrait of life in these shops and of the many and varied attempts of workers to control them before World War I. The focus of the study though is the lead up to and the events of strike. While much of the book's emphasis is on the national union leadership, government, and employers, it is also sensitive to regional and local diversities in the conduct of the strike. Although some readers may have preferred even more attention to local conditions, the value of the study lies not here but rather in its broad exploration of class relationships in the 1920s.

Davis contends that many explanations for the "humiliating defeat" of the shopcraft workers were offered at the time and in the years following the strike. The leadership of the Railway Employees' Department (RED) of the AFL, which oversaw the strike, questioned the workers' willingness to fight an effective battle. This they blamed on the relative lack of union experience of many members. However, as Davis demonstrates, the workers, experienced or not in labour struggles, committed themselves to the strike. RED officials also complained that the craft structure of the shops divided the men and made them unwilling to fight a long strike. Davis' evidence effectively

counters this argument. He demonstrates that it is a mistake to link the defeat of the strike to the craft-based union structure in the shops. Davis concludes that much of this criticism from RED officials originated with their attempt to "save face and shift blame" away from themselves and their actions during the strike.

Davis' own explanation for the strike's collapse begins with an exploration of the relationship between shopcraft workers and other railroad employees. He is particularly critical of the Big Four operating brotherhoods, which devoted most of their energies to distancing themselves from the strikers. Limited support only came from them when safety of their equipment became an issue. Given the strategic position of the Brotherhoods within the industry, their lack of enthusiasm for the shopcraft workers' plight significantly weakened the movement. Davis further concludes that other railroad workers (clerks, signalmen, maintenance-of-way men) played a divisive role in 1922. Rather than striking, these workers held back hoping they could win concessions from management on a variety of proposed wage cuts and rule changes. Neither these workers nor the Big Four brotherhood even offered significant financial support to the shopcraft unions. As Davis notes "the shopmen fought alone, and were forced to bear the brunt of managerial and state-inspired Repression." (169) But even this fractured labour movement should not be over-estimated as a cause of failure.

Next, Davis turns to concerns of race and gender. While race was definitely a reality of shopfloor relations, tensions between white and minority workers had only a minor impact on the course of the strike. Davis also dismisses suggestions that shopmen failed to realize the potential benefits of encouraging their partners and other supportive women to participate in the struggle. What then does Davis consider to be the essential elements that brought such a devastating defeat upon the shopmen?

Davis argues that the primary factors contributing to the defeat lay with the RED officials, the Harding administration, and the powerful owners of the railways. On the evidence presented Davis provides a convincing argument. He shows that, in 1922, RED adopted an accommodationist stance moulded in the federation's insecure pre-war years and solidified during the years of federal control of the railways between 1917 and 1920. In these years, RED benefitted from the national state's concern to keep the railways rolling during the war. Union victories and apparent organization security were claimed largely through bluffing the state about possible job action. Insufficient attention was given to rank-and-file organization. The end of the war and the return of the railways to private control shifted dramatically the balance of power in favour of the state and the corporations. In these new circumstances, the owners called labour's bluff in 1922. RED's "leadership, and to a certain extent the membership, were ill-suited and unprepared to resist the onslaught of the railroads." (170) The state under the Harding administration and the railroad owners adopted aggressive anti-union tactics to defeat the shopcraft unions. Control was the central issue for management and every means possible appeared acceptable in this warfare with their shopmen. The state aided the owners in this harsh campaign. The Harding administration justified the companies' and its own bullying of the strikers on grounds of protecting the national economy from major disruptions. Davis's description of the state's manoeuvring throughout the strike effectively buttresses his analytical concern to draw the state back into the writing of American labour history.

Davis views the shopcrafts' defeat as a seminal event in the post-World War I labour movement. RED and the AFL now viewed the capital-state alliance as insurmountable. Retreat into craft exclusiveness and concessions to management became the order of the day until the rise of

mass-based CIO industrial unionism over a decade later. A recent addition to the distinguished series *The Working Class in American History*, *Power at Odds* is well worth the read.

Nolan Reilly  
University of Winnipeg

Staughton Lynd, ed., *"We Are All Leaders": The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1996).

THIS COLLECTION of studies of organizing in the early 1930s reflects the view that Staughton Lynd presents in his introduction: "We propose that the CIO from the beginning intended a top-down, so-called responsible unionism that would prevent strikes and control the rank and file." (7-8) The studies reflect a range of experiences including the St. Louis nutpickers' strike of 1933 by Rosemary Feuer; Peter Rachleff on the Independent Union All Workers in Minnesota; Janet Irons on the massive general textile strike of 1934; the Minneapolis labour movement of the 1930s by Elizabeth Faue; Solidarity Unionism in Barberton, Ohio by John Borso, and others.

While these studies are very specific, they are not marginal and represent major aspects of union organizing in the 1930s. Feuer points out that the nutpickers' struggle "led by African American women in a marginal industry, clearly marks the beginning of the 1930s union drive in St. Louis." (27) The great textile strike, which had been won on the ground in the South, was lost by a national leadership which "did not make the local concerns of the southern workers the centerpiece of their campaign. Concerned more about national wage standards than about the standing of southern workers in the context of their own local communities, the union did not oppose the stretch-out at all. To the contrary, as a measure of its commitment to union-management coop-

eration, the UTW [United Textile Workers] offered the assistance of its own efficiency expert to help make mills more competitive." (78) This illustrates what C.L.R. James wrote in 1950: "The bureaucracy inevitably must substitute the struggle over consumption, higher wages, pensions, education, etc., for a struggle in production."

Although these experiences seem to be long forgotten, they should not come as a great surprise. The CIO leaders, Sidney Hillman, a power in the Democratic Party, John L. Lewis, long a Republican, others, such as Philip Murray, who came out of the United Mine Workers, had a long record of bureaucratic and dictatorial control in their unions. On the other hand, the new unions were created by an upsurge in rank-and-file organizing. "Numerically, the self-organization of the rank and file in the early 1930s was at least as effective as the top-down efforts of the CIO a few years later." (3) In the Flint sit-down strike that organized GM, for example, the initiative was taken on the shop floor. The UAW and CIO leadership were annoyed at this lack of discipline, but they lacked the power to control it until later.

I am not at all sure that calling these early organizing efforts "alternative," "solidarity," or "community unions" helps to understand them, although they are clearly alternative to the bureaucratic structures of today. Communities supported these early unions, but that did not give the communities power or control. In the GM sit-down strike, for example, farmers and shopkeepers supported and contributed to the strikers. The famous Women's Emergency Brigade organized by Genora Johnson Dollinger played a crucial role in the victory. But that did not give any of these forces a voice in union affairs. As the organizing ended, community participation receded and the national union administrations reaffirmed their control.

The importance of this book cannot be overemphasized, not because the same

forms will reappear in the future, but because the source of future change lies with a rank-and-file, organized and unorganized, that can create new forms of organization. A symposium on this book appeared in the Spring-Summer 1997 issue of *Labor History*. The participants, all of them hostile to Lynd's book, reflected a range of views that ran the gamut from A to B. They also reflected the limitations of contemporary labour history. All the more reason for this book to get the widest possible circulation.

Martin Glaberman  
Wayne State University

Timothy J. Minchin, *What Do We Need A Union For?: The TWUA in the South, 1945-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1997).

"THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1945 and 1955 was clearly a good one for southern textile workers but a bad one for the TWUA [Textile Workers Union of America]." (199) Thus concludes Timothy Minchin in an important new study of southern textiles. Arguably, no industry in the United States has produced the quantity and quality of scholarship related to labour and working class history as has textiles; and this study, in an interesting and ironic way, brings that scholarship full circle. Breaking notably from the recent emphasis on corporate control and worker culture in explaining organized labour's failure in the region, the author refocuses attention on the structure of the industry and the character of the work force to explain unionism's defeat in the critical decade following World War II.

The continuing failure to organize textiles, which overwhelmingly had become a southern industry by mid-century, increasingly came to be seen as a peril to the movement as a whole. The CIO responded to this threat by launching Operation Dixie in 1946, a massive organizing drive centred on southern textiles

which like so many earlier union campaigns in the region ended in frustration and failure. In explaining that defeat, Minchin takes issue with scholars who have argued that the organizing drive was a short-term affair that effectively ended a few months after it started when such "bellwether" companies as Canon, Bibb, and Avondale beat back organizing efforts. The author of this study takes Operation Dixie more seriously, arguing that the CIO sustained the campaign for seven long years during which it won numerous representation elections, although those victories tended to be concentrated in small plants with few workers. In the end, however, the campaign clearly failed. In recounting that failure, Minchin acknowledges the validity of such traditional explanations as fierce employer resistance, white worker racism, paternalism, red-baiting, and, especially after Taft Hartley, the National Labor Relations Board's cumbersome, time-consuming enforcement machinery.

To this standard explanation, Minchin adds another important consideration. The southern textile industry and its workers prospered as never before during the war and immediate postwar years. Having never had it so good, as their employers continually reminded them, textile workers — not unreasonably — could ask labour organizers: "What do we need a union for?" Given the labour shortages and high market demand for textiles during the period, many textile companies quickly changed tactics in their efforts to maintain union free environments. Recognizing the inappropriateness of their customary heavy-handed response to union organizing campaigns, textile employers now adopted a new strategy of matching union pay scales and subtly associating such "beneficence" with the older paternalistic regime. In doing so, the author concludes, they effectively "harnessed specific social and economic changes originating in World War II [especially dramatic wage increases]

and used their power against the union." (480)

But the good times soon ended. Cut-throat competition, which temporarily had taken wartime leave from the industry, returned, and once again labour became a critical factor in the competitive equation. By now, however, textiles workers, caught up in the 20th century consumer culture, had entered into a newer version of debt personage. Home mortgages and instalment payments on automobiles and a variety of expensive hard durable goods securely wedded them to their weekly paycheck; to lose it was to lose their new "affluent" life style. Thus even if inclined to reconsider their previous skepticism about trade unionism, these workers were now too economically vulnerable to take risks, especially with an enterprise possessing such an overwhelming record of failure:

Still, the small cadre of organized operatives fought valiantly in the postwar strikes that accompanied Operation Dixie and the industry's determination to roll back union labour's wartime gains. But these strikes almost inevitably ended in defeat. Even when the union held a strong position, such as in the case of Hart Cotton Mill in Tarboro, North Carolina, where the union had everything going for it — militant workers, community support, favourable NLRB rulings — a determined employer still could prevail.

While a disaster to the union and its loyal members, however, these strikes ultimately proved a boon to unorganized textile workers. The threat to capital's hegemony represented by the TWUA's presence in the region led employers to raise wages and improve conditions. Unfortunately, these short-term advantages enjoyed by free-riding workers undermined the union that had inspired them.

Minchin argues that the "general strike" of 1951 proved the key event in the modern history of the TWUA and southern textiles. In an effort to establish a clear wage differential between union and non-union wage rates and to equalize



regional wage standards, union leaders called out all their southern locals in the South, demanding a 12 per cent wage increase. As long as unorganized workers earned wages comparable to union labour, organizers had a difficult time selling the advantages of unionization. TWUA leaders also wanted to eliminate the discrepancy between northern and southern wage rates in order to protect their relatively strong base in New England.

The giant Dan River mills quickly became the central battlefield in the strike. For the firmly entrenched UTWA, organization of workers in these mills represented its greatest success in the South — its showcase southern union. Moreover, because of its size and influence, Dan River set wage patterns for the industry; hence, a victory in these influential Virginia mills would go far toward achieving the goal of standardizing wage rates north and south. But the gamble was enormous; the union risked much and, in the end, lost everything. The company prevailed and did so with surprising ease. Thereafter, non-union textile chains took the lead in establishing wage standards in the region, further jeopardizing the viability of the TWUA's critical northern base.

Minchin makes his case with penetrating insights and shrewd observations, correcting an overemphasis in recent years on the explanatory power of worker culture. While he acknowledges the influence of race and gender in southern textiles, those issues remain secondary to the larger discussion of social and economic transformation. By bringing the political economy, unions, and the structure of the textile industry back into the analysis, he restores a necessary dimension to the story. In developing this analysis, the author makes good use of oral testimony to complement an impressive research effort in archival sources.

Unfortunately, the author's relentlessly revisionist discourse somewhat compromises his considerable achievements. In a history as contemporary as

this, new historiographical ground is broken on almost every page. Consequently, rhetoric about historians' previous neglect seems rather incongruous. Even more troublesome, Minchin's revisionist preoccupation perhaps leads him to claim too much for his analysis. Generalizations based on the quite atypical and ephemeral conditions that existed at the end of World War II, for example, would appear to have limited application to the larger story of southern textiles. Similarly, projecting the "general strike" of 44,000 textile workers in 1951 as a major turning point in labour history as important (or even more important) than the uprising of 1934 or Operation Dixie seems a stretch. Even if the TWUA could have won, which Minchin's own analysis makes implausible, what would have been accomplished other than the accelerated departure of the industry from the south as well as the north? A convincing case for the long-term significance of the strike still needs to be made.

Gary M. Fink  
Georgia State University

Nathan Godfried, *WCFL: Chicago's Voice of Labor, 1926-78* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1997).

THIS HISTORY of North America's only labour-owned radio station contributes to both labour history and the history of broadcasting. The Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) began the radio station WCFL as an alternative to the capitalist-owned broadcasters. It hoped that workers could counter some of the anti-labour propaganda sponsored by business in existing media. The first station manager, Edward Nockels, fought against the emerging monopoly of the "radio trust" while publicizing the union movement and trying to provide entertainment to his working-class audience. Not surprisingly, WCFL faced obstacles. The businesses that had already invested in broadcasting argued

against the existence of any alternative to commercial radio, including labour-owned radio, and suggested to the Federal Radio Commission that if any deviation from commercial radio were allowed, it would threaten the survival of the "best system in the world." The state accepted the existing industry's argument that commercial broadcasting on stations owned by business was the best model to provide "freedom" of speech on the air and that a labour union-owned station would not serve the broad public interest. The FRC assigned WCFL an inconvenient frequency and limited its power and hours of operation. Despite being marginalized, WCFL supported striking workers by getting union information out, and valiantly, if not always successfully, tried to create a working-class culture.

Unfortunately the station also lacked the financial support of the national union movement. The American Federation of Labor was suspicious of Nockels, who AFL officials felt was too confrontational, and without institutional support WCFL missed its opportunity to develop a non-commercial character. The station's managers, especially after Nockels' death, realized that to survive in a capitalist economy the station had to adopt capitalist methods. WCFL accepted advertising, developed programming that was designed to garner an audience rather than serve working people, and began broadcasting the network programming of its old nemesis the NBC. Despite the transformation into a commercial enterprise, the station received criticism from both the left and right. The privately-owned stations accused WCFL of spreading labour propaganda on the one hand on, on the other, of broadcasting commercially sponsored programming rather than providing the educational programming that WCFL had committed itself to in the FRC licence application. The Congress of Industrial Organizations also criticized the station. It accused the AFL of censorship and of denying CIO affiliated unions access to the air. Such criticism probably hastened the

station's evolution toward a commercial station like those stations owned by business. By examining the evolution of organized labour's use of broadcasting, the book provides a new dimension to the different strategies of the AFL and the CIO and the struggles between the two rival organizations.

Once WCFL shed its oppositional character and became a full-fledged commercial station, it became profitable and was able to subsidize the operation of the CFL, but it lost its democratic and class nature. "Business unionism" and a management ethos became the dominant culture of WCFL. The CFL was unable to provide the capital necessary for the station to move into television and labour lost its best opportunity to provide an alternative to the business-owned media. When the station failed to respond successfully to changes in the broadcasting industry of the 1970s, the CFL sold it to a subsidiary of that quintessential new-right phenomenon, the Amway Corporation.

Godfried has provided a new angle to the story of the emergence of commercial broadcasting during the 1920s and 1930s by examining the failure of an alternative. He confirms Robert McChesney's contention that the state did not provide a level playing field and encouraged the development of a business monopoly of broadcasting in the United States. This book's account of Nockels's fight against the "radio trust" and a pro-business regulatory apparatus is particularly illuminating. The same can be said for the author's discussion of Louis G. Caldwell's role as an intellectual warrior for business radio, an analysis that lays bare much of the mystification surrounding the origins of "free-enterprise" broadcasting. Although Godfried does not explicitly draw the conclusion, his narrative also seems to indicate that as long as broadcasters accept the form of commercial radio, any democratic or working-class culture will be marginalized.

As is common among histories of radio stations, the discussion of the content

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of the broadcasts is scant in this treatment, undoubtedly the result of the poor preservation of programming. It is doubly frustrating here because in theory we have in WCFL a rare example of what working-class organic intellectuals offered as an alternative to commercially produced popular culture. From what Godfried was able to recover, these efforts on the part of the station's owners were disappointing. The author tries to put these efforts in the best light. To take one example, Godfried makes a weak suggestion that the broadcast of sports on WCFL reflected the station's recognition that working-class people were interested in sports. The basis upon which the labour-owned station made its decision seems little different from the motivation behind NBC's decision to broadcast these athletic contests.

Media both reflect their community and shape it. The author observes that in the absence of a broadly based alternative cultural movement in the United States, WCFL could not broadcast artists from a working-class cultural community. Chicago had no Bertolt Brecht, so WCFL drew upon many of the same musicians and writers as the privately-owned stations. Labour-owned radio was not labour-radio, because it was born and had to live in a capitalist society.

This book stands as a significant contribution to the history of broadcasting and has much to say to those interested in the history of the American labour movement. Godfried has written a nuanced account of the inter-relationship between business, the state and organized labour in the development of a new technology of communications.

Jeff A. Webb  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press 1997).

THE HISTORY of modern dance in the United States is usually told as a history of aesthetic developments disconnected from broader contexts of social change and political conflict. Ellen Graff challenges that narrative in *Stepping Left*, arguing instead that during the 1930s revolutionary dancers affiliated with the Communist Party and other socialist or leftist politics had a significant impact on the newly emerging "modern dance." She explores how competing visions of modern dance in the 1930s, including notions of audiences and concepts of artistic expression, struggled for legitimacy and dominance. Parallel to current debates about the place of political content in art, Graff argues, "[t]hroughout a critical period in the development of American dance, writers and dancers were engaged in passionate dialogues concerning the relationship of art and politics." (13) *Stepping Left* explores the contributions of revolutionary dancers, such as Anna Sokolow, Jane Dudley, and Sophie Maslow, who often trained and worked with bourgeois artists like Martha Graham, but whose politics were rooted in their working-class, immigrant backgrounds, early experiences in settlement houses arts programs, and contemporary political commitments.

The economic crises of the 1930s led not only to anxieties over the collapse of capitalism, and a concomitant rise in nationalist rhetoric, but also opened up spaces for revolutionary political activism. Well-documented are the demands by labour unions for recognition, workers protection, and job control. Likewise, historians have explored in detail the activities of the Communist Party and socialist movements, and their influence on New Deal politics. Less well known to either dance historians or labour historians, however, are the cultural politics of these radical movements. *Stepping Left* takes us

into that world, examining the popularity of dance in Communist Party pageants, union hall performances, and benefits to raise money for international causes like the Spanish Civil War. Graff traces the impact on dance aesthetics of this political involvement by choreographers and dancers at a time when the "collision of the two revolutionary worlds sparked an explosion of choreographic activity. The antiacademy and antielitist basis of modern dance fit nicely within the mission of proletarian culture. ..." (7)

One of the most engaging chapters in *Stepping Left* explores how dancers created pageants and parades for labour union and Communist Party events that often challenged traditional divisions between dancers and audiences. Radical dancers, responding to guidelines by the Communist Party, attempted to break down barriers between elitist or privileged art forms and political activism. When revolutionary dance groups claimed the importance of dance as a weapon in class struggle, Graff demonstrates, they meant not only that dance could bring revolutionary content to working-class audiences, but also that "workers could participate in forms of mass or lay dance, which required little technical training, and through the act of dancing express ideas of social importance and revolutionary significance." (35)

Less concerned with professional aesthetic standards than political expression, revolutionary dancers came under criticism by dance reviewers for creating pedantic, stereotypical forms of agitprop. By the mid-1930s, in an attempt to widen their audience and legitimize their professional status, these dancers moved to the proscenium stage where their "[e]mphasis increasingly shifted toward the visual experience of dance, away from the kinesthetic and experiential — the participatory." (45) Nonetheless, Graff argues, radical dancers continued to experiment with collaborative forms of composition and collective work practices. Seeking

professional acceptance, Graff writes, these dancers faced serious challenges: "How to dance the oppression of the working class, the exploitation by a capitalist society, the threat of fascism, and the horrors of racism, yet not depend upon mimetic action?" (60) Using still photos, reviews by critics, and debates in dance magazines, Graff traces the struggles of revolutionary dancers to find choreographic solutions to that dilemma. Dance historians are often hampered in their analyses of live performances because of the limitations of visual resources. There are a few filmed performances from the 1930s but for the most part Graff must rely on photographs and written descriptions of the dances. Working within these limitations, Graff has a keen ability to analyze the images and draw rich conclusions about the meaning of bodily forms, staging, costumes, etc. Ultimately, she argues, despite their sincere political commitments, for most of these dancers, "modern dance was first an art form and only secondarily an instrument of social change. These dancers took the charged political atmosphere of the 1930s as fodder for artistic ambition. In many cases their impression of political issues was emotional and intuitive. ..." (75) This, Graff argues, helps explain the shifts that took place by the mid-1930s that increasingly emphasized artistic professionalism.

The most prominent form of political activism for radical dancers in the 1930s was their involvement with the WPA-sponsored Federal Dance Project (FDP). The project had contradictory goals of establishing professional standards and providing economic relief, contradictions that created unresolved tensions in dancers' relations with administrators. As a result, collective bargaining, picketing, and other strike actions introduced dancers to the politics of labour relations. Along with these struggles, Graff explores the cultural politics of FDP-sponsored performances. For example, *How Long Brethren*, choreographed by Helen

Tamaris, deals with the struggles of African Americans, an issue of deep concern for many radical groups during the Depression. Graff's analysis of the dance exposes the racial politics of 1930s, white radicals like Tamaris who sought to articulate through choreography their empathy with African Americans' struggles yet never confronted the underlying racism in which "white dancers were grabbin' the spotlight from poor darkies' faces." (95)

Graff's central argument, that New York dancers in the 1930s engaged in a dialogic negotiation between aesthetic and political imperatives, provides a crucial corrective to mainstream narratives of the history of American modern dance. For radical dancers, art was a site to engage the audience, to use performing bodies to critique social and political problems. The concluding chapter of *Stepping Left* examines how Cold War politics and anti-communist hysteria placed a chilling silence on artistic explorations of political ideals. This oppressive atmosphere privileged the work of artists like Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey who championed a modern dance aesthetic premised on claims of artistic universalities. In addition to national political forces, structural changes in funding and support meant that dancers were increasingly finding teaching jobs at colleges and universities, which provided performance venues and more opportunities to train students. Such opportunities, however, had the effect of separating dancers "from the working-class movement, from an explicitly political agenda, and from the structures of social activism within urban communities." (169)

*Stepping Left* offers new insights into the roots of modern dance and the exciting political ferment of the New York cultural scene in the 1930s. Graff, however, does less well exploring the impact of dance on radical political organizations and ideologies. While she examines pageants and parades, and discusses the impact for audiences, she does not consider

the reasons party leaders used dance and other art forms, or more importantly, how aesthetics influenced political agendas. Thus, Graff leaves uninterrogated the disciplinary divisions that continue to limit our understanding of the dialogic nature of cultural aesthetics and political formations. This book, then, remains a rich addition to dance history but one that adds less to our understanding of 1930s radical political practices.

Wendy Kozol  
Oberlin College

Jim Longhi, *Woody, Cisco, & Me: Seamen Three in the Merchant Marine* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1997).

OK, YOU ARE JIMMY LONGHI, and this is a day in your life. You arrive at the National Maritime Union hall in New York City, where "the flavor of the crowd was definitely old sea dog misted over by the smell of whiskey," ready to sign up for the Merchant Marine with your buddy, Cisco Houston. But he is not there, and despite being a socialist who was "raised on anti-fascism," fear starts to get the better of you. But before you have a chance to leave, Cisco shows up, bringing with him Woody Guthrie, the well-known Okie folksinger who has "lit up images of a suffering America" and the struggles of poor farmers and workers. You tell him that it is "an honor to ship out with you," but Woody's only interested in whether you can play a musical instrument. After much debate, you sign up for three jobs in the steward department, get your union card, join in a conga line led by the National Maritime Unions' (NMU) Ladies Auxiliary, and sing a few songs. Then, the three of you undergo a medical inspection, where you learn the Guthrie is "pretty well endowed" for "a little guy." You finally get on your first ship, the *William B. Travis*, only to hear an experienced sailor say that it is a "steel coffin" and a "piece of junk." Because of new

wartime production methods — “Mass production my ass!” — ships are welded rather than rivetted, thus making them more likely to roll during a storm. With that bit of new information quickly displacing whatever notions you had about the poetry of the sea, you stow your gear and find the chief steward. After a short sail to Jersey City, the three of you head back to New York’s Little Italy, where you introduce Cisco and Woody to friends at *L’Unita del Popolo*, the Italian anti-fascist weekly where you have been working. Then you return home to your girl, Gabrielle Gold, a legal secretary and impassioned leftist, who has “the sexiest pair of legs” you have ever seen. After a dinner of spaghetti and lots of red wine, you head to a party at Leadbelly’s house, where you meet Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry, Laura Duncan, and Josh White, some of the best blues and folk singers around. Leadbelly plays, Gabrielle says, she may not understand the words, but she can feel what he means, and after much celebration, you return home. Tomorrow, you ship out.

This brief summary of a single day, which takes Longhi 20 pages to tell, hopefully conveys what is special about this book. The book moves at a break-neck pace, combining elements of both farce and tragedy as it maps Guthrie, Houston, and Longhi as they join the merchant marine and make three trips across the Atlantic. Unlike most histories of the military, which celebrate heroism as a natural adjunct of patriotism, Longhi’s tale of the Seamen Three is driven primarily by the “frantic fear of death” which colours so much of their experiences. When informed of his decision, Gabrielle tells Jimmy he is “shipping out because you see Cisco and Woody Guthrie as romantic heroes, and you’re so goddamned impressionable, you’d follow them on a suicide mission if they asked you.” In retrospect, Longhi feels she was half right, as it was their camaraderie borne of fear as much as their anti-fascist politics or bravery which forged such strong bonds among

Houston, Guthrie, and Longhi. On their first trip, the three found themselves in “Coffin Corner,” the most vulnerable position in the convoy, and the knowledge that they might be attacked at any moment quickly translated into a continual preoccupation with anything that might serve as a distraction. The grandest of these projects was undoubtedly the construction of the Woody Guthrie Anticyclone and Ship Speeder-Upper Aerodynamic Wind Machine, which quickly came to captivate the attention of many of the crew. The machine, according to Guthrie, would make the ship go faster, and thus keep them from harm. Dozens of men joyfully participated in the elaborate process of assembling the wind machine, although there were dissenters; the anarchist Davey Bananas derided the machine as “a crock of mystic shit!” and its builders as “fetish worshippers.” And while not a devout believer in Woody’s contraption, Longhi details how the machine’s seemingly magical powers, most of which lay in Guthrie’s ability to spin a majestic tale out of the barest of details, helped sailors to take their minds off of the U-boats nearby and a storm which nearly capsized the ship. His telling of the wind machine story does much to convey the bittersweet nature of life in the merchant marine: the joy of camaraderie in the midst of intense periods of fear.

The Seamen Three spent most of their working day in the galley, and Longhi quickly learns the importance of food in the merchant marine: “A good feeder is a good ship. A bad feeder is a prison.” Houston and Longhi worked hard, fearful of dissatisfied soldiers: “If a messman served eggs not made to exact specification,” Longhi remembers, “he ran the risk of getting the offending eggs smack in his face.” Guthrie, however, was not nearly as diligent, although he always seemed to avoid the trouble that awaited others in the kitchen. Woody’s artistic impulses, whether his desire to play music or the long hours he devoted to hand-drawn menus, repeatedly interfered with his du-

ties setting tables, serving meals, and washing dishes. But Longhi's account also makes it clear that the soldiers on board were complicit in Woody's avoidance of work; as one gunner shouted, "The dishes can wait, our economical education can't!" On their second trip, Longhi ships out as second cook, which meant that he was in charge of breakfast and all the ship's baking. His instruction at the Cook and Bakers School, however, had ill prepared him for this task. "Because of the general wartime food shortage," Longhi writes, "our education was going to be mostly theoretical." Longhi's first attempt at baking bread resulted in a kitchen fire, and he feared-meeting his death at the hands of hungry sailors until, fortunately, he discovers one who had been a chef at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York. *Woody, Cisco, & Me* conveys the demands of galley work on Merchant Marine ships, and does so always in humorous fashion.

Coming from a leftist background, Longhi was a strong union supporter, although his membership in the NMU was tempered by the realization of the potentially deadly consequences: "I was proud to hold the card, but it felt like a living thing in my hand — a dangerous living thing." Longhi details how the split between left and right within the NMU filtered down to the ships. Cisco and Longhi faced cries of "Red" and "Communist" when running for the position of union chairman, while Woody weighed in in his own unique manner with lines such as, "If a man's a good union man, it don't matter one damn if he's left wing, right wing, or chicken wing." Despite the Red-baiting, the NMU radicals were successful in setting union policy on the ships, and won support largely through Woody's musical campaigns. "Talking Merchant Marine," which celebrated both the merchant marine and the NMU, got the sailors singing in unison with lines like "I'm a union man from head to toe, I'm USA and CIO," while Woody played a guitar with a sign proclaiming, "This Machine Kills Fascists."

Guthrie's music was also popular in times of crisis. During one battle with German U-boats, the Seamen Three got their instruments and had hundreds of seamen singing "Reuben James," Woody's song lamenting the war dead. Also interesting is Longhi's assessment of the power of the union versus that of the "criminal underworld." When NMU members running a crooked craps game threatened Longhi after he shut them down, Woody and Cisco offered to watch his back. This was not enough, and Longhi turned instead to men on the ship who were "connected" to protect him, since their reach extended beyond the union hall to the streets.

Like other fellow-travellers after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, Houston, Guthrie, and Longhi were coloured by the Communist Party's support of the American war effort as well as ideas about the postwar world. While in Oran, the Seamen Three debated radicals in the Maritime Union of France over the merits of Browder's Teheran policy of co-operation between the United States and the Soviet Union. And while only a brief incident, the book is suffused with the spirit of that particular moment in Communist Party history. While in 1940 Woody wrote songs celebrating the Soviet invasion of Finland, by 1942 he was telling Longhi that "the solution of the workers' problem has to wait. The war has to have top priority." Given Longhi's obvious talent for writing about politics as people lived them, I wanted him to comment upon the shifts in the official Communist position on the war, as well as others controversies such as that of Browderism. Did the Seamen Three follow their radicals in the postwar period, given the turn to the left taken by William Foster and others in the context of the Cold War?

*Woody, Cisco, & Me* also briefly touches on the segregation of blacks as challenged through Woody's music. Upon learning that black soldiers were confined to a small room on the ship, Woody, Cisco, and Jimmy moved their mobile musical show to defy the spatial

restrictions. When white soldiers demanded that the three return to sing for them, Woody refused to move unless the blacks could come as well. Eventually, he succeeds, temporarily suspending the rules. More horrifying is Longhi's description of hitting a Muslim longshoreman in Arzew, an incident which violates his sense of common "brotherhood." Longhi does not attempt to explain away his actions. Instead, he lets the reader judge what is his ugly failure to live up to his ideal of solidarity.

*Woody, Cisco, & Me* touches on many of the important histories of the World War II period — labour relations, Communist politics, racial segregation — and it does so with Longhi's lively, almost seductive, manner of telling stories.

Todd McCallum  
Queen's University

Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1997).

SIDNEY HOOD ended his days as a repugnant reactionary. A Cold War warrior since the 1940s, he was, for many years, as undiluted a voice of an expansive anti-communism as one could hope to find in American academic circles (where there are many who compete for such standing). Unlike some other repentant radicals, such as Theodore Draper, however, Hook's particular political Rubicon, once crossed, virtually ended his substance as an intellectual, and in his chosen discipline, it is the Marxist philosophy of the young Hook, in the still invaluable books *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933) and *From Hegel to Marx* (1936), that remain, ironically, as contributions to thought. Later Hook productions rarely, if ever, moved past a crass ideological need to unmask the sinister totalitarian countenance that grimaced behind every radical analytic exercise or project of social transformation. If all of this were not

enough to earn him the disfavour of any who embrace a "left progressive" orientation to the world, let alone a Marxist insistence on the necessity of the very revolutionary socialism that the Hook of the 1920s and a part of the 1930s espoused, the older Hook left us his self-satisfied advertisement for himself. Hook's 1987 autobiography, *Out of Step*, was a wilfully egocentric statement, a self-portrait of cantankerous pomposity, scaffolded on arrogance and the smug complacency of a mind and body numbed by messianic conviction that its every idea and act had historically been guided by a relentlessly righteous opposition to "evil" that few appreciated for the saving grace that it obviously was.

There is a generational divide that, very loosely, distinguishes right and left. Conservatives value the supposed moderations of age, and ensconce power and privilege in the elderly in the hope that this will secure society and its needed stabilities. Revolutionaries embrace youth and its potential rebelliousness; no revolutionary process, save that of Thermidorian reaction, has been paced by the old. Leftists, deep in their souls, feel strongly that they are at their best, whatever the excesses, in youth; if deserving to be remembered for any historical contribution it will be because they carry some of their immature idealism and uncompromising passion into the middle and older years of accomplishment, not because they have jettisoned the principles and zeal that marked a coming of political age in some kind of negotiated barter, or worse, with the status quo.

This makes Sidney Hook a tough sell for a socialist biographer. Christopher Phelps insists, however, that there is much to learn from a close scrutiny of Hook's years of commitment to revolutionary socialism. Not really a full-scale biography (it will be criticized, given the fashion of the moment, for telling us too little about the personal life of Hook, symbolized by the cropping out of the cover photograph his second wife, a beau-



tiful woman who met Hook when she enrolled in his courses in the 1930s), Phelps's study is a closely argued intellectual history, focused on the philosophical content of Hook's youthful Marxist engagement with the pragmatism of his mentor, John Dewey. He explores how Hook, a Brooklyn Jew for whom ethnicity was apparently not a central concern, came in contact with radicalism in his high school and City College of New York days, being pushed to refine his logical skills by the exacting philosophical dualism of Morris Cohen. Entering a doctoral program at Columbia, Hook grappled with the conjuncture of Deweyan "experimentalism," with its insistence on the inseparable relation of knowledge and action, denial of absolute, platonic "truth," and commitment to the democratic extension of social life, and Marx's historical materialism. Excelling as a student, Hook earned Dewey's profound regard for his capabilities.

Converted to pragmatism early in 1926, Hook spent the next three years working through his *rapprochement* of philosophy and revolutionary socialism. In explorations of the debt to and departure from Hegelianism evident in Marx, translation of and engagement with Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, brushing up against Max Eastman in bitter debate, travels to Germany and Moscow, and connections with (although not membership in) the Communist Party of the United States, Hook solidified his philosophy in an activist appreciation of the Marxist/Dewey conjuncture. Securing an instructorship at New York University in 1930, Hook worked with the Communist Party, authored defences of communism, kept something of an open mind with respect to the emergence of a Trotskyist critique of Stalinism, and eventually found himself assailed for his philosophical "revisionism" by the Party apparatus.

This drove Hook increasingly in the direction of the anti-Stalinist left and, by 1933-1934, he had formally connected

with A.J. Muste's American Workers Party (AWP), a body he would, in alliance with his NYU colleague, James Burnham, guide toward an eventual merger with James P. Cannon's Trotskyist Communist League of America (CLA) (Opposition). Both the AWP and the CLA had, in 1934, led major class struggles in, respectively, Toledo and Minneapolis, and they appeared to Hook to be the embodiment of an activist Marxism in which the philosophy of interpreting the world actually fused with the struggle to change it. No sooner had Hook seemingly joined the revolutionary fray, however, than he withdrew from the Muste-Cannon Workers Party of the United States. He would remain committed to the anti-Stalinist left for a time and prove invaluable as a personal force persuading John Dewey to chair the 1937 Mexico hearings of the Provisional Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials.

But in the last three years of the 1930s, Hook's trajectory was increasingly differentiated from the ideas and practices of Trotsky, in particular, and the anti-Stalinist left in general. By the end of the decade Hook's agreements with revolutionary socialism were receding as he struck out, repeatedly, against an abstracted, generalized communist politics, which he now saw, in sharp contradiction to earlier insistence on the historically specific particularities of the revolutionary process, as disfigured by precisely the kind of categorical imperative his pragmatist Marxism had once questioned and refused. In the process his careful defence of the Deweyan need to scrutinize scientifically and logically the process of historical construction and his Marxist embrace of class analysis and support for social transformation were debased and distorted, disintegrating in the post-1940 crash of Hook's democratic socialist world view into the fearmongering conservatism that fetishized the totalitarian/freedom opposition about to fuel the

debilitating political ugliness of the Cold War.

I am somewhat embarrassed to "pot" this complicated history in this way. A short review offers no chance to elaborate on the intriguing twists, turns, and timing of Hook's development. Phelps is to be congratulated for providing an always clear and usually reliable roadmap with which to traverse the trajectory of America's most brilliant student of the philosophy of Marx. This treatment of Hook is much needed and long overdue, and throws light on corners of Marxist thought long darkened by inattention. (And, of course, it is unlikely that any biographer willing to adequately chart the contours of Hook's entire life, and treat seriously his years advocating a supposedly "neoliberal" defence of "the free world," would have the inclination or ability to explore this brief youth of Marxist study and reflection.) Moreover, in what is perhaps his major purpose, Phelps prods all Marxists to see that it is no longer possible to simply insist, as has a tradition of Marxist philosophy, that pragmatism and Marxism are always incompatible, and that Hook's youthful attempt to conjoin these supposedly inherently contradictory philosophical systems contained the seeds of his future free-fall into anti-communism.

That said, Phelps' approach to Hook leaves a series of nagging questions. Hook's Marxism was always curiously ambivalent, perhaps even uncharacteristically unclear, with respect to the significance and centrality to the revolutionary project of dialectical materialism. Given that James Burnham's exit from Marxism, which paralleled Hook's in some ways, was ostensibly theoretically rooted in a longstanding refusal of dialectical materialism, and that Hook's initial forceful repudiation of Trotsky was philosophically sustained on a logical critique of dialectics as theology, it is odd that an intellectual history addressing the important contribution of a Marxist philosopher pays so little attention to what is obvi-

ously a central philosophical tenet of Marxism, and one that American radical philosophers have always grappled with awkwardly. This is not unrelated to Phelps' reading of pragmatism, which Hook would, in his later anti-Marxist period, defend as a peculiarly American antidote to continental European and Oxford systems of thought. In its best Deweyian formulation there is no question that a pragmatism premised on experimentation, scientific method, and the need for a democratic order to overcome the constraints of systematic oppression and exploitation could be highly congruent with the practical needs of revolutionary socialism and its historical, materialist method. Just as Marxist historians have appreciated the need to work in an empirical idiom, Marxist philosophers, as Hook's early 1930s publications insisted, can certainly accommodate the theoretical premises of a great deal of the pragmatic orientation, as long as the worst, non-Deweyian associations of this "American" philosophy, accentuating the give-and-take negotiation of compromise as an absolute, ideological value, are not accepted. Yet in the actual constraints on knowledge that an undemocratic, market-driven, capitalist order, whatever its ideological proclamations of "freedom," creates and sustains, lie inevitably the possibilities of a distorting pragmatism. This is not unlike, within history as a discipline, the problematic ways in which empirical research, if not consciously framed as Marxist, can easily tend in the direction of a fact-fetishizing empiricism.

Phelps, through the writings and movement of Sidney Hook, raises these and other questions for Marxists. To read his book on its own terms is necessarily to grapple with them. I was grateful to be pushed to do so. Yet, however much the analytic stick can and should be bent favourably towards the young Hook, it is perhaps overdoing it to break the shaft decidedly in two, holding up the snapped, prized short end and then withdrawing it from the field of criticism.

If Hook's youth was that of a revolutionary socialist, and his philosophical writings a lasting legacy for Marxism, Phelps may be too willing to give the Sidney of the interwar years every benefit of the doubt. His serious activism, after all, was remarkably brief (and we remain largely uninformed about his practical, organizational contributions to the left). Hook's choice of political parties could be considered an evasion of the "logic" of his own anti-Stalinist politics. In joining Muste's AWP, rather than the CLA of Cannon, Shachtman, Spector, and Abern, it might be suggested that Hook was acting out the more dubious features of American pragmatism's program, with its engrained hostility to a class politics of revolutionary internationalism. After helping to engineer the fusion of the AWP and the CLA (and later aiding in the Trotskyist entry into the Socialist Party), at the same time standing somewhat outside the critical maelstrom of party formation, Hook retreated further into the "independence" of his own moralism. There the tensions of his philosophy and his politics would work themselves out in a late 1930s ambiguity, where the balance of deeds and a discourse of left-leaning anti-Stalinism oscillated, tilting left and right.

The ultimate tragedy was that Sidney Hook was not alone in this balancing act; nor was his eventual, precipitous movement to the right. A similar process of disillusionment swept many New York intellectuals, as well as a generation of lesser known dissidents, into the camp of reaction; a twinned process rolled back the militancy of a critically powerful labour upsurge. Hardly a purely personal, "out of step" idiosyncrasy, this "dialectic of defeat," a product of capitalist containment, Stalinist squandering, and social democratic capitulations spent the communist ideals of a generation of youthful rebels and tabled the prospects of protest for decades.

Sidney Hook at least left those of us committed to revolutionary socialism

something more than his memoirs of redemption. That is what Phelps, rightly and usefully, wants to recover. But in that act of recovery, Phelps perhaps softpeddles too much, excusing areas of Hook's thought and practice, even in the best years of his 1928-1935 Marxism, that demand more than an always generously one-sided interpretation. I may offer a slightly more critical and contentious reading of the Sidney Hook of this period, however, only because of a youthfully excessive difficulty in getting past a Cold War thinker who endorsed the aims of McCarthyism if not all of its methods, denounced the radicalism of the 1960s as cultural and political barbarism, rationalized the US presence in Vietnam, found his retirement home in Palo Alto's Hoover Institute, and, along with Jeane Kirkpatrick, Frank Sinatra, and other notables was feted by Ronald Reagan in 1985, treated to a White House luncheon and awarded the highest civilian honour, the Medal of Freedom.

Phelps sees no relation between the Sidney Hook of these 45 years of reaction, and the Hook of the early 1930s. On one level he is right. The young Sidney Hook was what was best in Hook, and what was best in Hook is worth preserving. The final questions, not really posed by Phelps, have rather large implications: could what was indeed best in Hook have been better and, if so, would it have made a difference? To push the query to this corner brings contemporary socialist academics, whose ideas and actions are unfortunately largely unconnected to the wider mobilizations of class and party that alone sustain Marxism as more than philosophy, rather close to a powerfully necessary autocritique.

Bryan D. Palmer  
Queen's University

Sam Tanenhaus, *Whittaker Chambers: A Biography* (New York: Random House 1997).

IN THE INTRODUCTION to the 1997 edition of his book on the Hiss-Chambers case, Allen Weinstein notes that the story of the two men is so bizarre and fantastic it should be written by a novelist. Actually, I have always envisioned it as an opera. Such scenes as the moment when Hiss confronts Chambers before HUAC and asks to see his teeth simply demand a musical setting. Imagine the trio: Hiss singing, "Will you open your mouth," Chambers replying, "You know me, Alger," and Nixon intoning *sotto voce*, "This will make my career."

Though neither a librettist nor a novelist, Sam Tanenhaus tells the story well. His extensively researched biography of Whittaker Chambers is, as promised, definitive. Nonetheless, at least as far as "the case" is concerned, the book contains little that is new. Both Chambers himself in his 1951 best-seller, *Witness*, and Weinstein in *Perjury* (1978) have offered essentially the same account.

No stunning new evidence has surfaced in the interim. The recently released VENONA transcripts of the partially deciphered KGB telegrams intercepted during World War II, while revealing much about Julius Rosenberg's espionage activities and substantiating many allegations of the confessed Soviet agent Elizabeth Bentley, contain only one document that may or may not refer to Hiss. The other material that Tanenhaus collected corroborates some parts of Chambers' story, but, except for a Hungarian document the author did not see, does not deal with Hiss. The case, in large part, still hangs on the testimony that Chambers gave in public and to the FBI.

Such a paucity of new evidence does not necessarily exonerate Hiss. Chambers claimed that he had worked for the Soviet military intelligence, not the KGB. Thus, it is possible that documents about the two men's undercover activities may

someday emerge from some as-yet-unopened Soviet military archive. Moreover, given the fact that so many other people accused of transmitting unauthorized information to the Soviets turn out to have done so, it is likely that Hiss did so too. If he did not, he has given historians little help, for he went to his grave without offering an alternative explanation for what he did do during the 1930s, thus ceding the narrative to his accuser.

What complicates the matter is that Chambers was really weird. He came from a seriously dysfunctional, yet artistically pretentious, family with a crazy grandmother, an often absent, bisexual father, a flamboyant, histrionic mother, and a suicidal younger brother. Chambers took after them all. He was unstable, grandiose, and self-destructive. Tanenhaus describes his protagonist's aberrations, but does not seem to feel that they detract from his veracity. Since so much of Chambers' story remains uncorroborated, Tanenhaus might have been wise to evince a bit more skepticism about the often paranoid behaviour of someone with such a flair for self-dramatization.

He may have been dazzled by his subject's brilliance. For Chambers was an extraordinarily gifted writer who excelled in every genre he tried. He was the leading undergraduate poet at Columbia in the early 1920s, a master of proletarian fiction in the Communist party ten years later, the most effective prose stylist on *Time* magazine in the 1940s, and the most powerful ex-Communist memoirist of the 1950s.

But success as a writer did not, it seems, appease Chambers's inner demons; and he may have turned to politics the way other depressed people turned to drink. Communism, for him, was an emotional release, not a commitment to a specific social and political program. Thus, it is easy to see why he would gravitate toward the semi-secret revolutionary cult that the party seemed to be in the 1920s and why he was drawn into its more conspiratorial activities a few years later.

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What is harder to understand, however, is why the CP would have sent Chambers underground — if, in fact, it did. He was not a reliable cadre; by the early 1930s, he had already defected and recanted. Tanenhaus offers little guidance. Relying more on speculation than documentation, he peppers his text with “probably’s” and “must have been’s” and suggests that party leaders and their Soviet advisors hoped Chambers’ WASP pedigree might open doors that had been closed to the CP’s more ethnically challenged members.

Though Tanenhaus adds little to the well-known story of his subject’s disaffection from communism and subsequent career as a witness, he does offer considerable new information on Chambers’ work as a *Time/Life* staffer after he left the party. His literary gifts and hard-core anti-communism quickly endeared him to *Time*’s publisher Henry Luce. Once he became the magazine’s foreign editor in 1944, he imposed his own ideological grid on its international coverage, often by rewriting or ignoring his correspondents’ reports from the field.

There was a seamlessness to all of Chambers’ activities after he turned against the CP. Both his journalism and his personal testimony were part of his self-imposed mission to warn the West about godless communism. And, to a certain extent, he succeeded. As much as any other single figure — with perhaps the obvious exception of J. Edgar Hoover — Chambers ratched up the emotional level of the anti-communist crusade that dominated American politics during the early years of the Cold War.

He would never wield such influence again. Though he became a kind of midwife and guru to the emerging conservatism of the late 1950s and early 1960s, he was essentially a single-issue man and once anti-communism faded from the political stage, he did too.

Though Chambers certainly deserves a full biography, it is important to place this book within its contemporary con-

text. What purpose does it serve to disinter the Hiss case yet again? Tanenhaus claims that the case remains significant because of “passionate belief of so many that Hiss must be innocent” (434), but those “many” are now a mere handful of easily ignored and rapidly aging partisans.

Rather, I would argue, the Chambers biography belongs to the growing genre of post-Cold War triumphalism that justifies the internal security measures of the 1940s and 1950s by showing that they were directed against a genuine threat. It is, of course, no longer possible to deny that Communists spied for the USSR. Nor, as David Holloway shows, can we overlook the way in which the efforts of Soviet agents like Klaus Fuchs intensified the Cold War. Still, in assessing the nature of the threat, it is important to realize that most of the ideologically motivated espionage we know about occurred during World War II. Whether it would have continued once the Cold War got under way is unclear. In any event, by the late 1940s, most of the people who gave secrets to the Russians were no longer on the federal payroll or in the Communist Party.

Moreover, Tanenhaus’ focus on espionage distorts our understanding of the domestic Cold War. Only a few dozen American Communists gave information to the Soviets; the rest organized labour unions, fought for racial equality, and opposed the arms race. Chambers’ revelations, however, diverted attention from all those other activities, identifying communism with espionage and thus justifying a wave of political repression that reached far beyond the legitimate security interests of the American state. Though Chambers himself became disillusioned with the outrageous antics of Joe McCarthy, he did not make the connection between his own earlier activities and the later excesses he deplored. Nor does Tanenhaus. By failing to deal with the broader implications of the Hiss-Chambers case, he is,

thus, merely resuscitating an old Cold War story.

Ellen Schrecker  
Yeshiva University

Jonathan Aves, *Workers Against Lenin: Labour Protest and the Bolshevik Dictatorship* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers 1996).

AT THE BEGINNING of 1921, Lenin and the Bolsheviks found their hard-won rule of Soviet Russia under threat. The danger no longer came from without, for the civil war had been won and the 1920 war with Poland had ended, but from within. The measures known as "war communism," which included rigorous labour discipline, a state monopoly on trade, and especially food requisitioning and strict control over food distribution, provoked widespread domestic discontent which now burst into open and frequently violent protest. There were peasant uprisings, industrial strikes, and, finally, the revolt of the Kronstadt sailors in March of 1921. The Communist Party's response at its Tenth Congress was the introduction of the New Economic Policy, or NEP, which relaxed labour discipline and allowed free trade in foodstuffs, even while tightening the party's monopoly on political power and its own internal discipline.

The subject of Jonathan Aves's book is the industrial component of this wave of unrest, referred to in Soviet sources as the *volynka*. As he explains, the word means a "labour slowdown" and is used as a euphemism for what was in fact a nationwide strike movement that shook the Bolsheviks' primary base of mass social support.

The first chapter traces the background to the *volynka*. With the end of the civil war in 1920 there was widespread expectation that war communism's controls would be eased. Instead, the Communist Party instituted measures to militarize the industrial labour force — in-

cluding concentration camps for labour "deserters" (14-5)—and to close down all private trade in foodstuffs, which threatened the towns with starvation. Aves feels that there was an ideological component to the Bolsheviks' actions, a utopian belief that a full-scale socialist society could be achieved by pursuing the methods that had been so successful in fighting the civil war. But the ready resort to force against the workers, the increasing reliance on the secret police (the Cheka) as an instrument of coercion, and the automatic branding of any expression of protest as the work of counter-revolutionaries suggest that militaristic attitudes and methods had now become ingrained in the party, reemerging even more strongly in Stalin's collectivization and industrialization campaigns. Trotsky was in the forefront of efforts to militarize the labour force, but even Lenin, in his denunciation of "factionalism" at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, "metaphorically" threatened to bring a loaded machine gun to bear against recalcitrant factionalists. The remark so scandalized the party that he felt obliged to apologize the next day. (178)

The party's policies provoked the labour unrest of February and March 1921, Aves contends, and he devotes the longest chapter of his book to a detailed, virtually enterprise-by-enterprise narrative of its development. The account concentrates on Moscow and Petrograd but also covers strikes as far afield as Saratov, Ekaterinoslav, the Donbass, and the Urals. The strikes generally began over narrow economic issues, especially inadequacies and inequities in the food supply — including, even at this early state of Soviet development, complaints about the privileged treatment of party officials — but, as in 1917, often broadened into political protest against the Communist Party's dictatorship.

Throughout the book, Aves asks who provided the initiative and leadership for the strikes. He rejects the frequent Soviet claim that it was the work of the "least

conscious" elements of the industrial workforce — peasant-workers freshly recruited from the countryside, adolescents, women (!) — and finds consistently that skilled, long-standing workers took the lead. He points out that at least in certain industries the extensive melting away of the urban labour force into the countryside during the civil war, as industry deteriorated and the food supply in the towns shrank, left the most skilled and urbanized workers, who had the fewest ties to the villages, in a stronger position in the workforce that was left. As to the non-Bolshevik parties, Aves cites numerous instances of influence exerted by Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and anarchists, particularly in industries and unions that had long been their strongholds. On the whole, however, he finds that the opposition parties were too debilitated by 1921, and sometimes too ambivalent in their own attitude towards the government, to provide consistent leadership. His main conclusion is that the workers relied on their own traditions of protest, often stretching back to 1917 and even earlier, and "long-standing shop-floor subcultures and hierarchies" (55) to defend their interests.

After a few weeks, the government restored control and the strikes subsided. Not only did the Bolsheviks' own discipline and unity hold, but the workers were divided, both among themselves and from other groups. While the peasants wanted free trade in agricultural products, for example, many workers feared that this would put them at a distinct disadvantage and wanted only relaxation and reform of the supply system. The onset of famine conditions in 1921 also dampened the protest movement as the struggle for survival took precedence over everything else. The opposition parties were now completely destroyed and a number of labour leaders shot or imprisoned. Finally, as Aves points out, under the NEP the government's direct involvement in the food supply diminished and the workers' hostility was redirected towards the

market — and, one might add, towards the peasantry.

The book is based on some Soviet archival research but primarily on contemporary newspapers and published documentary sources. Unfortunately, a considerable time lag occurred between the completion of the work, which originated as a 1989 doctoral dissertation at the University of London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and its publication in 1996. Except for one article, none of the items listed in the bibliography is dated later than 1987. Much has occurred in this field since then. New archival sources have opened up in the former Soviet Union and have been explored by Western scholars. For example, Vladimir Brovkin's *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War: Political Parties and Social Movements in Russia, 1918-1922* (1994), details the activities of the Mensheviks and other opposition parties in the period Aves discusses. New research opportunities have also generated a number of recent studies of Russian workers "from below," illuminating the social history and factory culture of various elements of the industrial labour force. Use of this literature might have added substance to Aves' sketchy references to shop-floor organization and traditions.

Furthermore, Aves fails to draw any significant conclusions from his account of the *volynka*. Surely this episode, when the "proletariat" in whose name the Bolsheviks had taken power turned against them, was a moment of truth for the party and had repercussions on the subsequent development of the Soviet system. The party prevailed and maintained its power, but in ways that would exact a heavy price in the future. Aves has produced a useful but narrowly focused chronicle of the *volynka* of 1921, and the broader import of this early protest by Russia's workers remains unexamined.

Marshall S. Shatz  
University of Massachusetts at Boston

Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997).

THIS IS A MOST ambitious book which examines the German Communist Party (KPD) and its successor the Socialist Unity Party (SED) from the bottom up. Eric D. Weitz sees these parties as made up of partly autonomous historical subjects, the movement shaped by the specific structures in which it emerged. He asks why it was that a sect became a popular movement, how far communist parties were influenced from below, and what were the essential national differences. He concludes that the KPD/SED was no Stalinist monolith but had, up to a point, a life of its own.

Accordingly the party's origins are to be found in the failure of the Wilhelmine patriarchal system to deliver the goods when World War I left the economy in ruins. A grim portrait is painted of that world of uniquely exploitative capitalists, militaristic soldiers, harsh policemen, and craven politicians. It is a scenario which echoes the lurid early work of Hans-Ulrich Wehler and those German historians who seem to take a perverse pride in the singular awfulness of their country's history.

There are two basic problems with this approach. It has long since been shown to be factually wrong, and it lends support to the fatal Stalinist notion of "social fascism." For this author almost any social programme is a sinister means further to exploit the working class in general and women in particular. It goes without saying that the efforts of industrialist like Krupp to build decent housing for their workers, and to provide educational and medical services as well as pensions were purely and simply designed to secure a docile and obedient work force. The quite extraordinary achievements of the Weimar Republic in building public housing, in comparison with which the often trumpeted British

efforts pale into insignificance, are dismissed out of hand. For this author "apartments designed for the two- or three-child nuclear family seemed to capture in brick and mortar the essence of rationalized sexuality." Making housework less burdensome was merely a means of reaffirming existing gender relations. All welfare programmes were designed to discipline rather than to support those in need. Concern for peoples' health was the first step along the slippery path to eugenics and genocide. That workers were encouraged to take pride in their work as all part of the "productivist utopia" to which the Social Democrats (SPD) subscribed. Yet no one was more enthusiastic about productivist utopias than the Communists, but then in the Soviet Union a worker like Stakhanov could take pride in "socialist" work.

The SPD is condemned for its adherence to the great but uneasy "party of order" in the Weimar Republic. But is this surprising? The KPD was a menace that had to be countered. It threatened the violent overthrow of the democratic republic or, as it is here coolly phrased, it "posed the issue of power." The rank-and-file was frequently violent and delighted in sabotage, looting, and theft. The author is far too intelligent to subscribe to the view that criminality is necessarily political, but argues that the origins of the KPD's hatred of the SPD are to be found in the fact that in some of the German states the police force was controlled by the Social Democrats. It was this, rather than directives from Moscow, that was the cause of the vitriolic hatred of the SPD as a party of vicious cops and trades union bosses who sold out the working class. Party propaganda thus corresponded with the lived experience of many members.

It is probably impossible to determine exactly the degree of rank-and-file enthusiasm for the intransigent inanities of the "Third Period," but I would suggest that it is exaggerated in this account. It may well be that at the Zeitz and Leuna works Social Democrats and Communists had



separate changing rooms and ate in different sections of the canteen, but there were many instances of solidarity between workers of these two passionately hostile parties. The experience of Austria and France are heartening reminders that many communists refused to swallow the party line in the face of an obvious common danger, but on the other hand the KPD was a party made up largely of unemployed workers under the bone-headed leadership of Ernest Thälmann and was capable of any absurdity. Thus in 1934 many German Communists joyfully awaited an imminent communist revolution. It is very skilfully shown how the combination of Stalinist ideology and the specific experience of the KPD went to make up a particularly noxious brew, but then we are told that the party members' "emancipatory convictions connected them to the long trajectory of German humanism that stretched back to the eighteenth century." In much the same tone, reminiscent of Wilhelm Pieck's musings on "J.S. Bach and the Working Class," we are reminded that by appropriating bourgeois culture socialism was moved beyond the class-specific to the universal.

The author also has a lot of difficulty with the complex figure of Rosa Luxemburg. On the one hand he quite correctly stresses her intransigence, rigidity, and hatred of the Social Democratic "*Scheidemänner*," on the other he sees her as something of a democrat. We are told that the party's strategy was largely defined by Lenin and Luxemburg and differences between the two are downplayed. It is not quite clear what is meant by the statement that Rosa Luxemburg was the "dominant intellectual voice" in the party. In fact she had precious little influence and was soon to become a non-person. When she was allowed to reappear she was the source of no little embarrassment to the SED.

The part of the book devoted to the party after 1945 is less thoroughly researched. There is far too little on the split

between those communists who stayed in Germany and those who returned from Moscow in the wake of the Red Army. The protracted working-class struggle against the Ulbricht regime in 1953 is not given the attention it deserves. The German communist tail is allowed to wag the Stalinist dog altogether too vigorously when it is asserted that the SED pushed Stalin towards intransigence over the German question, or that at certain (unspecified) junctures they established a menu of options that limited those of the Soviets. However admirable in their idealism and intent, dissident groups like *Neues Forum* and *Demokratisches Aufbruch* were muddle-headed, unfocused, derivative, and politically naive. To call such confusion "post modernist" is hardly helpful, and to say that they were "deeply revolutionary" is mere wishful thinking. In much the same vein to take the communists to task for putting class before gender is asking them to cease to be Marxists, and the fact that the SED did not promote "gender neutral parenting" is surely not among the most serious of the charges to be brought against the regime.

There is a great deal of valuable material in this book. It is an excellent guide to much recent work on German social history, and provides many illuminating insights into working class life in 20th-century Germany. It fills in many of the gaps in the traditional political histories of German communism. That it is ultimately an unsatisfactory work may well lie in the nature of the enterprise. In spite of painstaking research and huge effort the author is maddeningly ambivalent about the object of his study and is unable to show how the social context really influenced the politics of a rigidly centralized party. It is thus a brilliant failure — but as such infinitely more stimulating and provocative than yet another conventional monograph on a subject that has been so exhaustively studied.

Martin Kitchen  
Simon Fraser University

Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 1997).

DENNIS DWORKIN's narrative of the development and evolution of the British Marxist tradition and cultural history is a fascinating study of 20th century intellectual current and influences in both Great Britain and the historical profession. By looking at the scholars, their works, and the professional debates on Marxist theory and their influence on the next generations of historians, Dworkin's work goes beyond an intellectual history on the British Marxists. Part biography, part advertisement for historical journals and institutions of the left, and part sociological analysis of varying intellectual currents, Dworkin's study gives a much wider accounting of British cultural history and its impact. He views theoretical developments and major works as part of the historical traditional and details the debates and divisions between individuals, political and scholarly movements to both inform as well as engage the reader in the intellectual debate.

Dworkin's work begins, as it must, with the origins of British cultural Marxism. The post-war intellectuals, grappling with new opportunities to redefine the relationship between traditional socialism and the industrial working-class — not to mention the realities of Stalinism — questioned and ultimately rejected traditional Marxist assumptions about class relationships and industrial society. Scholarship expanded to look at literature, language, media, subcultures, popular culture, and in particular, race and gender. This was the birth of cultural studies. Dworkin argues that the British cultural Marxists "treated the cultural domain as an arena of contestation between dominant and subservient classes over values and meanings" and historians embraced this "whole way of struggle." (5) The remainder of the first part of the study

describes the growth of Marxist historiography in the context of the Cold War by looking at the Communist Party's Historians' Group. Conflicts within the British Communist Party over the Soviet Union's actions in 1950s threatened the intellectual and political campaign to restore the "lost rights" of Great Britain's workers. A narrative introduces the reader to the intellectual climate of the 1930s and the young Marxists Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, Victor Kiernan, Eric Hobsbawm, and others associated with the foundation of the new historicism.

The second part of the study addresses the contributions of the New Left of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In an effort to undo the damage of a divided leftist presence in Britain, Dworkin argues that the New Left tried to promote new hegemonic models and political organizations, put forth in both the *Reasoner* and the *New Left Review*. He contends that the New Left at this time, "saw itself as an alternative to the economism of Communist and labour Left and the revisionism of Labour leadership. It conceived of its political position — socialist humanism — as more than just another strategy for socialism; socialist humanism represented an alternative set of priorities based on a whole way of life and the total individual." (61) Here is the birth of cultural studies as delivered by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. The *Uses of Literacy* and *Culture and Society* were pathbreaking works which sought to answer the question "who are the British people?" in cultural terms rather than in economic ones. But these workers were also criticized — and from within Marxist scholarly circles. Edward Thompson, whom Dworkin calls "unquestionably the most forceful defender of Marxism and socialist humanism within the New Left" (109), challenged the authors' sociological approach to working-class culture as lacking historical context and accuracy. Stuart Hall's defense of Hoggart and Williams resulted in a lively intellectual exchange with Thompson and his insistence

that "culture" was not "the whole of life" but rather "the whole way of struggle." (102)

The result of this second theoretical position within the New Left was further disseminated in Thompson's next work. Perhaps no single work has had such an impact on students of modern British history as E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* and for that reason, no doubt, Dworkin fully explores how it was that Thompson came to his political views, incorporated them into his understanding of Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries and, ultimately, wrote the work which would have such a profound and prolific impact on the historical profession. The work specifically intended to counter both structural-functional sociologists who characterized the working class as a "thing" or a component of the social structure and orthodox Marxists who understand the working class almost exclusively in terms of industrial productive terms. (105) What resulted was new dialogue with the New Left on working-class consciousness and a new phase of Marxists thought — critical of Thompson and led by Perry Anderson. Dworkin provides an important account of the debates and published attacks on each other's interpretation of theory, tradition, and cultural influences on the British working class which shaped historiography and the relationship between historian and subject in the future years.

The final part of the book looks at the achievements of the New Left and further intellectual challenges. The newly emerging History Workshop offered socialist feminist historians an opportunity to shape feminist theory and practice and dozens of new historical studies which challenged the traditional glorification of the male working class and traditional political and social action. Dworkin shows that while humanists on the left welcomed this new celebration of difference and class and gender consciousness, Thompson felt further alienated from the intellectual movement he helped initiate.

This resulted in the great intellectual and professional divide which dominates the remainder of Dworkin's last section of the book: the clash between Thompson and his "Poverty of Theory" and the work of Althusserian Marxists. A far too complicated issue to adequately explain in this review, Dworkin does yeoman service in recasting this critical split among British Marxists for the reader. A greater understanding of the change in the historical debate on Marxism and culture, as well as the next stage of Thompson's political activities, emerges.

Dworkin's book is fascinating, in part because of the nature of delving into the work and art of so many great minds of 20th century Britain, and in part because he clearly demonstrates that British cultural Marxism was "as a coherent intellectual tradition, not limited to one discipline or one figure within it." (3) He concludes his study much as he begins it — with Stuart Hall's assessment of a troubled times for the intellectual and political left of Britain at the time. Hall's criticism of Thatcherism and Britain's "new times" linked economic and cultural forces into a means to understanding "material social relations, integral to hegemonic politics." (260) But his efforts to redefine and reinvigorate a democratic Left by reminding it of and linking it with the cultural Marxist tradition are clearly admired by Dworkin as much as Hall's earliest contributions to the tradition and interpretation of historical significance. His is clearly the model — theoretically, politically and scholarly — which Dworkin so admirably emulates in this important and thought-provoking work. Let us hope with the election of "New Labour," Dworkin is not disappointed as his predecessors were time and time again.

Nancy LoPatin  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender* (London: Sage Publications 1997).

*FORMATIONS OF Class and Gender* is a product of 12 years of research with a group of 83 white working-class women in England. Beverley Skeggs began this research for her PhD in the mid-1980s, engaging in participant observation with a group of young women taking "caring courses" at a small college. Interviews continued over the next decade as these women moved into work, unemployment, marriage, divorce and families. In itself the longitudinal nature of the research makes this study unusual.

Skegg's key concern in the book is to "reinstat[e] class in feminist [and] cultural theory." (2) Drawing on post-structuralist feminist theories of subject formation and cultural studies traditions of class as ways of living, Skeggs focuses on discourses of respectability as these women negotiate their lives. Respectability, she argues, is central to working-class women's subjectivities, the choices they make within structurally constrained circumstances, and the ethics of caring embedded in the "caring courses" into which unemployed women are funnelled. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of class as forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital) Skeggs maps how these women negotiate class through attempting to build on and limit loss of capital through performing respectability, femininity, and heterosexuality. In the process, the women both recognize and misrecognize, accept and refuse, elements of classed and gendered subjectivities.

This book will be of interest to those concerned with the construction of femininity, sexuality, and subjectivity. It will also interest those who, like Skeggs, are frustrated with post-structuralist analyses that jettison class as an important dimension of people's lives just as global capitalism and neo-liberalism combine to increase unemployment and poverty among women and men. The book is organized

into 9 chapters. Chapter Two deals with feminist methodology, providing an excellent reflexive discussion of the contradictions and pitfalls in feminist ethnography. Sociologists will find the book worthwhile for this chapter alone. Chapter Three outlines the history of "caring courses" and the positioning of white working-class women in terms of respectability, family, and state-building. The ethnographic research is presented in Chapters Four through Eight. Chapter Four examines how "caring courses" help these women develop and self-monitor a "caring self" of the "right kind" that signifies respectability. Chapter Five examines how respectability is employed to refuse recognition of pejorative working-class identities (those who are not the "right kind" of people). In spite of the women's refusal of working-class identities Skeggs shows how class is reflected in this refusal, in women's bodies (dress and behaviour), and in their concerns that housing and possessions present the "right image." Chapter Six explores femininity through the contradictory negotiation of appearance and practices of caring to construct the "respectable woman." Femininity "offered a space for hedonism, autonomy, camaraderie, pleasure and fun whilst simultaneously regulating and generating insecurities." (116) Chapter Seven focuses on heterosexuality that "produces simultaneously normalization and marginalization for working-class women." (118) And Chapter Eight examines the women's resistance to feminist labels, mediated through popular culture, while engaging in daily struggles that can be seen as feminist, such as challenging sexist behaviour or constructing safe places for children to play.

A major limitation of this study is its limited attention to processes of racialization. Skeggs clearly identifies these women as white but does not problematize the construction of their white identities or white privilege in the context of racialized nation-building in Britain. Yet, as she recognizes, this discourse on car-

ing and respectability is clearly racialized. Sexuality also receives less attention than it might. Were all of these women heterosexual? How did age affect their performance of sexuality and femininity?

In the end I am not sure *Formations of Class & Gender* successfully integrates post-structuralist and materialist analysis. The threads of the material dimensions of class get submerged under discussions of subjectivities that are often not adequately related back to these women's lives. Instead, Bourdieu's model is grafted on, often in a rather mechanistic way, to make class dimensions more explicit. I wanted to know more about how these women negotiate other practices at work, through child care, marriage and divorce, living circumstances, etc. I wanted to know more about what these do and how that changed as they got older.

In spite of these limitations Skeggs has produced an interesting and useful study. I recommend this book to anyone interested in feminist ethnography, gender and subjectivity and, especially, those seeking to develop multi-dimensional materialist analyses of gender and class. *Formations of Class & Gender* is suitable for graduate courses in cultural studies, sociology, and women's studies.

Gillian Creese  
University of British Columbia

Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed, eds., *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life* (New York: Routledge 1997).

*HOMO ECONOMICS* is a response to the political crisis of the contemporary gay and lesbian movement in the United States: to the obvious limits of working within the Democratic party, to the right-wing attack on gays and lesbians as a privileged, affluent minority, and to the fractious nature of a homosexual community increasingly

divided along class, race, and gender lines. For editors Gluckman and Reed, the response involves recognizing that the struggle for gay liberation is more than simply a cultural struggle revolving around "sexual freedom vs. sexual repression, or of free expression vs. censorship, or of authenticity vs. hypocrisy" but one with a "complex political-economic dimension that needs to be brought to the fore in the gay movement's debates on agendas, strategy and tactics." (xxiv-xxv) With that in mind, the book is divided in three sections broadly covering commercial activity and the gay community (marketing to gays, gay entrepreneurship), economic trends, and the state of gay life (the rise of wage labour, the sexual division of labour), and the current state of gay political activism (coalition building, AIDS, spousal benefits). The diversity of subject matter is held together by the consistent assertion of two key themes: the impact of economics on sexuality, and, more controversially, the influence of sexuality on economics.

Gluckman and Reed trace many of the current problems of the gay movement to the false images of affluence attributed to it. Television ads featuring well-groomed gay yuppies purchasing home appliances or living in upscale "ghettoes" might have been an improvement on a complete absence of positive gay images in media but now these narrow images have excluded much of the gay community and convinced others that all gay people have lots of money or found niche jobs in gay-friendly sectors. Indeed, as Gluckman argues (with Jean Hardisty) in her own contribution, "The Hoax of 'Special Rights': The Right Wing's Attack on Gay Men and Lesbians," the right has successfully manipulated these images to suggest that gays do not require legal civil rights protection. Substantial space in *Homo Economics* is reserved for challenging these stereotypes and the means by which they were created. Articles focus on the origins of gay marketing and ads incorporating gay images, as well as repudiating the

stereotypes of gay affluence, gay job ghettoes, and union hostility to gay issues, among others. However, here the editors have focused on breadth over depth as few of these contributions run beyond ten pages. For instance, economist M.V. Lee Badgett can barely raise some provocative suggestions about the biased sampling of the gay community or lesbian and gay occupational strategies in her two pieces before running out of space. In their defence, the editors recognize the sketchiness of some aspects of their project but claim, quite legitimately, that much here is new and speculative.

For the editors, challenging the stereotypes of gay affluence means that the gay community in all its diversity — rich, poor, and middle income — can come into view. However, this does not mean that homosexuality is independent of the economy, or that gay people are not affected in similar ways by certain economic developments. Here the above-mentioned twin themes come to the fore as the editors suggest that gays “as a group have long been entangled in a contradictory relationship with capitalism” in both benefiting from the decline of the traditional family and economy but suffering occupational segregation and discrimination in the new one. (xxii-xxiii) A number of contributors successfully convey the impact of changing economic conditions on gay life and struggle. For instance, Julie Matthaei argues in “The Sexual Division of Labor, Sexuality, and Lesbian/Gay Liberation: Toward a Marxist-Feminist Analysis of Sexuality in U.S. Capitalism” that men and women’s sexual opportunities were affected differently by the rise of wage labour. While men might have escaped compulsory heterosexuality with the breakdown of the family economy, women were bound more tightly to it because of their lower wage-earning power. Only when women entered the full-time labour force in large numbers (that is, World War II, the 1960s) did lesbianism become more economically possible.

If the volume goes some way in supporting its contention that gay life and identity are shaped by economic forces, it is less successful with its companion theme that sexuality must be incorporated into our understanding of economics. Even when authors set out to make this case they usually end up providing evidence for the reverse. For instance, Karen Weston and Lisa B. Rofel argue in “Sexuality, Class, and Conflict in a Lesbian Workplace” that *lesbian identity must be incorporated into a theory of class if we are to make sense of the conflict that occurred in their case study of a lesbian auto shop with lesbian owners, employees, and customers*. The authors argue that the lesbian shop bridged the public/private divide by allowing workers and management to be themselves in the public setting of work through an alternative lesbian culture. But it is hard to see how this differs from any work environment where a boss utilizes consensual management techniques or encourages an employee-driven *élan* of workplace culture. Nor is it clear how there is anything particularly lesbian in the assertion of productive control by the lesbian owners that led to the strike and eventual dismissal of the lesbian workers.

And here perhaps is the fundamental flaw of the book. There is an insufficient attention paid to what is meant by “the economy” and the term “capitalism” in particular. At a certain level of abstraction one can argue that gay people have had an impact on the economy, if by “economy” one merely means the most obvious aspects of money transactions: buying and selling, advertising, etc. However, when one uses the term “capitalism” it usually denotes something more than that the simple existence of commodities and trade. One must go further to explicate the social relations involved in that production. This *Homo Economics* does not do. In fact, it is ironic that a book with “economics” in its title neglects any real engagement with economic theory at all. Richard Cornwall comes close in his

"Queer Political Economy" when he argues that neo-classical theory fails to grasp the reality of market activity by simplistically accepting all choices consumers make as "revealed preferences." However, Cornwall shows no awareness that this point can and has been made by others, without recourse to postmodern analysis. For instance, Marcus Roberts critiques the rational choice underpinnings of neoclassical economics in his recent *Analytical Marxism, A Critique*. If sexuality really is crucial to an understanding of economics then surely a queer political economy must distinguish itself from other approaches, and that suggests some necessary engagement with other views.

Despite its limitations, *Homo Economics* makes the necessary and long-awaited effort to bring political economy into discussions of sexuality. But it does so tentatively, more with suggestions than definitive statements on any given issue. Most articles are short — between eight and fourteen pages — and of the five major essays only two date from 1991 or later. As such, the volume represents a kind of summing up of the relevant previously-published work as well as a quick take on a host of contemporary issues. Hopefully the volume will inspire others to take these themes to greater levels of depth and consistency.

Dennis Pilon  
York University

Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997).

THE PRODUCT of nearly a decade of intellectual labour, Ruth Milkman's latest book joins her other recognized books on industry and workers. *Farewell to the Factory* spotlights "what is happening to industrial workers and their way of life" (1) amidst the massive and multi-layered

restructuring taking place in the automobile industry. Milkman's point of access into these complex processes at work is her examination of the consequences of the "reinvention" of the GM assembly plant in Linden, New Jersey, during the 1980s. What especially attracts her attention are the results of the buyout option (cash payments for worker jobs) offered as part of this workplace reorganization. Along the way, Dr. Milkman does much to illuminate the contradictory developments taking place in the transition from the old world of Fordist mass production to the new and uncertain world lying beyond.

The author investigates two categories of workers at the Linden GM plant who responded differently to the buyout option: those who left, seeking to pursue post-factory opportunities; and those who remained, grasping hopefully for the possibilities of a less arduous and more participatory work process than they had inherited. Positioning the Linden experience in the middle ground between the NUMMI joint venture and Saturn experiment and the old Fordist workplace, Milkman seeks to demonstrate that these more limited reforms and more glaring failures in managerial innovation are closer to the operating realities of most North American auto assembly plants than either of the Japanese-led joint venture in Fremont, California, or the home-grown enterprise in Spring Hill, Tennessee. The Americanized version of lean production and post-Fordist management practices which GM attempted to install at the Linden auto factory, she shows, quickly unravelled soon after the corporate hoop-la and worker training classes ended. With other works like Rinehart, *et al.*'s *Just Another Car Factory?* and Fucini's *Working for the Japanese*, Milkman demonstrates that the grave diggers of the post-Fordist dream were predominantly the front-line plant supervisors (or "dinosaurs," as they were called), not the workers. The latter, former "prisoners of prosperity" deeply scarred by the degrad-

ing environment and authoritarian management practices, embraced the promise of the new system of management and production with hope mixed with desperation.

Her other target for criticism is the United Auto Workers (UAW). Milkman recounts the halting, then rapid, accommodation of the UAW leadership to the "new realities" of a globalizing automobile industry and of Detroit's Big Three under siege from the challenges of the ascendant Japanese auto makers and their lean production methods. There, she argues that the root problem resides in the terms of the UAW's historic peace with American auto manufacturers in the 1940s — specifically, its willingness to cede to management the fundamental decisions concerning plant organization and management. Now, with the union in the throes of multiple crises, in part stemming from the consequences of managerial initiatives advancing pseudo-democratic reforms in the workplace, the liabilities of this historic tendency have been compounded by new conundrums emanating from changes in work organization "that often render traditional modes of resistance to managerial domination obsolete." (20)

Much of this story is familiar to close students of American unionism generally and of the UAW's history and role in the auto industry in the 20th century in particular. What is new and provocative in Milkman's book is her effort to distance herself both from the more radical and orthodox business administration interpretations of Japanese production methods (JPM) and their American variants and of worker attitudes toward those practices on the shop floor. Departing from the "management by stress" thesis of Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter and like-minded streams in Garrahan and Stewart's *Nissan Enigma*, Jurgens, Malsch, and Döhse's *Breaking from Taylorism*, and Green and Yanarella's *Northern American Auto Unions in Crisis*, she struggles to defend the integrity of work-

ers' beliefs and attitudes by pointing to the widespread appeal of participatory procedures in the new and evolving industrial regime. On the contrary, she argues that the "apparent preference of the workforce for the new system suggests that it has some positive features and cannot simply be dismissed as the latest form of labor control." (17) Her empathy toward the plight of workers caught in an era of painful transition from one world of work to another also leads her to underscore and exaggerate the highly qualified and limited successes of those workers who in accepting the GM buyout option bid farewell to the factory and "landed on their feet" as small business owners.

While Milkman's *Farewell to the Factory* is a must-read for labour educators, policy studies students, and political economy scholars, it does not overcome the analytic or political problems of understanding and acting within the "brave new world" of work organization in a globalizing political economy and of the union labour movement confronting the mostly negative effects of both globalization and regional trade blocs. Obviously, that is more than one case study should have to bear. I fear though that Milkman's fealty to the "empirical worker" blinds her to the complexities of the working of corporate power in 20th century capitalism and thus leads her to depreciate the continuing value of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Much of her portrait of the brutality of Fordism and its ravages of the labouring body is paralleled in the prison notebooks of Gramsci. Where his analysis of the new work regime stands above hers is in his subtle grasp of the involvement of coercion and consent as essential elements of the hegemony of corporate power in the minds and over the bodies of workers in the Fordist factory. As I have tried to show in my own work on worker training at the Georgetown/Toyota and Saturn plants, corporate hegemony may evolve and be refashioned in light of changing work and management relations. But the need and value of



hegemonic theory as a tool for understanding the interweaving of economic, political, and cultural power under late capitalism have not been surpassed, as have crude Marxist notions of "false consciousness" and radical sociological models of "labour control."

This valuable and insightful work also suffers from the shortcomings of the case study approach. Milkman's study strains to draw large ramifications from the Linden example for wider geographic, theoretical, and strategic purchase. In particular, it fails to juxtapose the findings of this American case with others from Canada and Europe. Many American students of labour studies and critical political economy have striven to control for theoretical parochialism by juxtaposing American case studies with those drawn from a more pluralist Canada with a more vibrant union movement. Rinehart, *et al.*'s case study of the CAW's participation in pushing the boundaries of work reorganization at the GM-Suzuki CAMI plant in Ingersoll, Ontario, provides a host of insights about the strategic possibilities of union efforts to close the gap between the democratic promises and pseudo-democratic realities of one version of post-Fordism. Likewise, Lowell Turner's study, *Democracy at Work*, demonstrates the merits of exploring the multi-faceted nature of post-Fordist practices in the face of German union and worker council successes in advancing an alternative union model of work organization to counter corporate-inspired Japanese, Korean, and American models.

In her rush to wave goodbye to the Linden auto workers *cum* small business owners, Milkman seems prepared to close the doors to the factories of the diminishing manufacturing sector to tactical and strategic moves led by workers and their union leadership. But even assuming that her prognosis of factory life between Fordism and Fordism is accurate, are not the implications of her account of those who remain a portent of the new prison factories of the future in the service and

retail sector where most of the former Linden workers who accepted the buyout landed? Are the uncertain future of the small business remnant and the painful circumstances of the predominantly downwardly mobile not the long-term fate of many more outside the factory walls? Will these former "prisoners of prosperity" be the "bellwethers" of the new "prisoners of insecurity" in the unfolding age of global capitalism? Should these gloomy forecasts not stimulate great theoretically-informed strategy and greater militant political practice?

Ernest J. Yanarella  
University of Kentucky

Charles Woolfson, John Foster, and Matthias Beck, *Paying for the Piper: Capital and Labour in Britain's Offshore Oil Industry* (London: Mansell 1996).

*PAYING FOR THE PIPER* is one of the most important works to be published on the offshore oil industry and the political economy of oil. Not since the groundbreaking works in the early 1980s of Noreng and Carson has such a well-written analysis of capital and labour in the offshore industry been undertaken. This full-fledged study of occupational health and safety is the first of its kind on the offshore oil industry. Woolfson, *et al.* have opened the door to historians studying the industry, those interested in occupational health and safety, and those interested in trade unions. While the focus of this work is Britain's offshore oil industry it is a work which will influence writers in many countries and specialties. *Paying for the Piper* deals with the ways in which the oil industry has managed to side-step attempts to restructure the industry to improve health and safety, with government connivance at every critical juncture. This government connivance is at least partially determined by the government's dependence on offshore oil

revenues and the power that oil multinationals yield over the British economy.

*Paying for the Piper* examines the worse accident in offshore oil history, when on 6 July 1988, 167 offshore oil workers were killed when the platform they were working on, the *Piper Alpha*, exploded in a firestorm. The authors explain how government dependence on oil revenues resulted in speed of recovery being placed over safety. *Paying for the Piper* examines the development and subsequent crisis of a US dominated production regime which chose to exclude trade unions and to use repressive managerial tactics to control the workforce, and the results this had for offshore health and safety. Following the *Piper Alpha* explosion there was much impetus for change yet almost a decade later the new regime still attempts to exclude trade unions, this time through a process of direct communication with workers in what are largely powerless consultative committees. In both the early development of the industry and the crisis of the early 1990s state-level intervention was crucial in allocating power to management. Even the recently elected Labour government of Tony Blair has supported the oil multinationals, backing away from earlier calls to nationalize the industry and removing some of the legal restrictions on collective bargaining, indicating that whoever pays the piper, indeed does call the tune. (570)

In the foreword to this excellent work, offshore worker Bob Ballantyne visualizes the United Kingdom North Sea as "a graveyard where people's dreams have been buried for the sake of wealth and power." There is no doubt in the authors' minds, nor in the end in this reader's, that is indeed the case. *Paying for the Piper* places the industrial relations regime in the UK in its proper context, that of the political economy and the relationship it beget between the British and city of London governments and multinational corporations. The authors trace the origins of the offshore oil industry to

its roots of British imperialism, and examine how the use of oil as a diplomatic tool in the post-World War II era resulted in a very close relationship between the British government and US banks and multinationals. According to the authors, it was this relationship which led to the differences between the Norwegian and UK North Sea oil industries. Woolfson, *et al.* detail how the relationship between the British government and US multinational corporations in the early 1970s resulted from the need to secure oil production in stable regions post haste. It was the speed with which oil extraction was forced, the anti-union bias of the employers, the poor health and safety legislation, which combined to end in the tragedy of the *Piper Alpha* explosion.

After detailing how the industry developed, and why, the authors' present the response of labour and trade unions to the industry, especially in the wake of the *Piper Alpha* explosion. Following the *Piper Alpha* explosion, workers staged a series of strikes protesting health and safety violations, and to call for increased union mobilization. In Part II, Woolfson, *et al.* detail this growing workers consciousness. Here it would have been helpful to know how the rank-and-file workers responded to calls for unionization both before and after the *Piper Alpha* explosion. At one point the authors state that "for the first time in nearly a decade, the antipathy of many of the 'bears' to trade unionism could be overcome." (112) Unfortunately, this tantalizing tidbit is not explored in any depth. Is it the anti-unionism of the multinationals which prevents unionization or lack of workers' support? Or, as the authors suggest, did support for unionization decrease following repressive management actions and economic downswings in the industry? This section concentrates more on the attempts of union activists to organize the industry and neglects aspects such as how workers responded to such calls for unionization. To what extent employee antipathy to trade unions existed

and why this is the case is not explored by the authors who instead chose to focus on union activists, perhaps understandably given the availability of official union sources. One wonders if the rugged culture of offshore work led to the creation of a masculine identity, and if this masculine identity affected attempts at unionization. This reviewer is left wondering how much of the "rugged individuality" concept espoused by managers and workers ran contrary to the concept of union organization and collective action. Given the scope of *Paying for the Piper*, it is understandable that the topic of masculinity is not addressed.

This section also examined employers' responses to the industrial unrest, including initial bribery attempts and wholesale firings. While the authors' Marxist approach is apparent through the book, it does not prevent them from analyzing the trade unions responses and criticizing labour and unions for failing to overcome internal divisions to represent its workers. After examining the offshore safety post-*Piper Alpha*, the authors conclude that it is little improved. Calls for improved health and safety have been inextricably caught up in the workers' struggle to act collectively, which can only be viewed in light of employers' position of extreme union avoidance.

One of the most powerful tools in *Paying for the Piper* is the authors' use of workers' own words to tell their stories, including an especially compelling testimony by a *Piper Alpha* survivor. Woolfson *et al.* combine these personal glimpses with their own gripping storytelling abilities to make for an always readable account. This is in pleasant contrast to much of the recent Industrial Relations literature in Canada which seems to favour quantitative over qualitative methods. The authors judiciously incorporate quantitative history into their work but do not allow it to subtract from their key focus, the way policymaking by governments and corporations infringes upon the offshore oil workplace and workers.

*Paying for the Piper* is part of the Employment and Work Relations Series which addresses issues relating to the evolving patterns of work, employment, and industrial relations in various workplaces, localities, and regions. The overall aim of the series is to trace the way in which policymaking, by both government and multinational corporations, affects workers and workplaces. This book fits very well into this mandate and combines both qualitative and quantitative research. This judicious blending of methods is perhaps due to the varied nature of the authors backgrounds: Beck is a lecturer in economics, Foster is a professor of applied social studies, and Woolfson is a lecturer in industrial relations.

This saga offers many lessons for Canada's emerging offshore industry, especially in Newfoundland where production platforms remain largely unorganized. *Paying for the Piper* provides a concise, well-analyzed argument for the effects the lack of union organization can have on health and safety. There is much to recommend this book, not the least of which is the impact it may have on the study of the Canadian offshore oil industry which is still in its infancy. This book is also a must read for anyone interested in labour history, health and safety, or industrial relations.

Michelle McBride  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London: Verso 1997).

IF THERE IS ONE PHRASE that has come to dominate mainstream political and economic discourse over the past ten years it is "the global economy." Politicians invoke its immense rhetorical power to frame policy decision, businesspeople demand greater compliance with its new disciplines, and op-ed writers extol its virtues. The phrase itself is the corner-

stone of a wider neo-liberal discourse, a way of seeing and interpreting the world that has become so common-sensical, so naturalized, that the process of creating a global economy — globalization — is presented as a given, a permanent state of being. In *Workers in a Lean World*, Kim Moody attempts to cut through this ideological mystification by examining both the emergence and limitations of the global economy, its far reaching impact on the working class the world over, and the different strategies employed by workers and unions to fight back. Moody's objective is to debunk the myth of powerlessness that currently pervades much of the labour movements and society at large. In doing so, he makes one simple, but compelling point: in the age of global capitalism other political and economic possibilities for working people are indeed possible.

The book begins with an-examination of the drive to globalization, the concomitant shift from "mass" to "lean" production ("Capital's Offensive"), and the rise of neo-liberalism, in particular the spread of multilateral trade and investment agreements and supranational organizations, on a global scale ("Capital's Cops"). Drawing on Marx, Moody argues that relentless competition and the periodic crises of accumulation that it produces forces capital from its "home" country in search of lower production costs, increased market share, and better returns on investment elsewhere. (46) Since World War II this process has intensified as transnational corporations (TNCs) have sought, through investment, acquisitions, and accumulation abroad, to "decentralize" their operations to lower-cost, usually non-union firms in other regions or hemispheres. While globalization is often viewed through the prism of finance capital, for Moody it is precisely these dense webs of corporate interaction, or "cross-border production systems," that gives it "its reality as a process." (75)

At the core of lean production is a relentless push by TNCs to use fewer re-

sources to produce a product or service by "readjusting the production system and, above all, the labour process." (87) The "outsourcing" of "in-house" production, the creation of a more "flexible" workforce, and the development of a collaborative workplace ethos through new managerial techniques are just some of the innovations that have come to define lean production, and all are explored here in detail. (85-108) In contrast to those who now speak of a post-Fordist era, a time in which work, if not the working class itself, appears to be a thing of the past, Moody stresses both change and continuity. To be sure, the tendency to "unbundle" the production chain is new, but the maximization of profit, "high-volume output," and "standardization of product and process" made possible through "management-by-stress" is not a departure from, but a realization of, Ford's "wildest dreams." (86)

However, TNCs do not exist in a political vacuum. Indeed, in order for them to "operate freely on a world-wide level" the nation state and its ability to "regulate the national economy had to be reduced and limited." Multilateralism, be it in the form of NAFTA or the Uruguay Round, accomplished this objective. (138) Yet despite the world-wide eclipse of social democracy and the emergence of supranational bodies charged with enforcing such agreements, the state has not simply "dissolved" into a "seamless world market." Rather, it continues to protect capitalists' interests at home — by regulating the class struggle for example — and continues to negotiate international agreements on their behalf. Thus, it remains vulnerable to pressure from working people from below and can provide some modicum of protection from "the race to the bottom produced by global trade and competition." (135)

In the final section of this book ("Labor's Response") Moody documents the fight against globalization, lean production, and neo-liberalism being waged by workers the world over. Drawing on the

examples set by a wide range of organizations — the New Directions Caucus of the UAW and the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE) for example — he contends that “social movement unionism” is the key to resisting capital’s offensive. Democratic, militant, and internationalist in outlook, this type of union fights for power at the workplace, eschews the “parties of liberalism and social democracy,” and augments its power by forging links with other unions and social movements, both at home and abroad. (5) In the global context, it is along the cross-border production chains that rank-and-file workers can develop both the strategies and consciousness required for future collective action. (75) There is no question that capitalism, the world of work, and the composition of the working class has changed immensely, Moody argues, but such changes have in fact made struggle against capitalism not less, but more possible.

For those familiar with the left-wing monographic and journal literature on this subject, much of what Moody has to say about the historical origins of capitalist expansion, the impact of lean production, or the rise of multilateralism will sound familiar; for those less so, this book provides an excellent critical summary of much of the current writing. Indeed, Moody is particularly adept at laying bare the myths and realities of globalization: it is not a *fait accompli*; the “convergence” of income and opportunities that neo-liberal economists predicted would come to the world’s workers has taken place in a downward direction; and capital is not as mobile as conventional wisdom would have it. What distinguishes Moody, though, is his focus on the “resisters,” not the “victims,” of this class war (though the death of social democracy is well documented here) and the international dimensions of his analysis. The unevenness of capitalist expansion, the continued dominance of North America, Western Europe, and East Asia, and the international division of labour, among other

themes associated with the “South,” are all explored in detail. By looking to non-Western countries, he locates the rank-and-file internationalism that underpins his vision of social movement unionism (a term borrowed from the South African and Brazilian labour movements) and thus avoids the defeatism that defines, what one writer has called, “the strong version of the globalization thesis.”

Without question, the breadth of Moody’s coverage is one of the book’s greatest strengths. However, it can, as demonstrated by his treatment of the Canadian labour movement, produce some rather blunt formulations. Drawing on the work of Canadian Auto Workers’ staffer Sam Gindin, Moody argues that the CAW, the only Canadian union to be examined in detail here, is a paragon of social movement unionism, at least in the North American context. Furthermore, he contends that the Day of Action protests in Ontario, which the CAW helped to lead, are evidence that in Canada, as in other nations, there is a “growing separation” between unions and the “parties they had been dominated by ... or dependent upon. ...” (21) To be sure, the CAW has demonstrated a willingness to confront the neo-liberal agenda and forego its “dependency” on the New Democratic Party, both on a provincial and federal level, but the wider conclusion that Moody draws here is simply false. In Newfoundland, Québec, and British Columbia, the provinces with the highest union density rates in Canada, organized labour has shown little willingness to move away from formal ties with the “parties of capital” — the Liberals, Parti Québécois, and NDP respectively — despite massive layoffs, chronic job insecurity, and unpaid overtime. The point here is not simply that Moody has mistaken the Ontario experience for the country as a whole, but also that, on a wider interpretive plain, comparative analysis can lead, as is the case here, to overly general conclusions that obscure more than they reveal.

What is more, the effectiveness of the Days of Action protests in Ontario raises important questions about the limitations of social movement unionism. The rotating one-day strikes did not force the ruling Tories to back down on their legislative agenda; afterwards, the Ontario Federation of Labour, deeply split by the issue of a general strike, elected a new president, an NDP loyalist, who was the candidate of those (mostly) private sector unions wishing to steer a more moderate course. On the one hand, this experience confirms Moody's point regarding the need for greater rank-and-file initiative, union democracy, and reform. On the other hand, it highlights the ease with which today's social movement unionism can become tomorrow's business unionism. Moody is aware of this danger, and is quick to assert that within such alliances the unions must provide the "class vision and content" in order to ensure that they do not become simply "warmed-over versions" of "liberal or social democratic 'coalitionism.'" (275-6) But some important questions associated with the internal politics of such alliances remain under explored. How are different and competing constituencies and political agendas meshed and managed? What trade-offs are made in terms of strategy and goals in order to ensure that everyone stays on side? And finally, who leads, who follows, and why? Without answers to these questions, what one scholar has called the "good cop/bad cop mythology" of union leadership persists, and one is left wondering just how much the old-guard business union leadership and the "leadership more in tune with the times" actually have in common and what structural realities link these different and often opposing factions together, despite the appearance and rhetoric of difference. (291)

By the end of *Workers in a Lean World* it is difficult not to share Moody's enthusiasm for a reinvigorated labour movement but, at the same time, be somewhat overwhelmed by the immense reach and power of global capitalism docu-

mented so well here. This combination of emotion prompted one important question that remained, by the book's end, unanswered: how, in the face of this employer and state offensive, is working-class consent to the dominant neo-liberal paradigm possible? As activists and historians know well, the answer to this question is not an easy one — false consciousness? hegemony? fear? But in the context of capital mobility, a key component of globalization, the precise ways in which the interests of capital become synonymous with those of a wider community are indeed important to consider. Such analysis is perhaps beyond the scope of this book. Moody is, after all, interested in the resisters, not the victims of this process. But to probe the ways in which, what one scholar has called, the "democratic aesthetics" of capitalist domination are cultivated in particular locales would lay bare both the economic and ideological power of capitalism and illustrate how the "myths and mystifications" associated with globalization have, despite such tremendous upheaval, become so powerful, common-sensical, and natural. Indeed, such an inquiry would strengthen the core message of *Workers in a Lean World*: do not believe the hype, organize! It is a message as timely and engaging as the book itself.

Andrew Parnaby  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Kumazawa Makoto, *Portraits of the Japanese Workplace: Labor Movements, Workers, and Managers*, ed. Andrew Gordon, Translators Andrew Gordon and Mikiso Hane (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1996).

NOT SO VERY LONG AGO popular interest in Japan largely concerned understanding how this relatively small, resource poor country had managed to build one of the worlds' great economies. Some focused on state market protection and cartelized

price fixing. The more romantic gave importance to highly focused feudal warrior values harnessed in the service of national economic growth (a surprising 1980s bestseller was *The Book of Five Rings*, a treatise on samurai warrior theory and practice written by an obscure 17th century swordsman.) The most common area of discussion, however, considered what was seen to be Japan's distinctive system of labour relations. This "Japanese Employment System" included a variety of elements such as "permanent employment," seniority wages, weak company unions, and powerful corporate identity that bound all employees to each other and to the firm. Japan's protracted recession has stripped some of the lustre from this system while its practical essence is assumed to persist. This newly translated book by a prominent Japanese labour economist calls the reality of this system into question. His study is not the first in English to do so but it is the most well informed, sustained critique of the now mythological "Japanese Employment System."

The title of the book's final chapter, "Working Like Mad to Stay in Place" conveys the study's general tone. The real heart of Kumazawa's book, however, is the preceding chapter in which he looks at "Twenty Years of a Bank Worker's Life." On these pages the reader meets a middle level Fuji Bank employee, Kawabe Tomomi, who, at forty-seven years old, was killed in an automobile accident. For the previous twenty years Kawabe had kept a journal in which he charted his personal and professional life. He was, from a North American perspective, an extreme oddity: A committed, life long Marxist, Kawabe was also a hard working, conscientious bank employee. He organized workers study groups, regularly opposed the officers of his own union, and served as a careful mentor to new employees. Over time the company passed Kawabe over for promotions, pushed him aside in the workplace, and deprived him of symbolic forms of sup-

port and recognition. In many ways the antithesis of the docile, cooperative Japanese salary man, Kawabe's work career demonstrates that the idealized Japanese employment system and the structure of labour relations were harsher and more antagonistic than the model suggests. The first seven chapters seek to explain how and why.

Kumazawa argues that unlike British or American workers, those in Japan never developed a sense of working class membership. As a result, working life in Japan has been marked by isolation and insecurity as workers compete with one another for recognition and promotion within a seniority system. Thus, Japanese working life is, contrary to commonly held assumptions, characterized by intensely competitive individualism. Japan's companies, which base assessments of workers on merit and length of service, have, as a result, created a hierarchical system "saturated with a culture of free competition." (40) When one worker wins in this competitive struggle another loses and because this hierarchy is not separated into impermeable divisions, workers compete with each other from entry into the company until retirement. Thus, even in vaunted Japanese workplace innovations like QC circles, workers are subjected to mutual criticism and conflict in the name of team cooperation and collective goal setting. Uncompensated overtime and worker endorsed work speedups are inevitable consequences of the "mandatory volunteering" that is characteristic of such a system.

Kumazawa offers a powerful analysis of Japan's women workers. In addition to a separate chapter on women's working conditions (159-203) throughout the text women are placed within the context of the larger workplace. For example, in the chapter on Kawabe's career, Kumazawa discusses the persistent problems Fuji Bank women faced such as gendered promotion barriers and explicit pressure to quit at marriage. Most will not be surprised by the existence of systematic gen-

der discrimination but the methodologies for its implementation are usefully documented and analyzed here.

The failure of Japanese workers to develop an awareness of class consciousness and a class-based union movement Kumazawa compares unfavourably to Anglo-American conditions. He suggests that Anglo-American workers did not improve their lot "by forming unions as a means to achieve individualistic goals." Instead organization was a product of an awareness that workers "could not survive by competing as individuals" in a capitalist society. (39) Many will find his analysis of Anglo-American worker values not a little naive. Nevertheless, setting Japan's workers behaviour and lack of organization off against this Western model allows Kumazawa to build a helpful framework for dispelling effectively notions of Japanese groupism and communitarian identity. Indeed, to Kumazawa it is the very individualistic and isolated character of Japanese worklife not the reverse that makes it distinctive.

For a tough minded but fair assessment of Japan's workers and worklife this study is the place to begin. For those both very familiar with labour and industry in Japan and for those who are not this is an important book. The editor and translator deserve our thanks for making it available.

W. Dean Kinzley  
University of South Carolina

Edward Fowler, *San'ya Blues: Laboring Life in Contemporary Tokyo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996).

IN THIS FINELY crafted book, Edward Fowler joins the world of Japan's day labourers, in particular the residents of the San'ya district on the edge of Tokyo.

The book begins in cinematic fashion with a gripping short prologue, the story of a jolting encounter between the author and some San'ya men that explains

Fowler's decision to immerse himself in their world. It ends with a brief epilogue that updates his 1990-91 fieldwork with a report on a 1995 revisit, in a time of very different economic circumstance, and a reflection on the rewards and limits of his method of oral history. In between is a chapter placing contemporary San'ya in historical context and outlining the community's socio-economic geography, and four substantial chapters. One examines the lives of San'ya residents. Another describes political activism in the community. A third takes up rituals of summer festival, year-end celebration, and mourning. Finally, Fowler offers a compelling narrative of his own experience working as a day-labourer.

In the chapter on lives, Fowler recreates the personal narratives of 44 members of the day-labourer community. The stories told by 23 day-labourers form the core of the chapter. They vividly convey a San'ya ethos marked by cheerful bravado and fatalism, pride in survival skills, and a combination of scorn and longing for a place in mainstream society.

The other narratives of union organizers and supporters (most of whom are themselves day-labourers), flophouse proprietors and shopkeepers, bureaucrats, policemen, missionaries, and journalists, offer varied sharp insights into the self-perceptions of the labourers and the economic and political structure that sustains and constrains communities such as San'ya. I was particularly struck by the observation of a police officer assigned to the San'ya district that "our job is to see that a balance is maintained between the yakuza [gangsters] and the unions, and to adjust our response to their movements as needed." (115) What an extraordinarily honest and discouraging assessment of the political ecology of 1990s Japan, where the state treats gangster wage-extortion and union dues as morally and functionally equivalent outside impositions on the community! Whose interest, then, is served by this sort of system



maintenance: the labourers or those who purchase their labour?

Relatively briefer chapters on "activism" and "rites" show that Fowler himself wisely refuses to treat the community with similar "balance." He pays greater attention and respect to the relationship between competing unions and the community (describing, for instance, the separate festivals sponsored by the two local unions dedicated to defending the San'ya labourers) than to the place of the yakuzas, though he does not ignore the latter. We learn that while the labourers have relatively low tolerance for long-winded speeches that analyze their economic or political situation, the unions and their allies can be a considerable resource for some of the most defenceless members of the community.

The final chapter reports on Fowler's own summer-long stint as a day-labourer picking up jobs at the San'ya morning market, and the similar market in Osaka. With Fowler, we learn something of the rigours of pouring concrete for a highway ramp and removing the scaffolding, as well as something of the fear and frustration of several days of not finding work, or possibly finding oneself on the wrong side of a gangsterish labour boss or the immigration authorities. Fowler describes the camaraderie of those on the furthest margins of Japan's economic miracle, who inhabit a world of small pleasures and considerable pain.

Most basically, Fowler's goal and achievement in writing this book is simply to bring to the attention of the English-reading audience the fact that such a world — homeless men, flophouses, and grinding, dangerous labour — even exists in present day Japan.

But the book has two broader aspirations, nicely realized. It explores the links between these seemingly isolated enclaves and Japan's affluent mainstream contemporary society; and it conveys something of his informants' own understanding of their lives and work. To these ends, Fowler combines the techniques of

the ethnographer — participant observation, interviewing, analysis of a community's social organization and rituals — with the art of a writer attentive to the rhythms of speech and story-telling.

Fowler argues that the middle-class masses of Japanese people and San'ya's floating populace are economically interdependent. There exists, he says, a "vital and mutually dependent relationship between marginal and mainstream society." (47) The labourers rely not only on welfare but on jobs provided above all by the construction industry for survival. Corporate Japan relies on an army of one or two hundred thousand day labourers to build its offices and roads. (11) The labourers' communities serve as neatly contained sites of refuge for those who cannot find or keep a place in mainstream society. And isolated as these communities are, they nonetheless (and not surprisingly) reproduce the protocols of the mainstream, from funerals to social drinking to the love of a good bath. We also can see a psychological dimension to this interdependence; San'ya residents are both separate from and often scornful of mainstream society, yet desire its respect and, in some cases, the chance to re-enter.

Beyond arguing for the mutual dependence of "marginal and mainstream," Fowler's greatest achievement comes in the last chapter on work, where he credibly enters the psychological world of the day-labourers through telling of his own San'ya odyssey. Skilfully and gradually he builds a picture of his growing alienation from a former world of family, friends, and a steady job over the course of a summer as an itinerant construction worker (see especially 143-4, 214-25, 223). As Fowler conveys his mixed feelings about his isolation and escape from responsibility, which provokes feelings of guilt as well as liberation and excitement, I read him as suggesting that his fellow labourers are similarly ambivalent about their situation. Ultimately, of course he goes back to his university and family, but with a powerful sense of re-

gret and suspicion of relying on the dubious certainties of normal life.

In sum, this is a wonderful book. My one complaint is that readers who wish their academic authors to specify a detailed, explicit analytic framework will be frustrated at times. For the most part Fowler shows us through his narrative rather than telling us straight out what the San'ya experience means, or how the community works and fits into a larger society. If he thus makes the reader work to figure out the significance of his stories, it is well worth the effort.

Andrew Gordon  
Harvard University

Timothy Bewes, *Cynicism and Postmodernity* (London: Verso 1997).

THIS IS A CHALLENGING, rewarding critique of deconstruction, postmodern political theory, and the "inner emigration" favoured by many intellectuals today over active politics. Deconstruction, metaphysical in essence, is unsuitable as a guide to politics; instead of allowing for the construction of a more rational political order, it promotes a neurotic obsession with the impossibility of authenticity and a disavowal of the "violence of representation — both political and semiotic." (196) Postmodernism has become an empirical social condition, a set of critical-theoretical strategies which legitimize a widespread cultural anxiety. It leads to a political sell-out, to a self-obsessed, sterile avoidance of any risk. Anyone concerned to keep up with the booming literature on postmodernism, and particularly that focused on its political consequences, will want this book. It could be paired in opposition to Zygmunt Bauman's *Intimations of Postmodernity*.

I would offer three criticisms of this book. First, its markedly Hegelian argument is curiously reticent about Marx; it provides us with a methodologically and politically idealist account of postmod-

ernism. Bewes is right to see cynicism as a dominant *motif* of our time, and he is right to seek to counteract it. His strategy and his argument both centre on high-philosophical issues: cynicism and postmodernism originate with intellectuals; their ideas have shaped the late-20th century world. A "Mass cultural retreat from politics" (3) has been accompanied by a refusal to attempt to grasp the impossible — "Disillusionment with enlightenment, the loss of faith in modernity and rationality, is not primarily the result of enlightenment's failure to fulfil its promises ... It is the consequence of the *formalization* of an endemic disappointment — unknowability, undecidability — as the definitive modern condition, by way of the concept 'postmodern.'" (6) "Postmodern cynicism is a legacy of the transportation of ... metaphysical anxieties to the political sphere, and of the diversion of politics ... to ethereal concerns more properly addressed in the realm of metaphysics." (48) Among c. 20,000 critical theorists on campuses in the West, this may indeed serve as a rough-and-ready genealogy of the postmodern sensibility. But disillusionment with enlightenment is not to be found only among intellectuals, and is experienced and voiced by people who have never read a postmodern theorist. The dynamic nucleus of postmodern culture today is not the university but the cultural industries, from advertising to popular music; what the left confronts is not a few easily identified and vilified cultural figures, but a vast network of signs and discourses: MTV and Musique Plus do far more for a postmodern sensibility in an hour than Jean Baudrillard in a year. Perhaps had Marx rather than Hegel more centrally shaped this inquiry, its engagement with the present could have spoken more eloquently to the social and economic complexity of our historical present.

Second, if Marx is missing, so is the 20th-century socialist experiment. Tony Blair (an outlandish parallel is drawn with Himmler!), "moderation," Zygmunt

Bauman, the proliferation of statistics as a manifestation of depoliticization, the Hamlet-like Derrideans pathologically disinclined to get real about politics — are all arraigned by the author for undermining the possibility of a serious politics. The origins of contemporary political cynicism can be related to movements in epistemology. I do not think this is an accurate picture — at least not of the reality! operate in. I think the collapse of socialism, an incipient future, as capitalism's other, as a reality with maps and flags and libraries, is far more closely related to today's pervasive cynicism. I think many left intellectuals, most of them innocent of any interest in Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, do have a sense of deep gulf between their old Marxist-Leninist or social democratic or neo-Marxist maps of possible presents and futures — and the remorseless, brutal efficiency of late-20th century reality. This is not primarily a philosophical problem. It is the problem of the defeat of socialism, in both its Marxist-Leninist and social democratic versions. We would be on a different planet if there were one (even seriously flawed) "socialist experiment" that could be cited as a real alternative to the capitalist mire in which we are compelled to live. With capitalism (for now) apparently the one feasible economic and social system and liberalism (for now) as the one surviving, successful ideology, cynicism is not an illogical response from anyone who had dreamed of something else. Where else, but in a kind of internal migration, can the dream of socialism be remembered?

Third, the book offers us an implicit contrast: the obsessive, politically inert postmodern cynics, as contrasted to the politically active, engaged non-metaphysicians. Over and over, with something like the enthusiasm of an aerobics instructor, Bewes counsels his readers to reject the strategy of "internal migration" — that is, that of surviving in a society we despise by exiling ourselves to its margins, there cultivating our inwardness and

authenticity. Leftist intellectuals should embrace, instead, the violence necessary of politics and for representation. This language is curious; it gives the book a very Babouvist flavour, but nothing is made very specific. The book's "violent" tone — even if the "violence" is merely a metaphorical one — echoes the vanguardist rhetoric of the distant past. At the end of the 20th-century, the socialist language of violence lives vigorously on; violence, it is imagined, will somehow jolt post-moderns out of their cynical lethargy. I do not think so. There are ethical and historical arguments against this stance, but the practical argument is that the socialist revolution has been deferred, perhaps for a long time, by the uninterest in it, for both economic and political reasons, of the masses — and no amount of verbal "violence" in a book as academic as this one will change this fact. The recourse to the rhetoric of violence suggests a continuation, not a going beyond, of the psychology of internal migration and left isolation.

This is a good book, for academics who are interested in the theories which surround postmodernism. But the left's dilemma — and the self-regarding futility of such impassioned but rather disembodied appeals to a generic "violence" — is surely illustrated by the fact that neither Bewes's book (nor indeed this review of it) is likely to reach more than a tiny fraction of the people who every day are affected by CNN, NBC, the Internet, the advertising industry. Written strictly for a philosophically informed minority, *Cynicism and Postmodernity* bears the scent of the PhD it was once.

One savours in particular the Aristotelian/Hegelian take on *Beavis and Butt-head* — can a Beginners' Guide to the Epistemology and Ontology on Beavis be far behind? Or am I just being "postly" cynical?

Ian McKay  
Queen's University

Jean Baudrillard, *Fragments: Cool Memories III, 1991-1995*, translated by Emily Agar (London, New York: Verso Press 1997).

THE DUST COVER of this, the third volume in the *Cool Memories* series, proclaims Jean Baudrillard "the most important French thinker of the past twenty years." Readers of this book may well be puzzled by this claim. There is no doubt that in places Baudrillard displays, if not brilliance, an ability to conceptualize history and society in thought-provoking ways. But this book is uneven and, in and of itself, it hardly justifies the rather lofty claims made on Baudrillard's behalf.

Part of the problem here is the format. As the title suggests, this book is not, as so many others of Baudrillard's are, an essay in social theory. Rather, it is a collection of Baudrillard's rather diverse reflections from the period 1991-1995 (although the title page suggests that it is between 1990 and 1995). None of these entries is longer than a few paragraphs. Some are just one sentence. At times Baudrillard waxes poetic: "The cool, crisp feel of the pillow in summer is the cool, crisp feel of despair," at others, ironic: "The imbroglia of safety and death. In Quebec, where the use of safety belts has considerably lowered the death rate from road accidents, there is a shortage of organs for transplant." At other times still, this book resembles a diaristic self-analysis: "These women who are unreal in so far as they are a fetishized part of myself. Hysteria of feminine projection, without which I would still be prey to that worse part of myself: masculine hypochondria." None of this really seems to have much to do with social theory at all. Thus, having been seduced into reading (or even buying) this book by the acme of academic marketing (the claim that herein lies the wisdom of yet another major French theorist) readers will be forgiven for feeling somewhat cheated. For this mish mash of dubious poetry, more dubious self-analysis, and other diverse

Baudrillardiana is at least as prominent, here, as his more serious theoretical reflections.

Yet even if one is able to keep the theoretical and critical concerns of this book in focus further problems arise. Although it adopts the aphoristic form used to such great effect by Nietzsche in his *Genealogy of Morals* or Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, it lacks the overarching line of logic or criticism that gave these older works such power and enduring influence. As I will discuss below, there are many ideas here that are interesting and could form the basis of innovative modes of social analysis. Yet the fact that Baudrillard does not pursue these ideas deadens the impact of them. Nor does Baudrillard attempt (at least not here) to unite these ideas one with the other into a larger theory or critical framework. This fragmentary substance as well as form of this book will invariably be off-putting to readers new to Baudrillard.

And perhaps this last criticism gets at the very heart of the matter about this book. Contrary to the indications in the text that this book is about the years 1990-1995 (the title page, the references to major events of those years, from the Gulf War to the electoral collapse of the French Socialist Party in 1995) it is really a book about Baudrillard's other books. To use a musical metaphor, the fragments presented here are variations on themes developed in Baudrillard's earlier work.

In the broadest terms, one can understand Baudrillardian *oeuvre* word in terms of its position within postmodernism. As with other postmodernists, Baudrillard seeks to problematize the "real," arguing not that there is no real, but that it has "disappeared" (141) amidst the fragments of discourse with which we are constantly bombarded in this postmodern era of television, film, and computers. In grounding his postmodernism in an account of "postmodernity" (that is, material transformations in the productive forces of capitalist society such as the rise of computers, etc.) Baudrillard takes

up a postmodernist stance close to that of Jean-Francois Lyotard, who in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) explains the collapse of the "metanarratives" which had legitimated modern science, literature, and the arts in terms of the effects of computerization. He is more distant from such postmodernists as Jacques Derrida (who is arguably not a postmodernist but a deconstructionist, although the difference would seem to rest in method rather than effect), who makes no claims about a supposed "postmodernity" but who argues that it is the effect of *différance* (both the differential relation of signifiers which produces meaning and the endless deferral this implies) that obscures the real.

What is peculiar about Baudrillard amongst the postmodernists is his early affiliation with Marxism (he studied under the anti-structuralist Marxist sociologist, Henri Lefebvre) and the enduring influence that Marx has had on his work, in particular Marx's theory of value. This influence has not manifested itself in a fidelity to the original, but in his arguing that the Marxist categories of use-value and exchange-value were operative only in the conditions of modern industrial production. In the postmodern era, where it is primarily reproductions — that is, information, meaning — that are produced and consumed, the system of production is governed by symbolic exchange value. However, the symbolic exchange value of reproductions has nothing to do with the extent to which the original is reproduced in them. As such, each reproduction is itself an original, which he designates by the term "simulacra." A grim political corollary of this system is that actions against or criticisms of the system have symbolic value and are thus recuperated by the system and deprived of their putatively radical character. In the conditions of postmodernity, everything becomes part of a "hyperreality" in which the difference between the real and the imaginary loses all significance.

*Cool Memories, III*, speaks to this theoretical perspective which Baudrillard elucidated in several works beginning in the mid-1970s with *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Yet in so far as there is no restatement of the fundamentals of this theory here, the book will be of most value only to those who are already adept in Baudrillard's work. Even then, such readers may be frustrated by the way in which Baudrillard wantonly abandons these theoretical foundations and begins talking about the "crude manipulation" of the media by contemptuous "political class." (29) If Baudrillard is just warmed over Chomsky, such highfalutin' and problematic concepts as simulacrum and hyperreality hardly seem necessary. But such a traditional, non-postmodernist representation of the way the media works seems to be built into a theory which wants to problematize reality but which can also boldly speak of the real, essential, and determining material conditions of postmodernity. This flaw at the heart of Baudrillard's work and evident in this book will surely embolden those who revel in the late E.P. Thompson's denunciations of the obfuscations of the French Left Bank and will frustrate those, like myself, who feel that postmodernism has much to offer history and allied disciplines.

As I suggested earlier, however, Baudrillard presents some stimulating ideas. For instance, he toys with the notion of using genetic theory as a model for social analysis, representing historical events in terms of a genetic predisposition or immunodeficiency of the social organism. (113-4) At the very least, this holds out the possibility of a new rhetorical strategy in an historical discipline heretofore dominated by atomistic and mechanistic rhetorics, the offspring of Newtonian physics. In another vein, he argues, as he has in other works, that the possibility of effective political action against "the system" resides in a radical deepening of the confusion between the real and the imaginary that is the hallmark of post-

modernity. (31) This strategy seems to turn on its head Marx's criticism of religion (or, in this case, postmodern popular culture) as the opiate of the masses. Yet in each case these ideas are merely broached. The hard work of establishing their utility remains to be done.

At the end of the day, those who want to learn more about Baudrillard will do well to avoid this work and turn to some

of his other writings or to some of the very good critical commentaries on his thought, such as Douglas Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Post-Modernism and Beyond* (Polity press 1989) or Mike Gane's *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory* (Routledge 1991).

Craig Keating  
Simon Fraser University

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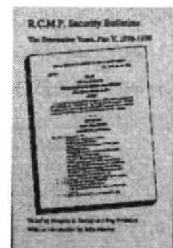


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