

## Reviews / Comptes rendus

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## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

**Rusty Bittermann, *Sailor's Hope: The Life and Times of William Cooper, Agrarian Radical in an Age of Revolutions*** (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press 2011)

IN COLONIAL Prince Edward Island, the struggle for democracy was inextricably linked to the land question. Large swaths of the island had been granted in the 18th century to British landlords on the condition that they develop their estates. Few did, and the result was the escheat movement: a multi-generational struggle to revoke these grants and transfer title to the tenant farm families who worked the land. Rusty Bittermann argues that in order to understand the complexities of this struggle, we need to place it in the much larger context of a revolutionary age, for the life story of William Cooper, a leading figure in the escheat movement, is not an island story. It is a story that criss-crosses oceans and circumnavigates continents. By reconstructing Cooper's life journey, Bittermann establishes the intimacy of relations between the local and the global. He, thus, effectively challenges the presumed centrality accorded to better known colonial reformers, such as William Lyon Mackenzie and Joseph Howe, by illustrating the world in and through a relatively small place.

Sailor's Hope was the name Cooper gave to the farm he leased in 1819 at the top of Howe Bay on the island's east coast. It was there that his wife Sarah Glover gave birth to nine of their ten children. But neither farming, nor family,

structures this biography. The book opens with an exploration of rural Scotland, where in 1786 William was born to a poor craft family in the village of Lochee near Dundee. His father died while William was still a young boy and, after working as a herder, at the age of eleven William went to sea. His rise to mastery of a small sailing vessel by 1811 allows Bittermann to examine the maritime world linking London, Portugal and British North America. The focus then shifts to William's diverse activities after first settling on the island. His experiences as an agent for an absentee landlord and as owner/operator of a grist mill would shape his understanding of the specifics of the land question, which was so central to his role as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and as the island's emissary to the Colonial Office in the 1830s.

When the reform initiative he had led failed, William turned his attention in the 1840s to 'making property.' Bittermann details the ups and downs of an enterprising father, who despite quarrelsome sons, engaged in both ship building for the imperial market and myriad inter-colonial and imperial trades. Here, the invisible hand of the market is replaced by the very visible and active hands of men busy creating markets, while the abstract swings of trade cycles are replaced by real losses and the occasional profit. In the wake of repeated poor harvests and no improvement on the political front, Cooper proposes to his extended family that they emigrate to California. Many accept and, in 1850, they build an 88 ton

vessel and sail it around the tip of South America to San Francisco. The crush of men in the rush to gold created a speculative environment more to the liking of his sons than William, who makes the fateful decision to return alone to PEI to settle matters there. Cholera strikes soon after his departure and Sarah is the first of seven family members to die. Most of the surviving members resettle in the Eel River valley of northern California, where three of William's adult sons would die at the hands of Native American resistance to settler colonialism. William's return to PEI thus becomes permanent, and he once again agitates for a just settlement of the land question. His debates with first the Liberals and then the Tories illustrate clearly how, and to a certain extent why, the 1850s mark the end of this revolutionary age. William Cooper died on June 10, 1867, just weeks before Confederation, but eight years before the federal government legislated an end to landlordism on the island. Although the compensation they offered the landlords was much too high, the mechanisms used to resolve the issue were resonant with William Cooper's half-century old critique.

Rusty Bittermann is careful, indeed cautious, in his use of sources. In the early chapters, readers are informed as much about historical method and the limitations of the written record, as they are about William Cooper himself. Where he has no written confirmation, Bittermann declines to speculate. The principal sources for the political debates of the 1830s are Cooper's printed speeches, supplemented by family correspondence, in particular with Sarah Walker, his wife's aunt in London. As his eldest son, John, came of age, a reminiscence he penned decades later becomes a frequently, although critically, used source. Surviving family papers from the American descendants are increasingly important as the story unfolds. Bittermann

lists 35 archives and a similar number of period publications in addition to his 16 page bibliography. Clearly, this has long been a labour of love.

The book concludes with a reflection on the meaning of William Cooper's life work. Understandably it focuses on the land question and the many criticisms of Cooper's politics. For anyone teaching 19th century Canadian history these are pages well worth reading, but this very choice highlights for me the two imaginative failings of the book.

We learn little about the farm and even less about family life. Bittermann invokes "the challenge of providing for his wife" (250) and their nine surviving children when explaining the turn away from politics towards "making property" in the 1840s. This compounds his earlier uncritical citation of Sarah's "delicate" condition (171) as a reason to emigrate to California. Creating value through developing a farm was not men's work. It was the work of the whole family. To be sure, a gendered division of labour characterized the mixed husbandry of a pre-industrial family farm, but in varying and yet essential ways women and men, girls and boys "provided" for each other. If by 1848 Sarah was "delicate," one might imagine that three decades of farm making, while successfully carrying ten births to term, had something to do with it.

William Cooper struggled for justice and equity, but he did so within a firmly Euro-centric and imperialist framework. Rhetorically, Bittermann asks, "Why stay on Prince Edward Island [...] when there were warmer, better lands available for the taking elsewhere?" (251) Current population estimates for the Wailake, Lassik, Nongat and Sinkyone peoples of the Eel river valley, prior to the settler invasion in which the Coopers played a leading role, range from ten to twelve thousand people. By 1900, they numbered 300. As Danny Vickers once noted, "if there was

good money to be made in trade with the Indians, there was a fortune to be made in dispossessing them." As William Cooper learned through the deaths of three sons, this land was not free for the taking.

Changing gender relations and the new imperial frontiers of the 1840s and 1850s were both major contributing factors to the dawn of a counter-revolutionary age that culminated in World War I. By illustrating the incredible opportunities and exceptional costs of settler colonialism, William Cooper's life and times illuminates this age as well.

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**Christopher Armstrong, Matthew Evenden, and H.V. Nelles, *The River Returns: An Environmental History of the Bow* (Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press 2009)**

THIS IMPRESSIVE history of Alberta's Bow River examines the relationship between natural processes and human societies along the river, mainly from the last third of the 19th century to the end of the 20th. It is primarily an account of human initiatives to master the Bow, and borrowing from Donald Worster's work on water in the American west, a study of "the power relations resulting from control over water, but also on the power exerted by the consequences of environmental manipulation." (16) The book tells the story of an intensely variable and unpredictable mountain stream, a very desirable homeland for millennia of Native residents as well as incoming European settlers from the 1860s, and its thorough remaking by the technology of the high modernist era, as well as the changing ways that people have thought about the river as a result.

While earlier residents (Natives, ranchers, and homesteaders) shaped

their lives to the rhythms of the river, really substantial change began around the start of the 20th century, when the hydroelectric potential of Horseshoe Falls, upstream of the growing city of Calgary, dazzled the eyes of Montréal financier Maxwell Aitken (the future Lord Beaverbrook). Aitken's sight cleared quickly when the first massive flood carried away his work on the unfinished dam, but by that time "capital had already been committed." (126) New engineers were acquired, and the industrialization of the wild river proceeded through a half century of dam building, irrigation projects, and euphemistic "nutrient loading" from Calgary's sewer outfalls. By the 1960s the Bow had been thoroughly redesigned – diverted, restrained, and flattened out – all in order to "salvage and improve upon the ill-considered investment decisions" of the early century. (147) Throughout the 390 pages of *The River Returns* (and 74 pages of notes), Armstrong, Evenden, and Nelles attempt to prove that these events constitute a case of nature and culture made one, rather than the simple abuse of the former by the latter. They conclude that "there is no more 'pristine nature' out there to be preserved or restored, [and] the history of humanity along the river is so bound up with the history of the river as to make the two inseparable." (389)

The book can be thought of in three parts, each with its own character. First, in chapters 2 through 4, the authors examine the mainly free-flowing early years of the Bow. After an initial look at pre-European Native presence in a chapter that skips effectively but lightly over well trodden ground, the account of settlement makes effective use of diverse primary source material to paint a truly engaging portrait of the lives of the farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, schoolteachers, and others who settled along the Bow from the 1860s through the 1910s. The

river pulled settlers, as well as the traders who built Fort Calgary, to its banks; and the railroad that followed them to the city and beyond, up into the mountain pass that the Bow had carved. But the river pushed as well, with its unpredictable floods, and as the authors demonstrate more than once, settlers drawn at first to the floodplain were quick to withdraw to the uplands when dryland agriculture offered the chance. Intriguingly, the authors here point out the influence of climate, in that a long period of greater-than-average rainfall shaped settlement as much and as ominously as a titanic flash-flood might. It is just one example of how quickly, and to what good effect, they abandon in practice their stated objection to the idea of the river's own historical agency. Indeed, the first part of the book is characterized by a river "more acting than acted upon," that therefore "wound its way into the lives of many of the people who settled on its banks." (85) It is also in marked contrast to what follows, as the Bow flows into its industrial era.

*The River Returns* is not a strictly chronological book. Its mainly thematic chapters cover and re-cover the same several decades. The early chapters therefore trespass slightly on the hydroelectric years of the mid-20th century, but it is in the middle section of the book (chapters 5-7), beginning with the future (and ironically titled) Lord Beaverbrook's ill starred attempt to bring the Bow to heel, that the river suffers the staccato insults that brought it to the end of the century fully restrained, massively diverted, and much polluted. Aitken's successors admitted the original error as early as the 1920s, but that did not stop them from building dam after dam to compound it. The story of irrigation makes an even more fascinating study of another treadmill of problems and technological solutions flowing from large capital

investment and a view of nature as inadequate. The Canadian Pacific Railway, that ever-present force in so much Canadian history, fetches up on the banks of the Bow in chapter 6 with a plan to divert most of the flow of the river into the dry prairie and sell irrigated plots to homesteaders. So it did, only to face endless environmental challenges which eventually led it to dump the loss-making enterprise in the laps of state and settler in the 1930s and 40s. One bright spot at last comes in chapter 7 and the account of the Bow's near-death experience in the 1960s and recovery from the slimy, oily, weedy mess in which Calgary's dual "fountain and sewer" demands had left it. The city's embrace of water quality controls is as hopeful a story as the book offers, but it falls sadly short of balancing the sum of the middle chapters, where the river is, this time, more acted upon than acting.

The remaining chapters of the book take a closer look at the ideas people had of the Bow River in the 20th century. At first glance a bit of a hodge-podge of salient themes, chapters 8 through 13 are loosely tied together by a more complicated relationship between nature and culture, consistent with the authors' stated conclusion that the two have been rendered inseparable. Though the chapter on Banff National Park will no doubt attract an especially keen audience, the highlight of this last section must be the chapter on water and environmental policy. As always in Canada, federal-provincial relations have been a driving force in the development of a regulatory regime, and the course of resource politics in the Canadian west is one area where this book stands apart from earlier US models. In particular, the return of federal influence, and even more interestingly the return of Native influence, during the Alberta Water Resources Commission of the 1980s prompts another of the authors' frequent

and well justified intimations of future resource conflict.

*The River Returns* has a curiously equivocal quality throughout. In the brief coverage of restoration ecology for example, the ecological integrity concept is treated with some scepticism, yet on many other occasions the authors make free use of concepts like harm and degradation, which presumably require a similar naturalistic benchmark. I worry that its managerial, potentially ecologically quietist, conclusion will carry weight with the casual reader, but nevertheless I am sure that the volume will be a delight to people with a personal interest in the Bow river valley and its history. It also makes a fine model of environmental history not constrained by a self-consciously whiggish or declensionist narrative. The limitations of the authors' nature-culture argument will be familiar enough to readers interested in environmental history that it will not detract from what is otherwise a great success.

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**Lisa Rose Mar, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885–1945*** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2010)

IN A BOOK THAT responds to recent calls for more transnational and comparative treatments of the Pacific Rim, Mar locates a world, often reduced to a simple binary, within a transnational framework that incorporates not just Chinese immigrant and white communities in British Columbia but extends back to China and into the United States. In moving beyond the simpler dichotomies of Asian and "white," Mar sheds light on the myriad interconnections between these seemingly disparate worlds, revealing that racial attitudes and encounters were far more

complex than earlier histories have suggested. Mar's transnational focus allows her, in turn, to foreground the activities of the Chinese "brokers" or "middlemen" who were able to leverage their ability to speak both English and Chinese, and to function effectively in all these spheres, negotiating the contours of white racism and the complexities of anti-Chinese exclusion laws. The inability of white politicians to read or speak Chinese and of newly arrived Chinese migrants to read or speak English created an opening that was occupied by Chinese brokers who could do both. The ability of these middlemen to bridge that language divide was a source of power that also rendered both groups dependent on them in critical ways. Mar herself is able to tell their story in part because of her own use of Chinese language sources that have not been previously utilized. (136, n.9)

*Brokering Belonging* comprises five separate chapters that examine the roles of Chinese brokers or middlemen in a series of specific contexts, including translating Chinese documents and interview responses for immigration officials and in both civil and criminal court cases; protesting against the segregation of Chinese students in the Victoria public schools in 1922; shaping public perception of Chinese immigrant communities by mediating responses to sociological studies; urging Chinese Canadians not to "boycott military service to protest their disenfranchisement" but to sign up for military service after they were permitted to join the armed services in 1944; and brokering remittances to China after the outbreak of hostilities with Japan in 1937. (12) Mar also examines the role of middlemen as labour contractors, describing their activities as "one of the founding bargains that structured Chinese migration in the Exclusion Era." (56)

The range of contexts in which Mar considers the roles of Chinese middlemen

means that this book will be of interest to scholars in a wide variety of fields, from immigration history and the history of identity and cultural representation, to labour history and education history. Mar argues persuasively that Chinese brokers were an integral part of the legal system that circumscribed the lives of Chinese labour migrants in British Columbia. Their role was a complex one, at once aiding other Chinese immigrants in negotiating an increasingly restrictive system of exclusionary laws when serving as interpreters for Canadian immigration officials, and using these negotiations to their own personal gain. In brokering agreements with white politicians who agreed to overlook legal irregularities, she argues, these middlemen played a critical role in producing new waves of "illegal immigrants." (133) Although Mar notes that Chinese brokers served as practical enforcers of Canada's Chinese head tax, she resists the impulse to simply dismiss them as "villains," implying, in effect, that their efforts to aid Chinese labour migrants in evading the head tax can be understood as a form of resistance (even as they used the bind in which these migrants found themselves to line their own pockets). Ironically, although Mar rightly critiques race-based exclusionary laws as "illegitimate," she appears to accept at face value their result, leaving unquestioned the status of the labour migrants who were able to avoid their full impact with the assistance of Chinese brokers simply as "illegal immigrants." (14, 133) The dual layer of injustice faced by these labour migrants in the form both of race-based exclusion laws and graft cries out for a more complex analysis of their status.

Mar seeks to write history "from the middle" employing "neither a top-down nor a bottom-up perspective," arguing that "writing history 'from the bottom up' obscures the role of brokers as

creative individuals." (4, 109) Also important to note, however, is that the Chinese middlemen whose roles she examines functioned as an elite within the Chinese immigrant community. Although Mar makes the reader aware of the diversity of the Chinese immigrant community, labour migrants are largely absent in the early chapters except to the extent that they are rendered illegal immigrants through the actions of the brokers. Although the story of these middlemen is an important element of a larger history that Mar argues convincingly has not received adequate attention, the absence of the voices of these labourers – subject to victimization by both hostile immigration officials and Chinese interpreters alike – is most acutely felt in the context of statements such as one regarding labour contracting: "While this relationship was exploitative, it was for the most part mutually beneficial." (55)

One interesting and unexpected chapter on the role of middlemen in producing "brokered knowledge" about the Chinese immigrant community describes their efforts to shape community responses to questions posed by University of Chicago sociologists and researchers for the Survey on Race Relations based on their belief that the results of this study would impact government decisions regarding the excludability of Chinese in both Canada and the United States. (90) Fearing that public awareness of the transnational framework within which they operated would only serve to reinforce exclusionists' claims regarding their inadmissibility, they engineered meetings that encouraged researchers to select individuals like themselves as interview subjects and urged those who were interviewed to represent themselves as permanent settlers, even if their real intention was to return to China, in order to counter charges that Chinese were not assimilable. In addition to asserting



identities as Canadians or as British subjects, Mar explains, they also concealed the “Chinese population’s spiritual beliefs, the community’s transnational outlook, anti-British aspects of Chinese nationalism, and illegal immigration” as well as “Chinese beliefs about their own racial and cultural superiority.” (96, 97) So effective were they in this regard, Mar argues, that their portrayal of Chinese immigrants as “tragically thwarted Canadians” has effectively obscured knowledge both of the transnational nature of the early 20th century Chinese community in British Columbia and the proactive role played by Chinese middlemen in brokering relations with the dominant society. (108)

Although Mar has not attempted to write a comprehensive comparative history of Chinese immigration to Canada and the United States, she highlights some key points of comparison and raises a number of questions that bear further investigation. In addition to avenues for further study suggested at the end of several chapters, Mar’s work also suggests a number of other possibilities for comparative study including, for example, the respective roles of brokers in Chinese immigrant communities and of the bosses or oyakata who facilitated labour immigration to Canada and the United States from Japan.

Indeed, the strength of this book is grounded both in the questions it raises and the complexity it reveals. For this reason, and in answering the call for more nuanced transnational histories of Pacific migration, *Brokering Belonging* is important reading for all students of Asian immigration history.

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**Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada*** (Vancouver: UBC Press 2011)

WHEN EATON’S department store closed its doors in 1999, Canadians mourned. The outpouring of sadness was tremendous, greater than most prime ministers have enjoyed in life or death. In this well written monograph, readers learn that Eaton’s, like its counterparts the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and Simpson’s, was much more than a shopping destination for Canadians. It was part of the nation itself. For anyone interested in understanding the manner in which consumption, modernity, and nationalism became intertwined in Canada, *Retail Nation* is excellent. In this monograph, Donica Belisle “brings the history of Canadian consumer society to centre stage” (4) to show readers how and why mass retail and consumerism emerged in Canada between 1890 and 1940. In the process, she offers us a different perspective on the “making of modern Canada.”

Belisle argues that department stores were one of the most influential “agents of Canadian modernization.” (7) Using advertisements, catalogues, census data, company archives, newspapers, letters, and the Eaton’s Mail Order Oral History Project, she explains how Eaton’s, Simpson’s, and the HBC, as well as smaller regional establishments like Dupuis Frères, Morgan’s, and Woodward’s, became so important in the retail landscape. These stores, particularly Eaton’s which emerges as the undeniable giant of Canadian retail in this period, enjoyed tremendous power for two principal reasons: they were involved in all three areas of the consumer marketplace: production, distribution, and consumption; and, through marketing, they cultivated their identities as Canada’s stores, giving them emotional and patriotic significance.



Once this relationship was established, retailers had the power to promote and sustain a particular idea of the country and its citizens, which celebrated white, European bourgeois culture, and heralded consumption as an essentially modern activity.

For historians of Canada, *Retail Nation* offers the first comprehensive study of the history of retail that explores the rise of mass merchandising and its impact on the lives of Canadians. Belisle positions the intellectual contributions of this book at a nexus between scholars who have understood consumption as necessarily exploitative and those who have uncovered the multiple ways in which it can be a context for protest and change. In doing so, she builds upon scholarship by Lizabeth Cohen, Joy Parr, Victoria De Grazia, Erika Rappaport and Cynthia Wright to develop a “less dichotomous” and more complex understanding of the history of consumption in Canada. This history emerges through individual stories, as well as the connections Belisle draws across time and place. We learn through comparison with other retailers both large and small, including the Bon Marché in France, Harrods in England, and Sears Roebuck in the United States, that the history of consumption and retail in this country is about industrialization, but also about the peculiarities of the Canadian context. Unlike department stores in other locations, Canadian retailers marketed to the urban petite bourgeoisie and working class. By buying in bulk, having a cash only policy (until 1930) and producing their own merchandise, Eaton’s kept prices (democratically) low. They aligned bargain days with paydays to encourage consumption. To tackle the geographical expanse of the country, they developed a highly successful branch and mail order catalogue system to market to consumers in far-reaching locations. As a consequence,

between 1900 and 1920 Eaton’s enjoyed remarkable profits. In 1919, Eaton’s total sales were nearly \$123,590,000, while Simpson’s earned \$33,444,765, Macy’s \$35,802,808, and Sears \$235,000,000. In size, Eaton’s was second only to Sears in North America. The department store’s economic strength becomes even clearer when you consider per capita earnings. The population of the United States (100 million) dwarfed that of Canada (8 million). While some readers may find the study unmoored because of Belisle’s efforts to draw broad connections, I found her conclusions meaningful and thought-provoking.

While *Retail Nation* has many important things to say about the dynamics of gender and race, it is first and foremost a study of working-class history. As such, it focuses on the rise of consumer capitalism, relationships among workers, retailers, and consumers, and stories of protest and activism. The culture of paternalism prevalent in department stores provides one of the book’s predominant themes. We learn that retailers provided workers and consumers with some of the earliest private welfare services. This included medical plans, pensions, and social programs, as well as complimentary child care, lavatories, and free events like the wildly successful Santa Claus Parade. Naturally, this paternalistic ethos also had drawbacks. Merchants, cooperators, labour unions, and women’s rights activists all challenged the power of department stores in these years, pointing to unfair labour practices, market monopolization, low wages, and anti-unionism. Ultimately, protestors were not successful because they could not convince Canadians to stop buying from, or the Canadian government to take decisive action against, large retailers.

Within this paternalistic context, Belisle argues that women were particularly vulnerable. This conclusion is well

developed within the existing historiography, and Belisle builds most obviously on the scholarship of American historian Susan Porter Benson. In chapter four, she highlights the manner in which Eaton's commodified their female employees. At one 1919 event, Eaton's "girls" used their bodies to form the words "for King and Country". In doing so, they signaled that Eaton's workers were the "embodiment of feminine purity" and the department store itself was a respectable and truly Canadian place to shop and work. (119) In chapter five, Belisle examines the dimensions of retailer-consumer relationships. Here Belisle contends that Canadian women had less power than their American counterparts. While Porter Benson argues that female shoppers could effectively challenge dominant gender and class ideals through performance using dress and deportment, Belisle contends that the culture of paternalism that reigned in department stores prevented women from gaining significant traction in efforts to override social inequalities. In one example, a respectably dressed female shopper, and a loyal Eaton's customer to boot, is shunted aside at the cake counter when a more "richly dressed" woman arrives. For Belisle this example highlights the limits of performance for women in a consumer capitalist society. Despite her dress, this shopper could not challenge the belief that "wealthy consumers were the world's most important people." (150) I appreciate the class story Belisle tells here, as well as the class dynamics she wants historians to keep in focus. What this story highlights for me most clearly is the manner in which social power shifts in time and place, and between individuals. To return to the cake counter in 1958 Toronto, if the "richly dressed" entitled woman had been African Canadian or Anishinaabe, even the best class performance would not have allowed her to jump the line.

At the end of *Retail Nation*, Belisle asks readers to consider: what kind of Canada did department stores help to create? As in other contexts, department stores changed the face of consumption in Canada. In many ways they democratized shopping, providing people across social classes, and an immense geography, with access to a wider array of goods and services. They provided jobs for working-class women, as well as warm places to shop with lavatories and child-care. Their catalogues were a source of entertainment and utility in urban and rural homes. At the same time, department stores exploited their workers and manipulated consumers. They implicated themselves into the very fabric of national identity, and did this so powerfully that they could sell a particular idea of Canada that was exclusionary and racist without damaging their image or bottom line. In the end, *Retail Nation* clearly demonstrates that department stores were integral to the making of modern Canada, its economy and its culture. In an equally important sense, the book encourages Canadians to think twice the next time they reach out to affectionately rub Timothy Eaton's shoe.

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**Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Making Up the State: Women in 20th Century Atlantic Canada* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press 2010)**

JANET GUILDFORD and Suzanne Morton's *Making Up the State* is a collection of 14 essays that interrogate various aspects of women's relationships with the state in 20th century Atlantic Canada. The compilation brings together a wide range of case studies that investigate not only how the state and its various actors regulated women's lives in the

region, but the myriad ways women responded to these changes, engaged in political and social activism, expanded their rights, and challenged the state. As the editors note in their introduction, however, the articles also illustrate “the ad hoc character of state formation” in the region over the course of the century, and force scholars to confront new questions about women’s relationship to the state. (9) Contributors raise important questions about the state’s adherence to separate spheres ideology, women’s participation in and interactions with the formal political sphere, and the role personal faith played in shaping women’s activism throughout this era. What emerges is an important collection of scholarship that expands the historiography of state formation and women in Atlantic Canada, complementing the editors’ previous 1994 collection, *Separate Spheres*. Several contributors to this current collection stand out as particularly adept at examining women’s relationships with the state over the course of the 20th century.

*Making Up the State* is divided into four thematic sections. An untitled first section features Sharon Myers’ examination of Prince Edward Island’s Minnie McGee. After her 1912 murder conviction McGee was bounced between federal penitentiaries and Falconwood Hospital, the province’s mental asylum. Federal and provincial jurisdictional conflicts coupled with legislative gaps, exacerbated in this case by a poorly funded medical system, illustrate critical flaws in the state’s power and its regulatory structure. This case reveals how these fissures impacted citizens’ lives and highlights the fractured nature of the state in the early 20th century.

Women’s interactions with and participation in the formal political system are explored in part two, “Electoral Politics.” In her case study of women from

Woodstock, New Brunswick, Shannon M. Risk reveals how organizations such as the Red Cross, IODE, and Women’s Institutes served as important platforms for women. Despite their exclusion from the formal political sphere, women were drawn together as activists through these organizations, and they wielded considerable influence in advancing issues such as suffrage and women’s education in rural areas that were so often ignored by male politicians. Sharon MacDonald’s article explores the life of Mary Russell Chesley, a prominent Nova Scotia suffragist and peace activist, and one of the most vocal and influential feminists of her time. MacDonald highlights Chesley’s work with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, a group which played a critical role for women to promote numerous causes in the early part of the century. Chesley’s activism was fuelled by her personal faith. MacDonald argues that historians must be attuned to “the role of spiritual faith in radical social movements” (54) to fully understand the intersection between religion and activism, a neglected area of study. Risk and MacDonald’s essays also broadly illustrate the importance of examining the rural women’s interactions with the state, a topic which the editors note in their introduction is frequently overlooked.

Part Three, “Women and Policy,” explores different facets of state program and policy development. Barry Cahill’s examination of the Nova Scotia Barristers Society’s 1915 admission of its first female lawyer to the bar illustrates how a professional self-regulating body shaped provincial state policy. The Society, unlike its counterparts in most other provinces, did not prevent women from being called as lawyers and simply accepted their applications for articles. The provincial government followed suit in 1917 when it amended the Barrister’s and Solicitor’s Act to reflect the decision already

taken by the Society which, as the profession's regulator, retained sole jurisdiction over bar admissions. Cahill provides an interesting comparison between the admission of female lawyers and women's enfranchisement, observing that for the provincial government "the prospect of two or three women at the bar was as underwhelming as that of a magnitude of women at the polls was frightening." (81) Phyllis Jane Lyttle's work as a public health nurse in Baddeck, Cape Breton is explored in Sasha Mullally's article. Lyttle's experience working in the province's burgeoning public health care system reveals how services were centrally managed but "delivered in idiosyncratic ways at the local level." (114) State public health mandates oftentimes had to be ignored, revised or negotiated in order to serve the community. Lyttle transcended her role as public health nurse, often stepping into the role of physician in order to meet local needs and forcing her to "operate on a tenuous boundary between community and state." (129)

Contributors also demonstrate how the state subscribed to a male breadwinner/female homemaker ideology through its policies and programming. The Maritime provinces' participation in the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program is explored by Heidi MacDonald. Designed in response to the Great Depression the program underscored that "male unemployment was far more serious than female unemployment." (146) Under this program the state pursued a separate spheres gender ideology through a curriculum that trained men for paid employment outside the home, while women were instructed in homemaking skills. This system embedded a framework that ensured women's economic reliance on men and that they would not contend with men for employment outside the home. Suzanne Morton's examination of Atlantic Canada's fisheries reveals that despite

the critical role women played in the industry, state policies and programming marginalized their contributions, their work "almost always disregarded, minimized or ignored." (152) State fisheries policy reflected traditional gender ideology where men were cast as the industry's primary breadwinners, and women were constructed as secondary helpers or as consumers. The editors' introduction notes that some posit that women have generally benefitted from a strong state. However, MacDonald and Morton's work are potent reminders that throughout the 20th century the state instituted policies that reified separate spheres ideology and fundamentally shaped its relationship with women.

Women's activism in postwar Canada is the theme of the collection's final section titled "Women Engage the State." Gail G. Campbell looks at the life of Muriel McQueen Fergusson who, in 1953, became the first Atlantic Canadian woman appointed to the Senate. Fergusson's work with her peers and feminist organizations helped launch the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and advanced equality for women on several fronts, including equal pay and increasing women's presence in Canada's civil service. Campbell reminds scholars about the importance of investigating feminists of Fergusson's generation, many of whom "have remained in the shadows" of historical inquiry. Janet Guildford explores the formation of Status of Women advisory councils in Atlantic Canada. Starting in the 1970s, these councils advised provinces on a wide range of labour and social welfare issues, legislation and policies affecting women, and ensured women's protection under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Despite significant accomplishments, however, advisory councils remained subjected to significant political forces outside their control. Advisory council members were

appointed by provincial governments which, as Guildford argues, raised serious questions about representation and autonomy. Although Guildford concludes that these groups had “little autonomy and no ‘teeth’ to ensure the adoption of woman-friendly legislation,” councils nevertheless “played important roles” (246) advising the state on important issues impacting women’s lives.

The editors are to be commended for this outstanding collection of essays which interrogates various aspects of Atlantic Canadian women’s relationships with the state, and broadens the historiography on state formation in the region. Additionally, they also draw readers’ attention towards subject areas that remain to be explored. As Guildford and Morton write in their introduction, with a few exceptions, little scholarly attention has been paid to “state-supported arts, culture and heritage policy, especially in the area of ... ‘high culture’ or fine arts,” an area that was “often the subject of women’s lobbying efforts.” (14–15) Overall, *Making Up the State* is an important contribution to the historiography on women in Atlantic Canada that not only interrogates new areas of study, but maps out future areas of research. This collection will be essential reading for those seeking to understand women’s relationships to the state in the region.

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**Therese Jennissen and Colleen Lundy,**  
*One Hundred Years of Social Work:  
A History of the Profession in English  
Canada 1900–2000* (Waterloo: Wilfrid  
Laurier University Press 2010)

*ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF Social Work* by Therese Jennissen and Colleen Lundy examines the history of the social work profession in English Canada. Although the

book’s subtitle indicates that it deals with the period from 1900 to 2000, it actually covers a block of time stretching from 1880 to 2010. The Preface of the book claims that it is “the first comprehensive history of the Canadian social work profession.” Other texts, such as *Social Work Practice*, by Heinonen and Spearman (2010), include a chapter on the history of social work in Canada and weave important elements of social work history into other content areas; however, *One Hundred Years of Social Work* is the only text that attempts to deal exclusively with the historical development of the profession. It is clearly written and represents a significant contribution to social work literature in this country.

The authors note certain limitations, namely that social work in Québec is not discussed to any extent and the book does not present information about the profession related to social work in the northern territories. They also indicate that they did not focus much attention on social work with Aboriginal populations. However, the background research represents a considerable amount of work and time. Jennissen and Lundy travelled extensively to explore archival records as well as interview people with relevant information. There is a fairly heavy reliance on records of the professional association, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW).

The book is divided into 14 chapters ranging from the earliest history of social work in Canada through to fairly recent events in 2010. The early religious roots of the profession are discussed, especially the role of the social gospel movement. The authors draw some parallels with the history of social work in the United States and the philosophical approaches of important American figures like Mary Richmond and Jane Addams. The development of the CASW is central to the authors’ discussion of social work history

during the Depression, the war, the Cold War, and the more recent dismantling of the welfare state.

Jennissen and Lundy present interesting examples about the influence that the CASW was able to exert on the federal government as Canada developed various policies and programs in the areas of health and social welfare. The organization presented regular briefs and papers to the federal government on policies such as unemployment insurance and family allowance. Members of the CASW were invited to sit on government committees concerned with the development of policies that built Canadian social welfare. Today the CASW is a fractured and somewhat insignificant organization so it is surprising to read about the influential and active role it played with policy makers even though it was, and is, a relatively small professional association.

The documented history of the CASW represents the greatest strength of this book. The authors describe the activities of the organization as well as the various internal tensions that relate to the dynamic between what might be termed social action and professionalization. These elements tend to be presented as incompatible polar opposites, and occasionally the reader gets the sense that a social worker cannot espouse professionalism and at the same time pursue social justice that promotes genuine political and social change. At best, the relationship between professionalism and activism is presented as one that is ambiguous and conflicted.

The book also devotes some space to the development of social work education, unionization and working conditions, and regulation. The discussion in these areas is somewhat limited and narrow in focus. In terms of regulation of the profession, the authors present a view that is somewhat unbalanced. For example, Stuart Alcock, a former director of the BC Association of

Social Workers, is quoted as saying that regulation is not really necessary as most social workers are employed by organizations that scrutinize their practice and in effect protect the public. (242) The quote is ironic as the Gove Inquiry and its subsequent report (1995) found exactly the opposite case. The lack of regulation and protection of the public on the part of employers and employing organizations was cited as a chief reason to regulate the profession of social work in BC. The evidence and recommendations of Judge Gove paved the way for subsequent passage of the Social Workers Act and broader regulation of the profession. In the same vein, a quote from Marion Walsh suggests that regulatory bodies are undemocratic servants of government. (242) It is true that governments enact the legislation that creates the regulatory bodies. However, public (government) appointees to social work regulatory boards comprise a minority of the members with the majority elected by peers.

A weakness of the book is the lack of information concerning the evolution and change in what might be called front-line social work practice. For example, the rapid deinstitutionalization of populations that included people with psychiatric disabilities and people who were mentally challenged had an enormous influence on the growth and demand for social work as well as the nature of social work practice. Case management, advocacy, knowledge of the law, medical knowledge, knowledge of psychotropic medications, psychosocial rehabilitation, risk assessment, and crisis intervention represent a few areas of knowledge and skill that social workers have had to master in order to practice effectively since the policies of deinstitutionalization were implemented in Canada through the 1960s and 1970s.

The book devotes limited attention to the important field of child welfare. In



rural and northern parts of Canada, child welfare and social work are often synonymous in the eyes of the general public. In many provinces child welfare organizations are the major employers of social workers. This area of social work practice often draws media attention given the vulnerability of children and the highly publicized tragedies that occur from time to time. The judicial inquiries that follow major criticism of child welfare service delivery have exerted a profound impact on social work practice in the field of child welfare. Reports such as *No Quiet Place* (Kimelman, 1985) or *The Report of the Gove Inquiry* had significant influence on social work and social work practice, but this does not receive any attention in the book.

The authors occasionally subscribe to assumptions about practice that lack validity. For example, they suggest that social work “embraced Freudian psychology in the 1920s.” (230) However, a careful and thorough analysis of both literature and practice sources (1972) demonstrates that this is a mistaken belief and that in fact the influence of Freudian psychology was marginal at best and clearly located outside the mainstream of social work practice.

Despite some of these shortcomings this book is an extremely valuable contribution to social work literature in Canada. It provides an excellent history of the CASW and it sets social work within the context of broader political and economic events that influenced and affected the development of the Canadian welfare state. Jennissen and Lundy have created a useful resource for social workers including university faculty members, students, practitioners, regulators, professional associations, and agency managers.

*Glen Schmidt*

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**Stephen High, ed., *Occupied St. John's: A Social History of a City at War, 1939–1945*** (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2010)

THIS EDITED COLLECTION brings together the work of Stephen High and nine contributors whose collaborative efforts have led to a splendid volume on the social history of St. John's, Newfoundland, significantly altered by the sudden arrival of allied personnel during the Second World War, more so in fact than was any other port city in North America. Each chapter documents in vivid detail St. John's social and urban history from 1939 to the early postwar years, not only transformed during the “friendly invasion” of American and Canadian forces but altered in ways that shaped local and family histories on the Avalon Peninsula and throughout many parts of Newfoundland. With just 40,000 residents at the start of the war, no urban settlement in North America was more stunningly invaded or profoundly affected by a wide variety of social relationships that developed among many, indeed most, civilians and the men and women of the allied forces and Red Cross. *Occupied St. John's* stands out as a particularly striking work in terms of its production value (arresting photographs, useful illustrations, even pull-out maps), elucidative analysis, and thematic scope, from a study of the speedy creation of military installations and the social responses that followed to a reassessment of a North Atlantic seaboard city at war in the context of global war.

High and his colleagues took on the challenging task of examining complex and intersecting changes – military, social, and cultural – that quickly took shape with the arrival of Allied forces personnel, especially naval and airborne, who provided the first line of North Atlantic defense against German U-Boat



attacks on merchant shipping. The arrival in St. John's Harbour of the US Naval vessel the *Edmund B. Alexander* at the end of January 1941 to bolster established and still growing Canadian forces, alongside a scant British presence, marked the shift from the city's mere home front distance to Europe in September 1939 to its war front proximity as the command centre of an "island fortress" located just off the Grand Banks. Of course, St. John's location as the most easterly port with its immediate access to the North Atlantic and proximity to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, as well as the potential value to the enemy of nearby iron mines and deposit reserves on Bell Island and vast, undersea coal seams off Cape Breton, pre-determined its strategic significance. The Ogdensburg Agreement, and the Permanent Joint Board of Defence that resulted, as well as the Canada/Newfoundland Defence Accord, and the Anglo-American Leased Bases Agreement (known also as the "Destroyers for Bases Deal") set the planning stage for the sudden influx of uniformed men and women – most, of course, in the ranks and of typical military age – that had such immediate impact on St. John's and other coastal areas in Newfoundland for the remainder of the war, indeed for the many soon-to-be brides and grooms on family histories on the island today.

Following a useful introduction by High, Christopher A. Sharpe and A.J. Shawyer examine the making of a "war-time landscape," marked by the installations of Shamrock Field Camp (Newfoundland militia), Lester Field Camp (Canadian army), and Fort Pepperell (American forces). On any day during the thick of the war, the city's military and harbour facilities housed some 7,000 American soldiers, most stationed at the newly constructed Fort Pepperell on the northeast side of Quidi Vidi Lake, 1,600 Canadian army personnel, 2,400 Royal

Canadian Air Force, and 3,600 Royal Canadian naval service men and women.

In part, particularly in High's own chapter on "Rethinking the Friendly Invasion," the volume seeks to revisit Peter Neary's clever observation that "the United States had come into Newfoundland with a first class ticket, while Canada came with a second class ticket which only the British could upgrade." (190) High suggests that popular stereotyping of stalwart, American heroes (in contrast to the often drunk, disheveled Canadian bumpkins) is, and always was, a misleading construct, embedded in a historiography rooted in Newfoundland's pre-Confederation island nationalism. High's contribution merits a re-thinking on our part of the friendly invasion of American in contrast to Canadian servicemen. The stereotypical perception of "drunken Canadians" looking less than admirable next to the neatly uniformed and better behaved, indeed beloved "Yanks," especially, as the story goes, by young women, needs a closer look. And, as High points out, the oral historian's eye-witness and often alternative accounts can offer us better markers of lived experience. High presents a nuanced probe through his interviews to challenge conventional notions of national differences. Individual and personal stories, located in the back eddies of mainstream myths, are certainly something we might expect in this case to leave behind, given the large invasion of servicemen and women of all stripes and so many personal stories that are recovered here. This chapter revisits the national question applied to St. John's friendly invaders, and High's analysis throughout, as subjective as this issue can be, is clear and to the point.

In terms of naval installations, Paul Collins' chapter, which follows, describes the surge in naval installations that moved St. John's Harbour from a strategic

port with minimal defense in 1940–41 to the highly effective transatlantic naval base that ‘Newfyjohn’ became by 1944. Collins’ work expands on the important wartime naval histories of Marc Milner and Michael Hadley to broaden our understanding of the strategic importance of the Royal Canadian Navy (which joined US fleets, from corvettes and destroyers to battleships, to combat U-Boat attack). Collins also focuses on the social history of the sailors and merchant marine crews, with detailed reference to the everyday lives stationed in the city: “Possibly the most well remembered service facilities in St. John’s during the Second World War” he writes, “were the three hostels. The Caribou Hut might be the most famous of the three. During the 1,637 days it operated, ‘The Hut’ rented 253,551 beds, served 1,545,766 meals, and hosted 1,518 movies, 459 dances, 395 shows, and 205 Sunday night sing-songs with a total attendance in excess of 700,000 people.” (105)

As essentially a “people’s war” retrospective, this book is based on an impressive set of oral history projects. In the second section, “Remembering Wartime St. John’s,” Barbara Lorenzkowski leads with a chapter on the “children’s war.” Based on 27 interviews with women and men, resident today in the city, Lorenzkowski offers the oral historian’s interpretation of the recollections of growing up during the war of a doubly distant land, first through time and memory, and, second, through children’s eyes. The focus here is on the recollections of a particular set of private and public urban spaces—the homes, streets, and schools as wartime intensified settings that left deeply ingrained impressions of a hometown flooded by uniformed men and constant news of war overseas that often seemed so close to home, indeed closer to home than anywhere else in northern North America. Lorenzkowski’s voices

are carefully assessed for differences of class and gender: the war, for instance, through a younger girl’s eyes, who recalled social occasions, as when her parents entertained naval officers in their middle-class home; or her adolescent sister, ignoring their warning about staying out past curfew at a Knights of Columbus Hall dance; or, of course, a young lad’s propaganda-inspired and boyish desire to slice “Hitler slowly in to pieces.” (140) Lorenzkowski highlights, in particular, “flashbulb” memories shared by many local girls and boys, from the spectacular – the Knights of Columbus hostel fire (100 dead) to the horrifically tragic – the scenes that followed the torpedoed sinking of the North Sydney-to-Port aux Basques passenger ferry, the Caribou (130 victims, many from St. John’s).

Jeff A. Webb reassesses the friendly invasion through the lens of popular culture. Webb moves toward the everyday milieu of local young women, dating US and Canadian servicemen, through a critical look at the music and ambiance of barroom concerts and dances at notable halls like the Caribou Hut. He considers armed forces entertainment visits, largely organized by Americans with Canadians attending, by Phil Silvers, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, and Les Brown. Webb is especially interested in challenging simplistic notions of cultural modernization as a pattern that began with the war, or merely the inevitable result of the huge and dramatic arrival of American servicemen and American cultural baggage. In broad terms, Newfoundlanders’, especially the city’s civilians’, taste for American movies, American radio, and American consumerism pre-dates the war considerably. But as this chapter also illustrates, the Canadian influx had its impact too. The cultural collisions and collusions were obviously shaped by age, with younger single women and sailors, airmen and soldiers as the very friendly

invaders, who re-shaped the styles of behaviour, language, and dress of the new era. Webb uses his tour through the St. John's entertainment sites, rejuvenated by wartime music and dancing, as convenient stopping off points to offer a carefully illustrated study of popular culture and the occupation of St. John's.

My personal favourite among the chapters, hardly an easy choice, was Gillian Poulter and Douglas O. Baldwin's portrait of Mona Wilson. Poulter and Baldwin trace Wilson's wartime career through her exemplary work as Assistant Commissioner of St. John's Canadian Red Cross. Seconded from Prince Edward Island, this Rosedale born and Johns Hopkins Hospital trained nurse brought with her extensive World War I and post-World War I experience with the American Red Cross. Over 20 years before, Wilson had taken part in de-commissioning American hospital bases in France, before she continued as a nurse during Allied participation in the Russian Revolution in Vladivostok. She then moved on to Tirana, Dubrovnik, and stations on the Dalmatian coast. Obviously, Wilson gained a diverse array of experiences. She organized mother's clubs, for instance, to help care for infants in Vir Pazar, Montenegro before returning to Toronto in 1922. While this chapter reads as a tribute to Wilson's impressive record, the details of her arrival in October 1940 as a "Canadian" from P.E.I. are followed by a compelling life and times narrative, with the frenetic backdrop of this particular city at war. The authors note Wilson's skill in associating with local notables and key service organizations, from Lady Eileen Walwyn, wife of the Chairman of Commission Government Humphrey T. Walwyn, to the Girl Guides, St. John's Ambulance, a revived Women's Patriotic Associations of Newfoundland, the YMCA, Salvation Army,

among other groups and societies that filled up her hectic schedule to mobilize volunteer work. Wilson worked from the Red Cross office, located right in the Caribou Hut before it moved to the Knights of Columbus building, right across on Water Street, serving in a senior capacity to provide aid to all military allies, from stationed personnel to rescued seaman. The wealth of everyday details concerning Wilson's quick responses to a wide range of immediate demands could be recast by the reader in more critical terms in light of Ruth Roach Pierson's feminist interpretation of the re-solidification of feminine/masculine boundaries for service women and civilian munitions workers across wartime Canada and overseas. Of course, to condemn Wilson today for the class and gendered assumptions she pursued in her work could veer toward an exercise of presentism, and Poulter and Baldwin show why.

Finally, Ken Coates and Bill Morrison place the city's dramatic occupation in the context of a global war. They apply perspectives from their earlier work on the massive Alaska Highway road building project, which, of course, brought with it another US forces invasion on the other side of Canada and the United States, in British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska. Their skill at examining strategic North American responses to world war, grounded in their work on the Pacific Northwest coastal experience following Pearl Harbour, allows them to expand their broad contextualization of this volume's specific emphasis on the social history of wartime St. John's.

As a collaborative work, this book joins a still growing list across the country of social change in specific urban sites during both world wars, from Ian H.M. Miller's *Our Glory and Our Grief* (2002) and James M. Pitsula's *For All We Have and Are* (2008) to Serge Marc Durlflinger's *Fighting from Home* (2006) as well as

my own work on three Canadian cities in World War I. What obviously makes St. John's unique as a wartime locale is its strategic location on the North Atlantic, from proximity to key harbours (both St. John's and the US Naval Base at Argentia, which prompted the wholesale local population relocation to nearby Placentia and Freshwater) to expanded air force base potential that prefigured the massive and friendly invasion, that accelerated after Pearl Harbour.

What would be less obvious, without this new book, is what this particular city looked like, and what it felt like to live there, especially temporarily for the men and women in uniform, or in the exceptional circumstances of a war taking place both overseas and not far from shore for the permanent population; and what the past and future in the early 1940s to the immediate postwar period seemed like to the invaders and residents of all ages. These are things that often only the personal interview of the oral historian can really get at best. What anyone reading the multiple layers of evidence contained in this single volume would appreciate is that High and his colleagues captured a vibrant, often tragic, often exciting, sense of the past: they "got it" for a wide reading audience today.

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**Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900–65*** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2010)

COVER ART IS NOT normally within the purview of the book reviewer. But in this case, praise for Cameron Duder's *Awfully Devoted Women* must begin with the striking cover image of Frieda Fraser literally and metaphorically paddling her own canoe. Taken in 1936, on

a camping trip in northern Ontario, the photo captures Fraser's muscular naked back, cropped hair and hint of a smile as she canoes across a northern lake. Doing historical justice to this moment is the purpose of Duder's book. And it is a *tour de force* of painstaking research, careful analysis, and compelling findings, as Duder expertly weaves such singular moments into a compelling narrative of women who desired women. Decades before Winnipeg artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan took back the wilderness as Lesbian National Park Rangers ([http://www.fingerinthedike.ca/rangers\\_mov.html](http://www.fingerinthedike.ca/rangers_mov.html)) we have this memento of Fraser's entourage paddling into the heart of Canadian Shield country, and successfully disrupting Canadian history in the process.

Duder, an independent historian and scholar, has amassed a terrific collection of archival, print, and oral histories, to produce this important work – the first comprehensive study to document the history of lesbians in Canada prior to the mid-sixties. Well versed in the transnational literature of lesbian histories, this book provides a welcome addition to both gendered and sexuality histories. Conversant with contemporary scholarly debates about sexual identities and challenges inherent in writing histories of people who never claimed such "identities" (as explicitly lesbian actors) Duder's study eschews these debates in favour of concentrating on historicizing the lived experiences. Tracing the development of sexological literature, and the histories of romantic friendships amongst women, Duder provides an excellent model for other historians of sexuality to follow. In part one, Duder historicizes the "awfully devoted women" of the pre-World War II era. Working from private documents, novels, and extant media sources, he carefully reconstructs the language of upper-middle-class women's same-sex

desires. Whether physician Frieda Fraser and her partner Edith (Bud) Bickerton Williams, or social reformer Charlotte Whitton and her partner Margaret Grier, the correspondence reveals the intimate nature of those relationships. Significantly, Duder had access to new sources about Whitton, as her final personal files were released to researchers in 1999. What, many have wondered, did Whitton want to keep secret in those files? The answer is a bit more complex than anticipated. Not surprisingly, she clearly wanted to protect her relationship with Grier. But she was also keeping her own personal failure secret, since Whitton's work commitments kept her from Grier's bedside when she died. The grief, anger and despair expressed by Whitton at this irrevocable situation were the source of some of her darkest days and clearly haunted her long afterwards. The portrait that emerges from this additional archival material is one of a grieving widow. Classifying the Whitton and Grier partnership as a same-sex marriage in all but name seems conclusive now that these missing pieces of the puzzle have been revealed.

While a number of previous scholars, both in the American and Canadian historiography, have resisted "labeling" women like Fraser and Williams, or Whitton and Grier, without conclusive proof of sexual activity, Duder's work illustrates the flaws in such debates. First, it overlooks the class, gendered and racial conventions elite and middle class women operated under, particularly with respect to explicit sexual discussions and/or writings about sexual activity. Secondly, it illustrates that the evidence we do have has been purposefully coded so as to allow the writers their freedom of expression, at the same time it prevented random readers from de-coding the true meaning. Duder encourages others to adopt careful readings, to look for repetitious coded phrases (such as "awfully devoted

women" used to denote lesbian couples) and to be alert to the full possibilities of language. In doing so, his assertions that these relationships were sexual seems a logical conclusion to make. Impressively, in both parts of the text, Duder devotes a chapter to enumerating the range of women's same-sex practice, to historicizing what available medical or popular literature existed to frame these practices, and to analyzing how women learned how to have sex with other women. Rather ironically, while this book offers us important advances in our knowledge by illustrating that some so-called passionate friendships were sexual relationships conversely it also cautions us about presuming too much for the post-war years. Duder's informants from the fifties and sixties recollected how they often had very little information about their bodies. The universalizing notion that the post-World War II era opened up infinite possibilities for same-sex desire and expression was not, in practice, always true.

Another strength of the second part of the volume are the marvelous insights that emerge from the oral interviews. The 22 lower-middle class women whom Duder interviewed for this project, combined with a smaller number of interviews completed for earlier academic and community-based projects, provided wide-ranging interviews about sexual practices, how women located other lesbians, and details about how one lived as a middle-class lesbian in Canada prior to the mid sixties. The quick answer, for these middle-class women, was quietly and discreetly. Unlike the working-class-bar lesbians or the lesbians who would emerge in the sixties and seventies from identity based activist groups (feminist and/or lesbian and gay liberation) Duder's cohort chose a different approach. Circumspect about their private lives, which consisted of long-term partnerships with other women, and largely private

socializing, they were mainly invisible to the surrounding mainstream society. While an effective strategy for them, this practice has skewed historical analysis of lesbian histories for a couple of key reasons. First, unless oral interviews are conducted and women consented to interviews, scholars have few sources to capture this group of individuals. Secondly, many scholars have privileged the prevailing political narrative of lesbians willing to openly declare and define themselves as such with the result that these women have often been dismissed or denigrated for being “closeted.” Duder disagrees with this mischaracterization of less visible, middle-class lesbians. He carefully illustrates through their own life narratives, combined with the prevailing views of the era the risks they faced for disclosure – commitment to psychiatric facilities, loss of employment, social ostracism and potentially, losing custody of their children. Given those very real dangers, many strategically adopted discretion and privatization as a way to live their lives as they chose.

Reflecting on 65 years of lesbian histories in Canada, Cameron Duder eloquently concludes, “exploring same-sex desires, maintaining a lesbian relationship, and forming a social world based on a shared desire for women were all more challenging before 1965, but by no means were they impossible. Learning about lesbians from those earlier decades requires us to look for expressions of desire and social formations that may be unfamiliar to us, accustomed as we are to much great lesbian visibility than in the past. We need to take account of the factors that caused lesbians of earlier generations to hide their relationships from prying heterosexual eyes and also to look for visual and linguistic clues to their presence, codes that lesbians could use to know and to be known by others like themselves.”

(264) Indeed. Which brings us back to the cover image. Obviously Fraser and her crew could never have imagined that their afternoon canoeing would one day be featured on a historical text. Presciently, though, ten years earlier Williams wrote candidly about her hopes for the future: “perhaps in time—20 yrs (sic) or so—people will get tired of it and leave us in peace. That is the most we can hope for. I don’t suppose they’ll be enthusiastic about us even in 100 years.” (1) While we can point to significant legal gains in the past 20 years for lesbians and gay men, Canadian society has not fully embraced sexual diversity let alone demonstrated “enthusiasm.” Nor have Canadian scholars enthusiastically embraced the field of sexuality histories or incorporated its insights into our social histories. Reading *Awfully Devoted Women* provides us with renewed enthusiasm for the field and illustrates convincingly (for those that still require such convincing) that the hidden histories of lesbians can be made visible, intelligible and accessible to a wide-ranging audience of readers.

*Valerie Korinek*

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**Robert A. Wardhaugh, *Behind the Scenes: The Life of William Clifford Clark***

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2010)

FEW CANADIAN public servants have reached the notoriety, power or influence as the so-called civil service mandarins who controlled the federal public service between the mid-1930s and the late 1950s. In this period, the central organs of the Canadian state were controlled by a select group of white, English-speaking men who were responsible for creating, administering and implementing the policy agendas of successive Conservative



and Liberal governments. According to some historians – most notably J.L. Granatstein in his seminal history of the federal civil service – these “Ottawa Men” are to be celebrated for their dedication and non-partisan commitment to tackling the depression, administering the massive military and industrial build-up during World War II and laying the foundation for postwar reconstruction.

Building on Granatstein’s narrative, Robert A. Wardhaugh has produced an extensively researched biography of William Clifford Clark, the federal deputy minister of finance and influential mandarin to the governments of R.B. Bennett, William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent. Wardhaugh’s book is truly a labour of love, as he painstakingly chronicles vast details of Clark’s life ranging from his time as a American private sector financier in the 1920s, to humble economics professor at Queen’s University in the 1930s, to reluctant but dedicated public servant during the 1940s and 1950s. In *William Clifford Clark*, Wardhaugh has centred on a unique and somber personality who was the driving force behind the creation of the most important financial institutions within the current phase of Canadian capitalism, including the contemporary Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Canada. For Wardhaugh, Clark represents a textbook public servant: dedicated, hard working and unwaveringly non-partisan. In highlighting these characteristics, Wardhaugh’s portrait of William Clifford Clark is a celebration of the man and his steadfast commitment to his country in a time of crises.

According to Wardhaugh, Clark was not an economist shaped by ideology or political belief but rather by the events of his time. In centering on this theme, Clark is portrayed throughout the book as an objective economic thinker, uniquely suited to address the crises

associated with the depression, war and post-war reconstruction. Clark’s independence was well demonstrated when Wardhaugh shows the deputy minister challenging prominent Liberals, Conservatives and the financial classes if they refused to listen to what he perceived as sound economic thinking. Perhaps the most interesting example of this autonomy was in Clark’s determination to create the Bank of Canada. While many bankers saw the establishment of a national bank as weakening their power over monetary policy, Clark pushed ahead despite this opposition, comforted in the belief that nationalized financial regulation would cure the ailing economy. As the depression worsened, Clark’s position (and determination) to create the central bank eventually won the backing of important Conservatives and Liberals, including Bennett and King. It is the portrayal of these political struggles involving the Prime Minister’s office, cabinet, the public service and the financial classes that make the book a laudable piece of work for anyone interested in economics, politics and public administration between the 1930s and the 1950s.

In defending Clark as a simple economic and political pragmatist, however, Wardhaugh has missed a golden opportunity to look beneath the social, economic and political power structures that made up the Canadian state in this important period. Clark’s prominence within the public service, for instance, was attained in part because of his linkage to the English-speaking male patronage network that travelled through the Ontario university system, the private sector and the traditional bourgeois political parties. Perhaps because of the hegemonic nature of this network, Clark himself maintained an irrational disdain for French Canadians in both his private life and within the broader public service.



Throughout the book, Wardhaugh describes how these structures operated yet never problematizes or questions how they influenced social relations within (or outside) the state.

The lack of any sustained theoretical analysis about how power influences the actions of government weakens Wardhaugh's overall examination of Clark and his time as deputy minister of finance. To take one notable example, in June of 1935, Clark is shown placing significant pressure on a special parliamentary committee on housing to quash public investment in a national housing project. In this case, Clark clearly understood his role as a public servant to pressure elected representatives to stay within the "realm of free market capitalism" on the question of social housing. (101) Yet, at the same time that Clark is engaging in a dogmatic defense of the private market, hundreds of workers were participating in the On-to-Ottawa Trek that ended in the infamous Regina riots. That Wardhaugh makes no mention of the On-to-Ottawa Trek or the Regina riots is beside the point. The important detail, as I see it, is that Clark's role as deputy minister was both an ideological and actual defense of the existing economic system. In this way, Clark's actions as deputy minister offer a unique opportunity to explain how power works within the state apparatus of liberal capitalist democracies. Unfortunately, no examination or analysis is forthcoming.

The ideological disconnect between Clark the man and the deputy minister of finance's structural linkage to state power is the book's real shortcoming. By the middle of World War II, for example, Wardhaugh is clearly celebrating Clark's actions for bringing in "Canada's first Keynesian budget" and working with his colleagues to implement what would become Canada's welfare state. (129) Later, Wardhaugh stretches this narrative and

accepts the argument that it was not pressure from the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) or the organized left that pushed the Liberals to implement important elements of the welfare state, but rather the work of the influential mandarins. (239) Even if we accept this uncertain claim, Clark and his office come across as an enigma within this history. In one period, Clark actively promotes the social reforms of the Saskatchewan CCF government of Tommy Douglas while also advocating for more generous social security benefits for workers. (243) Yet, only a few pages later, the deputy minister of finance is actively working to defeat a national health plan. (265–6) How do we understand Clark's seemingly contradictory actions? Presumably, the mandarins (Clark included) were influenced by the Keynesian theories sweeping the advanced capitalist world. Yet, to what degree did those theories affect the behaviour and actions of the mandarins and other state actors? Why had Clark's ardent defense of unrestrained "free market capitalism" changed only cautiously since the 1930s? Regrettably, Wardhaugh provides no real explanation to describe the actions of the man or the office and thus the reader is left confused about Clark's overall exploits in this important period.

In the end, Wardhaugh's book succeeds because he has opened a small window on an influential life lived "behind the scenes" and away from normal public scrutiny. Unfortunately, the book falls short by failing to theoretically examine how this influential man and the office were able to wield state power during periods of prolonged crises. The book would have been strengthened by an analysis of the social, economic and political structures that sustained and promoted the power so masterfully exercised by William Clifford Clark.

*Charles W. Smith*

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**Bert Whyte, *Champagne and Meatballs: Adventures of a Canadian Communist*, ed. by Larry Hannant (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press 2011)**

ON THE SURFACE, Bert Whyte does not seem like the typical communist. A cigar-smoking ladies-man who enjoyed the bourgeois pleasure of high class Rideau Hotel shaves while undercover, Whyte was also a committed communist who not only contributed to the party's work in Canada, but also spent many years in China and the Soviet Union as a foreign correspondent. *Champagne and Meatballs*, written by Whyte with an introduction by Larry Hannant, brings us a deeply personal look at what it meant to be a communist from the 1930s through the 1960s.

Whyte begins his memoirs with a lengthy recollection of growing up in small-town Ontario. Interestingly, this is the story of how someone from a British background came to the Communist Party, a party primarily composed of Finns, Ukrainians, and other eastern European immigrants. The Whytes were not rich, but they were better off than many of those who would eventually turn to the Communist Party. Whyte's father worked as a skilled labourer in several Ontarian mines. Whyte himself spent stints employed in the mining industry, interspersed with periods riding the rails across Canada. Whyte does not seem to have had much of a political education prior to joining the Communist Party, at least not one that he deems worthy of his memoirs. He learned about the communists after riding the rails to Vancouver and was eventually recruited while working at the Noranda mine by a Ukrainian who simply asked, "You wanna join the Party?" (163) Whyte explains that he thought the CCF was not about to be "doing anything very revolutionary" and that the IWW was "either grey-headed or

bald." (163) Yet while Whyte dismisses other parties on the left, he does not put forward any ideological justification for joining the Communist Party other than its revolutionary nature. This is indicative of the rest of the book. Unlike other communist memoirs, there is very little discussion of ideology or politics in Whyte's writing.

Particularly interesting from a historian's perspective is Whyte's discussion of his underground organizing activities while the Communist Party was illegal. Whyte gives us a detailed depiction of what life was like as an organizer. Posing as a salesman, Whyte travelled throughout eastern Ontario. He relates the story of how he blended into society, joining the YMCA's bridge club, befriending a vehemently anti-communist Catholic newspaper editor, and getting his haircut at the Chateau Laurier. (178) This is not the typical image one has of an underground communist organizer.

While in Ottawa, Whyte began to publish the *Clarion* newspaper twice monthly, hiding the illegal publication, among other places, in books in the public library. (179) After Germany attacked the Soviet Union and the communists supported the war effort, Whyte joined the army and had a successful military career. (187–236) Whyte's postwar career provides an illuminating glimpse into communist history as he discusses life as a communist during the postwar years, particularly as a Labour-Progressive Party organizer in Toronto, a city where several communists held elected office. (237–40)

One of the strengths of this book is a series of letters written by Whyte to his wife while stationed in China as a communist for the *Canadian Tribune*, providing insight into the life of post-revolutionary 1960s China. Whyte describes the challenges of being one of few foreigners in China at the time and his personal

interest in witnessing the development of a Communist state. Whyte was particularly interested in personal stories – although these stories, he admitted, were not what the Canadian Tribune was most interested in reporting. (295) His letters often focus on these personal moments in the midst of post-revolutionary fervour, whether it is buying pants or watching Chinese take an escalator for the first time. (306) Hannant did well to include these letters in this book.

Hannant's introduction stands out in this work, tying together the story of Whyte's life and filling in many of the gaps that are apparent in Whyte's own narrative. This introduction, drawn largely from RCMP surveillance files and Whyte's manuscript, sets Whyte's largely personal story within the framework of broader communist history. Furthermore, Hannant extends the story beyond the 1960s (where Whyte ends his narrative) until Whyte's death 20 years later. Indeed, Hannant's introduction was essential to providing a context for the memoirs that followed.

Bert Whyte writes in an entertaining, conversational fashion. His prose is eminently readable, a consequence, perhaps, of the many years he spent as a journalist. Whyte is comfortable as a storyteller. Often this leads to interesting anecdotes that illuminate his points, although at times his stories diverted the book onto tangents, particularly regarding his love life.

Peculiarly, it seems that many significant moments are barely mentioned in the work. Some of these are personal – his second marriage for example was deemed to warrant no more than a paragraph. (249) More interestingly, however, Whyte does not linger on either the Soviet-German non-aggression pact (177) or the reversal of policy in 1941 when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. (186) Both are afforded a paragraph.

Other significant moments in Communist history, such as de-Stalinization, or the crushing of Hungary in 1956, are not mentioned at all.

These events had significant repercussions for the Communist Party, yet have been omitted from Whyte's work. It would have been interesting to read what Whyte, who remained a loyal communist till his death, thought during these moments of crisis or his impression of the resulting party turmoil. Perhaps he just did not want to delve into controversial issues that had caused so much turmoil within the party. Yet Whyte does not seem like the type of writer keen on shying away from controversy. Rather, he seems more interested in presenting his personal narrative rather than a narrative of his political party. The choice is understandable. It is, however, unfortunate from a historian's perspective, that Whyte did not address these political issues in greater detail. Larry Hannant relates the story, gleaned from RCMP surveillance, of how, when the CPC was seeking someone to write a biography of Leslie Morris, Whyte wanted to write about Morris as "a man and a Communist...[to] tell ordinary Canadians what a leading Canadian Communist was like." (10) Whyte never got his chance. The party leadership had a different idea for the project, an ideological biography to serve political purposes. When it came to writing his own memoirs, however, Whyte made sure to seize the opportunity, focusing on himself as 'a man and a Communist' rather than merely as a communist functionary.

While the weakness in Whyte's work is the omission of significant political moments and ideas, his intimately personal narrative helps take us beyond the official story of the Communist Party or the dry lines of RCMP surveillance files. It infuses life and personality into the party, recognizing the colourful personalities that contributed to the Party and

its work. And it gives recognition to the importance of these personal narratives in creating a party that, at first glance, can seem monolithic.

*Stefan Epp*

Canadian Mennonite University

**Bob Barnetson, *The Political Economy of Workplace Injury in Canada***

(Edmonton: Athabasca University Press 2010)

AS ANYONE WHO studies occupational health and safety and workers' compensation knows full well, these are complex subjects. This is the case because singularly and together they involve having to know about economics, politics, laws, medical science, trade unions – the list goes on. They are important topics as is evident by provincial workers' compensation board statistics which inform us that virtually every year over one million workers are injured on the job – tens of thousands with injuries sufficient to cause them to stay away from work, countless others whose injuries result in some form of permanent impairment which in some form inhibits their abilities to work – as well as that hundreds annually lose their lives because of an acute accident or a chronic work-related injury or disease. It is a puzzle, then, why they do not garner more attention than they do from, in particular, progressive academics and activists. Although Bob Barnetson does not address himself directly to this issue, an answer can perhaps be gleaned in his explanations as to why there is not a more general societal cry about the carnage that goes on in our workplaces, on the one hand, and how this carnage is handled by workers' compensation systems, on the other.

One of the strengths of this book, I believe, is that the author does not pull any analytical punches. Writing within

a classical Marxist framework, Barnetson locates both occupational health and safety and workers' compensation laws and regulations as resulting from class compromise: at the turn of the 20th century an accelerating number of workplace accidents were creating discontent with the production systems in place. This discontent threatened to boil over into the political arena and therefore threatened the legitimacy of the Canadian capitalist system. So, in addition to the factory and shop acts that had been passed in the last two decades of the 19th century, provincial governments began passing 'workmen's compensation' laws that, while representing a real victory for injured workers and their supporters, nevertheless served, first, to shift attention away from the unsafe and unhealthy labour processes that caused these accidents and injuries, and, second, to put in place a compensation adjudication process that spread out accidents and injury such that the causes of accidents were obscured and normalized while injured workers were left to confront a system that individualized and depoliticized their claims.

The explanation that Barnetson provides to the question regarding the lack of a political profile for both occupational health and safety and workers' compensation is, then, that the laws and the institutions that have been set up to administer these laws have been successful in keeping the assault on workers out of the societal limelight. The only exceptions are cases where there are a large number of deaths such as in mine explosions, or where an entire workforce comes down with an occupational disease. For the most part, though, accidents and injuries are viewed by society – including by workers themselves – as a normal, even inevitable, aspect of going to work.

To be sure, this construction of workplace accident and injury does require

some ideological and practical buttressing from time to time. According to Barnetson, one of the most sustaining of these supplements has come in the form of academic studies, employer organizations' statements and workers' compensation board campaigns that blame workers for their own accidents and injuries. For, if employers have done all that they can do to ensure that their workplaces meet health and safety standards set by the government laws, and, if governments are basing these laws on state-of-the-art medical knowledge, then the great bulk of accidents can be attributed to the fault – the carelessness – of the worker.

Not surprisingly, Barnetson takes great umbrage with this willful distortion of real processes and events. As part of his efforts to turn our attention back to the workplace and the culpability of employers, Barnetson unpacks the concept of a workplace "accident." "Saying that a workplace injury," he writes, "is the result of an 'accident' implies a lack of intentionality. This terminology implicitly absolves employers of responsibility for an injury because they did not explicitly set out to injure a worker. This is not, however, the full picture. While the exact moment individual injuries occur can be difficult to predict, the circumstances in which injuries occur and mechanisms of injury are typically well known. In deciding how work is designed and performed, employers place workers in circumstances that routinely give rise to the injury in the pursuit of profit. Using the term 'accident' obscures, and indeed legitimizes, this behaviour." (33)

This excursion into how such a serious situation – workplaces, both industrial and post-industrial continuing to cause both physical and mental injuries at alarming levels; and, worker's compensation systems that increasingly do not come close to attending to the physical, emotional and economic needs of injured

workers – has very little purchase on our social and political consciousness, does not begin to do justice to the wide ranging nature of this book. In canvassing and analyzing materials relating to occupational health and safety and workers' compensation, Barnetson has performed a yeoman's service in supplying instructors, students and activists in these fields with a much-needed, long overdue synthesis of heretofore disparate materials. As critically, by stuffing occupational health and safety and workers' compensation between the same covers, he brings together twins that were separated at birth and need to find each other if either are to truly be effective in safeguarding the health and safety of workers.

It is no accident – if I can use that term – that it takes a political economy or historical materialist approach to truly centre the critical situations that come under the umbrella of occupational health and safety and workers' compensation. During the time it has taken to read this review, hundreds, even thousands, of workers have been injured on the job – some seriously, a few fatally. These are real working bodies that, strangely, tend to get lost in the dominant 'scientific' studies, for example, of workplace exposure limits and the etiology of an occupational disease. But, the adherence of such 'scientists' to the 'objectivity' of their methods and the 'neutrality' of their interpretations does nothing for those workers who have been injured, diseased and killed while, again, you are reading this review.

I do have one somewhat significant quibble. There are places in the book where Barnetson tends to extrapolate or generalize on the basis of an experience in Alberta or a study from Ontario or Québec. There are significant differences between provincial occupational health and safety and workers' compensation regulatory systems. This is not to say that

Barnetson is unaware of such differences. Indeed, Alberta earns a dubious pride of place for having the most conservative regulatory systems. It is to say, though, that keeping variations in mind can be of utmost importance as is the case in the current context where the Ontario government and its workers' compensation board are using the financial status of a number of western Canadian workers' compensation boards to justify fundamental changes in its funding formulae – changes that injured worker advocates claim will have a devastating effect on the level and duration of benefits awarded to injured workers.

Another concern pertains, ironically, to one of the book's strengths. I stated above that Barnetson is to be credited for his determination and ability to tie occupational health and safety and workers' compensation together. In overseeing this marriage, however, many topics under both headings get short shrift, that is they get mentioned, briefly described, summarily analyzed and then, the moving finger, having writ, adroitly moves on. The problem with this approach is that both of these subjects are multifaceted in structure and complicated in operation. That is to say, in his efforts to be comprehensive in his analysis of the political economy of workplace injury in Canada, he moves along so quickly that I worry he will lose his audience. Given that this book seems intended for a reading beyond the already engaged and committed, this would be an unfortunate result. This is because Barnetson seems not only to want to understand the world, he also wants to change it. If we are to take heed of his point that injured workers are a marginalized group who, by themselves, are unable to make these changes (and what subordinate social grouping does not need allies?), then it is critical that exercises in political education, such as the one contained in these pages, are patient

with their readers' efforts, in Marx's words, "to grasp the root of the matter."

*Robert Storey*

McMaster University

**David Camfield, *Canadian Labour in Crisis: Reinventing the Workers' Movement*** (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2011)

MANY WHO READ this book will feel uncomfortable with how unions and the working-class movement are portrayed, but few will disagree with Camfield's assessment of the crisis the labour movement faces. Given this reality, the message Camfield brings is important: unions are "necessary" to the success of a working-class movement, yet today they are "profoundly inadequate." The inadequacies of unions in the face of corporate power are evident in major conflicts taking place even as I write this review. In St. Thomas, Ontario, 1,200 Ford workers and CAW members are losing their jobs. Once the company decided that the Ford St. Thomas plant was redundant, the union simply lacked the weapons to launch an effective resistance to this decision. In Hamilton, U.S. Steel has locked out its workers, members of USW Local 1005, for nearly a year, for demanding major changes to their pension rights. While the effort to resist management demands is to be applauded, the company has just returned to the bargaining table with basically the same offer it made at the beginning of the conflict. These are real signs of the very crisis that this book seeks to explore: Why doesn't the Canadian labour movement feel much like a movement, and what can be done to restore the labour movement as an agent of change for working people?

The raw material for this book comes from Camfield's own experience working with unions and with other components



of the working-class movement, plus from a number of targeted interviews with labour leaders and activists. While there is some discussion of the academic literature in this field, it is not the dominant focus of the book. The end result is a rich and compelling account of what is happening within unions in Canada and Québec, and a detailed agenda for a new kind of working-class movement. This should be read by anyone concerned with the future of unions in Canada and Québec and would be a useful text in a union course or an introductory university course on unions.

The first section describes the different components of the working-class movement, focusing mainly on formal unions, but also discussing some of the informal and non-union components of the movement. Chapter One begins with an overview of unions and collective bargaining in Canada. It tells the familiar story of unions as enforcers of contracts, the growing distance between union officials and the rank and file, the weakening of working-class militancy and the growing inability of unions to defend their members' interests.

Chapter Three looks at life inside a union, examining the role of staff and issues of union democracy. Camfield lists numerous problems with how unions are organized and how government legislation limits their capacity to represent their members. While few of these concerns are new, together they give substance to the claim that unions are in crisis. Of profound importance is the observation that, despite their relatively democratic structures, unions find it difficult to tolerate internal debate and dissent. Organizing union activity around defending a contract and sectional interests limits the capacity of unions to act as broader agents of the working class or to pursue class goals.

Having identified many of the problems within unions, the volume goes on to explore how we got to this state of affairs and what we might do to improve the situation. The rise of "responsible unionism" after World War II narrowed the focus of unions to collective bargaining and limited their ability to act in solidarity with other workers. The inability to act collectively has been compounded by the disappearance of spaces where workers can gather to exchange ideas, what Camfield refers to as the "infrastructure of dissent." The end result is a working-class movement both unwilling and unable to challenge neoliberalism. Nor does Camfield believe that the current New Democratic Party might offer a solution, as the party has increasingly come to accept the status quo in its search for electoral success and has largely abandoned policies that might significantly change workers' experience at the workplace.

How can unions and the working-class movement be revived? Camfield argues that what is needed is not a revival of the existing working-class movement but rather its reinvention, something that has happened several times in the past. He provides a long list of possible actions including making unions more democratic, increasing the number of activists and equipping them with the knowledge needed to promote fundamental change in society. Workers need to learn how to be more militant and to understand that their interests are not the same as their employers. Unions need to expand their organizing efforts to more of the working class. A culture of solidarity among unions needs to be constructed paving the way for a more radical challenge of the existing social structures.

Camfield doubts that this change can be effected from above, pointing to the limitation of movements such as the "Change to Win" in the United States.



In Canada, the efforts by the CAW in the 1990s and more recently by the Toronto York Region Labour Council to make significant change have come up short. The proposed alternative strategy is one led by workers themselves, a process of change from below. He gives numerous examples of such action. It is argued that as unions become more democratic, the members gain more confidence and capacity to organize, and the goals of the union align more clearly with the members. Success at the workplace can then lead to success in making changes outside the workplace. The book ends with a call for new political institutions to provide a forum for the larger debates that are needed to make the transition to a fairer society.

Camfield has provided those concerned with the current direction of our society and those dreaming of a more equitable world a significant service: the courage to engage the debate. It is important not to underestimate the challenge facing those seeking a more effective working-class movement. Democratization of unions is almost certainly a necessary step, but unlikely to lead to a more equitable world without setbacks and disappointments. The questions that remain unanswered are how can democratization be nurtured and, more importantly, once in place how can it be shielded from the other forces in society that have so effectively transformed the working-class movement into the relatively ineffective movement it has become today.

In answering these questions, perhaps more credit should be given to unions as agents of this process. Camfield focuses on the role of unions in improving wages, reducing employment insecurity and promoting healthier work. Less attention is given to other fundamental contributions of unions including their role in advancing the dignity of labour by challenging unilateral employer power and enforcing

a rules-based workplace culture backed by a grievance and arbitration process. As ineffective as unions have become in challenging the power of employers, they are still one of the few organizations in society offering a collectivist (if sectional) alternative to the rampant individualism promoted by neoliberalism. Unions help generate a sense of community and collectivism, and without this alternative vision, dreams of a more powerful working-class movement are but dreams.

*Wayne Lewchuk*

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**Vincenzo Pietropaolo, *Harvest Pilgrims: Mexican and Caribbean Migrant Farm Workers in Canada*** (Toronto: Between the Lines 2009)

WITH THE INCREASING concern surrounding produce and its supply in public discourse, a Foodland Ontario stamp adds a sense of reassurance to the act of purchasing produce. The provincial marketing board eagerly emphasises the localness and freshness of domestic produce, often linking it to pictures of the expansive (and largely empty) Ontario countryside. Through advertisements and publications, the board constructs buying local as a conscientious response to the environmental and economic challenges arising from the transportation of food and as a means to fostering healthy communities.

Vincenzo Pietropaolo's documentary photographic collection *Harvest Pilgrims* complicates both the pastoral and local constructions of Ontario farms by inserting Mexican and Caribbean labourers into the fields; it captures their difficult working conditions and the financial precariousness of their situation. As a work intended for a broad readership that seeks to unveil worker lives, its

readers have no defined thesis to directly evaluate. Nevertheless, its vivid illustration of the 'harvest pilgrim' phenomenon that has shaped Canadian farming since the 1960s is an important contribution in itself. By presenting an array of striking photographs, the book admirably fulfills one of Pietropaolo's stated objectives: to re-insert the migrant worker into debates over the merits of local food production. (20)

Four introductory pieces and a brief essay accompany Pietropaolo's 79 photographs. The photos themselves were taken between 1984 and 2006, documenting the predominately male migrants who were a part of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. The book's subtitle, which suggests the work covers migrant workers from Canada as a whole, is slightly deceptive, for the photography largely concerns farms in Ontario. Pietropaolo also followed some of the workers to their respective homes in Mexico and Jamaica. The photographs are presented chronologically without commentary, other than occasional quotations from interviews. The forward, by noted historian of photography Naomi Rosenblum, situates the collection in a long tradition of "socially useful photographic documentation," such as the famous works of the Historical Section of the Farm Security Administration taken during the Great Depression. (ix-x) Maia-Mari Sutnik, curator of photography at the Art Gallery of Ontario, contributes a reflection on the role of the documentary photographer as social critic. She draws attention to the shifting definition of documentary photography as questions of the 'truth' in the photograph give way to evaluation of images and "the critical ideas that make them stand apart." (3) Pietropaolo's inclusion of a 1974 photo of César Chávez in his introduction makes it abundantly clear that his photograph collection connects to a

long story of struggle and exploitation as documented through photography. He acknowledges funding from the United Food and Commercial Workers Canada union as "crucial" to publication, thereby highlighting his ties to a broader labour movement. (xiii) Thus, he is a person who has the opportunity to provide realistic, yet interested, images that tell powerful stories. (7) Finally, the brief "An Imaginary Letter to a Migrant Farm Worker" creatively contemplates the patterns of a migrant worker's life, and foregrounds the author's very personal stake in the project.

Pietropaolo's essay, "Living Between Two Worlds," together with his photographs, illustrate the key concepts of beholden labour, permanent temporariness, mutual dependency, and migration. The term 'beholden' evokes the tremendous power that farm owners hold over migrant workers. A series of photographs and quotations vividly convey the workers' endurance during the cold of late season. (60-65) Migrants continue to toil despite the conditions, for their re-admission to the country is contingent on the farmer's favourable report. The 'temporariness' of the foreign worker program is rightly dismissed as a myth, since employers rely on the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program for cheap labour, while the migrants rely on the program for urgently needed wages. (10-12) The ramifications of permanent temporariness appear in photos of living conditions—cramped and bereft of many personal possessions, but evidently built to last for years. Images of greenhouse growing towards the end of the book speak to the theme of mutual dependency, reminding the viewer that agribusiness requires cheap labour. A picture of migrant workers harvesting alongside a farm owner demonstrates that this dependency happens at different economic levels. (35) The essay labels the

relationship between migrant worker and farmer as 'symbiotic,' a term with a positive connotation that sits uneasily with much of the following work. (18) Lastly, by accompanying these migrant workers back to their home countries and witnessing the reactions to their absence and the joy at their return, Pietropaolo underscores the emotional cost of sojourning in a way that traditional academic monographs cannot always accomplish. Yet Pietropaolo's themes converse with such works; notably, he complements the concept of unfree labour advanced by Tanya Basok's work *Tortillas and Tomatoes* (2002) by illustrating the structure that binds migrant and farm owner together.

*Harvest Pilgrims* succeeds as a collection of documentary photography because it invites reconsideration of familiar questions surrounding agency and structural exploitation. Pietropaolo's portraits of difficult working conditions juxtaposed with pictures of proud workers who boldly stare into the camera offer a multifaceted portrait of their lives and perceptions. A photograph and text concerning the airport disrupt normal views of exploitation by revealing that many farm owners accompany their workers to the terminal to wish them well. In one such image, the migrant worker's suit contrasts sharply with the farm owner's work wear. (71) While a social mission drives the book, offering the photos without commentary on the same pages affords viewers a space in which to raise their own questions about the images' significance.

However, the presentation of the work provokes a couple questions. While there is no commentary written by the author underneath the photos, his selection process for the accompanying quotes goes largely unexplained. The brief "A Note on the Text" reveals that they come from transcripts of translated interviews – interviews for which scholars will

undoubtedly be most grateful – but not why quotes appear together with some photos but not others. Because the quotations strongly shape how the photo is 'read,' this might have borne further reflection. Further, Pietropaolo's choice of the term 'pilgrim' in his title is evocative, but he does not fully address the term's religious connotation. Is the labour itself to be bestowed with a spiritual significance? The migration? Or some broader sense that divine forces shape the entire experience? These questions are worth pursuing, especially given the importance of religion in the workers' lives, which manifests in some of the photos taken in Mexico and Jamaica.

Nevertheless, these questions do little to undermine the overall value of Pietropaolo's work. *Harvest Pilgrims* not only contributes to documentary photography, but also to scholarship more generally by providing compelling photographs and insightful essays that bring the lives of these often neglected workers into sharp relief. It particularly serves as an important contribution to sojourning scholarship by recording the lives of rural workers who often elude the archives. I hope that *Harvest Pilgrims* will find an audience outside of the universities, for by disrupting the pastoral view of farmland that renders migrant labour invisible it offers an accessible means to reconsider the meaning of 'locally grown' labels.

Jonathan McQuarrie

University of Toronto

**Nicole Gombay, *Making a Living: Place, Food and Economy in an Inuit Community*** (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing 2010)

IN THE LAST DECADE or so, some North Americans have begun to alter dramatically their relationship to the food they eat and those that produce it. Spurred in part by Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's*

*Dilemma*, a wildly popular defence of local and “do it yourself” forms of food production, or Alisa Smith and J.B. Mackinnon’s *The 100-Mile Diet*, many so-called locavores have joined Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, developed community gardening projects, or packed local farmers’ markets on Saturday mornings. The motivations that propel the embryonic local food movement are various, for some likely not much more complicated than their desire for extra-fresh rapini. For others, however, the heart of the local food movement lies with resistance to the idea that food is primarily a corporate commodity. Instead, the production and consumption of food represents an affirmation of the bond between farmer and eater, one of the profound building blocks upon which we build human communities and more sensitive relationships to the natural world.

Nicole Gombay’s *Making a Living* addresses the tension between commoditized and communitarian attitudes to food in a very different context: the Inuit community of Puvirnituk on the east coast of Hudson Bay in Nunavik (Inuit territory in northern Québec). Gombay, a geographer at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, conducted fieldwork in Puvirnituk on the community’s debate over increasing export sales of country food (often as part of government economic development programs), internal trade within the community (primarily sale to non-Inuit or catering companies), and sales to a Hunter Support Program (HSP) designed to help Inuit stay on the land through cash payments for country food. Through formal interviews, conversations and personal observations, Gombay explores the internal friction within Puvirnituk between the idea of food as a conduit for sharing and reaffirming social ties within the community, and a newer notion of hunting

as a form of labour that carries potential rewards in the marketplace in the form of access to the cash economy. Using Karl Polanyi’s and anthropologist Tim Ingold’s work as a theoretical foundation, Gombay begins with the premise that the introduction of market relations has the potential to remove hunting labour from its social context, changing the process of production to merely sustain consumption rather than as the basis for a community’s way of life. As market relations become ascendant in a given space and time, the social economy may suffer as the sole purpose of labour becomes cash exchange.

As with many field research projects, Gombay’s observations on the complex ways that specific families and individuals adjust to shifting economic circumstances provide nuance to her theoretical foundation. While recognizing that the commodification of food and the labour that produces it may pose a threat to community institutions, Gombay tracks the myriad ways that Inuit hunters have taken control of cash exchange systems as a means to affirm the social value of food sharing. In the case of the HSP, for example, hunters are compensated for fuel and labour while food is distributed from the central warehouse for free. Hence many hunters see the HSP as simply another form of food sharing, with cash payments enabling them to maintain the increasingly expensive proposition of hunting on the land. Other hunters sell part of the fish and game they catch to pay expenses, but also keep a portion for distribution within the community. The adoption of this middle way is not universal: Gombay describes an incident where arctic char had been stolen from the HSP warehouse and then sold for cash. Nonetheless, Gombay writes powerfully and persuasively about how the cash economy paradoxically props up the social economy of sharing in Puvirnituk, arguing that

the commodification of food in the community is not a totalizing force but has at least partially been incorporated into the existing matrix of community values. Her book is an extremely valuable account of how one Inuit community has attempted to challenge and accommodate the economic and cultural forces that threaten to overwhelm the social values they accord to food production.

As compelling as Gombay's field observations may be, some aspects of *Making a Living* could have been more fully developed. The historical overview of government programs that promoted commercialization of food in northern Canada is limited to a very brief four pages that focus narrowly on the issue of social assistance payments, sedentarization and state-driven local economic development initiatives (collection of eiderdown, for instance) in the post World War II period. With a bit more digging, however, Gombay would have discovered that the Canadian government proposed large-scale schemes to commercialize food production in northern Canada as early as the 1910s, granting leases to private companies to establish reindeer herds and establishing a Royal Commission in 1919 to study the viability of large-scale reindeer, caribou, and muskox ranching in northern Canada. If large-scale wildlife domestication and ranching never fulfilled its promise in the Canadian North, certainly the wildlife commodification in the form of the fur trade has a long history throughout northern Canada. Although Gombay mentions the fur trade, she does not fully explain how this long history of integrating hunting and trapping into the cash economy might bear upon the commercialization of country food she witnessed in a contemporary setting. Indeed, as a reader I was never convinced that the debate over commercializing wildlife was new, as Gombay implies. Certainly I would have

liked to learn more about the historical manifestations of the issue during the early fur-trade era.

I also wanted to see more discussion of the author's research methods and design. Gombay includes a brief discussion of the multiple and sometimes contradictory nature of her interview subjects, but very little on how she chose interviewees, how she conducted interviews, how she negotiated her place as an outside researcher in the community, whether she involved local people in the research process (as more than informants), and how she communicated results to the community. If one of the great strengths of *Making a Living* is Gombay's evocative descriptions of the community, more contextual historical information and greater attentiveness to the research design might have moved the book more firmly beyond the limitations of its local setting.

Nonetheless, Gombay has produced a powerful account of one Inuit community's attempts to reconcile the lure of the cash and wage economy with the community values of food sharing. *Making a Living* is an accessible and intelligent book that will appeal not only to anthropologists, but also to general readers who are interested in contemporary debates surrounding local versus commodity-oriented food production.

*John Sandlos*

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**Ted McDonald, Elizabeth Ruddick, Arthur Sweetman, and Christopher Worswick, eds., *Canadian Immigration: Economic Evidence for a Dynamic Policy Environment* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2010)**

THIS BOOK HAS emerged out of the Canadian Metropolis Project, a network of academic scholars and policy analysts.

The editorial team reflects this partnership, with three academics and a senior figure in Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Elizabeth Ruddick), who was at the time of publication the Director General of Research and Evaluation for that ministry.

The editors outline their key concern at the outset of the introductory chapter: how should we understand the apparent decline in the economic fortunes of newcomers to Canada? It is worth noting that this outcome flies against much of the Canadian policy environment. Canada has invested significantly in selecting immigrants with the potential to adapt to the Canadian labour market, and has also advanced multiculturalism, employment equity, and various anti-discrimination measures (such as the ongoing National Action Plan against Racism). Furthermore, Canadians are constantly warned that we are on the precipice of demographic disaster, given prolonged low fertility and the looming retirement of the baby boom generation—meaning that there are relatively few young Canadians and a rapidly growing elderly population. If immigration might be the solution to this pressing concern, and if policy has created a pathway for immigrants to succeed, why do we see the counterintuitive result that newcomers struggle to find a place in the labour market and that this is especially the case for those arriving with high levels of educational attainment? This question has generated what could almost be described as a research industry in Canada, and many of the captains of that industry have contributed to this volume.

The substantive chapters begin with Li Xue's analysis of the labour market integration of newcomers, based on the four-year Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, which shows highly varied outcomes, depending on language competence, region of origin, region of

settlement, and other factors. Barry Chiswick and Paul Miller compare the returns to education for immigrants in Canada and the US, and find that the income gap for immigrants, relative to education, is higher in the latter country. In a technically sophisticated and particularly lucid chapter, David Green and Christopher Worswick show, among other things, that Canadian employers discount foreign experience effectively to zero: "By the mid-1990s, an immigrant just out of school and another immigrant with the same level of schooling but 20 years of experience outside Canada would expect to have the same average entry earnings in Canada." (107) This finding is especially significant given the importance accorded to foreign labour market experience in Canada's immigrant selection system for skilled workers, and we can only wonder at the wisdom of that criterion.

Ted McDonald and Christopher Worswick examine the earnings of young Canadian-born men and women, in relation to newcomers, since both groups are new entrants to the labour market. Some of the difficulties experienced by immigrants are shared by young Canadians, an important contribution to our understanding of the economic incorporation of immigrants. They also show that Canadian-born members of Visible Minority groups are faring reasonably well. Herbert Schuetze adds a degree of nuance to the larger picture by examining data on immigrant self-employment, though his analysis is based on dated information that cannot answer the critical question whether immigrants turn to self-employment out of choice or necessity.

Arthur Sweetman and Casey Warman contrast the labour market experience of the spouses of skilled workers who were admitted to Canada based on their human capital, through the points system, with those of family-class immigrants. Their results are complex and point



toward a lower rate of return in the labour market for both spouses and family-class immigrants relative to their human capital, when compared with points-assessed skilled workers. There is no simple explanation for this outcome. In another chapter, Warman uses census information to show that Temporary Foreign Workers actually appear to be better compensated for the skills and experience they bring to the Canadian labour market than points-assessed skilled workers who are permanent residents. Apparently, when Canadian employers initiate the migration of foreign workers to Canada, they fully acknowledge their human capital, but choose not to do so for immigrants already in Canada.

The decline in the relative economic fortunes of newcomers in the labour market is echoed in the housing market. Newcomers in the early 21st century are taking longer to purchase homes than their counterparts who arrived in the early 1980s. Michael Haan uses a regression model and longitudinal data to assess the causes and consequences of this gap and finds that some groups improve their rates of homeownership rapidly over time, while others do not. Arthur Sweetman provides a more positive story, showing that the test scores of immigrant children in elementary schools converge with those of Canadian-born children over time. There is another important type of acculturation identified in the book. Alicia Adsera and Ana Ferrer analyze the fertility of immigrants and find that, on average, it is only marginally higher than that of the Canadian born, though rates vary widely between immigrant groups (roughly in proportion to the rates in their source countries). Finally, Jun Zhao et. al. employ data from LSIC to investigate the health of newcomers during their first four years in Canada. Here we find yet another form of convergence. Given Canada's selection

and admission systems, when they first arrive immigrants are typically healthier than similar individuals born in Canada, but they lose this advantage quickly after arrival. Zhao et. al. reveal that the rate of this process is slower for immigrants with extensive social networks and, conversely, faster for those who lack social capital.

Overall, the chapters that comprise the *Canadian Immigration* book are technically impressive and are based on a vast quantity of data. In some cases, traditional sources of data such as the census are used in innovative ways, while in others new types of data are analyzed (especially the longitudinal survey of immigrants undertaken by the Canadian government between 2001–2005). I believe the results of the studies are accurate and important. The authors are also well informed about the policy context and implications of their work.

At the same time, the econometric approach adopted by most authors, and the data they employ, can only answer certain questions. Since the standard resources of data at our disposal cannot reveal discrimination in the labour market directly, for example, its effects can only be inferred through unexplained variance in regression models, or other similar approaches. Therefore, what is arguably the most crucial question of all—the extent of discrimination against newcomers and members of visible minority groups in the labour market and Canadian society more generally—lurks in the background of these studies. The impact of immigration on the opportunity structure of the Canadian-born is also not addressed in this volume. Does the arrival of approximately half a million new immigrants and temporary residents to Canada each year stimulate the economy and provide net benefits to Canadian-born individuals, or does their presence saturate the labour market and raise the level of unemployment for the Canadian-born? It

would have been helpful to include this type of analysis in the book.

Individuals who are well versed in Canadian immigration policy and economic analysis will profit a great deal from this book. Many of the chapters enhance our understanding of crucial policy issues. At the same time, those who lack this background, and those who are skeptical of the logic embedded in this type of work, will either struggle or find fault in it.

*Daniel Hiebert*

University of British Columbia

**Oscar Chamosa, *The Argentine Folklore Movement: Sugar Elites, Criollo Workers, and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism, 1900–1955*** (Tucson: University of Arizona Press 2010)

IN 1945, ANTONIO TORMO was a very popular folklore singer, in vogue in the Argentine provinces but with little access to the cosmopolitan audience and media of Buenos Aires. Five years later, he released the song “El rancho e’ la Cambicha” (Cambicha’s Ranch), which became an immediate hit, selling an astounding five million copies at a time when the country’s population was 16 million, and breaking the all-time record for national music sales. Tormo, known as “The Singer of Our Things” or “The Criollo Voice of Emotions,” immediately came to represent not only the voice of Argentine folklore, but also the face of the Peronist culture that had invaded the urban centres from the interior and had expanded its presence throughout the entire country. By the time Oscar Chamosa finishes telling the sensational story of Tormo, he has described in detail the history of Argentine folklore during the first half of the 20th century. His book places the folklore movement at the center of the

configuration of Argentine national identity. And in doing so, the author describes a much vaster and interwoven history, that of Argentine nationalism as an ideology, its relationship with scientific and educational projects on national culture, the conservative elites and the peasants from the interior, the emerging urban working classes, the evolution of popular culture in parallel with technological changes, and the disruptive arrival of Colonel Juan Perón to power at the head of the largest labour movement in Latin America. The author argues that these forces converged in shaping the singular experiment of modern Argentina, a society integrated in a way that “move[d] Buenos Aires a little farther away from Paris and a little closer to Chivilcoy, Tucumán, and Salta.”

Chamosa’s thorough research of Argentine folklore focuses mostly on Tucumán, a small province in the northwest of Argentina where the sugar industry flourished since the beginning of the 20th century. His is not a random selection: the book argues that population from the Northwest came to represent a notion of an “authentic” Argentina that replaced the gaucho of the 19th century. In what the author describes as the “politics of cultural nationalism,” he shows the disparate forces that coincide in this transformation.

Combining intellectual history with social and cultural analysis of a wide range of documents, the author identifies “romantic nationalism” and the literary movement celebrating gaucho life known as “criollismo” as the trends at the heart of the folklore movement. The nationalist component of folklore made it fruitful to the 19th century politics of state consolidation and produced a discourse that became a way to acquaint local elites with the notion that Argentine nationality was embedded in a rural culture.

But this soon changed, as “argentinidad” came to refer to an increasingly complex society. In 1921, nationalist members of the Radical government – many of whom would plot against it in the 1930 military coup that overthrew President Hipólito Yrigoyen – promoted one of the most interesting actions of state-sponsored nationalism: the National Folklore Survey conducted by the National Board of Education. Teachers were sent to assemble a massive amount of information about everything local. In the Calchaquíes Valley, they collected information on Inca rituals, indigenous medicine and witchcraft. Nationalists and positivists looked down on these features as expressions of backwardness. But for folklorists, the findings confirmed the communities’ folk character and the need to preserve it. The survey also found early signs of a changing society. Some reported about people reluctant to disclose their beliefs for fear of being mocked –not by the teachers, but by the people of the Valley themselves. Others reported on the popularity of Carlos Gardel, the great tango singer from Buenos Aires.

Chamosa focuses on the data collected in the Calchaquí Valley that included the increasingly powerful sugar industry of Tucumán. The sugar elites are at the centre of his study during the remaining chapters. Sugar barons went out of their way to present their workers as “whites,” as opposed to indigenous people, as a way to advance subsidies and tariffs at the national level to protect them against sugar produced by the labour of “inferior races” in Cuba and other regions. Sugar politicians represented this breed of nationalism against Porteño liberalism during the 1920s and 1930s, but they also found in these ideas a form of hegemony, a common ground with workers and voters. It would be the lifetime work of Ernesto Padilla, sugar mill owner and conservative politician, to transform the sugar

politicians’ interest in criollo culture into a consistent program of folklore research and propagation at the national level.

By the early 1940s, folklore was a popular movement across the country, its research supported by Northwestern elites and the state. At this point, Chamosa shows how the implications of folklore’s expansion went much further than what its sponsors had imagined, or wished. If conservative elites defended the status quo in the name of a nation depicted in folklore, workers felt that folklore also described their own lives and the injustices they suffered. Popular folklore singers such as Atahualpa Yupanqui or Antonio Tormo sang protest songs praising the hard-working labourers; stressing the indigenous, non-white roots of criollo culture; denouncing social injustice; and emphasizing the moral superiority of poor workers over rich landowners.

The accelerated industrialization of Argentina stimulated a massive migration of workers from the provinces to Buenos Aires. These workers arrived with their ethnicity, their ideology – and their passion for folklore music. Chamosa describes how Tormo became an immediate star, providing entertainment for a working class that adopted an identity based on class, Peronist political affiliation, and a provincial background connected with mestizo-criollo identity. Peronism elevated folklore as a cultural priority, but partially subverted the logic of nationalism linked to its origins. By 1948, sugar elites heard Eva Perón praising workers “who have suffered from a soulless oligarchy,” during the Zafra Festival that that very same oligarchy had envisioned with a rather different, self-celebratory purpose. Peronism’s take on folklore also reinforced Perón’s own place at the top of the new polity. And while Tormo became the face of Peronist culture and was subsequently banned by the military coup that overthrew Perón in 1955, Yupanqui,

a Communist sympathizer, was banned by Peronism.

Chamosa's study of the development of folklore in the public sphere is an excellent contribution to the social and cultural history of modern Argentina. It provides fresh insight into the consolidation of Argentine nationalism during the 20th century. His study of local elites also expands the rich field of recent work that has shifted the focus of research about the origins of Peronism from Buenos Aires to the interior of Argentina, focusing on Peronism's early relationship with migrants, conservative groups and local caudillos. Finally, the progressive conquest of national public space by folklore also exposes a long-term history of popular culture that explains the changes that occurred after 1945. While the transformations that Peronism brought about were abrupt, they flowed from ideas, social forces, and knowledge that were steadily expanding in Argentina for several decades. What emerges is the description of cultural nationalism as a specific historical artifact, distinguishable from other forms of nationalism, yet intrinsically linked to them. That is what makes the history of the folklore movement, and Chamosa's book, so interesting.

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**Janet L. Polasky, *Reforming Urban Labor: Routes to the City, Roots in the Country*** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2010)

IN THE FIRST DECADE of the 20th century, the County Council in London, England built over a thousand cottages for working class families in the outer reaches of the county at Totterdown Fields. The London County Council (LCC)'s tram ran to the edge of the estate, and two rail lines had stations about a mile away.

Housing reformers hoped to attract regularly employed workers and their families away from their overcrowded and unsanitary dwellings in the centre of London to this and other new estates in outlying districts. Here, the environment would promote better health and improved morality. Reformers wanted workers to live outside the central districts of Brussels as well, encouraging them to stay in villages and commute to workplaces in the urban centre.

Janet Polasky outlines the attitudes of these reformers and the policies they spawned in a comparative study of innovations in working class housing and transportation in the decades preceding World War I. She argues convincingly for the interdependence of housing reform and transportation policy, as attempts to house workers outside central districts required affordable and available transportation: "Housing and transportation reforms were mutually dependent." (135) The book reveals the similar concerns of reformers in Britain and Belgium, and it illuminates differences in policy approaches in the two countries. Her ability to draw together housing and transportation and to highlight significant patterns through the comparative approach makes this a valuable and at times fascinating study.

The book begins by explaining British and Belgian reformers' view of the dangers of working class life in urban centres in the last decades of the 19th century. Observers decried the sanitary condition of slums, citing overcrowding and the spread of disease. In the eyes of the reformers, residents in these neighbourhoods also suffered moral degradation, alcoholism and promiscuity. Strikes and demonstrations in the 1880s contributed to concern about class conflict and the political threat of large urban working class populations. "Entombed in pestilential rookeries and impasses, respectable

workers and the unemployable alike languished without the benefit of sunlight, beyond the gaze of the middle class.” (40) In both countries, reformers hoped that improved housing could transform the urban environment and workers themselves.

In Britain, philanthropists spearheaded the earliest efforts to improve working-class housing. Because of high land prices in central locations, most of these developments were blocks of flats. On the continent, a small number of industrialists built working-class housing estates. Some reformers envisioned cottages outside the central urban cores, and building associations and philanthropists began to experiment with this model on the outskirts of Brussels and London. By the 1880s, though, it was clear that these efforts were inadequate and the urban crisis appeared to be getting worse. In Belgium, legislation in 1889 established Patronage Committees with the authority to recommend housing projects for low-interest loans and to help workers purchase land and build homes. In Britain, legislation created the London County Council and empowered it to build housing for workers. The LCC cleared a large slum district in the East End and built the Boundary Street Estate, a complex of five-story blocks completed in 1897. Though in Belgium, private development was far more common, the central commune of Brussels did construct the Cité Hellemans, apartments for 2,000 residents in the centre of town.

Despite these experiments, cottages for regularly employed workers outside central urban zones seemed to promise a better solution, given the moral and political dangers of high density working-class districts. Reformers in Britain and Belgium shared a desire to foster a working-class population that embraced middle-class values and ways of life, enjoying privacy in their garden cottages.

In Britain, reformers encouraged workers to move out of slum districts and into cottage developments. In Belgium, planners hoped that village dwellers seeking employment in Brussels would remain rooted in their villages and commute. Reformers in both countries hoped to convince workers to inhabit cottages where they and their families could enjoy what *The Times* described as “purer air and better habits.” (99)

These workers needed cheap and convenient transportation into the cities. Without the development of viable workmen’s trains, plans to house workers on the outskirts of cities could not succeed. Thus, Polasky highlights the connections between housing reform and transportation policies. In Belgium, the state-owned rail system willingly expanded the provision of cheap fares for workmen. British railways were privately owned, and parliamentary efforts to regulate workmen’s fares were far more controversial. In both countries, though, workmen’s journeys grew as a proportion of all rail travel in the last two decades of the 19th century.

The LCC tried to push British railway companies to provide more cheap trains as it built large cottage developments in the 1900s. In addition to Totterdown Fields, the LCC built the Norbury Estate near Croydon, White Hart Lane Estate in Tottenham and others. These appealed primarily to skilled workers who could afford rent and the cost of commuting. Unskilled workers needed to live in central districts to pursue casual jobs and allow multiple family members to earn wages. In Belgium, on the other hand, housing reform remained small in scale, encouraging individual workers to own their own cottages. Despite the limited scale of housing efforts, Polasky argues, “workmen’s trains in Belgium accomplished most of the reformers’ goals.” (180) The rural population remained stable and the number of commuters rose dramatically.

Polasky also argues that London housing reform achieved the goals of its planners, removing many skilled workers from the dangerous influences and conditions of the slums.

Some of this material will be familiar to many readers. British housing reform and social reformers' views of working-class districts, in particular, have been well-studied. Polasky's contribution comes in her integration of transport and housing issues and her comparative approach. The Belgian and British cases are similar enough to merit comparative consideration, yet their differences highlight interesting features in each case. For example, the fragmented nature of local government in Belgium handcuffed attempts to organize large-scale developments like those implemented by the LCC. On the other hand, fragmented and private ownership of the railways made the provision of workmen's trains in Britain the source of great contention. Polasky's comparative approach demands familiarity with a broad range of sources, but her work here is rewarded in the insights gleaned from these comparisons.

The main shortcoming of the work lies in the paucity of workers' voices and agency. Only occasionally does Polasky present the point of view of workers. What she deems the reformers' success in both countries depended on the decisions of workers to live where reformers wanted them to live. Polasky is sensitive to the challenges facing workers who commuted from distant homes into town, but we get little sense for their decisions, their attitudes, their choices. One place we do see workers asserting themselves in this process is in the riots over workingmen's fares in Edmonton in 1899. Yet she offers little insight into what led increasing numbers of workers to move to Edmonton, given the inadequate provision of cheap trains. Despite this, Polasky provides a convincing view of the

interaction between housing reform and transportation policy, and her comparative approach provides insight into both the British and Belgian cases.

*Andrew August*

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**Al Sandine, *The Taming of the American Crowd: From Stamp Riots to Shopping Sprees*** (New York: Monthly Review Press 2009)

GEORGE RUDÉ and E.P. Thompson first brought to our profession's attention the enormous importance of crowd actions in defending customary moral practices and shaming those in positions of power to do the right thing for the *hoi polloi*. Jesse Lemisch, Alfred Young, Gary B. Nash and others have shown that the same phenomena were equally present on this side of the Atlantic in colonial times and during the early US Republic. But whatever happened to the crowds such as those studied by these prestigious scholars? Today, with a few exceptions, purposeful crowds of that sort seem largely to have become a matter of history. Crowds are largely reduced to mere aggregations of people – to the passivity and conformism of shoppers in malls and of sports fans in stadiums and arenas. It is the question of what happened to the more radical activist crowds that is taken up here by scholar/activist Al Sandine. Sandine provides a set of historical vignettes illustrating crowds in their once spontaneous, rowdier variety – such as the ones that shut down the Stamp Act in 1765, those that freed slaves awaiting return to the South under the Fugitive Slave Act, those that joined with striking railroad workers in 1877 and striking textile and rubber workers during the 1930s, and finally those of the rebellions that broke out in Harlem in 1935 and 1964 and then elsewhere during the later



1960s. Sandine is fully aware that “mobs” have not always acted in ways that progressives of the political left could ever get behind – that even “killer crowds,” such as racist lynch mobs, must also have a space somewhere on display in what he refers to as the “crowd museum” – and he devotes a chapter to describing them, too. Nor were all crowds “self-owned,” as Sandine puts it. Many have been bought and manipulated like the high-pitched partisan political crowds during the Jacksonian period.

Sandine remains convinced, however, that much of democratic value has been lost in this transformation. Our ancestors were much more capable of taking useful collective actions, from barn-raising to hell-raising. That spirit needs to be revived. He reminds us that crowds, invariably derogated as “mobs” by the ancient and modern upper classes and their intellectual apologists, once ruled effectively in the Greek polis and the Roman republic. He argues that crowd and other collective actions are needed today, above all, to drive a wedge between politicians and the big business interests that hold them so much in their sway. Sandine hopes the present economic crisis, as it intensifies, will see a revival of them, and perhaps it will. (The book came out before the mass labour takeover of the State Capitol in Madison and similar struggles to defend worker bargaining rights in other states.) He holds out the mass anti-IMF and anti-governmental actions by workers and members of the squeezed middle class during the Argentinian debt crisis in the early years of the current century as examples of what can be possible.

So what happened? Sandine argues that during the 19th century the ruling powers moved to tame the streets and public squares that had long been contested class terrain. Longstanding popular festivals that involved role reversals

and the mocking of clerical and civil authorities were suppressed by refusing to issue permits and by unleashing the newly created urban police forces and vigilantes. Festivals and marches affirming patriotism and capitalism, with most people relegated to the role of spectators on the sidelines, were promoted instead. The “ginger” was removed from the once tumultuous July 4th celebrations, and Labor Day was substituted for workers’ May Day. Today, the Macy’s Day Thanksgiving Parade, with its “family-friendly” commercialism, is much more the norm. Those who attend these events today have generally internalized respectable behaviour patterns and do not need much policing. Others simply watch at home on their individual TV sets. Also contributing to the transformation of crowds was the emergence during the 20th century of consumerism turning people into social atoms – no longer mobilizing en masse to storm the barricades but trampling each other in order to be the first in line at a Walmart Black Friday sale. We hear the voice of a seasoned political activist when Sandine writes about the difficulty of anti-war or other protesters being heard, locked out of malls and tuned out by those few left in the streets.

Sandine has done his homework, and is familiar with theorists like Debord, Baudrillard, Lefebvre, Harvey and Castells. Lively, well written and quite enjoyable to read, the book is more like a rambling set of mini-essays roughly grouped together into topical chapters than a systematic historical monograph. Thus, in the chapter entitled “Safe Crowds” we find two or three page sections on suburbs, auto commuters, malls, the New Urbanism and mega-churches. There is no effort to bring each chapter’s sections into something greater than the sum of the parts. Valuable insights pop up throughout the book, including the notion that the rioters of past generations are in the prison

population of today. However, there is insufficient follow up to these insights.

Most surprisingly, Sandine never once engages with E. P. Thompson's famous hypothesis that a good many of the early modern crowds in food riots and otherwise were defending the principles of a commonly understood "moral economy," an hypothesis that since Thompson's 1971 essay has stimulated much productive scholarly discussion and debate. By applying Thompson's insights, we might be able to make better sense out of the obsolescence of crowd actions, especially in terms of one political economy with its particular set of structural rules being supplanted by another.

Sandine mentions the neighbourhood assemblies as popular discussion and decision-making bodies that emerged for a time out of the Argentinian crisis. But he does not offer any observations on the relationship of crowd actions and more permanent revolutionary political change. We would surely like to hear something more about how crowds can become institutionalized as organs of dual or alternative power in historical situations and why these things lose their momentum. Still, regardless of its lacunae, this is a book that is deserving of attention – by scholars and activists alike – for opening up for a popular audience four major questions: What were crowd actions? How did they impact American society? What happened to them? And why we are still so much in need of them?

*Jay Moore*

Marshfield, Vermont

**Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960*** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2010)

IN *COOKING IN OTHER Women's Kitchens*, Rebecca Sharpless explores the realm of domestic labour in the South, particularly from the perspective of domestic cooks, from the end of the Civil War to the middle of the 20th century. Noting that as African-American female labourers transitioned to wage labour after the Civil War, African-American women in the South moved from the fields, to domestic work, to manufacturing, and finally to pink-collar office work in the 20th century. Her study, rather than focusing on these larger workplace transitions, centres on the early shift to domestic labour, which lasted roughly until World War II, when the transition to a war-time economy opened up opportunities for wage-earning women, including African-American women, in the industrial workplace. Sharpless presents illustrations of African-American women working in white women's kitchens as paid domestic help, refuting the long-held stereotype of African-American cooks as naturally endowed with kitchen prowess. As a group, domestic workers were on the front lines of interracial contact in the Jim Crow South in the 20th century. As such, Sharpless argues that domestic labourers "created a vanguard of resistance to the iniquities of segregation, as they found myriad ways to maintain their dignity and sense of self-worth." (xiii)

Inventively utilizing cookbooks as primary sources, as well as memoirs and letters written by African-American cooks, Sharpless illustrates how African-American women both wielded some semblance of power within the kitchen, and how their lives were shaped by the racial inequities of the social caste system in the South in the 20th century. Though

the Jim Crow South constructed barriers so as to segregate black bodies from white spaces, the irony was that white female employers had come to rely on the centrality of African-American women's labour within the domestic sphere. Though racial segregation also permeated the kitchen in various ways, such as confining the cook, especially a live-in cook, to certain areas of the home, and mandating that she not touch food once prepared for the employer's family, African-American domestic workers more frequently complained of long working hours, sometimes without even a full day off per week to tend to their own homes and children. Under these circumstances, African-American cooks carved spaces of autonomy within the confines of the kitchen. Inventive cooks who took pride in their creations were oftentimes asked to reproduce recipes for their employer's personal collection. Offering incomplete recipes, or no recipe at all, functioned to protect a domestic servant's status within the household. Many cooks also chose to withhold their labour, walking off the job with little or no notice to their employer, when working conditions within the domestic sphere grew intolerable. Aside from the direct withdrawal of labour, African-American cooks developed other indirect methods of protesting or improving their working conditions. For example, Sharpless notes that the transition from in-house domestic service, which was more prevalent in the 19th century, to one where African-American women commuted to their employer's house on a daily basis, was a change that African-American domestic labourers forged in order to avoid a 24 hour work day and to gain more autonomy in their personal lives. African-American cooks also employed other techniques, such as tool breaking, once household technologies like gas and electric stoves were introduced into better homes, which served

to slow work down or protest working conditions.

One of the more illuminating aspects of Sharpless' analysis deals explicitly with the formal and informal organization tactics of domestic labourers. Letters to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt during the New Deal illustrated how African-American cooks attempted to influence public policy in order to decrease their workday and workload, and to improve their general working conditions. Though these letters made little impact upon New Deal policies, nothing terrified white, female, Southern employers more than the general threat of organized domestic labour during the 1930s. According to Sharpless, "women did in fact organize themselves for collective action across the South," in various ways. (84) Beginning in the early 20th century and peaking under the Roosevelt administration's labour-friendly watch, several formal domestic labour organizations appeared in the South, such as the Houston-based Women's Domestic Union, the National Association for Domestic Workers in Mississippi, and Domestic Worker's Union, forged in Washington DC in 1935. Though Sharpless notes that, "obviously, African-American domestic workers were paying attention to the federal labor legislation regarding such organizations as the Congress of Industrial Organizations," attempts to organize Southern domestic labour ultimately met with little success due to the solitary nature of the work. (85) However incomplete attempts to organize black women's domestic labour may have been, the cook's greatest weapon for organizing was not a formal domestic labour union, but rather through social networks in churches and on public transportation. In church groups, when African-American women were not forced to labour on Sundays, and on lengthy rides on public transportation to and from work, cooks

remained free to discuss employers and working conditions. Sharpless' attention to these informal organization tactics through social networks, particularly on public transportation routes, is particularly astute.

While Sharpless succeeds at illustrating the myriad ways that African-American women cooks implicitly and explicitly fought against poor working conditions and bad pay, thereby giving agency to women whose lives and livelihoods were shaped by structures of power in the South, she may downplay the powerful technological transitions taking place during the time period in question. Sharpless notes broader shifts in employment opportunities available to African-American women by the mid-20th century, most of which can be attributed to the World War II economy, and notes that better pay pulled many more domestic servants out of the kitchen and into employment in public spheres. Yet, she pays relatively limited attention to the role of technology that undergirded this shift, especially in the realm of domestic appliances and the extension of electrical power lines into the South. During the New Deal period, the federal government specially selected areas of the South to receive extended power lines under the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Tennessee Valley region was the test market for government-subsidized domestic appliances under the Electric Home and Farm Administration. These technological shifts can, by no means, account entirely for the transition in employment trends, but they may have made a significant impact on Southern women's labour in the household. By the 1950s, white women of means, in increasing numbers, garnered the ability to supplant hired labour with domestic technology, performing their own culinary feats and doing their own laundry and decreasing their reliance

upon hired labour to perform these tasks. Arguably, domestic technology may have played a role in freeing African-American domestic labour for other pursuits; once those opportunities became available, former domestics seized the opportunity to change career paths.

Issues of technology aside, Sharpless' book is wonderfully detailed, and provides voice for the often overlooked African-American domestic. In many ways, *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens* picks up, chronologically, where Thavolia Glymph's *Out of the House of Bondage* leaves off, tracing the relationships between black women employees and white women employers well into the 20th century. Especially of interest for many will be Sharpless' depiction of the complex relationship between author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and her long-time cook, Idella Parker. For anyone interested in domestic labour in the South during the 20th century, Sharpless' book is highly recommended. Readers will delight in Sharpless' refutation of Aunt Jemima and Mammy caricatures of African-American cooks, in favour of an honest representation of what labouring in other women's kitchens may have looked like from the perspective of the domestic.

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**Rosanne Currarino, *The Labor Question in America: Economic Democracy in the Gilded Age*** (Champaign: University of Illinois Press 2011)

ROSANNE CURRARINO'S *The Labor Question in America: Economic Democracy in the Gilded Age* explores the changing meaning of citizenship through the Gilded Age and into the Progressive Era. Scholars who have studied this period tend to lament its outcomes: political disengagement, acquiescence,

and consumerism, rather than a radical leftwing alternative to an increasingly industrialized and capitalistic society. Currarino, however, challenges this negative assessment, arguing that Americans did not become apathetic. Instead, the sites of struggle simply changed. Citizens may have ceased looking to political organizations like the Knights of Labor or a socialist party as the vehicle of change, but they did continue to preserve and expand the meaning of democracy. Not only did this mean voting for candidates who represented their interests but it also meant demanding more of the good things in life.

According to Currarino, there are two distinct and competing ideas of citizenship that can be identified during this period. The first conception is the proprietary-producerist model that existed prior to and after the American Civil War. At this time, a citizen was defined as a property-owning male artisan who lived from the fruits of his labour – independent and self-sufficient. Beginning in the early 1870s, however, the independent artisan and his place in American society increasingly became threatened due to a series of historical events: a depression that began in the early 1870s and lasted the greater part of that decade, the de-skilling of labour processes, and an influx of immigrant labour. As labourers became more proletarianized – no longer independent or in control of the means of production – and the proprietary-producerist model of citizenship no longer spoke to the realities of life in America, debates surrounding a new form of citizenship began. According to Currarino, what emerged from these debates was a socialized (consumerist) version of democracy. Under this conception, citizenship moved beyond the narrow confines of the proprietary-producerist emphasis on owning property and on self-reliance to embrace “politics of more” – meaning

more of the social surplus. Proponents of consumerist citizenship included economists, social reformers, and labour leaders. They all believed that workers had an entitlement to a certain standard of living which included shorter work hours, higher wages, the right to form unions, the ability to purchase consumer items, and the enjoyment of leisure activities during their free time.

But can the meaning of citizenship during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era really be reduced to only two versions? Considering the importance and activity of the radical left – socialists, anarchists, and later the rise of the Industrial Workers of the World – in the United States during this period, it seems necessary to address how these different groups viewed citizenship and what it meant. Did the radical left put forward a differing view of citizenship than those of the proprietary-producerist or consumerist models? Was the radical left more likely to endorse one over the other? Did socialists, anarchists, and Wobblies agree with certain aspects of these two types of citizenship and if so, which ones? The Chicago anarchists of the Haymarket era were in support of the eight-hour day but it is likely that their idea of citizenship would be quite different from that of the social reformer Jane Addams and the American Federation of Labor’s Samuel Gompers. Some consideration of the radical left is warranted here.

Currarino does an excellent job providing brief biographies of people like Addams and Gompers but does not give the same attention to detail to key historical events. For example, the Haymarket Tragedy and the Homestead Strike are mentioned only in passing. Though there is a footnote for the former, it tells us nothing about the event, why it occurred, or its outcome other than stating that, as a result, some progressive economists had to be careful about how they

expressed their ideas if they wanted to keep their positions at universities. Even less is said about Homestead. It would have been of interest to know how those striking steelworkers, who engaged in a twelve-hour gun battle with Pinkerton detectives, conceptualized citizenship in America. Specifically, how would their version of citizenship compare with those put forward in this book?

If, according to Currarino, citizenship based on consumerism is the answer to the labour question in Gilded Age and Progressive Era America, it would be important to know how working folks who had migrated from various countries and empires felt about it. The commentators who appear in this book largely addressed an Anglophone audience. Did their views make any inroads into migrant communities where English was rarely if ever spoken? Can examples of consumerist citizenship be found in the non-English labour press in the United States at this time? Were proponents of consumerist citizenship frustrated by non-Anglophone migrants and their potentially differing views? In addition, how much influence did these views have on native-born English-speaking Americans? Understanding the ideas of commentators and intellectuals is one thing but it is also equally important to explain how these views were interpreted, redefined, and challenged by the wider society.

Tracing the history of the shift from a proprietary-producerist to a consumerist conception of citizenship makes for an interesting topic. The third chapter on the German-trained American economists was a highlight of this book. Figures such as Francis Amasa Walker, Edwin R. A. Seligman, and Arthur Twinning Hadley, among many others, saw economics as an extension of their parents' abolitionist activism and a path to social reform. For these individuals, economic policy was a way to improve the lives of Americans

by providing them with stability and prosperity. It is unfortunate that this approach to economics has largely disappeared and has been replaced with a ruthless emphasis on bottom lines at the expense of people and their well-being.

However, there are two key themes that are not addressed within *The Labor Question in America: Economic Democracy in the Gilded Age*. The role of the radical left and its views on citizenship need to be considered. Some comment also needs to be made on the success of consumerist citizenship among both Anglophone and non-Anglophone workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, this book would be made more accessible if key historical events, such as the Haymarket Tragedy, were explained. Overall, Currarino's book is a worthwhile read for those interested in the shifting meaning of citizenship in America during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and who have a specialized knowledge of this period.

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**Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal, 1919–1935*** (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2010)

IN A JULY OP-ED in the *New York Times*, industrial relations expert George Yorgakaras called for professional sports, as private cartels that provide a public good, to adapt their labour framework to the 1926 Railway Labor Act. This is a useful reminder that the US labour landscape is still shaped by the experience of decades long past. The passage of that act is central to *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal*. In it, historian Jon R. Huibregtse argues that the railroad unions' activism of the 1920s helped establish the conditions for the New Deal



of the 1930s. Claiming that the standard historiography of the New Deal largely overlooks the pivotal role of these unions, Huibregste's book credits the railroad brotherhoods as innovators in American social policy and labour law. It provides a clear account of the political activism and social policy reform of the railroad brotherhoods. However, the book leaves several important questions unanswered.

In the 1920s, while American labour reeled under the assault of business after the glory days of strikes and mobilization during World War I, the railroad unions turned to legislative and political action. Wartime rhetoric of "industrial democracy" was abandoned as capital and the state worked to expel radicals and roll back gains made by workers under the auspices of the first Red Scare and the "American Plan." Huibregste shows that the railroad brotherhoods, sometimes dismissed as conservative and insular, kept that ideology alive in pushing for further gains. The testimony he provides on the hazards of railroad life and the instability of careers provides good context for why security provisions were so urgent a priority for the unions.

During the Great War, the railroads were nationalized and unions recognized by the government railroad authority. After the war, carriers successfully prevailed on the government for legislation that turned back the clock to the prewar era. A particular concern of the brotherhoods was the weakened labour dispute arbiter created by the legislation, the Railroad Labor Board (RLB), which had no authority to enforce its decisions. Huibregste sees in this setback the seeds of future success. In creating their own counterproposal, the Plumb Plan, the railroad brotherhoods learned to work together on matters of political advocacy. Furthermore, the newspaper they created to promote the Plumb Plan, *Labor*, would become an important pulpit for

their reform efforts throughout the next decade.

Another way the railroad unions adapted to the postwar situation was by actively participating in partisan electoral politics. Huibregste details how, through the labour newspaper, their monthly magazines, and on the ground organizers, "railroad labor's political machine" became a force that influenced races at the Congressional, state, and federal levels. He even argues that the successful and varied organizing of railroad union leadership indicated they "had supplanted the American Federation of Labor as the leading voice of American Labor." However, this is a contention mentioned in passing, and Huibregste provides little evidence to support this claim.

Throughout the mid-1920s, the railroad brotherhoods worked tirelessly to convince legislators to repeal the Railroad Labor Board. Huibregste demonstrates that they applied political pressure to both Republicans and Democrats, and explored the possibility of a progressive third party under the leadership of Wisconsin senator Robert La Follette. While the third party option petered out after La Follette's death, railroad labour's multidimensional activism in the 1924 election season prompted even the GOP to pledge a review of the RLB and tepid support of the brotherhoods' favoured Howell-Barkley bill, which introduced direct mediation and voluntary arbitration with binding decisions. Huibregste sees the eventual passage of the Railway Labor Act as a "pioneering measure" establishing "collective bargaining in the railroad industry a decade before that right was generally recognized." He argues that their political efforts and the power railroad workers wielded in the US economy delivered the victory. To Huibregste, this is also a triumph for reformism, and political moderation over radicalism. The brotherhoods' leadership's gradualism rocked no boats,

eschewed the radicalism of the era, and therefore triumphed, enabling the wider successes of the New Deal.

Unfortunately, this provocative argument is not developed, but merely asserted. To Huibregste, that the railroad unions' leadership provided gains for their workers is enough; it follows naturally that their strategy was best. He does not consider that, given their pivotal location in the American economy, they had the leverage to win far more for both their own members and for the broader working class. A sustained evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of 1920s railroad unionism would have added much needed perspective, here and elsewhere. This type of conservative unionism is less studied than the histories of militant unions that fought notorious strikes. While it is valuable that Huibregste has examined their strategy and tactics, he declines to connect a consideration of the brotherhoods' businesslike approach with broader questions of working-class strategy and ideology. Despite the current vogue for histories, such as Ian McKay's, that attempt to combine disparate left movements into one amorphous oppositional *mélange*, there is a real need to historicize discrete actors, unions, and organizations, appreciate their differences, and evaluate what worked and what did not. The author's silence on this point is a missed opportunity.

Huibregste then turns to the efforts of the railroad brotherhoods to establish a retirement insurance plan for their workers, which he credits as a forerunner for the Roosevelt administration's eventual establishment of Social Security. Their bill was defeated when the Supreme Court decided that establishing pensions was outside of Congress's sphere of authority, forcing its backers to base legislation on Congress's recognized powers of taxation. Huibregste argues this

experience helped smooth the later passage of the Social Security Act.

The remainder of the book is somewhat puzzling. Next is a chapter on the brotherhoods' leadership's disastrous establishment of labour banks, including an unethical and calamitous foray into Florida real estate at the height of a real estate bubble. While the subject is interesting, and reminiscent of today's labour investment funds, Huibregste does not connect this section to the rest of the book. It is unclear how exactly the chapter is supposed to develop the author's arguments. While Huibregste notes the railroad brotherhood leadership's enthusiasm for labour banking as symptomatic of a view of themselves as middle class, he stops short of a deeper exploration of that class consciousness. One possibility would be to consider this misstep as an outgrowth of their top-down orientation. As he impressively documents, the leadership was aligned to gradualism and negotiation with railroads and the state, rather than a stance more critical of capitalism. This may have contributed to an enthusiasm for the elements of elite power, such as banking. After the discussion of labour banking, the book simply ends, without a conclusion to drive home Huibregste's main arguments or suggest directions for future research.

Huibregste has done a thorough job of explaining railroad labour's political and legislative strategy in the years after World War I. However, his argument that the reforms won by labour leaders directly led to the New Deal era is not conclusively proved. That the battle over retirement legislation may have cleared the path for Social Security is not overwhelmingly persuasive. As he admits, Social Security would have been enacted anyways. While he trumpets the policy accomplishments of the brotherhoods, he does not discuss the actual impact

of reforms and policy on the constituency of these leaders – railroad workers themselves. Did these reforms work to significantly impact the lives of railway workers? What were the political concerns of railway workers themselves, and did leadership take them up? How democratic were the railway brotherhoods? Was their racial exclusionism controversial among members, or accepted as a foundation for white superiority and the “wages of whiteness”? The book has little to say about these issues.

These are important questions for a study of the political activism of the railroad unions. Many of them are taken up by Paul Michel Taillon in *Good, Reliable White Men*, his history of the brotherhoods up to and during the Great War. That book highlights what Huibregste’s focus on the leadership obscures: the constituency of that leadership, the ‘rail-roader’. The reader of this book is unenlightened about how that constituency might have been constructed by class, race, gender, occupation, and status to advance certain claims on capital and the state. Despite its untapped potential, the book is a useful starting point for historians interested in railroad labour, labour activism in the 1920s, and the techniques of the era’s most effective business unions.

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**Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class***  
(New York: New Press 2010)

THE “WORKING CLASS” died in the 1970s. As a cultural and political force, Jefferson Cowie argues that the relatively short-lived phenomenon of a unified idea or ideal of the working class came undone in the 1970s from not just external factors but also its own inner struggles. Replete

with engaging cultural references, political discussions, and a continual emphasis on the social realities for working Americans, this is an important book for historians of labour, the working class and postwar politics more generally. *Stayin’ Alive* is a *tour de force* in realms of American social, political, and cultural history.

Cowie’s two-part approach convincingly demonstrates that the decade was profoundly important for the working class. Part One, roughly stretching from 1968 to 1974, is replete with engagement with the working class by political leaders and cultural producers with the working class as they recognized its potential power and emphasized its significance for better or worse. The Democratic Party struggled for a sense of identity, with big labour dominating during the 1968 primaries after Robert Kennedy’s assassination, but overreaching in 1972 and seeing the AFL-CIO’s opponent, George McGovern, win. This campaign infighting saw working people split their votes between McGovern and Nixon, weakening the traditional relationship between labour and the Democratic Party. Exemplifying Cowie’s mastery of both cultural and political history, the narrative then shifts towards the contemporaneous Nixon effort to capitalize on working-class confusion by rallying the working class around the Republican Party behind social and cultural issues, as well as patriotism rather than the economic and material policies of the Democratic Party. Nixon reached out to labour leaders and the rank-and-file by rallying the “Silent Majority,” seizing on the famous Hardhat Riots in New York City in the wake of the 1970 Kent State shootings, backing and signing the landmark Occupational Safety and Health Act, as well as inviting George Meany over for a symbolic Labour Day dinner. While the AFL-CIO broke with him over wage freezes, the

policies delivered a large number of votes and helped propel him to a second term. This strategy continued in the cultural sphere. The image of country-music-hating Richard Nixon and his staffers listening to a literally haggard Merle Haggard “bang” through his backlash hit “Okie from Muskogee” epitomizes the rise of working-class cultural concerns over economic, material issues. Binary opposites like Woodstock and Muskogee set up a chapter that demonstrates the condescension held by middle-class cultural producers and audiences towards workers (*Easy Rider*, *Joe*, *All in the Family*), with few exceptions such as Syndey Lumet’s *Dog Day Afternoon*. The cultural examples are woven well into Cowie’s overall argument, bringing them alive – and will probably send many readers down to their local video or music store!

While the importance of the working class, both as a political and cultural force, is apparent in the first section, the second part focuses on the despair and destruction of the working class as a unified idea in the late 1970s. The contrast adds to the rhetorical power of Cowie’s argument. Labour was increasingly scapegoated by academics and the media as the source of economic malaise and inflation; as elites looked more towards Friedman than Keynes, the ascendant New Right chipped away at the working class. Equal opportunity legislation and pressures resulted in opportunities for women and minorities at the same time as the economy gasped. “[T]he idealism of affirmative action dwindled to a vicious logic,” (241) Cowie notes, as the labour market then saw a zero-sum battle between those struggling to hold on to increasingly insecure jobs and those trying to enter these jobs. An attempt to garner a “New Deal” with the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act, which in its initial version sought to genuinely enforce a right to employment at prevailing wages, was

ultimately adopted as a watered-down bill without substance due to very tepid support from the Carter administration. This, coupled with failed reforms to labour law, represented the last attempt to break beyond the New Deal. As Cowie notes, in the failure of legal reforms, “one could hear the death rattle of American working-class political power.” (296) In dead-end jobs, devoid of political influence, working people turned towards the escapism of disco (epitomized by 1977’s *Saturday Night Fever*). The subsequent “Disco Sucks” movement was “the last stand of white blue-collar Midwestern males against all that was cosmopolitan, urbane, racially integrated, and, most of all, gay” (323) and the blue-collar revenge fantasies *Rocky*, the rejection of class in *Taxi Driver*, and the interracial conflict and union corruption of *Blue Collar*. By Bruce Springsteen’s *The River* (1980), the union card is seen as a source of entrapment rather than liberation; a wholesale shift in working-class consciousness and identity had been affected.

This is easily one of the most compelling, well researched and excellently written books that I have had the pleasure of reading. Making generous contributions to the historiography of American labour, the working class, and politics more generally, Cowie also bumps up against the growing literature on the sixties. Historians in both Canada and the United States have extensively debated how to periodize this epoch, focusing on the pivotal changes brought by the period on campuses, for women and minorities, and for the growth of the welfare state. *Stayin’ Alive* is a trenchant argument for locating pivotal change in the realm of working class and labour history in the seventies: from cultural and political force, to attempts at a New New Deal, to its ultimate fragmentation and demise as a coherent force. Many of the changes and efforts that stem from the sixties ran

up against political and cultural forces that emerged in the period Cowie studies.

There are a few decisions of scope that are perhaps a bit limiting. While Cowie's book is firmly focused on the seventies, the second part does carry a date range of 1974 to 1982. However, the book treats the first two years of the 1980s as almost an afterthought. The 1981 Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization strike is a critical moment, yet receives only a cursory description in a too abbreviated last chapter. Given that Cowie spends hundreds of pages demonstrating the waning cultural and political power of the working class, some more attention on the overt class war of the 1980s would have helped wrap up the package. Indeed, as Cowie explicitly notes earlier in his book, it stands in contrast to Nixon's 1970 conciliatory approach towards a postal workers' strike (which would have been illegal had it been recognized as a "strike" rather than a "work stoppage"). That said, *Stayin' Alive* is a lengthy book as is (albeit never slow), and that narrative is certainly well trodden. Another issue, which might pique the attention of some readers, is the lack of attention paid to non-American events. Could a comparative comment be made about mid-seventies Canadian labour militancy? Canadian members of the United Steelworkers of America played a pivotal role behind the defeat of reform candidate Ed Sadlowski in the 1975 Steelworkers leadership contest, but the reasons behind this are not discussed. Furthermore, given that the election of Reagan fit into a global current including Thatcher in Britain and Mulroney in Canada, more international attention and comparisons might have helped round out the picture.

These admittedly minor quibbles aside, *Stayin' Alive* is a must read for historians of the working class, labour, and of the postwar period more generally. Arguably the most important work in recent labour

history, this book deserves to be widely read. For Canadians, as we see the ascendancy of "working families" rhetoric over that of workers, and the victories of conservative governments in many jurisdictions, it is all the more important that we learn the lessons of the 1970s.

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**William Kaufman, Woody Guthrie, *American Radical*** (Champaign: University of Illinois Press 2011)

AT THE INAUGURATION ceremonies of newly elected US President Obama crowds cheered as folk singer and veteran activist Pete Seeger stepped out alongside rock star Bruce Springsteen to sing Woody Guthrie's anthem to the people – "This Land Is Your Land." This time the song, written as Guthrie's response to the ultra-patriotic "God Bless America", was performed as originally written with the inclusion of two essential verses (one an attack on private property greed, the other identifying the grim reality of poverty), so often deleted from schoolbook texts, song collections and even labour music songbooks published by trade unions. In the final years of his life, physically ravaged by the debilitating effects of Huntington's disease, Guthrie despaired over what would become of his musical and political legacy. Would it too be ravaged by the diseases of anti-communist hysteria, of McCarthyism, Cold War rhetoric, commercial censorship and even the conservative ideological shift in the ranks of organized labour? His concern was warranted. Singers and songwriters in years to follow often copied him in form, but not in content.

In the past two decades musicians have reawakened to a past tradition of what is now referred to as folk, world and roots music. This has been paralleled in the

past decade by a growing body of a music of resistance by songwriters expressing social concerns in tandem with worldwide protests against global neoliberalism and economic crises. Guthrie has been increasingly acknowledged by more well known popular music celebrities as a musical influence, but his hard-edged politics has often been played down perhaps for the purposes of commercial consumption.

One can purchase a T-shirt of Guthrie holding his guitar upon which he handpainted the now famous scrawl "This machine kills fascists." The smoking cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth in the original photo has been conveniently airbrushed out. This seemingly small change of image is symbolic of the moderated political discourse which soft-pedals Guthrie's hard political edges. He is recognized as the songwriter who fought for "social justice" instead of socialism, singing songs for "the people" instead of the working class, the economically and politically dispossessed. His travels and flights from family are often portrayed as mere "wanderlust" and not placed in the context of a politically driven performer who took his music directly to the very working class he sang about.

To his credit author William Kaufman clears the decks from the first page by reprinting Guthrie's poem "Socialismo," a mixture of political acumen, humour and homespun dialect recognizing that the process of constructing a new world would be no easy struggle: "My name is called Socialism . . . If I do happen to tear a part of your house down on my way growing up towards the sky, don't be afraid. I'll fix it back a whole lot better than I found it."

Reviewing the massive collected works of Guthrie, published and unpublished songs, poetry, political commentaries, personal letters, radio talks and

interviews alongside the reminiscences of close musical compadres Kaufman provides a clearer insight into an artist politically committed, thoughtful, outspoken, often frustrated and angry with those who did not share his passion. Kaufman's criticism of former biographies is that Guthrie's politics have too often been lost in the intimate details of his personal idiosyncrasies, the effects of his later affliction of Huntington's disease, personal family tragedies, his sexual meandering and infidelities. Ed Cray's biography (*Ramblin' Man*, 2004) makes much of Guthrie's non-proletarian class background and stresses that the singer was not one of the Oklahoman thirties farmers Dust Bowl refugee. Guthrie's father was a landowner, a real estate agent and vociferously anti-socialist. While Kaufman acknowledges this he places this in a broader historical context noting that Oklahoma was no conservative political backwater. The state had a substantial and lasting tradition of left-wing ferment including a vibrant Debsian Socialist Party that rivalled the party centres of the east, the Social Gospel tradition, prairie socialism and farm-labour movements, and the Industrial Workers of the World which would have a notable effect in the way Guthrie constructed and presented his political message.

Kaufman resurrects the essence of Guthrie's political radicalism which many might consider too politically grating for popular consumption (including his admiration for Joseph Stalin and his identification with and advocacy for Communist Party hardliners). The importance of this new biography is that it has saved what one can call "the truth" of Woody Guthrie not only as a radical, but as a revolutionary who, unlike many left-liberal musicians today, dared to identify himself as such and was willing to place himself on the line in the



struggle even if it meant facing physical danger, commercial failure and economic impoverishment.

Kaufman locates Guthrie within the vortex of an era of volatile national and international politico-economic crises (the Great Depression, policies of the New Deal, an insurgent industrial unionism of the CIO that some viewed as a revolutionary force, anti-fascism and the Spanish Civil War, the American entry into the Second World War, and the rise of McCarthyism). This was concurrently an era that witnessed the destruction of older, traditional music norms and folk music narrative with the ascendancy of an increasing commercialization and corporate control of the music industry and airwaves producing music as "pure entertainment."

To Guthrie music and song had to have meaning for his vision of new world awakening. Even his children's songs, so beloved by parents to this day, were meant to serve to awaken the spirit of self-creativity and resistance to capitalism. Kaufman recognizes that Guthrie was part of a collective body of musicians who saw value in the preservation of American folk music forms and passionately believed in the intrinsic links between art and radical politics. Left-wing artists strove to create a body of "proletarian art" and "people's songs" at a time when the very nature of the songwriter was transformed with the commodification of song. This was the era of the professional singer-songwriter who made his or her living as a cultural worker and that meant a livelihood increasingly dependent upon the industry. Guthrie was often frustrated by the limitations imposed by media executives who hoped they could censor the political message within his music in order to advertise products from soap to tobacco. In order to guard his own livelihood Guthrie jealously

guarded the copyright of his songs. He would often lash out not only at industry executives but at fellow musicians such as Josh White and Burl Ives, whom he befriended and formerly praised, for selling out to commercial fame. Even the Almanac Singers came under criticism for abandoning folk music authenticity.

The attempt to create an authentic folk and genuine working-class culture was the subject of often interminable, heated debates amongst this collective of singers, songwriters and musicians. What indeed was an "authentic" people's music? What was the role of the cultural worker when the movement they were often linked to (the Communist Party) placed politics in command? Could musicians from a middle class, educated and more privileged background of urban New York speak to the daily realities of life of the masses of migrant, itinerant workers or the broken farmers fleeing the Oklahoma dust bowl? Their efforts to be pro-working class sometimes ended up in comedic disasters when the dynamics of social class expression were misread. Kaufman notes one instance when the Almanac Singers were booed off the stage when they appeared in concert before a largely working-class audience. There to sing songs about workers and unions, the performers dressed down in work boots, shirts, and what they visualized as typical proletarian garb considering it to be a sign of class identification and solidarity. Audience members took this as a personal affront and interpreted it as a sign of disrespect for their class. Professional musicians, in their opinion, were expected to be dressed in their best, in suits and ties, dresses and high heels.

If there is a minor weakness in the book it is within the last chapter. While Kaufman does a more than adequate job of identifying musicians on an international scale who have been influenced

by Guthrie he has somewhat missed the mark in terms of those who could be considered his heirs. By concentrating on the more well known commercially successful artists Kaufman has ignored those who have struggled over the years (artists such as Anne Feeney, Charlie King, Rebel Voices, David Rovics amongst many others) and followed in Guthrie's tradition, immersing themselves wholeheartedly in the role of supporting working-class movements at the expense of commercial success.

One of the strengths of the book is that the material linking politics to music is approached with a sensitivity of a writer who is himself not only an academic but a performer of music. Perhaps because of this Kaufman brings greater insight, revealing the artistic spirit and process that lay behind Guthrie's creative political expression allowing him to resonate with working people of the 1930s and 1940s and continuing to resonate today.

*Len Wallace*

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**Jeremy Brecher, *Banded Together: Economic Democratization in the Brass Valley*** (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2011)

JEREMY BRECHER has spent much of the past 35 years documenting the rise and fall of the brass industry in the Naugatuck Valley in Connecticut. The Brass Workers History Project was initiated in the late 1970s, resulting in a popular history book and documentary film. It was an inspiring early example of community-university collaboration in the field of oral history. Now, in *Banded Together: Economic Democratization in the Brass Valley*, Brecher tells the story of the Naugatuck Valley's energetic response to deindustrialization. In so doing, he

shifts our attention from the profound loss experienced by displaced workers to local efforts to build democratic alternatives to the economic status quo. It is a movement history of the Naugatuck Valley Project (NVP), a coalition of community activists, churches and unions. The resulting storyline is both inspiring and deeply depressing.

Brecher, a longtime participant-observer in the NVP, wrote the book for both an academic and public audience. It was initially timed to coincide with the organization's 25th anniversary. It is therefore a commemorative act that draws some critical lessons from the surge of economic activism in the 1980s and 1990s. There is much to celebrate here. Unlike other places experiencing deindustrialization, the Naugatuck Valley was the site of large-scale and sustained community mobilization. The political possibilities of "banding together" to buy out failing companies or starting up new cooperatives are evident in the interviews the author conducts with movement activists. As he states, they "sought ways to establish greater democratic control over the economic forces, institutions, and decisions that were devastating their communities, livelihoods, and ways of life." (xiii) These interviews reveal political awakenings.

The NVP's early success at Seymour Manufacturing, re-opened under an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, was widely heralded at the time. Its demise seven years later however raises troubling questions about the viability of the economic alternatives being presented. The NVP's other buyout campaigns failed, as did a cooperative start-up. In fact, only the Brookside Housing Coop still exists today. As Brecher states, "[t]here was no resurrection in the Naugatuck Valley." (203)

*Banded Together* left me with more questions than answers. If deindustrialization "liquidated not only factories and

jobs; it liquidated a legacy of community building" (11), why then did we see large-scale and sustained community mobilization in the Naugatuck Valley? Why here and not elsewhere? Conversely, we hear that valley residents also voted out a liberal Democratic Party Congressman in favour of a conservative Republican. How do we reconcile these seemingly divergent politics? We are told of the "broad loss of confidence in Keynesian economic policies identified with liberals and the Democratic Party." (12) Is this why labour and community activists turned to local forms of solidarity? Did this decision serve the Valley well? Sadly, Brecher largely fails to engage with the wider scholarship on deindustrialization. There is a larger story here; see for example Jeffrey Manuel's fascinating 2009 thesis on the decline of "industrial liberalism" in Minnesota's Iron Range.

That said, my main criticism of the book is that Brecher offers us only an inward-looking history of the NVP. We hear mainly from a handful of inspiring insiders such as organizer Ken Galdston, trained at Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation. How did other residents view the NVP? The author's source base, and his location as participant-observer, lead him to dismiss outside criticism. The failure at Century Brass, for example, is blamed on the narrow-mindedness of union leaders. But why did most union members vote against the NVP? Were there substantive fears over pension rights? How did they perceive the NVP? No dissenting or external voices are heard. These silences limit the author's ability to bring a more critical eye to the work of the NVP. Basic assumptions are never questioned.

One of these assumptions is the value and effectiveness of NVP's economic prescription. Are employee or community-led cooperatives viable alternatives? Brecher notes that there is bound to

be trouble with employee buyouts if "new democratic structures are simply grafted onto the existing structures of a conventional corporation." (109) This is a key insight. But there is still an unforgiving market to deal with. Can democratic structures be grafted onto capitalism? These local initiatives were quickly crushed by "the policies of neo-liberal globalization." If all we have are heroic defeats, what are we left with? There is no easy answer. *Banded Together* provides us with an invaluable reflection on one community's imaginative efforts to overcome the bleak economic realities facing industrial regions everywhere and the solidarity that resulted.

*Steven High*

Concordia University

**Susan Chandler and Jill B. Jones, *Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places***  
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2011)

*CASINO WOMEN: Courage in Unexpected Places* is an important, inspiring, and timely book which has the rare distinction of being a valuable resource for labour research, teaching, and political action. Drawing on multiple years of research with workers in Las Vegas and Reno casinos in the United States, Susan Chandler and Jill B. Jones present a captivating and insightful story of daily work, organizing, and collective action. Through a gendered, intersectional frame, we are taken into the daily lives of housekeeping staff, cocktail waitresses, bartenders, dealers, pit bosses, and managers, thus gaining a comprehensive and holistic picture of the realities of who and what make casinos work. The book offers rich descriptive detail and interview data, illuminating behind-the-scenes labour processes and worker experiences, as well as providing a deeper understanding of the challenges of the most visible

labouring bodies in casinos. Recurring themes include surveillance, exploitation, physical pain, and intellectual frustration. We get to know a cross-section of workers intimately, as they share powerful and moving stories of historical and ongoing struggle and hardship but also hope. Their emphases reaffirm that the personal and the political, and the public and private spheres are interconnected in many ways. As a result, the reader gains a deeper, broader, and more nuanced understanding of the differences and the commonalities among service workers.

The depth and breadth of data on different kinds of service work in casinos make this book ground-breaking. However, its contributions to labour studies extend much further. The authors, through their commitment to holism and to examining many groups of workers within the same corporate structures, expose the complexities of feminized labour. Rather than presenting women's work and workplace power politics as monolithic, we are forced to grapple with the ways gendered labour relations and performances are contingent upon the work required, the spaces in question, and the agency of women and men. Women are the primary focus of Chandler and Jones' research, but male co-workers and union representatives are also discussed. As we move through the experiences of cocktail waitresses, table dealers, and chamber maids, our understanding of the interconnectedness of gender and labour as structured and as experienced is both enriched and deepened. The findings are noteworthy, untidy, and in some cases, unexpected. Consequently, this volume provides an important contribution to contemporary gender studies, one that reveals the substantial influence of work and class in women's lives. Similarly, the findings offer multi-dimensional gendered fodder for discussions of labour

relations more generally, and the dynamics of service work in particular.

At the same time, this book is a compelling exploration of the relationships among material conditions, political consciousness, and individual and collective action. In my view it is this angle which is the book's most important and exciting contribution. The authors set out to better understand labour and gender in casinos, but their inquiry is underscored by a desire to understand what makes some workers pursue progressive change. This analytical and political commitment is the core organizing axis for the book. Chandler and Jones not only cover a range of occupations and their specific labour processes, but link these data to analysis of which workers organized, in what ways, and why. Unionization and union-based political action, particularly in the Culinary Union, is a central focus of the book, but there are also chapters on unorganized workers' individual struggles to make change through legal and formal political arenas in areas such as anti-smoking legislation, for example. The authors present a range of political avenues pursued by casino workers, but ultimately emphasize the more substantive influence and reach of union-rooted strategies. Moreover, the positive impact union activism and ongoing organizing has on women is highlighted, as workers identified a greater sense of their own power, and recognized the value of solidarity within and beyond the workplace.

To add a contrasting but complementary angle, women who were frustrated and alienated but who did not resist or organize are also featured in the study. The reasons for workers' acquiescence and inaction were more predictable, thus it is the larger sections on resistance which were of most interest to me, and which provide insights of broader analytical significance about how, when, and why social actors defy hegemonic powers and processes.

The insights gathered by Chandler and Jones into how workers developed critical, political consciousness and why they were committed to fighting against inequities and for greater collective rights are instructional, thoughtful, and powerful. I would have liked to see even more space allocated to their discussion and analysis, particularly given the pressing need for more contemporary studies of agency and class consciousness and action, especially among the growing ranks of low-wage workers.

*Casino Women* is ideally suited to undergraduate teaching in labour, gender, and/or social justice studies, and it is an excellent resource for other forms of worker education. Brief but key historical and geographic data, in combination with pertinent details about the local-global casino industry, provide the necessary context for the reader at the outset. Throughout the volume, Jones and Chandler strategically enlist social theory and select political theorists such as Paulo Freire, Eduardo Galeano, and bell hooks, but these writers' contributions are used as analytical tools, rather than central voices or organizational pillars. In other words, this is not a theory-dense, conventional academic text. Instead, the workers' emphases and the author's analyses are interwoven, thereby creating a captivating narrative and data-driven book which is rigorous and analytical, but accessible.

Due to its organization and narrative style, the book flows like a compelling mystery being unraveled. The most significant insights – those about what factors contributed to the development of critical consciousness and collective action among some workers – are revealed at the end. Consequently, I am not going to give away key dimensions here. Rather, I urge all readers to take a trip to Las Vegas, through the lens of this insightful and valuable book.

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**Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliot**  
(London and New York: Verso 2011  
[2006])

DOMENICO LOUSURDO claims to have written a “counter history” that brings to light elements of the liberal intellectual tradition obscured by hagiography masquerading as historical analysis. Near the end of *Liberalism* the author also suggests that his goal has been to grapple with the legacy of an internationally (indeed, globally) important political movement. To accomplish these aims, *Liberalism* engages a daunting chronology. Beginning with the legacy of the Glorious Revolution, Losurdo writes 344 pages that bring the history of liberalism up to the mid-20th century. Geographically, the text is primarily concerned with Britain, its colonies, and the United States, although the Netherlands, France, Germany and to a lesser extent Austria, Italy, Ireland, Spain (and its empire), Brazil, and Haiti figure into the narrative as well. Losurdo argues that liberalism was never really about freedom or democracy. Rather, it served as the ideology of a class and ethnically based “community of the free” who extolled their own liberty while subjugating others through colonial slavery, forced relocations, indifference to human tragedy, and strict legal programmes that carried with them only the oppression of the poor and racism.

This is an important story but it is a story that has already been told ... a fair number of times. Those looking for a new approach to the critical study of liberalism will need to look somewhere else and might, in fact, want to avoid this text. One can congratulate Losurdo on his encyclopedic use of primary sources (particularly west European and American

philosophic treatises and the published correspondence of philosophers and political leaders), but the truth is that there is nothing original in his study. This is the first reason to avoid this text. I cannot comment on the state of historical analysis in Italy (where the author teaches), but the conclusion that supposedly liberal thinkers could also be slaveholders or support authoritarian governments and oppressive class relations is hardly new. Exactly why we need another text to explain something that is already so well known is not clear.

The second reason to avoid this text is that it is frustrating. The translation I am reviewing was published by Verso, a reputable publisher that has produced very good work. *Liberalism* will not be numbered among them. The text is repetitive as the author makes the same point (often citing the same sources) over and over again in chapter after chapter. The footnote references do not always distinguish between the words of a secondary source (from whose work Losurdo draws information) and the philosopher about whom he is speaking. And, most grievously, the author persists in referring to First Peoples as “redskins” (again, over and over). I am confused as to why neither the translator nor publisher corrected this problem.

Third, the text makes at best passing reference to gender. Feminist philosophers or political activists are not discussed (with a couple of small exceptions), nor are the views of liberal thinkers on gender given detailed attention. Losurdo’s concern with exposing the already exposed problematic character of liberal thought, his use of antedated bigoted language, and his neglect of gender as a primary axis of analysis lend *Liberalism* a dated feel, as if one were reading a text from the late 1960s or 1970s.

Finally, Losurdo never directly answers the question with which he began:

“what is liberalism?” Liberals supposedly believe in freedom but it turns out they do not. Liberals supposedly believe in equality but we quickly discover that this is not true. Liberals supposedly support individual autonomy but yet again in other instances they stand completely behind the expansive power of the state. Losurdo’s pantheon of liberals does nothing to clear up definitional confusion. We find out, for example, that just about everyone is a liberal. In addition to the “usual suspects” (for example, Locke, Hume, Smith), Losurdo contends that Burke and de Gobineau are liberals, as is John Calhoun and even the supporters of Mussolini in Fascist Italy. I am no fan of liberalism but with such catchall characterization, it is no wonder that it is difficult to peg down a precise definition or so easy to spot contradictions.

Based on a quick review of on-line discussion, my impression of *Liberalism* is running against a broader chorus of praise. There are a lot of people – particularly political activists – who really like *Liberalism*. A couple of online blogs I read in a moment of reflection as I typed this review were completely laudatory. I find this odd too. Surely the gap between today’s activists and critical historiographic traditions is not so great that the work of a generation of scholars has been forgotten? If this is the case, it certainly does not bode well for either activists or historians. For those people who have been reading (even periodically) the large library of works that emerged out of the “new social history” of the 1960s and 1970s, however, there is no reason to add *Liberalism* to your reading list. It tells an important story, but it tells you a story you already know.

Andrew Nurse

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**Mary Daly, *Welfare*** (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 2011)

THIS CONCISE BOOK of fewer than 200 pages packs a great deal of theory and information within its covers. Daly, professor of sociology at Queen's University Belfast, has published extensively on the changing social policy environment within the United Kingdom and the European Union. But, while her examples in *Welfare* are largely limited to these two sources, with a few glances at the United States, she provides a philosophical and sociological overview that makes this little book the new touchstone for the study of social policy everywhere. Its readability will assure it an important place as a textbook in courses on social policy within a range of disciplines.

Daly traces the history of the concept of "welfare" from the 14th century to the present, demonstrating changing perspectives on what welfare embraces, whose welfare the state and private charities are expected to focus upon, and different types of welfare regimes that have come and gone. She makes a clear separation between "welfare states" and the more general concept of welfare, reminding readers of Richard Titmuss' perspective that fiscal and occupational arrangements are as important to welfare as social programs. Non-state provision of care is also part of what we think of as welfare. Daly tries to demonstrate the links among all of these, though her focus is tilted towards the welfare state.

An important focus of this book is the strong movement in recent decades away from the collectivist notions that underpin support for a "welfare state" both within the state and among theoreticians and practitioners of social policy. Indeed the word "welfare" has fallen out of fashion because some theoreticians believe that it robs recipients of agency while others suggest that it favours the idea of

entitlements without obligations. Daly argues that the words that others wish to substitute for "welfare" are flawed and reflect an individualist emphasis with an overlay of either neo-liberal thinking or simply an emphasis on individual empowerment devoid of the context in which particular individuals make their life choices. To that extent, they reinforce neo-liberal arguments that suggest, against all the research evidence, that state efforts to create greater equality produce a lazy citizenry unwilling to work or invest or participate within communities. As Daly notes, the research evidence suggests that the more equality within a society, the more that people feel a sense of community and join community groups of all kinds. The Scandinavian welfare states have historically had low rates of unemployment and high rates of economic productivity.

She particularly takes on advocates of subjective well-being and happiness, noting that they mute the importance of social and economic inequalities, and make social justice and more equality in the distribution of wealth appear to be unnecessary goals. Ignoring the power relations within societies, and the degree to which corporations determine what jobs and how much employment will be offered at a given time, those who emphasize individual adjustment as the basis for social policy mask the subservience of workers to capitalists. With their shallow exploration of politics and economics, the advocates of empowerment turn the topsy-turvy world that capital creates for labour into a realm of opportunities for subordinate people who can think positively and acquire the skills wanted at the moment by capital.

Daly observes the extent to which not only conservative political parties have embraced neo-liberalism, but with almost equal fervour social democrats, including Tony Blair's former Labour

government. The postwar brand of social democracy in Britain, while accepting the private marketplace as the main organizer of economic life, also assumed that markets left to their own devices did not create social justice. As Asa Briggs argued, the purpose of the welfare state was to modify the workings of the private marketplace by guaranteeing everyone a minimum income, narrowing social insecurities by guaranteeing income for social contingencies such as unemployment and illness, and insuring the best standard of service for everyone in areas where it was agreed that the state should provide services, such as health and education. (59) By contrast, Tony Blair rarely spoke of problems with the private market and the profit motive. Instead, there were problem individuals who made insufficient efforts to fit themselves into the economic system. He wanted the state to help them change their maladjusted work and social habits rather than to change the economic system to accommodate the broad needs and abilities of its various citizens who lacked either capital or richly marketable skills.

Daly compares the ideas of sociologist Anthony Giddens, who influenced Blair's views, with those of an early generation of social democrats. "Supply-side policies offer labour-market training and tax breaks for childcare and pension savings as a quid pro quo of people assuming more responsibilities...The contrast to the classic social democratic philosophy is striking: it saw compensation, redistribution, and demand management as the primary purposes of the welfare state." (78) She notes that in the postwar period, while Keynesian ideas held sway, there was an emphasis on first establishing a range of social programs and then enhancing them to benefit those elements of the population who needed them most.

Daly analyzes the differences among various theorists past and present

regarding the fixedness or variability of human needs, who requires welfare, and the appropriate division among the state, community, family, and market in providing services. She also makes clear the gendered notions of welfare in various societies in various eras, making good use of the work of Jane Lewis, Rianne Mahon, and others who demonstrate that gains during the 1970s and 1980s were made in women's autonomy through changes in the welfare state. While she also mentions the importance of racial and ethnic factors, she largely fails to develop an argument on this issue, or to provide examples.

A shortcoming in *Welfare* is that it ignores labour movements altogether although historically their presence, density, extent of militancy, and degree of political involvement have all been factors in determining the shape of welfare regimes. Daly duly notes Gøsta Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare states as well as the differences among various countries. But while she recognizes the importance of social forces as well as discourses in producing the different types of welfare states, she pays little attention to the social forces that have produced the different kinds of welfare states and the extent to which they have been able to protect post-war victories in the neo-liberal era.

Although Daly is generally perceptive about the threats to programs of benefit to working people and the poor in the age of neo-liberalism, her cautions that the welfare state is not threatened per se sometimes seem questionable. She notes, for example, that "one could read some of the developments in the US around encouraging home ownership and improving lifestyles for the working poor and those on low to medium incomes by increasing borrowing as suggesting the ubiquity of the need to put in place elements of a welfare architecture." (158) In

fact, these suggest the predatory nature of finance capital, which plays a dominating role within today's capitalism, and the selling of consumerism and illusionary economics to marginalized people. Its connection to social entitlements seems only to be that individuals are being told more and more that they have no right to receive aid from the state to compensate the failings of the capitalist system; instead they have to jump in as individuals into an economic architecture controlled by the few for the passive, prescribed participation of the many.

Nonetheless, if Daly's analysis of political economy is not always spot on, it is mostly quite perceptive. The many insights in this book and the distillation of a very broad literature are most welcome. It would have been better if the book looked at all six continents and therefore poor nations along with wealthy ones, but it is the best introductory book on social welfare to date of which I am aware.

*Alvin Finkel*

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**Lex Heerma Vam Voss, Els Hiemstra-Kuperus, and Elise Van Nedeveen Meerkert, eds., *The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650–2000*** (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2010)

IF THERE WERE a contest among recent scholarly publications for the label of "weighty tome," *The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650–2000* would trounce all competitors. At 838 pages, seven centimetres thick, and 4.2 US pounds, the book is anything but a "light read." A product of the International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam), it is an impressive work of comparative historiography. Containing country-specific studies and international comparisons, the volume offers a

comprehensive historical perspective on the international production of cotton and wool textiles during the 1650–2000 period. The chapters in the book are the product of more than 30 scholars, primarily comparative and economic historians by training.

The editors of the volume and organizers of the historical project selected this period because the core industrial transformations of the cotton and wool textile industry are included in these years. These transformations include early industrialization, the maturation of the industry, and the recent processes of de-industrialization, globalization, and spatial reorganization. The nation-state is the unit of analysis in Part I, which consists of 20 chapters about specific nation-states and some empires, ranging from Argentina to the United States of America. These chapters, written by area experts, provide compact overviews of the historical development of the industry in each of the nation-states. The area studies are complemented by nine comparative global chapters that include studies of workers, unions, gender, identity, ethnicity and migration, spatial divisions of labour, global trade, proto-industrialization and working conditions.

Providing a core set of concepts, methodologies, or paradigms is a challenge for any endeavour which brings together diverse scholars dealing with different nation-states and topics. A series of conferences by IISH provided the organizational infrastructure that went into the production of the book. The editors found that a set of common themes emerged from these conferences. First, the scholars involved in the production of the chapters avoided a teleological view about historical development; second, the chapters demonstrate the near-universality of the process of the entrepreneurial search for lowering production costs, which they label as "race to

the bottom,” borrowing the concept from the contemporary critique of globalization. Third, that the bargaining power of textile workers across time and place has been weak.

I will leave it to area specialists to comment upon the specifics of the 20 nation-state/empire chapters. As a sociologist, what I found surprising was the lack of a core set of theoretical concepts and frameworks. Perhaps, as the editors make explicitly clear, the principle of avoiding teleology may also have meant avoiding any theoretical debates about the capitalist world system, the development of underdevelopment, uneven development, accumulation by dispossession, unequal exchange, global commodity chains, regulation theory, mixed modes of production, spatial structure of accumulation, and/or current debates about globalization. Likewise, my review of the index did not find any listing for capitalism, accumulation, rationalization, bureaucratization, or alienation – concepts core to the sociological analysis of industrialization. Fair enough, although many of the core concepts from these macro-theory debates are implicit in both the nation-specific and global-comparative chapters. I would argue that macro-theory is not necessarily teleological, but this is not the time or the place for debates on the philosophy of science.

Like many edited volumes, there is a strong probability that students and scholars will be very selective in their reading. For example, someone doing a study of the impact of restructuring on the gender division of labour in Canada might read only one or two of the chapters. In essence the breadth of the book, which is one of its greatest strengths, is also one of its weaknesses. Why there is a “race to the bottom” or why labour lacks power in the textile sector are questions that would require either several more such volumes or a macro-theory of

society and how it changes. While this volume does not answer these questions, the case studies and comparative chapters will be very useful to scholars who do want to address these issues. I was pleased to find that my library has this book available as an e-book and as such, it is accessible to scholars from diverse disciplines. It is an essential reference, albeit one that will be used very selectively.

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**M. Laetitia Cairoli, *Girls of the Factory: A Year with the Garment Workers of Morocco*** (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2011)

IN 1994–95 LAETITIA CAIROLI conducted ethnographic research among the garment factory “girls” of Fes in Morocco’s Rif Mountains. The workers are universally called “girls” because it signifies that they are virgins, which in the great majority of cases is the case. The Qarawiyin mosque in Fes, established in the 9th century, is a centre of urban Sunni orthodoxy. This does not prevent Cairoli’s subjects and their families from visiting saints’ tombs and seers, like many Moroccans. Cairoli worked for three months in a garment factory in Ben Souda, one of four factory districts the state established outside Fes to encourage export processing. This rare experience for social scientists and labour historians in the Middle East and North Africa has great value in and of itself.

The passage of over 15 years might invalidate at least parts of an ethnography. There have been some changes and will be more. But, the main story is that things are the same, only more so. There were 786 garment factories in 1994–95 employing 95,000 workers. At the time of writing there were 872 garment factories – 60% of them large firms – with

153,010 workers. (237) The apparent precision of the figures is an illusion of official statistics.

Although it never adopted Arab Socialism or any other radical political or economic doctrine, Morocco established a large public sector after gaining independence from France in 1956. State-led development floundered by the late 1970s, just as Western economic growth stalled after the thirty “glorious years” following World War II. Neo-liberal economic policies were imposed on Morocco (and throughout the global South) by the international financial institutions and the US government in the 1980s and 1990s. In response, there were several “IMF riots” in Morocco, including a three-day general strike and riot in Fes in December 1990. King Hassan II’s brutally authoritarian regime introduced some political reforms in 1990–91. But, it also broke the already limited power of labour unions. Thirty textile factories in Fes were permanently shuttered, and a new labour regime was installed. (25)

Morocco’s garment industry is based on unstable subcontracting arrangements. Factory owners import fabric from Europe; workers cut and sew it into garments; the finished goods are re-exported. The largest buyers are in Spain, France, and the UK. As Cairoli’s Arabic tutor and principal male informant explained,

[S]ince the [1990] strikes, we have even more girls working in the factories.... Why? A girl does not strike. A girl is willing to work more than the [8] hours allotted by labor law [without overtime pay]....A girl does not have a skill... So a boss can say to a girl, “Sew today, and then clean up the factory tomorrow.” And if he has wheat at home to clean and work on, he can tell the girl to clean his wheat, clean his house, and then sleep with him, if he wants. (29)

This was largely confirmed by a factory owner who explained,

When men and women do the same thing... there is no question that the man’s performance is better....But.... I –we – all the owners do not hire men...

I myself prefer the lower productivity of women workers to the problems [making demands and refusing to work overtime] that men cause. (38)

Super-exploitation of girls and mostly unmarried young women is “rational” in this labour regime. The main component of value-added in garment-making is semi-skilled labour, except for the fabric cutters. Lower labour costs mean higher profits or – in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, which all have similar labour regimes – the capacity to compete with Asian countries with even lower wages but higher transportation costs.

The Moroccan government does not enforce existing labour legislation. The International Trade Union Confederation’s Annual Survey of Violation of Trade Union Rights for 2011 reports, “The rights of workers to organise and to negotiate with employers are not respected in practice. Union representatives are harassed or dismissed as soon as they are elected. Organising in the export processing zones is very difficult. The right to strike is constantly flouted.” (<http://survey.ituc-csi.org/Morocco.html>) European buyers and governments are complicit in this system because they are aware of these conditions. The United States government is complicit because it concluded a Free Trade Agreement with Morocco in 2004 and rarely enforces its weak labour protection provisions.

This labour regime challenges the family and gender values of the countryside and the urban poor, a topic which occupies a great portion of Cairoli’s attention, especially in Part III of the book where

she reports on conversations and social interactions while visiting the homes of factory girls and their families. The normative ideal is that girls remain at home, except perhaps for attending school, until they marry. Young wives should be largely confined to their husband's or his extended family's home and do housework and raise children, even if they previously worked. Husbands alone should be responsible for supporting of the family. Educated, urban professional women are not subject to these expectations and work outside the home before and after marriage.

The rate of urban unemployment is about 25 per cent and higher among youth. (235) Since many young men do not have stable jobs, and the factory owners do not hire them, they cannot marry until their late thirties. High rates of unemployment and widespread poverty compel girls and young women to seek factory work, which is considered "dirty" and "dishonorable," to support their families.

This entails traveling unsupervised outside their homes and returning at uncertain times. The girls know that their behaviour is anomalous and compensate by affirming their loyalty to what they perceive as Muslim cultural norms. In fact, they behave very differently from their mothers, keep at least some of the money they earn for themselves, speak to strangers on the streets, go on unsupervised shopping trips to central Fes to buy makeup or clothes, and avoid telling their parents where they have been. Families tolerate or pretend they are unaware of this because the girls' meagre pay is essential to the family budget. Some girls have come to believe that they should have the freedom to move about; and some mothers now prefer that their daughters delay marriage and gain experience of the world. (188, 197)

Cairoli's conclusions are not so much outdated as premature. She tells us that despite factory girls' proclaimed loyalty to normative ideals, wage labour, miserable and unsatisfying though it is, has affected their behaviour, and even to some extent their values. The scope and meaning of these changes cannot be assessed less than a generation after young women from this social background began entering the wage labour force. Moreover, the notion that there is a "tradition" and set of "Islamic values" against which "change" can be measured – which both Cairoli and the girls assert – is wrong. "Tradition" has a history and a context that is overlooked in this volume, a common flaw of older styles of ethnography. Just as naively, Cairoli believes that she has "avoided voicing [her] personal reactions" to what she saw or heard. (2) This implies an always false claim to "scientific" objectivity. In fact, one of the qualities that makes the book a compelling and enjoyable read is that, as the back cover blurb says, it is "as much memoir as ethnography."

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**Alpa Shah, *In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India***

(London: Duke University Press 2010; republished New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2011)

THIS VOLUME IS the product of a long-term ethnographic field research in the newly created state of Jharkhand in India. It is an attempt at understanding how contrasting perspectives about indigeneity, creation of a separate state in Jharkhand and the complex political economy of water, jungle and land, co-exist in the area: "what implications



they may hold for transnational debates on indigenous people, rights, and development; and what the unintended consequences of global indigenous rights activism may have for poor, rural indigenous people of Jharkhand, India.” (8)

Interrogating the discourse of indigeneity, the first chapter offers a critical analysis of this transnational discourse, and the engagement of Jharkhandi activists with this idea. The chapter argues that the “concerns of the poorest rural *adivasis* [are] often contradicted and subverted [by] those of well-meaning urban-based middle class, as well as those of local rural elites aspiring to rise up the class hierarchy” (11) and that “the local use of global discourses of indigeneity can reinforce a class system that further marginalizes the poorest people.” (12)

Rooting itself in a historically located analysis of the construction and emergence of the category of the tribes/Scheduled Tribes/*adivasi*, the chapter examines the British and post-colonial policies towards these populations, and sets forth the frame of analysis for the book which demonstrates how the “well-meaning, city-based indigenous rights activists may attempt to reclaim the state for the rural poor, while the rural elites – the descendants of the old landlords – maintain their dominance by intercepting the projects of development and democracy in modern India.” (31–2)

Chapter 2 critically examines the debates centred on the revival of indigenous systems of governance that are being promoted by indigenous rights activists to argue that there may be a conceptual gap between the presumptions of these traditional systems of governance and the bourgeois Western order. The chapter offers a rich ethnographic account of the continuous conflict and negotiation between the secular and sacral through a narrative of complex location

of the *parha* in the socio-economic life of Jharkhand. The author stresses that “the Munda view [of democracy] points to the importance of the notion that indigenous systems of governance are locally significant because they embody an idea of politics which is indivisible from the spiritual realm.” (64) The chapter also stresses that the Munda’s vision of democracy through a sacral polity must be taken as a foundation of an alternative political order.

Chapter 3 analyzes the ‘moral economy’ of the rural elites’ engagement with the state. In doing so the chapter argues that the notions of corruption embedded in the Western premises of the state and civil society activism may be inadequate to examine the process of capture by which the local class hierarchies are reinforced and perpetuated through the mechanisms of participatory development. Poverty, argues the author, must be seen in terms of systematic exclusion and marginalization from the development process. The narrative in this chapter is geared towards describing the process through which the existing rural elite (mainly the *sadans*) appropriate the state developmental resources to perpetuate their dominance in the area, and in turn, partially explains the differential and frankly, marginal engagement of the Munda *adivasis* with the state.

Chapter 4 examines the complex relationship that the *adivasis* have with forests and nature, something that has been instrumentally lionized and essentialized by the activists in Jharkhand. Deconstructing the notion of the eco-savage, this chapter argues that the Mundas’ approach to the environment has always been far more complex than the activists’ promoted notion of nature-love and a context in which man and nature live together in complete harmony. Further, this complexity of the Mundari view of nature is not easily reducible to being

against the modern notion of forests as a resource for exploitation.

Chapter 5 analyzes another dimension of cultural politics in Jharkhand – that of the eco-incarceration of the tribal where-in the tribal is portrayed as rooted in the local ecology, thereby militating against the seasonal migration of tribals for wage labour and to temporarily escape socio-cultural constraints imposed by their environment. The moralizing that this creates in the local contexts paradoxically encourages greater seasonal and other forms of migration for wage labour. Offering a complex narrative of the system of labour contracting prevalent in Jharkhand for centuries, the chapter argues that sites of wage labour to which the *adivasis* migrate from a complex set of spaces of both exploitation as well as of escape “indicative of historically changing relations of power.” (160)

Chapter 6 analyses the Marxist, Maoist and Leninist threads of politics in Jharkhand and argues that the bulwark of support for this brand of politics came from the rural elite because it offers a better protection for their practices of dominance; and not from the poorest sections, as is often argued in the literature. The author argues that these processes are in fact a protection racket to replace the one run by the state. The complex political economy of ‘*naxalism*’ in Jharkhand is alluded to but not dwelt upon in detail. Perhaps, the ethnographic tools used by the study do not lend themselves to such an analysis.

Overall, the volume is an empirically grounded, rich and lively narrative of the multidimensionality of issues in the new Jharkhand state. Interrogating many of the received wisdoms concerning the *adivasis* in general and those in Jharkhand in particular, the volume aspires to rein-vigorate critical thinking about the tribes in India and Jharkhand – many of whom have been essentialized by the global (and

fashionable) discourses on indigeneity, contests over rights, and the developmental process of the modern state. Having said that, it may also be noted that the strengths of the volume also encapsulate its weakness. The political economy of social change in Jharkhand has much to do with the way in which the political process is constituted – often in the name of the *adivasis*, but with little bearing on their location in local dynamics of power, resource contest and ‘development.’ The complex institutional and processual linkages of these dynamics cry out for attention in an otherwise rich ethnography of socioeconomic life in Jharkhand.

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**Franco Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*** (Albany: State University of New York Press 2011)

*PRECARIOUS LIBERATION* is one of the few works that considers South African labour history across the divide of 1994, the year Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) came to power after a decades long liberation struggle. As such, the book emphasizes continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, at least in the realm of labour relations. In particular, Barchiesi remarks upon the “similarities between the work-centered citizenship discourse of the ANC [in power] and the racial state” that preceded it. (61) Yet the ANC’s valorization of wage labour as the path to dignified citizenship rings hollow in the face of “radical labor constituencies, massive poverty, and vast inequalities” besetting the post-apartheid social order, Barchiesi suggests. (61)

Barchiesi’s book emphasizes the paradox that in post-liberation South Africa,

“trade unions had gained significant political and policy influence” (xvi) at the very moment that waged employment began to decline for the black working class. Jobs in the heavily unionized (and militant) metal and engineering sector, for example, declined from 385,000 to 255,000 during the 1990s; privatization and tight state budgets weakened the position of organized municipal workers in the same period. “Community contracting” of services undercut public sector unions while converting the poor into informal entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) unions representing these workers found themselves torn over whether “to contest social policies or manage them in the hope of decent deals for the rank and file.”(159)

Moreover, workers who once fought employers on revolutionary terrain found their unions less able to do battle when “a pro-business stance adopted by a government they voted into power brusquely reversed comfortable narratives of progress.”(237) Like the North American Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) during the 1940s, COSATU discovered that incorporation into a governing coalition and a contractual labour relations regime can undermine shop-floor power.

In neoliberal South Africa, Barchiesi argues, waged work cannot serve as a realm of freedom because “its degraded material conditions are excruciatingly at odds with its persistent idealization in governmental mythology”(199) and traditional leftist teleology. Wage levels, even for the steadily employed, fail to lift workers out of poverty; the social wage has been eroded; and “the casualization of work has slowly undone the gains of three decades of workers’ struggles.”(76) As a consequence the ‘work-citizenship’ nexus preached by both the ANC and COSATU holds less and less meaning for masses of South Africans entering the labour market.

Yet, at the same time, “the deeper waged employment has decayed into a condition of precariousness and immiseration, the more prominent work and job creation have become as governmental responses to social problems,” Barchiesi maintains. (93) *Precarious Liberation* closely examines three dimensions of this sapped “work-citizenship nexus,” (24) the linking of social citizenship to employment and production. He begins with the “official discourse” linking employment with citizenship, suggesting more continuity between racist and liberatory regimes than one might imagine. Second, he looks at how South African trade unions – particularly the ANC-aligned COSATU – inadvertently reproduced the category of work as the primary vehicle of “social redemption”(28) by placing the proletariat at the centre of its revolutionary discourse. This, he claims, marked a radical break from previous forms of African resistance to capitalism, which often had emphasized efforts to blunt proletarianization. Under apartheid Africans “were destined to experience work and citizenship as disconnected and mutually excluding spatial entities.”(41) In response, the liberation movement “elaborated a narrative that placed waged work at the core of resistance and social redemption,” a focus Barchiesi believes ultimately led down a neo-liberal cul-de-sac. (45) Finally, Barchiesi’s detailed ethnographic research among black municipal and industrial workers in Johannesburg and its industrial satellites allows him to consider how workers themselves feel about precarious work in post-apartheid South Africa. Here, he concludes that “workers did not perceive wage employment as a foundation of decent life, but rather endured it with a view to escape.” (25)

Barchiesi thinks of “precariousness” not just as the plight of proletarians in a neo-liberal order, but also “as a condition for strategizing alternative political

possibilities.”(xviii) As such, he seeks to explode what C. Wright Mills once called the “labor metaphysic,” the idea that a wage-earning, stable working class could usher in revolutionary possibilities. Certainly the South African freedom movement and the alliance between black trade unions and the ANC embraced such an analysis. The black trade union movement under apartheid struggled, first and foremost, for recognition of black workers as “employees,” with all the legal and political claims such “social citizenship” rooted in remunerative labour entailed. “The liberation struggle,” Barchiesi observes, “promised to restore work to a dimension of solidarity and self-realization,” not to mention material security. (3) But what can this mean in a post-apartheid economy that suffers 25–30 per cent unemployment? In the face of the neo-liberal economic restructuring and privatization inaugurated by the ANC after 1996, many black workers discovered that “the imagined connections between waged employment, emancipation, and social advancement were no longer obvious.” (8) As Barchiesi puts it, “official imagination has exalted ideal employees as embodiments of civic virtue, but actual workers have become redundant and disposable.” (137)

Unlike many on the South African left, however, Barchiesi refuses to see social developmentalism as a lost alternative to neoliberalism—this too, he says, despite its Keynesian overtones, focuses too much on work and the labour market. Barchiesi suggests that the repository of hope for “the idea that social citizenship could rely on universal, decommodified programs” rested initially on the push for a Basic Income Grant. But this social program never could overcome the valorization of wage work and the ANC’s fear of creating “dependency” among its citizens, and the income grant, despite

backing from the trade unions and the organized left, went nowhere.

In seeking non-workplace based forms of social consciousness, Barchiesi conducted over 200 interviews with black workers. The chapters based on these discussions examine how the precarious working class imagines itself under the new conditions of uncertainty. Because of the historically weak nexus of work and social citizenship in South Africa for black workers, some “elaborate [an] alternative discourse to articulate claims beyond production.”(198) Yet the line between reducing dependence on wage work through “personal initiative”(200) and the bootstrap entrepreneurialism preached by the ANC (and dismissed by Barchiesi) is a thin one indeed.

Barchiesi’s conclusions are not happy ones. If work has lost its capacity to generate an inclusive and liberatory social citizenship, he fears, labourers may look to it instead to “guarantee authority relations based on gender, age, and nationality.”(25) In other words, he asks, will the South African (male) working class settle for patriarchy, household dominion, and xenophobia, discarding the broken promises of human emancipation? Let’s hope not.

Ultimately, *Precarious Liberation* offers a stinging critique of a “left intellectual discourse [that] assumes that seriously degraded jobs can still provide a foundation to progressive social compacts.”(206) Nevertheless, at the risk of sounding like a scold, how far can the South African—or any developmental state, for that matter—“afford to decommodify” the social wage? While Barchiesi offers a trenchant critique of the ANC’s fetishization of work in the face of its actual precariousness, productive labour remains necessary to create wealth, even if one wants to contest the means by which that wealth is distributed. Hence

a developmental program oriented towards job creation may still be a potentially progressive policy. Indeed, it is not always easy to square Barchiesi's views with the fact that a third of his respondents saw job creation as a political priority; other surveys of black workers found that 90 per cent prefer jobs to an expanded welfare state. It is unclear if the "radical community politics" pursued by the unwaged in South Africa's new social movements (service delivery protests, anti-privatization mobilizations, rent strikes, and so on) can pose a viable alternative (243) to traditional labour politics; many of the workers interviewed by Barchiesi remain indifferent or hostile to these movements in any case. How can one, in fact, "place the precariousness of employment, rather than its idealized celebration, at the core of a new grammar of politics?" (247) Despite its provocative analysis, Barchiesi's book does not really offer an answer to this conundrum.

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**Paul Veyne, *Foucault: His Thought, His Character*, trans. Janet Lloyd**  
(Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 2010)

READING VEYNE, now age 82 and Honorary Professor at the Collège de France, is a bit like listening to an elder patriarch hold forth on his favourite subjects. It's not without its charm and much can be learned, if one is prepared to put up with the other things that often accompany such a performance.

The digressions. In a book about Foucault, there is an entire chapter on "the beginnings of Christianity." This is one of Veyne's own areas of expertise, and one that certainly interested Foucault. While Veyne's detour can be read as a demonstration of how the genealogical method

effectively deflates the universalist pretensions of Christianity, Foucault's name isn't mentioned even once in the chapter. This is followed by a long aside on Heidegger. Again, connections could be made, but instead they remain implicit, forcing Veyne, as if suddenly remembering the actual subject of his book, to make the rather awkward transition, "So let us now return to Foucault, our hero." (73)

The dizzying degree of disparate detail. Veyne tells us Foucault was not a relativist, a structuralist, or a nihilist. But he was a nominalist, perhaps a positivist, and a one-time Communist. He was also, in Veyne's estimation, a warrior and Samurai. But above all, Foucault was "a sceptic thinker." (1) Here Veyne is at his best, although it is impossible not to read Veyne's privileging of skepticism in Foucault's thought against Foucault's own arguably greater interest in elaborating a politically useful version of Cynicism in *The Courage of Truth*, his last lectures at the Collège de France. There is also a goldfish in a bowl, Veyne's recurring metaphor for how we are all trapped within discourse (Foucault's "ill-chosen word" [6]), and a cat that shows up at Foucault's apartment and upon which Veyne bestows philosophical significance. Readers will likely identify with Veyne when he declares, "My head is spinning," and this only halfway through the text. (66)

The distinct sense of having heard it all before. *Foucault* is an elaboration of an essay with a long history, one that goes oddly unacknowledged. It first appeared in 1986 in the French periodical *Critique*, although its conclusion – Veyne's recreation of the conversation he had with Foucault about AIDS a few months before the philosopher's death – was edited out. That intimate exchange later appeared with Veyne's permission in Didier Eribon's biography of Foucault, and in 1993 the complete *Critique* piece was

translated into English for the journal *Critical Inquiry*. Veyne cuts and pastes into *Foucault* the conversation with his dying friend, almost as if he's telling it for the first time, which has the effect, at least for this reader, of draining it of the sincerity that made the original so moving.

It's really only in the last chapter that Veyne takes "the risk of being too anecdotal" (140) to offer some of his more personal memories, which is another way of saying that anyone hoping to find a full memoir of Veyne's friendship with Foucault will be disappointed. Veyne remains too committed to elucidating "his thought." And this may not be such a bad thing. A number of Veyne's reflections on Foucault's "character," particularly in relation to sex and gender, give one pause. For instance, Veyne recounts how at a meeting of their cell in the early 1950s Foucault made deliberate use of a feminine homosexual argot to shock Veyne and other comrades into their first awareness of homosexuality within the Parti communiste français (PCF). Veyne reports that 20 years later Foucault "no longer sneered or relayed tittle-tattle. There was nothing at all hysterical about him." (141) What a relief. We can all rest easy now knowing that one of the 20th century's greatest thinkers was no flamer. And what is really behind Veyne relating in some detail the story of having once discovered Foucault, "proud as a peacock," in bed with "a beautiful young woman with an intelligent face"? (139) The ostensible purpose is to demonstrate Foucault's "open-mindedness" and to draw a far-fetched parallel with Nietzsche, but Veyne's own tittle-tattle, now preserved in print, seems rather churlish, especially when compared to Foucault's gracious acknowledgement of Veyne in *The Use of Pleasure*.

Not all of the book's idiosyncrasies can be pinned on Veyne. Some of them surely

stem from the translation into English (the book first appeared in French in 2008). Janet Lloyd is a prominent translator of French work in ancient Greek cultural studies, including some of Veyne's previous work in that field. But she may not have been the wisest choice for a book on Foucault, for she appears not to be overly familiar with the academic discourse on Foucault in the English-speaking world. And so we get clunkers such as "Foucauldism," (51) or more seriously, Foucault as a "specialized intellectual," (76) which misses by a long shot Foucault's notion of the "specific intellectual." But most bizarre is Lloyd's decision to render the notoriously difficult *dispositif* as "the 'set-up'" and in the index as "set-ups," as if such a generic use of the concept actually existed in Foucault's work. (Foucault was always careful to specify *le dispositif de guerre*, *le dispositif disciplinaire*, *le dispositif de sexualité*, etc.) In her translator's note, Lloyd opines that "*dispositif* is usually a hard word to translate, it can mean so many things, depending on the context." (9) True in a general sense, but the context here is clearer than Lloyd realizes, and it includes the essays by Deleuze (1989) and Agamben (2006), both titled "What is an Apparatus?," which, in addition to their interpretive contributions, signal the more accepted if still imperfect English translation of *dispositif*. Greater precision and understanding about this key concept are not likely to emerge from such off-the-wall renderings of *dispositif* as a "set-up." Those interested would do better to consult the 1977 interview, "The Confession of the Flesh," in which Foucault set out quite clearly what he intended by the term.

Two of Veyne's many characterizations of Foucault are particularly pertinent to those with a historical-materialist bent. First, and unsurprising for the author of the much admired essay, "Foucault Revolutionizes History," Veyne insists



Foucault was an “empiricist” who started with “the concrete practices of power” to “establish the material reality of what happened.” (17, 48) If reality could only be comprehended in and through discourse, that discourse remained part of what Veyne usefully designates as the “materiality of incorporeals” in Foucault’s work. (33) Second, in answer to the question about Foucault posed in the chapter title, “Was He the Despair of the Workers’ Movement?,” Veyne argues he was not, pointing to Foucault’s exemplary history as a political militant. At the same time, Veyne is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for the basis of Foucault’s life-long radical political activity. Veyne’s efforts to fold Foucault into some form of liberalism, detectable

in characterizations of Foucault as “this righter of wrongs, this reformer always on the attack, neither a Utopian nor a nihilist, neither a conservative nor a revolutionary,” are unconvincing. (143) Foucault quit the PCF in the mid-1950s, but remained within more of a left milieu than Veyne is willing to seriously consider.

There’s no doubt, this is a strange little book. Still, faced with a choice between Veyne’s eccentric perspectives, which sometimes also take the form of insights, and the many other solemn, all-too-straight introductory texts on Foucault, I recommend Veyne. After such a long and illustrious career, surely Veyne is entitled, following his favourite poet, René Char, to cultivate his “legitimate strangeness.”

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