

NST

Nature, Society, and Thought

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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NST

University of Minnesota
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Nature, Society, and Thought

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a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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Appeal for *NST* Sustainers

Nature, Society, and Thought is about to entered its third year of publication. The comments we have received from our readers indicate that we have been fulfilling their expectations. To maximize the accessibility of the journal, we have kept our subscription rates relatively low. A journal such as ours, however, is heavily dependent on multiuser (library) subscriptions to defray a part of the cost of publication. As many of you are aware, library budgets have been sharply curtailed in recent years. Libraries have also found that new journals often cease publication after a few issues and are therefore hesitant to take on new subscriptions until they are convinced of the lasting character of the journal. In this situation, our income from subscriptions does not yet cover the cost of publication. We have been meeting the publishing deficit by applying revenues from other activities of the Marxist Educational Press. But since these too do not adequately cover the cost of operations we cannot continue this practice without weakening our book publishing and conference programs. We are therefore appealing to our readers to become *NST* sustainers. While we appreciate contributions in any amount, we ask you to consider becoming a regular contributor by pledging a tax-deductible annual contribution of \$100 or more. We shall express our appreciation with a complimentary subscription to *NST*

**Update on MEP Summer School
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 5–12 August 1990**

Worldwide discussions of critical aspects of Marxist theory and their implications for the United States will be surveyed during this week-long summer school under a team of outstanding Marxist scholars, among whom are historian Herbert Aptheker and political scientist Michael Parenti. We are anticipating that the West German philosopher Robert Steigerwald, editor of *Marxistische Blätter*, will accept our invitation to join the team of lecturers. Housing in a convenient air-conditioned dormitory with three meals will be available at a daily rate of \$25.50 (double occupancy—arrival date 4 August. A very limited number of single-occupancy rooms will be available at \$28.50 per day (request early with registrar).

Registration will be limited to seventy-five persons. Reserve your place by sending in your registration fee early: \$150 (\$90 unemployed and low-income seniors) to MEP, University of Minnesota, 215 Ford Hall, 224 Church Street, S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455.

**Korean-U.S. Scholars Interdisciplinary Colloquium
(Pyongyang) and Chinese-U.S. Scholars Meeting and
Study Tour (Beijing and Shanghai), 11–27 June 1990**

The Korean Association of Social Scientists of the Korean People's Democratic Republic (DPRK) and the Marxist Educational-Press will bring together thirty scholars from each country to discuss the application of dialectical materialism to scientific methodology in the various disciplines, problems of socioeconomic development in the DPRK, and the contributions scholars can make to the improvement of Korean-U.S. relations and the removal of obstacles to the reunification of Korea. The one-week stay in the DPRK will include visits to several regions of the country. Persons interested in participating are requested to send a brief vita to

MEP, University of Minnesota, 215 Ford Hall, 224 Church Street, S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455.[]

The trip will also include a one-week study tour in China, four days in Beijing and three days in Shanghai, meeting with Chinese scholars in both cities. In the DPRK, the U.S. participants will be guests of our Korean hosts. The combined cost, which includes air transport from San Francisco (departing 11 June, returning 27 June) and meals and land arrangements in China and trip-cancellation insurance, will be approximately \$2208 (double occupancy in China) \$2430 (single occupancy in China).

1991 Marxist Scholars Conference
Temple University, Philadelphia
14–17 March 1991

The 1991 Marxist Scholars Conference will take place at a time when Marxists are subjected to critical examination positions long-considered to be basic to Marxist social thought. This conference can make important contributions both to the reaffirmation of fundamental Marxist principles and to the identification of weaknesses in theory, method, and practice. Papers and proposals for workshops are welcome from all fields of study.

Send one copy of papers or workshop proposals to each of the following by 15 October 1990:

Professor David Schwartz
Economics Department
Abright College
P.O. Box 15234
Reading, PA 19603

Professor Harold Schwartz
Box 91 Mayo
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Comic Strips As Propaganda: The New Deal Experience

Eugene Dennis Vrana

Many cultural historians and social critics would have us believe a host of assumptions about the entertainment value and innocuous purposes of newspaper comic strips.¹ But a new reading of old newspapers substantiates the view that comic strips have long been an integral part of the editorial line of their host publications and, as in the case of strips appearing in the San Francisco Bay Area during the New Deal era, when strips address current events and issues, they echo or amplify the views of the publisher with the effect, if not the intent, of any prosaic propaganda device. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of strips, headlines, and editorials can also tell us much about corporate control of “mass culture” and “popular art.”

Since 1945, mass culture has often meant cultural forms and values (including the arts) that have been made accessible and affordable to the majority of people in the United States through such media as movies, television, and paperback books. Popular art is a corollary notion that connotes accessible fine arts conveying recognizable popular themes and images. Some analysts have characterized popular art as the democratization of “high” art, while others have viewed it as demeaning fine art and pandering to popular tastes and fads. Regardless of which side one takes in the debate, weight can be given to Gilbert Seldes’s judgment that, “the popular arts in a capitalist society reflect the ethics and practices and mythology of capitalism.”²

The notion that popular art could reflect or advocate bourgeois values seems to have been shared by most strip commentators. The question has been whether such a characterization is the result of the artist’s intent, of popular demand, or dictated by the owners of

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the cultural marketplace in which U.S. artists, including creators of comic strips, have sold their wares. A second issue for debate has been whether evocation and advocacy of bourgeois values is indeed ideological or propagandistic in a capitalist society. Most commentators have paradoxically dismissed comic strips as nonideological while simultaneously describing (with either approval or disapproval) how the strips consistently reinforce the views of the white, male middle class in the United States.³ Such contradictions have been perpetuated by radical cultural historians who, like Warren Susman, have dismissed strips as “surrealistic pop art” and, like most of their more conservative colleagues, have repeatedly failed to place the strips in their newspaper context (a methodological necessity for historians interested in a structural analysis of society) (Susman 1984, xxvii, 282; Dorfman 1983, Dorfman and Mattelhort 1975). Conversely, other critics have taken the strips at face value, reading them as unbiased barometers of popular attitudes and morality. Even Heywood Broun was moved in the 1930s to write that the strips, “whether we like it or not, constitute the proletarian novels of America.”⁴ Although Broun’s judgment is debatable, it is nevertheless true that more people in this country read the comic strips than any other part of the newspaper. This fact, supported by numerous surveys since 1895, has triggered a host of phenomena connected to the strips, including their use to win readers during circulation wars; the compilation of strips into the first comic books before 1910; and the more recent paperback reissue of such strip superstars as Pogo, Peanuts, and Doonesbury.⁵ If anything, this enormous popularity has reinforced scholarly inclinations to methodologically isolate the strips from their newspapers. In a similar vein, other critics have shared Leo Bogart’s opinion that, “the comic strips are experienced as an integral part of the daily newspaper. They have a ritual aspect just as the paper does. They are one of many features which make the newspaper primarily a vehicle of entertainment rather than a vehicle of information” (Bogart 1957, 189–91).

That strips and comic books could, however, function as both entertainment and superior educational devices has not been lost on either governments or publishers. In other words, the propaganda value of allegedly innocuous comic strips has been recognized and exploited for decades.⁶ But even those who, like David Kunzle (1973, 1:1), see the primary purpose of strips as providing people with moral and political propaganda, have come up short in proving

how direct editorial control has been exercised over the strips and how the strips have served their masters (see Brennecke 1924, 665; Kolaja 1953, 74).

To establish patterns of editorial control over comic strips, it is convenient and appropriate to look at the policies and practices of the two largest strip syndicates in the United States before 1945: William Randolph Hearst's King Features Syndicate and the Chicago Tribune-Daily News Syndicate of Captain John Medill Patterson. As *Time* noted in 1946, Hearst and his editors spent "more time over their comic strips than over their editorial pages," and Patterson guided his comics "as cunningly as his anti-Roosevelt campaigns" (*Time* 30 Aug. 1945, 77–78).[

Time's conclusions were drawn from reading Hearst's correspondence with his King Features staff, and from views then prevalent about comic strips and the two syndicates. Even strip historians like Jerry Robinson (1974, 74–81), who deny the ideological function of strips, acknowledge the control exercised by Hearst and Patterson over their strips (see Couperie and Horn 1968, 135). Historically, this control has taken three forms: technical innovation (such as four-color comic pages), placement and promotion of strips (primarily as circulation builders), and the content of strips. Hearst pioneered both the technical and promotional aspects of strip development between 1895 and 1912 during the New York circulation wars (after he left his flagship newspaper in San Francisco, the *Examiner*). Like Patterson in Chicago, Hearst reviewed every strip that appeared in his papers, and often played a pivotal role in introducing new strips and strip themes to his artists. In a 1938 memo to all his editors, Hearst said, "The features are to be *ADDED* to the news, not to be *SUBSTITUTED* for the news."⁷ And during the 1930s, wrote one of Hearst's confidantes and subordinates, "All pages, yes all of them, came under his daily scrutiny" (Coblentz 1952, 252).

Why all this attention to comic strips by these giants of the newspaper industry? As Hearst wrote in 1924 to his son George, who was then running the *Examiner*, only ten percent of the readers read his editorials—but seventy-five percent read "the funnies" (Coblentz 1952, 274). And, as one strip commentator wrote in 1935, speaking of Patterson and his partner, Colonel McCormick, the "No. 1 Administration baiter among U.S. publishers must know that the strip carries his message more effectively than a hundred editorials."⁸

To specifically explore how comic strips and their newspapers lined up on social and political issues, it is appropriate to look at

lined up on social and political issues, it is appropriate to look at two San Francisco papers of the 1933–34 period: the *Examiner*, Hearst's first newspaper, which used strips from his King Features Syndicate; and *The Chronicle*, an independent paper of Republican persuasion that used strips from the Tribune-News and McNaughton syndicates. The years 1933 and 1934 are useful for this study because for millions of people they were dramatic, even traumatic years as the nation struggled to find its way out of the Depression and associated social and political crises. Revolution, rebellion, and repression had their impact on life in the United States through labor unrest and radical activity at home, and the growth of fascism and communism in Europe. If these problems did not actually enter the homes of an overwhelming majority in this country, newspapers did, bringing with them news and opinions about what was happening across the nation and around the world. Although comic strips did not transmit news, they did convey opinions about most things discussed in other sections of the paper, from revolutions to sports and the latest fashions. But it is necessary to limit the discussion here to only a few themes: Depression and the New Deal, Reds and revolution, and foreign wars and dictatorships.⁹

The San Francisco *Examiner* and *Chronicle* shared many assumptions about what was taking place domestically and internationally. This similarity was reflected in nearly identical views in their comic strips. Conversely, where the papers held different or opposing opinions, as on the social impact of the Depression, their strips took the same position as the newspaper in which they appeared—, or offered no opinion at all.

Both papers, for example, argued economic recovery would be hastened by positive thinking. *Examiner* editorials in 1933 cited “confidence and courage” as essential ammunition in the “war against depression, against poverty,” while Orr, *Chronicle*'s syndicated editorial cartoonist, said, “The depression will be over when the upturn comes in the corner of the mouth.”¹⁰ The same theme was echoed in several strips, including *Joe Palooka* (*Chronicle*, 12 March 1933; 22 August 1933), *The Bungles* (3 January 1934; 13 December 1934), *Gasoline Alley* (16 February 1933), and *Dixie Dugan* (4 January 1933; 28 September 1933)—and in the *Examiner*'s *Bringing Up Father* (1 June 1933) and *The Nebbs* (9 January 1933; 3 April 1933). While each of these strips saw prosperity around the corner, it was Rudy Nebb, small town hotel owner, who best articulated the idea during a conversation with Mr. Goldrox, a millionaire:

GOLDROX. What do you think caused all this grief?

NEBB. Gambling—trying to pick dollars out of the sky—inflation.

There was no limit to the value of anything according to some people's opinion and now there is no value to anything according to the same opinion.

GOLDROX What's going to cure all this?

NEBB. To have half the confidence they had in the values will bring it back...credit is confidence and without confidence there can be no credit.

The two papers also perceived political radicals as a serious threat to recovery. Industrial strife was primarily the work of “reds” and “professional agitators” (*Chronicle*, 14 October 1933, 19 February 1934, 12 April 1934, and 18 July 1934; *Examiner* 12 August 1933, 7 April 1934, 16 June 1934, and 9 December 1934). Communists were out to “seize all property in the U.S.” and overthrow the federal government. Although the *Chronicle* (25 June 1934, 20 September 1934) did not second the *Examiner* call to jail and deport all radicals (23 July 1934, 22 October 1934, and 30 October 1934), it did share their characterization by Hearst as largely foreign born and dupes of Bolshevik propaganda. Editorial cartoonists in both publications depicted radicals as stooped, wild-eyed, long-haired, and sometimes with a hooked nose (*Chronicle*, 24 September 1934, 21 April 1934; *Examiner* 7 May 1934, 7 September 1934). The strips mirrored this image most completely in their depiction of revolutionaries in foreign lands, but in two the *Chronicle* strips did deal with the domestic variety: *Joe Palooka* and *Little Joe*. In one *Joe Palooka* episode Joe and Knobby Walsh (Joe's manager) encounter some unemployed men:

FIRST MAN. There's nothin' wrong with this country. We'll all be workin' soon. The boys ain't lost any of the old dough boy spirit.

SECOND MAN. There was a bolsheviki tried et us stirred up.

THIRD MAN. Oh Baby did we handle him.

JOE (later). Golly Knobby, it makes me feel swell t'see how them fellows felt.

KNOBB. Boy—they guys is Americans! (*Chronicle* 12 March 10 September 1934)

The issue of Americanism vs. Radicalism was evoked with greater complexity in *Little Joe* in the *Chronicle*, which began appearing Sundays in October of 1934 during the height of the paper's attack on the gubernatorial candidacy of Upton Sinclair and his "EPIC" program. Editorials, news stories, and editorial cartoons vilified Sinclair for his alleged plans to bring to California "socialism," "collective farms," and a work day so short and a retirement age so low it would amount to putting millions of people on the "public dole" (*Chronicle*, 20 September 1934, 22 September 1934, 15 October 1934, and 1 November 1934; see *Examiner*, 23 October 1934). Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Little Joe, his mother, and Utah (the local sheriff and family protector) are struggling to make ends meet in the face of a meager cattle drive and a threatened bank foreclosure. Their troubles are compounded by a lazy, procrastinating, panhandling squatter who, just two weeks after Sinclair's defeat, comes up with a proposal for a planned community with a three-hour work day and retirement at age 40 with a guaranteed income, and (says the squatter),

where th' downtrodden poor kin form a happy community and grow rich in the sunshine."."." We must share nature's bounty with th' less fortunate—abolish poverty and greed in a brotherhood of man—those as has helps those as ain't.

UTAH. I'm an old man, an' I figger to end my days in what little's left o' th' west I knew and loved—any more talk o' changin' this country is gonna be did to th' music o' six guns.

And the squatter scurried away (*Chronicle*, 18 November 1934).

The strips' view of foreign revolutionaries was also closely tied to editorial opinions on revolution, dictatorship, and U.S. foreign policy. The *Examiner* and the *Chronicle* editorialized that dictatorships by right or left were equally evil and were the result of chaos bred by revolutions and manipulated by self-serving men of socialist or fascist loyalties. The United States, agreed the two papers, should maintain neutrality in European conflicts (*Examiner*, 15 April 1933, 8 January 1934), but should accept political, economic, and military responsibility for what went on in its own hemisphere (*Examiner*, 11 January 1933, 25 July 1933, and 9 September 1933; *Chronicle*, 8 August 1933, 19 February 1934, and 28 November

1934). These two themes prevailed in the comic strips—with only slight variations that reflected the few differences between the papers in which the strips appeared.

Joe Palooka and *Oliver's Adventures* in the *Chronicle*, and *Barney Google* in the *Examiner* all depicted revolutionaries as bloodthirsty men with leaders only out for personal power. These strips attributed revolutions to such subversives—and to poverty and injustice institutionalized by tyranny—and argued that the United States should only intervene in Latin American revolutions. When Joe Palooka, for example, is up to his neck in revolution in Hangoveria, a mythic Eastern European country, he is left to his own devices. But when he is captured by Latin rebels in Libertad (who are led by a general spouting republican rhetoric who really just wants to transfer the national treasury into his own Swiss bank account), Joe is rescued by a warship and the U.S. Marines dispatched with the blessings of Congress and the Ladies Pacifist Society.¹²

In both *Joe Palooka* and *Barney Google* there is a certain ambivalence about dictatorship that is also present in their newspapers. While the *Chronicle* condemned totalitarianism, it also lauded Adolph Hitler for unifying Germany and setting up the labor camps it found analogous to the Civilian Conservation Corps (2 May 1933). It is therefore significant that when Palooka and the Marines left Libertad the military dictatorship remained intact (and in Hangoveria Joe had been instrumental in replacing the oppressive autocracy with a benevolent monarchy) (*Chronicle*, 21 September 1934, 24 September 1934, 16 October 1934). The *Examiner* did not give even cautious praise to Hitler, but it often did urge the suspension of civil liberties for U.S. dissidents it thought threatened national security and stability. *Examiner* editorials also called for direct U.S. economic and political penetration of Latin America (13 August 1934 and 22 October 1934). Both of these themes were present during Barney Google's adventures in fictional Novedad. Through a variety of misadventures Barney lands in the Latin country and is captured by the rebels (whose leader is more interested in wine, women, and pillaging than in winning the revolution). Barney becomes the new rebel leader, storms the palace of the callous tyrant, and establishes himself as dictator. Consciously striking a Napoleonic stance, Barney suspends written law, abolishes taxes, and replaces the revolutionary cabinet with U.S. tourists. The episode comes to an inconclusive end

when Barney is summoned back to the United States to claim an inheritance of a shack and a set of twins in the Arkansas hills.¹³

A common denominator in each of these episodes is the totalitarian character of the established government. In its editorials, the *Chronicle* took this idea a step further to argue that tyranny is a precondition for revolution—an idea that was played out in the paper's strip, *Oliver's Adventures* (3 March 1934 and 12 April 1934). In the spring of 1933, young Oliver travels to the Brazilian coffee plantation owned by his wealthy guardian, Mr. Jackman. Upon their arrival, Oliver and Jackman are confronted by warring "wild Indians" and an army of revolutionaries. Although the Indians must be driven back by force of arms to save the plantation, they are described sympathetically: Oliver asks Perez, the plantation overseer, "Why can't we, by kind treatment, make friends with them, señor?" Perez answers, "It's utterly useless, señor—they hate all whites with an undying hatred, because of former days, when they were cruelly treated by unprincipled rubber explorers." Jackman and Oliver are subsequently captured by the Indians, but are treated well, and Jackman further describes the Indians' plight:

You see son, the early white conquerors of Brazil are responsible for our indian captors' deadly hatred of whites in general—the free roving Indians were reduced from masters to slaves by these tyrants—and then they became hunted victims—until they had no refuge but the virgin wilderness—driven, like hunted animals, to a fierce hatred of all whites. (*Chronicle*, 6 May 1933, 5 June 1933)

Two months later, after a rigorous but healthy stay with the Indians, Oliver and Jackman escape and return to the plantation, where they are immediately surrounded by the "insurrectos" and their leader, "Don Geronimo Navarro, dictator of Brazil and leader of our brave revolutionaries." The rebels have recently arrived from a nearby mine where they murdered the owner and his miners—and now threaten Perez with a similar fate unless he joins their cause. Perez refuses to desert his "friends and benefactors," and the two sides are at a standoff for two months until government troops arrive and drive the rebels into the jungle. Jackman informs Oliver of their next adventure, which appears to be right up the *Chronicles* editorial alley:

JACKMAN. That leaves you and me free to go home, son—to the U.S.—to enlist, to train and transport an army to the front—to go to war—?

OLIVER. War? What War?

JACKMAN. The war on the depression son—the army of the civilian conservation corps—i’ve been appointed supervisor of camp 13, in state forest park—and you’re going to be my assistant. (28 August 1933, 13 February 1933, 21 September 1933, 7 November 1933, and 8 November 1933)

But *Oliver’s Adventures* is dropped from the comic page before they leave Brazil. There is room for speculation on the strip’s demise, but not on its replacement: Dick Tracy, who had begun appearing in the *Chronicle* three months earlier, was moved into Oliver’s Monday-through-Saturday slot—just in the midst of the paper’s editorial campaign against organized crime.¹⁴

The general pattern of convergence between editorials and comic strips becomes even more striking when we look at topics on which the papers held divergent views—as in the case, for example, of assessing the individual and social casualties of the Depression. The *Examiner* (25 May 1934, 23 August 1933, and 26 August 1933) gave little or no editorial space to problems of unemployment, farm foreclosures, poverty, or business instability. Instead, the emphasis was on criticism of New Deal legislation for favoring the lower classes over big business, and for limiting the maximization of profits. It is therefore interesting to note that in *Bringing Up Father* and *The Nebbs*, the only two strips in the paper to specifically mention “the depression,” the central male characters (Jiggs and Rudy) were successful businessmen whose fortunes were virtually unaffected by the economic crisis. The *Chronicle* (13 October and 17 October 1933), on the other hand, gave editorial and news attention to the dislocation and difficulties caused by the Depression, and (at least through most of 1933) supported New Deal legislation for public works projects (which may also explain why the *Chronicle* did not carry *Little Orphan Annie*). Accordingly, all of the major strips that mentioned the Depression, with the exception of *Joe Palooka* had the lead character (or a member of the immediate family) undergo the trials of either business failure, foreclosure, or unemployment: George Bungle lost his business in the 1929 crash

(*Chronicle*, 24 January 1933); Dixie Dugan, a business college graduate, cannot find work (4 January 1933); Uncle Walt's sister (in *Gasoline Alley*) cannot get work, and Uncle John's farm faces foreclosure (16 February and 13 March 1933); and the bank is on the verge of foreclosing on Little Joe's ranch (21 October 1934).

For many, 1934 was indeed a winter of continued social and economic dislocation at home, and of imminent conflagration abroad. It is therefore not surprising that a new breed of hero emerged in this period of such anxiety and turmoil: the superhuman characters of Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, and Mandrake the Magician. These were men who rose above class and mortgage payments to do battle with super-villains—Good against Evil. The message was that normal men and women could not win the final victory against such evils as war, revolution, tyranny, and alien subversion because of their own fallibility and the pervasive power of evil. Just as it is interesting to note the appearance of such heroes, it would be of interest to explore the nature of the challenges and enemies they encountered, and how their mission coincided with goals and targets of their publishers—which is all another story, but one that should be pursued because, as this brief look at comic strips has shown, the comic pages reinforced, directly and indirectly, the ideology of the host newspaper. Within that framework, the strips also reflected ideas and images the editors and publishers believed were shared (or ought to have been shared) by a majority of their readers. That there was such significant correlation of strip and editorial opinions should also caution scholars and critics against isolating any component part of a newspaper, or of any medium or genre of the arts, from its historical and structural context.

Archivist and Research Librarian

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

NOTES

1. Of those who see the strips as entertainment, see Reitberger (1971, 7 and 13); O'Sullivan, (1971, 13); Umphlett (1983, 7–9, Chic Young, creator of *Blondie*, in Robinson (1974, 158);

- Daniels (1971, 4); and White and Abel (1962, 3); and Berchtod (1935, 36).
2. In Rosenberg and White (1957, 82). For these views of mass culture and popular art see Arthur Brodbeck's piece in the same collection (218), and Dwight MacDonald's essay in the same book (60–61, 66).
 3. For the best discussion of chauvinism in the comics, see Horn (1977).
 4. Broun in *The New Republic*, an interpretation supported by the view of Coulton Waugh (1947). It is interesting to note the "ideological generations" of strip commentators: from 1920 to 1950, most saw the propaganda purpose (or effect) of the strips; from 1950 to 1970, the dominant view was the strips were innocent of such design; and since 1970 the focus has been on thematic analysis of the strips, by proponents of both the "propaganda" and "innocuous" schools of thought—but without placing the strips in their context. Recent analysts have also been more prone to take the strips as evidence of popular values and tastes.
 5. The bibliography contains numerous histories, and O'Sullivan includes a handy chronology. Reitberger has a convenient periodization of this history (1971, 27). On the popularity of certain strips, and who read them, see the special issue of the *Journal of Educational Sociology* (December 1944), and Rosenberg and White. In 1934, for example, daily and Sunday newspapers in the United States had a combined circulation of 63 million (*The World Almanac and Book of Facts*: 1936). Using statistics for 1947, Waugh calculated that of newspaper readers, 83 percent of the adult males, 79 percent of the adult females, and 66 percent of children over six read the comic pages (1947, 352). Recognition of their value as circulation-builders is in Wendt (1979, 315 and 403), Berchtold (1935, 35), Tebbel (1952, 120–22 and 151), and Winkler (1953 70).
 6. By World War II both the CIO and the U.S. Armed Forces were making effective use of comic books and strips for educational purposes. And, in 1949, the People's Republic of China used the strips in a similar fashion (Chesneaux 1973).
 7. Coblenz (1952, 259). On editorial control of strips and related operations by Hearst, see Tebbel (1952), Blackbeard and Williams (1977), Winkler (1953), Swanberg (1961), and Robinson

(1974). On the *Tribune*, Patterson, and McCormick, see: Edwards (1971), Wendt (1979), and Galewitz (1974).

8. Berchtold (1935, 35). And none of Patterson's strips received more political notoriety than did the conservative politics of Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie*—which drew liberal fire in *The New Republic* as “Hooverism in the Funnies” (11 July 1934) in 1934, and again as “Fascism in the Funnies” (18 September 1935). Although *Annie* did not appear in the San Francisco papers to be discussed here, it is important to note that several analysts have established how Gray's anti-New Deal stance perfectly mirrored the politics and editorials of McCormick and Patterson in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News* during the 1930s.

Gray infused the strip with disdain and dislike for both organized labor and antitrust activity during the New Deal—both of which were often cited by Daddy Warbucks as barriers to honest work, patriotism, and national recovery. While the most complete thematic analysis of *Annie* is by Lyle Shannon (in Rosenberg and White 1957), a 1979 reissue of Gray's 1931 strips as *Little Orphan Annie in the Great Depression* gives graphic evidence of his conservative views. It is also interesting that Gray's anti-New Deal propagandizing in *Annie* caught the critical attention of *Time* (30 August 1945), *Newsweek* (6 August 1945), and *Scholastic Magazine* (20 May 1940). Similar criticism was raised by Abel (in White and Abel 1963), Daniels (1971), and Perry (in Perry and Aldridge 1971)—who also noted syndicates in general permitted editorializing in the comic strips if it was of a conservative hue). In addition to *Annie*, Patterson helped create and oversee such popular Depression era strips as *The Gumps* (who also commented on the New Deal) and, until his death in 1946, continued to pay close attention to his comic strips” (Galewitz 1974, x; Wendt 1979, 404–06). Just as it was popular for many critics to chastise Gray's conservative propagandizing in *Annie*, many of the same critics scorned the radical politics of *Little Lefty* a strip by Jack Shane and Richard Casimir in the Communist Party's *Daily Worker*, who often directly challenged *Annie*'s deeds and dialogue (Zorbaugh 1944, 201). Most of these commentators have created the impression that *Annie* and *Lefty* were political extremes and

thematic exceptions in the world of the comic page including, the authors of one “definitive” history of the comic strips who argued that the Depression, “upset the American’s world too deeply for him to want to see it in the comics (Couperie and Horn 1968, 173). See also the observation by Allen Saunders, creator of *Mary Worth* and *Steve Roper*, that syndicate editors in the 1930s pressured the artists to abandon Depression era topics for upbeat soap operas (White and Abel 1963, 75).

Creators of other strips cited in this study are: George McManus (*Bringing Up Father*), Sol Hess (*The Nebbs*), Ham Fisher (*Joe Palooka*), Leffinwell (*Little Joe*), Billy DeBeck (*Barney Google*), Frank King (*Gasoline Alley*), R. J. Tuthill (*The Bungles*), J. P. McElvoy and J. H. Striebel (*Dixie Dugan*), Gus Mager (*Oliver’s Adventures*), Alexander Raymond (*Flash Gordon*), Richard Calkins and Phil Nowlan (*Buck Rogers*), Chester Gould (*Dick Tracy*), Phil Davis and Lee Falk (*Mandrake the Magician*)

9. This selection of topics has narrowed the use of strips to those that consistently dealt with these themes, thereby excluding such popular figures as Krazy Kat, Mickey Mouse, and the Katzenjammer Kids. Other popular strips, like *Annie*, are not included because they did not appear in the newspapers used for this study. The scope of this study has also meant excluding topics for which information is readily available, including racism, military preparedness, wealth, and economic nationalism.
10. *Examiner*, 7 March and 4 July 1933; *Chronicle*, 24 May 1933. Citations for strips, headlines, and editorials are samples and not necessarily exhaustive.
11. For another aspect, see *The Bungles* in *The Chronicle* on plans for a kangaroo court to try Bolshevik “red hots” who allegedly burned down George’s lodge (1 August 1934), and on how the Depression turned George’s neighbor into a “bolshevik” (13 April 1933).
12. *Palooka*: *The Chronicle*, 7 April, 6 May, 8 May, and 16 May 1933. It should be noted that Joe was in Libertad during the mounting Cuban crisis, and in Hangoveria when Hitler and the Nazis turned towards Austria.
13. Barney asserted himself when the revolutionary cabinet began to consider taxes and punitive legislation similar to what had

- been enacted by the deposed dictator (*Examiner*, 30 March 1924). After he went to Arkansas, Barney met Snuffy Smith, who soon became the strip's central character.
14. The switch took place 1 November 1933. Tracy's first case was to solve a kidnaping (a crime that occupied *Chronicle* headlines and editorials throughout 1933).

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On the Question of Technological Determinism

Willis H. Truitt

Introduction

This paper is about Marx's theory of history. More particularly, it is about the revival of an old debate over whether or not historical materialism is a form of determinism. The advocates of determinism assert the primacy of technology or the productive forces in the shaping of society as a whole. Their opponents reject determinism for many reasons, some of which I will consider, but do not share a theoretical perspective. The purpose of this paper is to clarify some of the issues being debated and to suggest an alternative interpretation of the problem.

There are two famous passages from Marx that can serve as a point of departure for either side in the debate. Those who subscribe to "technological determinism"—whether they choose this label or it has been ascribed to them by others doesn't matter—quote the "Preface" to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) as decisive in their favor. In fact this passage has become the litany of the determinists:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of the development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that

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determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (Marx and Engels 1969, 503)

Now this seems to be a pretty straightforward claim that social structure, law, politics, and so forth are dictated by the “mode of production” or the level of development of the “material forces of production.” But the opponents of technological determinism can cite a passage from the *Communist Manifesto* which seems to tell a different story about history:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes...new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. (MECW 6: 482–85)

There is no technological determinism mentioned in this characterization of history. What we have is a struggle theory which has led Marxists, including Marx, to say that people make history.

What led Marx to assert these apparently incompatible views of history? Are they incompatible? If they are, then two things follow. First, Marx was a confused and inconsistent thinker. Second, if historical materialism is true, then the debate between technological determinists and those who reject determinism is a very serious matter. One side is right and the other is wrong, and the answer is not to be found in Marx.

What I shall argue is that these two accounts are compatible. This is so because the mode of production encompasses the forces of production and the relations of production as interconnected, interdependent, and interactive. Accordingly, the development of the

forces of production does not solely determine, at all times, social consciousness and elements of the superstructure. This was made plain by Engels in his correspondence with Joseph Bloch, Conrad Schmidt, and Heinz Starkenburg (Marx and Engels 1972). The problem with the interpretations of the determinists is that they involve linear and undialectical conceptions of the movement of history, conceptions that Marx did not share.

The determinists

Let me consider what the determinists believe to be the correct theory. The two main, contemporary advocates of this theory are William H. Shaw and G. A. Cohen. Shaw uses the passage from the "Preface" quoted above to support his interpretation but he also likes the following fragment (Shaw 1979, 155):[

Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist. (MECW 6: 166)

These and several other passages from Marx are proof enough, according to Shaw. "The relations of production," he writes, "comprise the economic structure of society, which in turn shapes the nature of society. The productive forces are not part of the economic structure, but they determine it" (1979, 157; see also Shaw 1978). And the development of technology, so the argument goes, explains the advance of society (Shaw 1979, 158). And, quoting again from Marx, "as men develop their productive faculties, that is, as they live, they develop certain relations with one another and . . . the nature of these relations must necessarily change with the change and growth of their productive forces" (159). Shaw tells us that the point made in the "Preface" is that even though dialectical interplay between the forces and relations of production occurs, the productive forces, over the long run, are determinant of historical change (160). It is obvious, he says, that Marx thought that men change their relations of production to correspond with advances in their productive technologies. G. A. Cohen is a member of a group who call themselves "analytical Marxists,"¹ which, it is claimed, requires them to apply the sophisticated and powerful

tools of logic, mathematics, and model building in clarifying and reconstructing the basic concepts of Marxism. But this reconstruction has led some of them to reject essential Marxist concepts such as dialectical materialism, scientific socialism, the labor theory of value, and the theory of the falling rate of profit. This, in turn, has led some Marxists to conclude that these so-called “analytical Marxists” are not Marxists at all and that they are indistinguishable from bourgeois liberals such as John Rawls (see, for example, Lebowitz 1988). I do not think this is true of G. A. Cohen, although his mechanical conceptual framework surely does, as I shall show, suppress the operation and importance of materialist dialectics.

Cohen’s long book (1978) in support of technological determinism, as skillful, analytic, and elegant as it is, is no more compelling than Shaw’s writings. This is merely because Shaw has said all that needs be said in support of the case. Cohen prefers to use the terms “productive force determinism or the primacy of the productive forces thesis” to characterize his version.

According to Cohen, the productive forces are facilities used by producing agents to make products and include the instruments of production, the raw materials, and labor power (1978, 32). The level of the development of the productive forces he defines as “the maximum to which productivity... would be raised, with existing means and knowledge” (56). Cohen’s primacy of the productive forces thesis tells us that “forces select structures according to their capacity to promote development” (135). This means that the relations of production are to be explained by the level of the development of the productive forces. As the productive forces of society advance, there will come a time when the relations of production no longer fit the advanced productive forces. At this time the “right [and changed] economic structure comes to be in response to the needs of development of the forces” (162). This is the process through which not only the relations of production change to conform to the new configuration of the forces, but, as Marx says, the whole immense superstructure follows suit. Since it is Cohen’s belief that changes in the productive forces initiate changes in the society as a whole, it is evident that he holds that the productive forces develop autonomously. In chapters 9 and 10 this autonomy is given a functional formulation, i.e., the productive forces are said to explain the relations of production functionally. By this Cohen

simply means that the functional requirements necessary for further development of the productive forces dictate changes in the relations of production. I think we can sum up this argument for technological determinism with the following three theses.

First, throughout history, productive forces have tended to grow; by this he means that with expansion of the productive forces there is a corresponding reduction in the amount of labor time spent on the production of goods (Cohen 1978, 55, 134).

Second, the relations of production come into existence and persist during the time in which they promote and are consistent with existing productive forces (171, 134).

Third, institutions and ideologies (the superstructure) persist so long as they initiate, maintain, and legitimate existing productive relations (232).

I will not challenge these theses for the moment, nor will I analyze the peculiar anthropomorphism, or better, animism, implied by Cohen's claim that "forces select structures." Rather, I will leave that to the critics of technological determinism whom we shall now consider; but I will have more to say about these issues below.

The critics of technological determinism

Four major critics of Cohen's version of technological determinism are Richard W. Miller, Andrew Levine, Eric O. Wright, and Joshua Cohen. What I will do is try to summarize their objections, and then I will give my own assessment of Shaw by way of offering an alternative interpretation.

Richard Miller attacks Cohen's "primacy thesis," which holds that the productive forces are virtually autonomous. Marx, he says, held no such thesis in his descriptions of the transition from feudal economy to capitalism, and here he quotes from *Capital*:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. (1978, 1:703)

According to Miller, the crucial changes in the productive forces did not occur autonomously. In Marx's explanations of productive

force development, commercial and political processes are as important as technological improvement.

Wherever we look in Marx's economic histories, the relations of production and the processes they generate play a basic, independent role in explaining changes in productive forces. Marx's one extensive discussion of a technological change in a relatively narrow sense of "technological" is his account of the new reliance on machinery in the Industrial Revolution. There Marx gives approximately equal emphasis to the greater efficiency of machine production and to its advantage to the capitalist, as a means of reducing wages, extending the work day, and instilling labor discipline by destroying bargaining advantages of skilled craftsmen. (Miller 1981, 100)

Miller also finds fault with Cohen's claim that social changes are functionally determined by changes in the forces of production. In fact, Miller claims that Marx shows how changes in the structure and organization of labor such as the reorganization of craft work in factories and the reorganization of agricultural work into large scale, one-crop operations became themselves "productive forces," not at all technological in nature, but clearly distinct from the far narrower conception of productive forces adopted by Cohen (Miller 1981, 102). Marx's concern was to show that changes in work relations, let us say, from guild production in small workshops to manufacture by many craftsmen under one roof, or small farming on independent plots to one-crop farming on large acreage were the dynamism behind the spread of the new economy. And these, although forms of labor power, had more to do with an initiative rooted in the relations of production than in technological improvement. In Miller's citation of Marx, we find this view confirmed:

With regard to the mode of production itself, manufacture, in its strict meaning, is hardly to be distinguished, in its earliest stages, from the handicraft trades of the guilds, otherwise than by the greater number of workers simultaneously employed by one and the individual capital. The workshop of the medieval master craftsmen is simply enlarged. (Miller 1981, 103; see MECW 1:305)

In other words, what Miller is invoking here is what I have called elsewhere the "primacy of labor power" (compare Truitt

1983). In many places, as Miller points out, Marx writes of economic transformation and development in terms of increased production generated by the unification of labor forces, the association of workers in social production, or the productive advances made possible by social combination. It was precisely Marx's point that the productive power of the individual was multiplied many fold by cooperation, a form of social production that lends a new power to the collective masses. This is a power, it should be noted, that also issues in the possibility of the withholding of that power. For Miller and Marx, it would seem,

the question of whether to include work relations among the productive forces is no mere matter of definition. The history of work relations is obviously governed to an enormous extent by the pursuit of social control, labor discipline, and commercial advantage. A general thesis to the effect that the development of the productive forces is the largely autonomous result of the effort to overcome natural scarcity through applying knowledge of physical facts [as Cohen holds] is implausible on the face of it. (Miller 1981, 104)

It is Miller's contention that Marx's general theory of history as well as his specific historical analyses propound a system in which economic structures possess significant causal independence, but within which the development of productive forces, in the narrow sense employed by Cohen, are the principal causes of internal change.

One argument against determinism by Levine and Wright (1980) is that it is quite possible, and indeed of frequent historical occurrence, that the forces of production "select" relations of production which are not optimally suited to enhancing productivity. If this is so, then Cohen's claim that the technology "functionally determines" work relations is "fatally mitigated."² There are many historical counterexamples to the thesis that productive forces determine productive relations which induce greater productive capacity. "Pre-capitalist class relations... can hardly be said to have encouraged the development of productive forces" (Levine and Wright 1980, 55). And the idled productive forces of the "Great Depression" can in no sense be said to have functionally selected optimal production relations say, for example, in the National Socialist *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* or the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps.

Another argument advanced by Levine and Wright has to do with the lack of distinction in Cohen between class interests and class capacities. In deterministically subordinating class capacities to class interest, or better by suggesting that class interest in and of itself will generate the capacities required for the realization of those interests, i.e., political power, Cohen neglects Marx's important distinction between the objective and subjective conditions for revolution and the post-mortem analyses of the revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune. In these analyses, the collapse of progressive political movements is not caused by a confusion of interests, but a deficiency in theory and implementation—an issue of capacities. There can be no doubt that Marx, in some of his writings,

saw the growth of class capacities as a consequence of revolutionary and transformative interests. As capitalism becomes increasingly untenable as an economic system...the proletariat become increasingly capable of transforming capitalist relations of production. This coordination of interests and capacities is achieved, on Marx's account, by the mutual determination of interests and capacities by the development of productive forces. However, many Marxists have come, with good reason, to question this account. Instead of seeing an inexorable growth in the capacity of the working class to struggle against the intensifying irrationality of capitalism, it has been argued that there are systematic processes at work in capitalist society that disorganize the working class, block its capacities and thwart its ability to destroy capitalist relations of production. These processes range from labor market segmentation and the operation of the effects of racial and ethnic divisions on occupational cleavages within the working class, to the effects of the bourgeois legal system and privatized consumerism in advertising. (Levine and Wright 1980, 59)

Such analyses as these do not imply class capitulation but rather invoke the Leninist insistence on the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. What this comes to is the fact that in advanced capitalist societies the relationship between the forces and relations of production is "distorted" by a vast mediating apparatus. In less developed capitalist economies there has not been sufficient time for the creation and deployment of mediating institutions that serve bourgeois interests by reinforcing stability. This is what led Gramsci to

suspect that successful revolutions might very well be carried through in precisely those societies which appear to lack the full complement of technologies which are summed up in the term “objective conditions.” This view is akin to Lenin’s theory of the weakest link and suggests to us that the concrete analysis of concrete conditions bids us to carefully study and grasp the nature of the processes of mediation.

Now it is in this context, I believe, that Levine and Wright bring up the problem of the “fettering of the productive forces.” The traditional Marxist analysis of this problem is that a declining profit rate ultimately leads to a crisis of depletion in accumulated capital, which in turn undermines capital investment, i.e., surplus value shrinks and investment becomes impossible. Accordingly, the decline in the rate of profit saps the investment capital necessary to stimulate advances in productive technology. Levine and Wright find that Cohen has totally abandoned this conventional understanding of the fettering of the productive forces and in so doing has rejected also the labor theory of value. This, if nothing else, should alert us to the possibility that Cohen has departed from what “Marx really meant.” In place of the conventional view of the fettering of the productive forces, Cohen introduces his own argument to the effect that

as long as production remains subject to the capitalist principle, the output-increasing option will tend to be selected and implemented in one way or another.

... Now the consequence of the increasing output which capitalism necessarily favors is increasing consumption. Hence a boundless pursuit of consumption goods is a result of a productive process oriented to exchange-values rather than consumption values. It is the Rockefellers who ensure that the Smiths need to keep up with the Joneses. . . . The productive technology of capitalism begets an unparalleled opportunity for lifting the curse of Adam and liberating men from toil, but the production relations of capitalist economic organization prevent the opportunity from being seized. . . . It brings society to the threshold of abundance and locks the door. For the promise of abundance is not an endless flow of goods, but a sufficiency produced with a minimum of unpleasant exertion. (1978, 306–7)

The objections of Levine and Wright to this version of the fettering-of the forces of production are never made entirely clear. Perhaps

this is because Cohen's account is doubtlessly true. But this may simply mean that "consumerism" is just one additional way in which productive forces are truncated in advanced monopoly capitalism. In at least one significant instance the class of capitalists implicitly accept the conventional theory of fettering which rests on a crisis in accumulation and attendant restrictions on investment: supply-side economics is designed precisely to overcome this structural crisis at the expense of the working classes.

Finally, Levine and Wright want us to believe that any account of social transformation based strictly on technological growth will fail to grasp a new world dynamic. Such an oversimplified account fails to understand the significance of the telecommunications revolution and dramatic improvements in transportation systems that have

made it easier for the bourgeoisie to organize capitalist production globally, producing parts for consumer goods in "world market factories" in the third world. This has meant that it is easier for the bourgeoisie to manipulate national and global divisions within the working class and to isolate technical coordination from direct production. The development of repressive technology has made insurrectionary movements more difficult, particularly in the advanced capitalist world. These and other similar factors do not imply that technological change intrinsically weakens the working class, but they do suggest that there is no simple, monolithic relation between technical change and the growth in the class capacities of the working class. (Levine and Wright 1980, 66)

In other words, even if the working class recognizes that capitalist class relations inhibit productive abundance and rational social development, they may lack the political and organizational capacities to change society. Let us now turn to a third argument against technological determinism.

Joshua Cohen (1983, 257) writes that G. A. Cohen's "image" of history is that of the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith. What G. A. Cohen has done is replace Hegel's "World Spirit on Horseback" and Smith's invisible hand with a steam engine or power lathe. Now this surely was not what Marx had in mind and I doubt that it was G. A. Cohen's image, either. If G. A. Cohen is

advancing determinism, which he avows, it doesn't seem to be of the metaphysical kind suggested by Joshua Cohen (his phrases "forces of production select" is anthropomorphic, not metaphysical). The thrust of the argument here is that technological determinism presupposes a global tendency to progress. Joshua Cohen argues that such progress is only identifiable in the capitalist epoch whereas stagnation and regression are more characteristic of precapitalist societies and other civilizations. He says that

there are no laws of "production in general"."."that is, there are no system transcendent tendencies of productive development." (266)[

I do not wish to defend G. A. Cohen here, but I think that this claim is probably false. But more importantly, it is beside the point. I also believe that Joshua Cohen's criticism can be restated in such a way that it is less global, more to the point, and fits better into the context of G. A. Cohen's thesis. Let us be content to argue that by according the forces of production primacy in the determination of the relations of production specifically, and social forms in general, G. A. Cohen has invested these forces with a reified, self-propelling autonomy which cannot be explained except in terms of some independent, transhistorical, universal, and therefore unempirical motion from within. This may be good science fiction—it conjures up images of robots in command—but it is not good scientific history. In this way the productive forces are removed from their social context. The productive forces do in fact develop over time, and here I disagree with Joshua Cohen, but they cannot be both the consequent and premise of G. A. Cohen's argument. It is a circular argument.

Determinism

Up to now I have summarized the determinist position and the responses of their critics, particularly to G. A. Cohen's "primacy of the productive forces" version. In what follows I will take a critical look at Shaw's version of technological determinism. But first I would like to make a few remarks about the concept of determinism itself.

The traditional meaning of "determinism" is the philosophical thesis which states that for everything that ever happens there are conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen (Taylor 1967, 1:359). Accordingly, I suppose, technological determinism

asserts that for everything that ever happens there are technological conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen. Neither of the works by Shaw and G. A. Cohen seems to fit this conception of determinism. Cohen prefers to call his version the “primacy of the productive forces” thesis. But neither he nor Shaw shrinks from declaring in favor of technological determinism. In any event, these two “determinists” nowhere make it clear what kind of determinism they are advancing. They seem to oppose the idea of “free will,” but do they? Is it a kind of “fatalism”? What precisely is the notion of “causality” with which they are working?—Cohen’s account of “functional explanation” does not give a clue. It is tempting here to introduce the distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions as these bear on the course of historical change. But to do so would carry us far afield and require an unmanageable expansion of this essay.

Nevertheless, it is odd that the issue of determinism in Marx should be brought up at this late stage of the development of Marxist thought. One might even suspect that all these years of academic anti-Marxist indoctrination which teaches that historical materialism is a deterministic system have worked. Of course, Marx was not a determinist, not in the sense just cited. His theory of history was advanced, at least in part, as a refutation of the deterministic theories of classical political economy (the invisible hand) and of the mechanistic political and social theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First Marx, and later Plekhanov, insisted on the distinction between historical materialism, which asserts the efficacy of human intervention, and the liberal tradition, descending from Newtonian, Hobbesian, and Lockean principles, which declares the reality of human liberty but cannot explain its place in a determined universe (compare Truitt 1983). It may be that Cohen and Shaw are arguing in favor of some kind of soft determinism or compatibilism.³ But for a long time I have been uncomfortable with the terminology of “hard and soft determinism and compatibilism.” Determinism means that events and actions *are* determined. To talk about *soft determinism* or *compatibilism* seems to me a confusion or even nonsense. Isn’t it enough to say simply that some events are determined, some actions are not, and leave it at that? Perhaps some of the confusion in the case at hand can be attributed justly to Marx and Engels. They both occasionally used determinist phraseology carelessly—the “Preface” is a good example. Marx might better

have used the terminology of causality, rather than determinism, for undoubtedly what he meant to identify were the primary and decisive causes of events at specific historical stages. In other words, the question that the determinists and their critics have been dealing with in this debate is, to what extent was Marx a technological determinist? I am not persuaded that this question makes any sense because one is not a determinist in degrees; one is either a determinist or not. Marx was not, and this is clear in the account of historical materialism given by him and Engels in *The German Ideology*.⁴

At the heart of any theoretical system is a more or less articulated epistemological standpoint. And unfortunately for Marx the epistemology was never fully fleshed out. Engels's *Anti-Dühring* and Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are not as helpful as one might expect them to be for this deficiency. Even so, the reason that Marx never raises the philosophical problem of determinism in his "mature writings" is not that he implicitly accepts determinism, as Cohen and Shaw appear to assume, but rather that he believed he had solved the problem and dispensed with it in his early "philosophical" research, which deals in part with epistemological issues. By 1849 he wanted to get on to the more urgent task of giving empirical and technical content to his account of the exploitation of labor under capitalism. Marx's early solution is cryptically stated in the "third thesis on Feuerbach."⁵ Here I am going to take considerable liberty in giving an expanded commentary on that passage. If I am not wrong, what Marx is contending is that the environment, including nature, society, and technology, does not simply enclose and directly determine the actions of human subjects, although historical and contextual factors do structure, condition, and limit the actions of people in general. What is unique about the human species arises through the evolution of extraordinary mental capacities. And these capacities must be counted in as part of the "environment," or better, as the environment of the external environment, and as a powerful determining agency exercised through human labor. Such capacities being not "external" to the subject are a character of what Marx calls *Gattungswesen*, i.e., species nature, as distinct from nature. Hence, the external forces (natural and social) that confront human subjects are taken as problems and obstacles to be overcome, as materials to be transformed through labor and as surroundings to be adapted to human requirements through practice.

Marx conceived this relation as a dialectical process in which a segment of nature evolved in the form of human consciousness acquires a power of such great potential that productive abundance is realizable. And one might add today, of such great mastery that it threatens the very physical-chemical environment in which it originated.

In this view, asymmetrical conditioning, i.e., determinism, is the false doctrine of classical materialism. What we are and what we choose to do, although conditioned by natural, historical, and social factors, is not determined in some unalterable sense because these factors are subdued in part through human practice.

The primacy of labor

The question of technological determinism is really no more than the question of whether or not we wish to mark off or characterize the main transitional stages of historical development in terms of their technological achievements as these are related to production. Yet when we assign causal priority to the productive forces, we should remember that the productive forces (the technologies) are human inventions, i.e., they are determined as they determine. Notice this is a conception of reciprocal or dialectical causation and it should be used to distinguish historical and dialectical materialism from other kinds of materialism. Human labor thus creates the very forces that once in existence exercise, for a time, controlling and directing functions of their own. Accordingly, when there are social transitions which can be best understood as being initiated by changes in technology, rather than, for example, in work relations, we do not have an account that is “determinist” in any ordinary sense of “determinism.”

One of the greatest achievements of our evolved mental capacities—as manifested in labor and science, the last of which Marx considered a sophisticated form of labor—is the creation of a technology sufficiently powerful to effect the transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism, even if it did not serve to initiate nascent capital formation. In any case, we can be sure that one of the consequences of this transition was the emergence of new social classes, the largest of which became subordinated to the new technology, adjunctive to it as labor-power in such a way that labor-power itself was turned against the interests of the very people who possessed it. But not inexorably and forever, because the subordinate classes have always and everywhere grasped the nature of exploitation

in one degree or another even when they could conceive no remedy. In other words, the ascendancy of technology represents at the same time the ascendancy of a particular historical class whose rule is not a permanent feature of social reality. What is mistakenly called technological determinism turns out to be an episode of social forces in transition and ultimately the liberation of labor-power from capitalist production relations is achieved through deliberate, collective human action. To characterize social change as the result of changes in the forces of production exclusively is to emphasize only one side of a dialectical movement and to suppress the temporal aspect of the process.

The rather rapid transitions from feudalism to capitalism and in our time from capitalism to socialism are results of what Marx saw as social contradictions—again perhaps a poor choice of terminology, structure different from logical contradictions. Social contradictions are bound up with Marx's notion of mediated opposites and this is no part of formal logic. The seemingly opposite or contradictory analyses of the historical process that we find in Marx's writings, for example in the "Preface" and the *Manifesto* with which I began this paper, and are not to be taken as formally contradictory or logically incompatible. Such passages simply represent different stages in a temporal line of development.

The opposites of a social contradiction are not mutually exclusive . . . if we apply a principle of exclusion to social contradictions we must neglect altogether the notion of "unity of opposition" and interconnection which are [indispensable] for a Marxist interpretation. [Instead, one] must always seek a third element or link that is capable of mediating opposition. This third mediating link might be understood as in a phrase such as "the present mediates the opposition between the past and the future"—in that the present contains elements of the past, while at the same time harboring the germs of future change.

It is time then that forms the unifying interconnection between dialectical contradictions in human social history. The time in which greater social consciousness matures. (Truitt 1983; also compare Vyakkerev 1982)

This is a time in which human opposition to technological and class oppression gathers strength and formulates strategy for a decisive negation which will initiate a transformation in the material and

social circumstances which constrain production and in which labor power will be emancipated. At this moment, active human consciousness is in ascendancy.

When in support of his technological determinist thesis, Shaw (1979, 155) quotes Marx that "The hand-mill gives you a society with a feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with an industrial capitalist," he fails to give any importance to Marx's claim in the same passage that "men change their mode of production." Had he done so it would have opened up the reciprocal connection between people and the machines they build. Put another way, that the hand-mill gives you a feudal lord does not ensure that it also sustains him in political power. Both the hand-mill and the steam-mill are products of human labor and the social organization that reflected the forms of production associated with each was and can be displaced by means of class politics, whether bourgeois or proletarian. Marx was well aware, even in the "Preface," that economic changes are brought about by active human agents. He did not view the forces of production as reified, autonomously self-transforming facilities or institutions.

What I want to emphasize here is the role of labor in the development of the productive forces. Shaw freely admits this role. "The productive forces," he writes, "include human labor power and the means of production. Labor-power is the capacity to labor, the abilities on which one draws in producing something. The instruments with which persons labor and the raw materials on which they work comprise the means of production... [and] are the basic elements of any labor process" (1979, 157). Now if the instruments of production are human inventions, and the raw materials are extracted by means of human labor, then it makes little sense to endow these instruments and materials with powers that would justify a theory of technological determinism. This is so even if technologies exercise a formative influence on work relations. But recall that Miller has persuasively argued that Marx viewed reorganization in work relations as prior to technical advance.

What ought to be stressed here is that the onset of mature capitalism takes place at the crucial moment when the instruments are taken out of the hands of labor and concentrated under private ownership. And the basis of this transfer is class political power. Miller is wrong, I think, to make so much of the priority of the relations of production in the development of productive power, for

that power increased meaningfully only with the advent of machine manufacture. And Marx teaches that the rise of capitalism involves a coincidental interplay of the forces and relations of production, not the dominion of either. Shaw is correct in insisting on the inclusion of labor-power in the forces of production, but their inclusion vitiates his argument for determinism and underscores the fundamentally dialectical character of human economic development. Shaw even writes,

that the technological determinism is a *slight* (my emphasis) misnomer since Marx speaks, in effect, of productive force determinism. More important than the label is the point that for Marx the productive forces include more than the machines or technology in a narrow sense. In fact, labor power, the skills, knowledge, experience, and so on which enable labor to produce, would seem to be the most important of the productive forces. The forces of production are, for Marx, thoroughly human. They are the powers which society has at its command in its continuous struggle with nature, in the ongoing, and distinctly human, activity of material production. Though Marx does hold a technological... determinist thesis about human history. (158)

On the importance of labor, Shaw is quite right. But that his understanding of this importance leads him to believe that Marx was a technological determinist is odd to say the least. What we have here is a theory of collective self-determination. Let me show this with a quote from Marx's correspondence which is a direct answer to the question of determination. He writes, "In developing his productive faculties, i.e., in living, man develops certain inter-relations, and...the nature of these relations necessarily changes with the modification and the growth of the said productive faculties" (letter to Pavel V. Annenkov, 28 Dec. 1846, *MECW* 38:100).⁶ This is dialectical self-determination, not technological determinism. In this same letter Marx states that society is a product of "man's interaction upon man," and that "every productive force is an acquired force," acquired through history (p. 96). In fact, the point of the letter is to refute Proudhon's determinism.

Changes in the forces of production may very well induce changes in the relations of production, but in order to get technological determinism out of this fact one must reify the productive forces, consider them to be an autonomously developing transhistorical

reality independent of human labor, human invention, and human history, or pretend that they somehow simply “appear.” It is clear that Marx never held such a view. The determinists seem to have fetishized technology and would do well to understand this process by turning to Marx’s account of the fetishization of commodities in *Capital* (vol. 1, part 1, ch. 1, sec. 4—any edition).

Even if it is true, as Shaw submits, that Marx thought it obvious that people change their relations of production to accommodate new productive forces, he (Marx) also stresses that it is >f62<people>f61< who change their productive relations and who are also responsible for the technical advances which require such changes. Why this should be called technological determinism is obscure. It seems that determinism is merely being substituted for what Marx meant as an empirical generalization. The primacy of the productive forces thesis means only that once a new set of productive forces is in place, it has the effect of reordering or restructuring society. This is a “causal” thesis, not a determinist one. Causality is conceptually distinct from determinism even though determinism is one, among many, theories of causality. It is not Marx’s. Marx and Engels may have used “determinist-type” language too loosely. And this is probably because it has only been in this century that powerful and sophisticated analyses of causality have become central to philosophy of science. The totality of their work leaves no doubt that they were not determinists in any important sense of the meaning of determinism. This is so even if we admit that at certain stages of social development the relations of production change not as a result of their own momentum, but under pressure from changes in the productive forces.

People may not be fully conscious of all the ways in which their improvements in technology restructure and redefine their work relations. They may only become conscious of the dialectical interplay between the forces and relations of production when the relations begin to block productive potential—this is what Marx thought. But once this idea is grasped, the way to socialism is well marked, and as Marx put it, the transition from human prehistory (when the dynamics of social development are only vaguely known) to human history (at which time the courses of social development are understood and can be applied toward a rational social policy incorporating a just distribution of burdens and benefits among all people) is a possibility. Humanity’s historical ignorance of the causal relations

between productive forces and productive relations, between technology and culture, is not determinism. It merely accentuates a certain lack of human control over social processes.

What is involved in Marx's view of history is a causal chain connecting labor and invention, improvement or alteration of productive forces, adaptation of the social relations of production to changes in the forces of production, and, ultimately, an incompatibility between the relations and forces of production (fettering) at which time social change is necessary to achieve the potential inherent in existing forces and to further advance them. There is nothing deterministic in this scheme. One can easily see that at certain stages of such a continuum, technology plays an overriding formative or conditioning role; at other stages radical human intervention comes to the fore. But lying behind every stage of development and running throughout the entire process we find the content of Marx's social ontology, which is labor itself.

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NOTES

1. Important among these are Jon Elster (1985), John Roemer (1986), and Erik O. Wright. Wright was an early critic of Cohen's determinism.
2. Remember that by "functionally determines," Cohen means selects those relations which optimally meet the requirements of the productive forces (1978, chapter 6).
3. This is Kai Nielsen's interpretation; see Nielsen (1983).
4. Also see Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach and Engels's comments in his 1888 edition.
5. "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that the circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the

the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary “practice” (MECW 5:4).

6. Oddly, Shaw uses part of this passage to support his argument.

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Patterns of Resistance and Social Relations of Production: The Case of Hawaii

Edward D. Beechert

The history of sugar production throughout the world goes to prove that, to make a success of the business it is absolutely necessary, not only to have cheap labor, but that this labor must be under absolute control.

Hawaii Gazette (8 Dec. 1880)

Plantation history has been dominated by the basic character of its labor supply. Sugar plantations have used workers that were racially distinct from both the indigenous population and the plantation power structure, since adequate local supplies were not generally available and “race was a convenient means of controlling labor” (Beckford 1972, 67). Forms of labor control have ranged from slavery to indentured labor. The range of repression varied greatly according to location and historical circumstances. Cuba, for example, in the seventeenth century probably had the most extreme form of chattel slavery. A similar wide range of repression characterized the institution of indentured labor (for Indian indentured experiences see Friginals 1976; Tinker 1974). Most of the plantation economies generated racial ideas which entered the political structure to create superior and inferior racial classifications (Thompson 1975, 115; see Mandle 1978, 10; Mintz 1985; Graves 1988; Saxton 1971).

The distinction to be made between race and ethnicity is largely one of acculturation. Groups identified as racial become, over time, ethnic groups, that is, groups distinguished by common traits or customs which set them apart from other groups. When systems of control are put in place, the defining term is usually *race*,

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conveying the sense of separateness. In Hawaii the term race was coupled to expressions of unassimilability, depravity, and uneducability. Ironically, in Hawaii, the planter group often argued that a particular race had those characteristics needed for a docile, servile labor force. The opponents of immigrant labor inverted these arguments to describe an undesirable population (Beechert 1985, 77–78).

Put briefly, the notion of ethnicity and race as applied to plantation systems tended to follow along the lines of racist concepts so familiar in U.S. history. The problem of labor control and worker response, however, cannot be dealt with in simple sociological terms. The circumstances affecting the social relations of production in plantation systems are so diverse and change so dramatically over relatively short periods of time that one is tempted to make sweeping generalizations. The point was well made by Alan Dawley (1983, 40): “Trouble begins when the whole fluid historical process is squeezed to fit simple sociological models.”

The fluidity of the Hawaiian labor situation, evolving under three distinct forms of government and law, is a good example of this problem. Andrew Lind identified the Hawaiian characteristics of the term race:

[The term race has been] defined . . . by criteria chiefly social and cultural in nature which can therefore appear and be widely recognized, or in some cases also disappear within a single generation. Consequently barriers and distances separating racial groups in Hawaii have shifted markedly from time to time and place to place. (Thompson 1975, 115)

The plantation was a dynamic institution, responding to the changes in the surrounding political economy, the rapidly changing technological conditions of cane sugar production, and changing international conditions which dramatically altered the supply of replacement labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Edgar Thompson characterized the plantation as a “race-making situation,” that is, one in which a labor problem was eventually defined as a race problem (Lind 1982, 130–50).

These rapid changes in the political economy can best be seen in the relations of production. The struggle for job control, which is present in the productive process under capitalism, is the most dialectical of all of the processes of class relations (Marx 1936, 13; Marx 1981, 57–59; Montgomery 1971, 4, 14).

The issue of control over working conditions takes forms other than those of direct conflict. More subtle forms of resistance to exploitation and control are more common or typical of worker responses. Two considerations affected the unfree worker of the indenture contract: penal sanctions and expulsion (loss of job and place). For those not indentured, the possibilities for response were somewhat greater but still limited. The job and a place in the plantation community had more importance than many observers have attached to such employment. For the worker, to be out of work was to court disaster. Unemployment is the ultimate worker's disease.

The patterns of capital investment create a dialectic which produces changes in the attitudes and responses of the worker. Using the rubric of the development of the sugar industry in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Hawaii, we will examine the workers' response to that industrial expansion.

Westerners were struck by two important facts on arriving in early nineteenth-century Hawaii. The abundance of vacant land and the benign climate suggested the great wealth which this combination could produce. Among the many crops considered and experimented with, sugar was one of the leading alternatives. Whatever the crop, labor was a necessary ingredient and the indigenous Hawaiian was thought to be in need of a gainful occupation to replace the "immorally" high level of idleness. Happily, profit and salvation could be combined. Between 1826 and 1850 vigorous attempts were made to convert the Hawaiian commoner into an appropriate, Western-oriented labor force to accompany the conversion of the Hawaiian communal land system into a fee simple, private property status, suitable for capitalist development. The chiefs proclaimed idleness to be a vice and an offense under the rapidly evolving western-style political structure. The crumbling Hawaiian political authority attempted to transform the traditional power of the ruling chiefs, based upon a communal society,¹ into one of wealth accumulation based upon the labor of the Hawaiian commoner. The results were indifferent to say the least.

A survey conducted by the newly installed Western-style government in 1846 revealed the degree of failure of the efforts to convert the commoner into a compliant wage-worker. Reports from all areas of the islands demonstrated the Hawaiian's refusal to work for low

wages. They could be attracted into wage labor for varying periods of time when the offer was attractive enough to persuade them to leave their subsistence activities (Willey 1848). It was this refusal to submit to low wages and the various legal efforts to compel the Hawaiian to work for wages which played a major role in the enactment of an indentured-labor system in 1850, duplicating the experience of other sugar-producing areas of the world. The Masters and Servants Act provided for the signing of labor contracts enforced with penal sanctions. The act, almost incidentally, provided for the importation of indentured workers.²

The initial flurry of sugar planting and the crude efforts to refine sugar slowly dwindled between 1836 and 1861, as the lack of capital and the lack of an adequate market forced a majority of the planters out of business. Spurred by the sudden appearance of a market created by the Civil War in the United States, sugar production expanded rapidly after 1861, from 572 tons in 1861 to 8,865 tons in 1864. This market trend continued with the growth of the Pacific Coast population and became a virtual monopoly market for Hawaiian sugar.

Planters had considerable difficulty in financing the development of land and mills. The semi-arid nature of the available land dictated the building of expensive and massive irrigation systems to ensure the expansion of production. Rapidly changing sugar-refining technology was also expensive. Hawaiian sugar could not meet the Pacific Coast market with the old low-grade cake sugar of earlier years. It was at this point that Honolulu merchant capital entered the picture to finance the expansion of production. Under this influence, plantations were consolidated and improved. A greater uniformity in sugar-production processes accompanied the rising level of efficiency (Taylor 1935).

Up to 1875, labor demands in sugar had been met largely with Hawaiian labor. At that point some two-thirds of the sugar workers were Hawaiian. As the old, traditional economy became more difficult to sustain, given the restricted access to the extended land areas necessary to the old Hawaiian system of subsistence, the peoples' scale of relative values changed accordingly. Wage employment had become a necessity for survival (*Planters Monthly*, 1887, 499, 539). Although there had been much discussion of the "Labor Question" before 1875, much of it was empty rhetoric, designed to ward off demands for higher wages. With the signing

of the Reciprocity Agreement in 1875, the pattern changed dramatically. Admission duty free to the U.S. market meant, in effect, a subsidy of approximately two-and-one-half cents per pound of sugar above the market price (Taylor 1935, 16, 65–66; McClellan 1899, 8).

The evidence of Hawaiian reluctance to accept low wages, which was clear in the 1848 report, was still operative in succeeding years. While the number of Hawaiians working on sugar plantations was remarkably constant in the period 1850 to 1876, the Hawaiians clearly maintained their selective attitudes, much to the dismay and disgust of those perennial experts on labor—the newspaper editors. The Hawaiian refusal to accept low wages was uniformly seen as evidence of “indolence” and ethnic inferiority. Typical of the complaint was the observation of the leading newspaper: “But with rare exceptions, they [Hawaiians] refuse to work on plantations and laugh at the idea. Few are tempted by the wages paid in Honolulu—from \$2 to \$2.50 per day about the docks” (*PCA*, 19 Apr. 1879). Against these views are the facts that the Hawaiians made up more than fifty percent of the plantation work force and that the predominantly Hawaiian longshore force had conducted no less than four recorded strikes in the years between 1867 and 1880. In each case, the newspapers optimistically urged the replacement of the Hawaiians: “The natives will find when too late they have killed the goose that laid the golden egg” (*PCA*, 4 May 1867; 17 July 1869; 19 Apr. 1879; 31 Mar. 1880). This apparently was not sufficient evidence to warrant a change in the stereotype.

The tendency of the Chinese to work out defensive mechanisms was held to be one of their “undesirable” traits. Since Britain and China had combined to prevent the signing of pre-embarkation contracts, the Chinese were arriving as free immigrants (Hawaiian Kingdom 1879, 311–15). “John Chinaman thoroughly understands the principles of trade unions, and the Chinese are not wanting in organizations among themselves to maintain the present price of labor” (*Saturday Press*, 11 Dec. 1880). The ability of the Chinese immigrant to choose alternatives to the penal contract was an effective weapon against the tools of control over the worker.

The dilemma of low prices for sugar in the 1880s, coupled with difficulties in the volume of the labor supply, created an upward pressure on wages. One answer to the dilemma for the planters was to organize. Forming the Kauai Planters Association in 1883,

they resolved to “fix a standard rate of wages of \$17 per month for Chinese day laborers, *shipped [indentured] labor remaining at about the same amount*” (emphasis mine). Hoping to regain control of wages, the new association proposed to institute a system of “certificates” which would detail the employment history of the worker. This was a recurring notion, taking the form of legislation during the period of the Republic—to no avail. The continuing shortage of labor and the hope of expanding production to take advantage of the United States subsidy effectively neutralized such a tactic (*PCA*, 1 Sept. 1883).

The extent to which the Hawaiian government was willing to go to maintain a supply of labor is seen in the instructions to the Hawaiian consul in Hong Kong in 1881.

This Government will do all that lies in its power to prevent any undue influence being brought to bear upon the Chinese immigrants, and to give them every opportunity of finding employment wherever it may best suit them, and at the best wages obtainable.

The point of the letter was to assure the Chinese government that all efforts were being made to put a stop to charges of a “coolie” trade. The minister of foreign affairs assured the consul that the government had been in communication with the Chinese government and had been assured that the Chinese minister would make every effort to

get the Chinese to bring their families with them. . . . It will be the duty of this Government to reciprocate by seeing that the Chinese when they arrive are kindly and fairly treated in every respect. (Hawaiian Kingdom 1881)

Objections from both the United States and from the Honolulu urban community to the continued importation of Chinese workers led to a search for alternative labor supplies. The ideal was to “Europeanize” the work force. As had other sugar producers before them, the Hawaii planters turned to the Atlantic Islands to bring in Portuguese sugar workers, drawing on both the experience of the Azores and Madeira people and the persistent poverty of the Islands. The high cost of Portuguese importation was discouraging, as was the tendency for Portuguese to depart Hawaii soon after arrival.

The use of the indenture contract proved to be a continued point

of opposition to the use of European workers. Advantage was taken of a depression in Norway to bring to Hawaii in 1880 a shipload of Norwegian craftsmen and urban workers under an indenture contract. A literate group of skilled craftsmen, they complained vociferously about the poor conditions and jobs to which they were subjected. Their letters of grievance reached the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which promptly put the letters to work in its campaign against the Hawaiian Reciprocity Treaty. Before long, European newspapers were making headlines about the “slave labor conditions in the Sandwich Islands.”³

The fiasco resulting from the importation of Norwegian workers in 1880 produced a blast of unfavorable publicity on the mainland and in Europe. The reluctance of the European workers to accept the conditions attached to Hawaiian sugar work, whether Portuguese, Norwegian, German, or Spanish, placed a severe restriction on the available numbers of workers. The consequence was an increased pressure to find a numerically sufficient labor supply, regardless of origin. Asia was the only practical prospect.

The fear of the Hawaiian aristocracy about the continuing threat of a loss of sovereignty from the decline of the commoner population and the growing need for cheap and hopefully docile labor combined to produce a solution that would solve both problems. The solution was to find a “cognate race” who could merge with the Hawaiian population and produce a “native” population and at the same time produce an adequate labor supply to relieve the upward pressure on wages. The two goals were often contradictory. For example, the vision of four million Negroes being freed by the Civil War seemed to offer an opportunity to expand the labor supply by as much as twenty thousand. “We could perhaps admit with advantage to ourselves, say 20,000 freed Negroes, pay them the wages and give them the treatment of free men.” The king, however, was adamant in insisting on “an amalgamation with the kindred races of Polynesia, or with industrious farmers, mechanics, and laborers from the U.S. and Europe.” The minister of the interior concluded his dispatch with the observation:

One thing I look forward to as a very serious impending fact and it is this—unless we take opportunely effective measures to secure a supply of *not over-dear labor*, all our best agricultural enterprises will fail. (Hawaiian Kingdom 1862)

After experimenting with various Polynesian and Micronesian imports, the search for labor turned to Japan—the only possible source of significant supplies, given that China and India were either inaccessible or off-limits. Conflicting with this management position was the view of the Hawaiian legislature, which vigorously opposed the importation of labor. In 1880 a severely restrictive Chinese immigration bill was enacted which prohibited the importation of Chinese workers except under an indentured contract and required the expulsion of any Chinese worker not under a current contract. The bill was vetoed by the king as contradicting the government's policy of repopulating the country with a "cognate race" to protect Hawaiian sovereignty (*Hawaiian Gazette*, 24 Aug. 1880).

While the king could block anti-Chinese legislation, and did, he could not control the obvious resentment of the Hawaiian working class toward imported labor. Chinese workers found it more profitable and congenial to work on the growing number of rice plantations or to go into urban work, rather than work on the sugar plantations. Coming as free workers, they could choose among the opportunities. The minister of interior complained of the slowness of the sugar planters to "advance wages and so forced large numbers of Chinese workers into rice culture. This is to be regretted as sugar is more profitable to the nation than rice." Government plans to import five hundred Chinese workers in 1877 were deemed to be useless: "unless more comprehensive and practical views are adopted [by the planters, the laborers] will exchange the cultivation of sugar under task-masters, for the more independent and profitable rice culture" (*Hawaiian Kingdom 1877; Hawaiian Gazette*, 1 Mar. 1877).

The increasing difficulties of recruiting in China and local anti-Chinese attitudes turned the search for a labor supply to the only remaining possibility—Japan. Despite an early unfortunate experience in 1868, the Japanese government was persuaded in 1885 to initiate a system of exporting "surplus" population to Hawaii. The Japanese government set up a quite rigorous and formal system to control the exodus of Japanese workers under a three-year indenture contract (Beechert 1985, 96–97; Conroy 1949, 120; Hawaii, Bureau of Immigration 1886, 283).

The introduction of Japanese workers brought to the industry a new element of control. Unlike the Chinese workers, these laborers arrived with the indenture contract signed in Japan under the supervision of the prefecture officials who selected the immigrants. The

agreement attempted to surround the importation of the Japanese workers with safeguards against the well-known abuses connected with plantation and indentured labor.⁴ Japanese physicians were to be stationed throughout the kingdom. A Japanese inspector of immigrants was to protect against possible abuses. The Japanese consul, of course, had the primary responsibility for safeguarding the emigrant workers. By contrast, Chinese workers had no effective representation in Hawaii.

The evidence suggests that such arrangements in practice left much to be desired. Consuls and inspectors of whatever nationality tended to find indentured workers to be deficient and ungrateful. The inspectors identified with and sided primarily with the employer. Perhaps the greatest difficulty facing the worker was that of the opportunity to file complaints with the proper authority. Leaving work to register a complaint with the local magistrate was an offense in itself if done without permission. The consul and inspector were in distant Honolulu. These factors must be weighed against the restraining influence of official sanctions for abuse of workers. Given the constraints of available alternative sources of labor, growers had to accept limitations on their power lest they be cut off from additional supplies. In a time of rapid expansion of planting, a shortage of labor meant heavy losses. The letters of planters between 1885 and 1900 reveal chronic labor shortages and difficulties in both replacing departing workers and obtaining needed labor for expansion.

In theory the law also required the employer to meet all of the conditions of the contract and forbade the use of corporal punishment, debt peonage, unilateral extension of the contract, reduction in wages, or failure to provide housing and food if specified. Needless to say, in such a system the worker was at a serious disadvantage. Workers brought to the magistrate on charges of "refusing bound service" were subject to jail terms and fines if convicted. Until such fines and trial costs were paid, the worker was confined to prison. In theory, if not in practice, there was no limit other than life to the length of such terms. In practice, such penalties were confined to more modest terms. The persistent shortage of labor placed limits on the utility of long jail terms. Given the high levels of arrest and punishment, it is clear that such punishment did not operate effectively.

Data on desertion suggests that the threat of imprisonment was not an effective tool of control.

TABLE 1. Cases of Deserting and Refusing Bound Service

Year	Number	Workforce	Year	Number	Workforce	%
1876	2000		1888	2,830		18.2
1878	2,478		1890	3,095		17.3
1880	4,476		1892	3,992		19.4
1882	3,454	33.7	1894	3,403		18.0
1884	3,164		1898	5,876		20.6
1886	2,955	20.6	1900	4,335		11.0*

*Six months only

SOURCE: Hawaiian Kingdom, *Reports of the Chief Justice, 1876-1900*, Summary of Civil Cases in District Court. Work force data from Adams (1925, 22-23)

One reason for the ineffectiveness of penal threats was the labor shortage. Planters were quite willing to add to their work force from whatever source. Letters to the factors show constant complaints about the willingness of plantations to hire runaways. This led to repeated demands to require an internal passport which would effectively prevent such hiring.

Unlike many other sugar-producing areas, in Hawaii workers always had the option of working as free day laborers, whether immigrant or citizen. After repeated demands for an internal passport system, a bill was enacted in 1892 but was vetoed. The "free Japanese and Chinese" as the attorney general termed them, continued to plague the job control effort (Beechert 1985, 112). As free day workers, a more normal employee-employer relationship was assumed, allowing the worker the option of withdrawing his labor power. Given the ongoing expansion of production and the chronic shortage of labor, maintaining a skilled, experienced work force was a matter of considerable importance and a source of frequent competition among planters for workers.

Chinese workers, imported to meet the demand of expansion after 1875, quickly took advantage of this option by organizing themselves

into contracting companies through which they undertook various tasks, dividing the work and payment according to their own rules. The government newspaper complained that a shipment of 114 Chinese would have little impact on wages.

They are free immigrants who are under no contract to labor, but are ready to engage in anything. They come in gangs or companies of eight to seventeen, each having its own head or chief. (*Hawaiian Gazette*, 2 June 1875)

This form of labor contracting tended to remove the worker from immediate supervision of the field superintendents. Historically, the low-level supervisor has been responsible for the majority of abuses associated with plantation labor.

A situation was thus created whereby three distinct labor forms could be found at any time: indentured labor under penal compulsion, free day labor able to withdraw at any time for any reason or to be discharged for any reason, and a self-organized gang-labor system contracting their services. Some planters combined all three forms; a handful of plantations refused to use indentured workers.

Given the pressure to expand after 1875 and the frequent uncertainty of labor supply, the plantations had far less flexibility than is frequently assumed in the degree of authority they could exert and certainly were limited in the extent of physical abuse which might have otherwise been available. Worker response to the conditions on the Hawaii plantations were, in turn, limited to individual reactions to personal abuse and sometimes to spontaneous violence or group turmoil. The organization of the work did not offer the possibility of worker organization.

Trying to balance the negative aspects of indentured plantation labor with the positive factors of secure, cash-wage labor is difficult. It is clear from the behavior of the Japanese workers that they frequently complained and even rebelled against abusive treatment and expressed their discontent in the rapid turnover and desertion rate characteristic of the period 1885–1900. Desertions after 1894 were substantially different from those occurring before that date. At issue after 1894 was the sum of money withheld from the workers' wage to ensure his return to Japan. If the desertion occurred within three months of employment, the importing company had to refund their fee, in addition to the wages withheld. The declining

number of indentured workers after 1894 lessened the importance of the desertion rate. The other side of the coin indicates that these workers were remaining in Hawaii as free sugar workers and sending to Japan startling sums of money. Between 1885 and 1894, the volume of money sent to Japan is estimated at 2.5 million yen per year (Okahata 1971, 2:25).

There is little or no evidence of any sense of cohesion or group identity among the different groups of workers. Spontaneous protest and individual response were the primary reaction of the worker. The varying records of plantation managers suggest that many were keenly aware of the negative effects of abusive or coercive methods on production. Others clearly had no understanding of the problem and firmly believed in force and a show of authority. Those plantations were generally associated with a poor record of production and profit. Against the successes of Makee and Grove Farm Plantations on Kauai must be set the dismal performances of Makawao and Lydgate on Maui and Hawaii in the 1880s.

In response to the rapidly growing sentiment against Chinese importation, efforts were made to devise a system whereby Chinese plantation workers would be confined to agricultural work and subject to immediate deportation should they leave such employment. A considerable struggle ensued between those desiring a total ban on Asian labor and those in sugar who needed a continuous supply of cheap labor. The popular sentiment was expressed by one of the leaders of the Hawaiian Anti-Asiatic Union: "We do not say as elsewhere that the Chinese must go, we simply say that Chinese and Japanese must be stopped from coming here any more."⁵

Facing a shortage of labor in 1890, the sugar industry was successful in securing legislation which would permit the importation of what amounted to Chinese serfs, bound to remain at labor on plantations under the threat of instant deportation. Wages were subject to a charge to guarantee the cost of the deportation should the Chinese worker leave agriculture. The constitutional provision which had permitted immigrant workers to remain in Hawaii was thus abrogated. The Hawaii Supreme Court found the provision for instant deportation to be a violation of the Hawaii Constitution since it presumed guilt before the fact by forcing the worker to pay for his deportation without having violated any law. The constitution was promptly amended to allow such a provision. The overthrow of the monarchy

made such concern over constitutional niceties unnecessary. Despite the changes in the law, there were no deportations during the period of the Republic, 1893–98.

The annexation of Hawaii in 1898 and the abolition of the penal contract drastically altered the terms of the labor supply. Torn between a desire to exert greater control over the work force and the importance of gaining permanent entry to the U.S. sugar market, the planters had a hard choice to make. The flood of Chinese workers imported during the period of the Republic (1893–98) had attracted severe criticism from the mainland where anti-Asian sentiment was reaching new heights. The importance of the United States subsidy was never better illustrated than in the decision to cut off the attractions of indentured labor in return for the certainty of the subsidy. The argument was offered, somewhat with hindsight, that more than half of the work force in 1898 was free labor and that the indenture form was no longer essential. Henceforth only two forms of labor would be available—day labor and short- and long-term contracting. The third, unfree element, was now not available to restrain the responses of recalcitrant workers.

Reviewing the generalizations made about labor in the period 1842–98, one can see quite clearly the racism which pervaded the Hawaiian situation. From the reluctance of the Hawaiian to accept substandard conditions was derived the notion of the “innate” indolence of the Hawaiian. Such ethnic stereotypes quickly entered the conventional wisdom of the community and were accepted without question. Each group of workers, in turn, was hailed as the “solution” to the problem of an adequate, low-cost, docile labor supply. Following the Hawaiian, the Chinese worker was the magic worker, to be followed by the Japanese, hailed as a paragon of the docile worker, accepting authority with unquestioning devotion to the master. Each of the European groups was presumed to have cultural or ethnic traits which would make them amenable to strict control and efficient production. Each group in turn was found to be wanting, failing in some respect to meet their employers’ expectations. An example of this stereotyping is to be found in a conclusion drawn by the commissioner of labor:

The Chinaman was the more steady and reliable but less energetic [than the Japanese]...The Japanese represents the radical, the Chinaman the conservative side of oriental civilization....His white employers consider him [the Japanese]

mercurial, superficial and inquisitors in business matters.
(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1905, 34–35)

Within a few years, another U.S. official reporting to Congress added to the list of stereotypes by including the two ultimate groups to be imported to Hawaii: Puerto Ricans and Filipinos. He said

The Porto Rican [sic] was considered very much inferior to all the others until the Filipino was brought in, and it is conceded by all, that the latter is the poorest specimen of man that was ever introduced to the Islands. (U.S. Immigration Commission 1911, 3–4)

The circle was now completed—each of the ethnic groups, without exception, whether Asian or European, had been tested and found wanting.

As the Hawaii sugar planters confronted the new situation of free unbound labor, one must compare their situation with that of other sugar producers. Sugar plantations around the world had displayed remarkably similar attitudes toward workers and systems of control. In almost all cases, workers were from Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and to a limited extent, from the poverty areas of southern Europe, such as Spain and Portugal. In all cases, the labor force was either racially distinct or ethnically identifiable from the managerial class. These were drawn largely from the ruling class or their direct representatives.

One of the more significant ideas of labor control was that of exploiting racial differences. A corollary was to justify rigid control on the basis of racial “inferiorities.” At its optimum, the exploitation of racial differences implies the ability to play one group of workers against others to enable the threat of substitution to act as the coercive device for each of the groups involved. This presumes that the work force can be easily replaced at any given time. The fact is that at no time in Hawaii’s sugar history was this true. Nor for that matter, was it true anywhere else. The disruption of production and the loss of skills were too prohibitive to contemplate. Even in Queensland, where the overwhelming political demand for a “white only” Australia policy demanded the end of Micronesian labor in sugar, numerous exceptions had to be made as sugar producers found reasons why “their” workers could not be deported (Easterby 1933, 10–12).

The realities of labor supply and the costs of importing labor

required making do with whatever was available. Efforts by the plantations in the Hawaii strikes of 1909, 1920, and 1924 proved the use of strikebreakers an expensive, largely futile exercise. There were never sufficient numbers of racially different skilled workers available to replace the massive numbers involved in these strikes.⁶

The global recitation of ethnic deficiencies was a part of the worldwide psychological rationalization of labor exploitation. From the beginnings of racial slavery in the sixteenth century to the present, such rationalizations are important in justifying the exploitation of those who “look different.” An example of the extent to which such rationalization exercises could go is seen in Max Weber, the eminent sociologist, who justified the poor treatment of Polish workers in Prussian sugar beets:

It is not possible for two nationalities with different bodily constitutions, stomachs of different construction, to quite freely compete in one and the same areas. It is not possible for our [Prussian] workers to compete with the Poles. (Weber 1893, 75)

New possibilities opened up for Hawaii’s sugar workers with the beginning of United States control. The most immediate gain was the abrogation of all indenture contracts as of 14 June 1900. Little else was gained. The U.S. Supreme Court soon ruled that the Constitution did not follow the flag. Protections such as the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments were not available in Hawaii.⁷ In reality, the protection of U.S. legal institutions was not significant, given the difficulty of worker access to such remedies. However, the absence of any penal recourse made the coercive efforts of the planters more difficult and less certain.

The almost immediate use of organized strikes by the Japanese workers, now the dominant work force, presented a new challenge to the planters. Organized in a largely informal organization, the Hawaii Sugar Planters Association (HSPA), the planters were soon forced to adopt a more formal and disciplined approach to deal with the disconcerting militancy of the Japanese. Strikes in 1903, 1904, and 1905 demonstrated an unsuspected ability on the part of the Japanese to organize and to take concerted action.

The uncertainty about immigration policy after annexation sharply cut into Japanese immigration. In the first year after annexation,

there was a net loss of 3,490 Japanese workers, largely to California agriculture.⁸

The militancy of the workers climaxed in 1905 when the abuse of a worker by a field superintendent at Lahaina produced a riot and an attack by armed deputies, resulting in the death of a worker. Alarmed by the militancy of the workers, the governor called out the militia and the U.S. Army sent a squad of Signal Corps troops, even though the manager had made several important concessions, including the dismissal of the foreman (Wakukawa 1838, 133–34; *PCA*, 22, and 23 Sept. 1905; Report of the Governor 1905, 64–65).

The unity of the employers was solidified largely through strike actions such as those in 1909 and 1920. These strikes were concerned not only with economic issues, but important community and social issues of dignity as well. Issues of camp sanitation, decent housing, and the quality of supervision were as important as demands like the abolition of racial pay scales and adequate wages. On all of these issues, the workers made major gains and forced significant concessions from the planters. This occurred despite the use of the old U.S. technique of jailing the strike leadership on a variety of charges revolving around “sedition.” The planters firmly believed that the plantation worker was incapable of acting on his own initiative and without leadership would be easy prey.

The strike of 1920 objectively transformed the organization and control of the sugar industry. The increasing financial control by factors over the individual plantations converted the trustees of the HSPA into a board wearing two hats—one as the trustee for the industry and one for the individual factors, now representing their wholly owned sugar companies. The gap between the two hats was narrowing and would eventually vanish in the strike of 1924.

Despite a deep belief by management that an ethnically diverse work force would serve to prevent collaboration, the two major elements of the work force demonstrated the ability to come together in the strike of 1920. With all of the difficulties imposed by language and culture and the intensive countereffort of the HSPA, the Filipino and Japanese labor organizations forged an elementary unity. Despite a highly coordinated espionage and agent-provocateur effort, the two disparate organizations held out for six months—until meager funds ran out (Beechert 1985, 201–8; Reinecke 1963, 87–136).

That the style of organization differed radically between the two groups demonstrated only the differences in cultural approach.

Expressed in different modes, both groups displayed a high degree of working-class unity. The degree of cooperation was inhibited only by the fact that labor organizations had no legal sanction in territorial or U.S. law at that time, and the workers' organizations possessed severely limited financial resources. They had not only to struggle against the employer, united and well-financed, but against the political and judicial system as well. The specter of racial cooperation shocked the industry into massive changes and reorganization in order to maintain labor control. Just as in the period of indenture, the pressure to produce limited the severity of the employers' reaction, so too in this later period the lure of the subsidy dictated some adjustment in the labor system which would provide a maximum of control over the wage level without affecting the labor supply or harming production.

Borrowing a leaf from the notebook of mainland industry, the Hawaii planters organized a program of welfare capitalism following the 1920 strike. The success of the workers in resisting the combined attack of the planters and the territorial government was an object lesson to the industry. Massive changes were put into effect. Shifting from closely supervised day labor to short and long term contracts for cultivating, irrigating, and harvesting, the industry hoped to reduce the group cohesiveness, and, hopefully, the militancy displayed in the dual ethnic strike.

The results were mixed. The Japanese were effectively dealt with by converting them to contractors and by their steady exodus from the industry. With none coming as replacements, the Japanese were quickly displaced as the dominant element in the work force. The planters met their needs during the continuing expansion of the 1920s with a sharp increase in the number of Filipinos. For these largely single workers, the improvements in camp welfare and housing were minimal. What was not noticed to any extent was the fact that the number of married Filipinos was increasing sharply. Further, even the single workers expected more community facilities, rather than the bare-bones camps. As had been the case with the Japanese, the altered perspective of the Filipino worker generated new pressures on the work situation.

The 1924 strike came as a serious blow to the elaborate welfare programs undertaken after the 1920 strike. Despite the disorganization of the Filipino organization, the strike nonetheless had a greater

impact on the industry than any of the earlier organized strikes. The 1924 strike came closer to being industry-wide than any of the previous strikes. It was the first strike to move throughout the islands, lasting over seven months. There is some evidence to suggest that the Japanese, although not participating in any overt manner, did contribute significant support by supplying money and food to various groups of strikers. The Japanese of Kohala and Kona contributed significantly to the Filipino effort on the island of Hawaii. Similar efforts seem to have been made on Maui.

The greatest impact of the strike is seen in the organization of the HSPA. The employer offensive was, unlike the earlier strikes, entirely conducted by the central organization, with a massive effort made to use police and judicial powers to break the strike at the earliest point. The frustration of the HSPA executives is apparent in their memos, demanding that plantations furnish the central office with advance warnings of meetings of the Filipinos so that they could be arrested. One agent wrote the manager of Oloa Sugar Company about the situation:

The police at this time are prepared to jail a large number of men and are arresting the Filipinos on the slightest indications of wrong doing, and that is why they are so anxious to have everything reported to them which occurs on the plantations so that they can act promptly. The police have forbidden any of the strikers to hold meetings in town or elsewhere, and if they can catch any of these men in the act of holding meetings they are anxious to do so, so as to arrest them. (C. Brewer and Company 1925)

The shock generated by the failure of the elaborate program of welfare capitalism pushed the industry to examine its operation. A. H. Young, Inc. was hired to conduct an intensive examination of the industry with a view to eliminating the conditions which had produced two severe strikes in four years.⁹

The survey noted the inefficiency of the ten- and twelve-hour days, recommending eight-hour shifts in the mill. The poor quality of field supervision came in for a major share of the blame for labor disputes. In general, the report found a contradiction between the welfare programs and the day-to-day operation of the plantations. The centralized control operated only in time of crisis. For

the daily conduct of the plantation, the individual manager still had a great deal of leeway. This made for great variations in the quality of the work experience. Most of the suggestions were shrugged off as unrealistic and too radical. Expanding production and improving efficiency were considered more important.

There were available to workers more subtle forms of resistance in the struggle over control of the work process. As the industry entered the decade of the 1920s, both the methods of production and the efforts to control the work force became much more sophisticated. A few examples will illustrate the process.

In the strike of 1920, workers on the outer islands voted to continue working and to contribute to the support of the Japanese workers in Oahu. In at least one case, this resulted in a sharp change in the employment policies of at least one plantation. The Japanese workers at Grove Farm approached the manager with the demand that a list of Japanese workers who had agreed to contribute a portion of their pay to the strikers be fired from the plantation because they had failed to pay their assessment. If the defaulting workers were not fired, all of the Japanese workers would quit. The manager reluctantly informed the owner that he had no choice, fearing to lose so many valuable workers. To replace the fired workers, the plantation was forced to break its boycott of Filipino workers.

A less dramatic example concerns the rapid mechanization of plantation tasks, particularly in cultivating, which accelerated in the early 1920s. A disagreeable task was the spreading of guano fertilizer on young cane. Traditionally this was done by hand casting. Ewa plantation, encountering difficulty in finding workers who would accept the assignment, devised a mechanical spreader. The manager at Kohala plantation questioned the need to invest in such machinery, pointing out they had no trouble obtaining workers to do the hand spreading. The manager at Kohala observed that citizen workers at Ewa had many alternatives to employment at Ewa, whereas workers at Kohala had few viable options. Before long, mechanical spreading was the common practice. The point to note here is that more than a question of saving labor costs was involved. Clearly mechanical spreading involved the expenditure of capital and was not shown to be saving in labor costs. It eased a labor shortage which took the form of resistance to the task.

The ability of the worker to resist surrendering control over the work process is illustrated in a variety of ways. Many are subtle and nonconfrontational. They nonetheless limit the ability of the employer to exert full control over the work process. One such example is found in the drive to meet several problems in cane harvesting. Cutting and loading cane were both onerous and labor intensive processes. A long search, extending from the 1880s, for mechanical means of dealing with these two tasks had occupied sugar growers in many areas other than Hawaii.¹⁰

In the decade of the 1920s, Hawaii succeeded in developing mechanical loading devices to replace the "hapai-koe" work which had been done primarily by husband-and-wife teams, often assisted by their children. In addition to the loss in earnings, there was a resentment of displacement by machines. Spurring that search was the realization that Japanese were no longer available. Fearing that the Filipino replacements were too small physically to accomplish the work, the drive to develop mechanical devices was accelerated. The first machines involved bundling the cane in preparation for its lifting by cranes. The loaders were put to this much lighter physical task. To the dismay of the Hawaii growers there was frequent refusal by the loaders to accept this task. Not until the pay scale was adjusted to produce income similar to loading under piece-work rates was the objection overcome.

This type of resistance has often been noted as an obstacle to mechanization. The social construction of skill has generally been ignored in discussions of mechanization. Opposition is seen as an example of Luddism, simple-minded fear of machines which leads to smashing (Wood 1982, 17). The question of whether a job or task is skilled is frequently a matter of management decision and can be seen as a means of attempting to cope with worker resistance. Piecemeal mechanization leads to many complications in the production process. The supporting mechanisms are slower to develop than the actual machine process. The problem of introducing mechanical solutions to cultivating and harvesting problems is the difficulty of adjusting the sequential process of sugar production to changes in one area. Worker fear of displacement as well as resentment of loss of status have worked as major obstacles to be overcome (Rosenberg 1969, 1982).

A part of the problem in describing these work processes and worker reaction stems from the fact that work is seldom defined in terms other than pay, hours, difficulties, etc. Little or no attention

is given to the consideration of work as a social process. The evidence of folk literature indicates clearly that work has an important social worth, and societies generally place a central importance on the necessity of work. Modern social science has long since departed from the path laid out by Smith, Ricardo, and Marx, whose studies focussed on the central role of work. "Economists have disregarded the notion of work as a cultural and social value" (Wallman 1979, 367).

The depression of 1930 brought the final changes to the work situation on Hawaii's plantations. Federal regulations governing the payment of subsidies and quotas for sugar production required compliance with a wide variety of federal statutes such as the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and Social Security. Henceforth, questions of control over the work process had to be considered in the context of these controlling statutes. What had been a dual situation of employee-management relationship became a tripartite affair. The participation of the federal government reached into the most minute areas of the work situation. Housing and perquisites, which had long since been converted into a means of worker control from a necessity occasioned by the isolation of the plantation, were now regulated by a variety of statutes, not the least of which was the tax liability incurred by the inclusion of perquisites in the wage.

As early as 1939 the industry was seeking to establish the job classification that would simplify the complex job structure of the industry. There were no less than 357 different job descriptions in use in Hawaii's industry (HSPA 1939, 12-13). The pressure of union organization and the development of industry-wide collective bargaining transformed the work relationships which had evolved historically into a much more bureaucratic process over which the worker now exercised job control through a voice in the collective bargaining process. In the instance of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, that is a very direct voice.

Conclusion

From the indentured worker in 1850 who ran away from the penal contract, to the union member who files a grievance under the sugar contract, the worker has not been without some means of bringing pressure to bear on the work situation. The noisy complaints

of the planter objecting to the behavior of workers in demanding higher wages and better working conditions is sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of the resistance of workers to abusive conditions. Given the circumstances of Hawaiian production, the workers achieved a higher degree of control of the conditions of work, within the limitation of not leaving the job. The turnover of approximately one-third annually suggests both that the opportunity to escape into other occupations was available and that this turnover exerted on the planter a constant pressure to conserve his work force. Perhaps one of the most effective tools to control abuse of the worker is to be found in the complaint of one planter who advocated “the introduction of East India laborers in large numbers, *if* it can be done without too much expense and without political considerations on the ground that this class of immigrant will prove an *offset* to Chinese labor in this country” (*Hawaiian Gazette*, 8 Dec. 1880).

When the historical conditions permitted, Hawaiian sugar workers turned immediately to classic labor organizing, albeit along ethnic lines. Given the level of communication available to them, the lack of experience with trade unions, and the degree of political and economic control of the planter class, the levels of achievement were remarkable. The ultimate transformation of sugar agriculture in Hawaii into an industrial type operation brought the benefits of mass organization to a unique class of agricultural workers.

That success is now threatened by circumstances from abroad and beyond the political or economic power of either the sugar companies or the worker organization—the chaotic conditions of the world sugar market and the political pressure of industrial sugar users to avail themselves of cheap world prices.

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NOTES

1. The term communal is used here to indicate the relationship of the commoner in the Hawaiian community. The chiefly system depended upon a distribution of the land to subordinate chiefs,

- who, in turn, made it available to commoners. The commoners' principle attachment was to their extended families and particular 'ohanas.' See Handy and Handy (1972, 287).
2. Hawaiian Kingdom, *Penal Code* 1850, sections 1–21. Reenacted in Hawaiian Kingdom, *Civil Code* 1859, sections 1417–26.
 3. Hawaiian Kingdom (1882a, 1882b). For Swedish reaction, see Hawaiian Kingdom (1882c); for Great Britain, see Hawaiian Kingdom (1882d).
 4. Masters and Servants Act, 21 June 1850. *Penal Code* 1850, 170–76. It was amended in 1859, 1869, 1872, 1876, 1880, 1882, 1886, 1892, and 1894, and invalidated by annexation on 14 June 1900.
 5. Much of the impetus for a complete ban on immigrant labor came from the Portuguese urban community, supported by some of the urban press (Kuykendall 1968, 3:176–78).
 6. The plantations created a loss-sharing formula in the 1909 strike where by struck plantations were paid for the lost production by a tax on the tonnage of nonstruck plantations. The losses in each case outweighed the production of the strikebreakers. Nonstruck plantations were unable to obtain sufficient labor to effectively harvest crops, as labor was diverted to the struck plantations (Beechert 1985, 173–74).
 7. *Hawaii v. Mankichi*, 190 U.S. 197 (1903). Neither the Newlands Resolution of annexation nor the Organic Act of 1900 “had seemed to incorporate the Hawaiian Islands in the United States.” The Bill of Rights was not applicable to Hawaii.
 8. The governor reported that “all plantation stocks have fallen owing to the uncertainty of the labor supply” (Report of the Governor, Territory of Hawaii 1901, 63).
 9. Beechert 1985, 244–45. The survey surfaced during the strike of 1937. The executive director of the HSPA was struck by the fact that the demands of the workers were almost identical with many of the recommendations of the 1926 survey. He observed, “What seemed too radical in 1926 has now become commonplace and in many cases required by law.”
 10. Mechanization of field work became a major goal of the association during the decade of the 1920s and became an imperative after 1934 when the Philippines were cut off as a source of labor (Beechert 1988, 131–33).

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Labor and Antislavery: Reflections on the Literature

Herbert Shapiro

The question of the relationship between the struggle for Black freedom and the strivings of labor is one that runs through the course of U.S. history. At issue is the matter of uncovering the historical roots of the Black-white alliance having the potential to transform society. Involved are fundamental questions of power and how power relationships are altered, and it is therefore not surprising that various influential scholars have stressed elements of rivalry and competition in relations between Blacks and poor whites. Such a stress, for example, is one of the flaws marring Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*. Myrdal contended that upper-class whites were "the Negro's friend—or the one who is least unfriendly" and that poor whites were the "interested party" in maintaining economic discrimination against Blacks (1964, 69, 598).

Apart from the evolutionary War, the period of antislavery struggle is the great era of radical transformation in U.S. history. To define more accurately what has been the substance of our democratic heritage it is important to understand the interaction between abolition and the labor movement. How was the working class able to respond to the very complex challenge of having to confront Northern employers, who sometimes voiced antislavery sentiments, while living in a nation in which the plantation owners were the most powerful force for reaction? The years of the antislavery struggle formed a bridge between an earlier artisan, small-entrepreneur society and the United States of large-scale industrial capitalism. What does the experience of those critical years say about the prospects for an interracial response to the new lords of

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industry and finance?

Much has been written on the question of labor and antislavery, but some of the answers have been simplistic and vital evidence has only quite recently been made available. The ideas of various individuals have been viewed as though frozen in time and particular statements taken out of the context of evolving reactions to the slavery question. Neither the labor movement nor the forces of abolition were monolithic entities and we have the task of estimating the impact of views that engage our attention. Still, the evidence we do have points to some definite conclusions as well as indicating areas for further inquiry. What is rather clear is that though there were serious problems in linking labor to the organized abolitionist movement, the labor movement, over time, was increasingly drawn to an antislavery position and that indeed without the participation of white labor it is difficult to see how antislavery could ever have become politically relevant. Those who contend that poor whites were the segment of Northern population most hostile to Blacks and to abolitionism are simply wrong. And it is also to be noted that Black leaders were often responsive to labor concerns and appealed for working-class support against the slaveholders. The evidence suggests that the antislavery cause was an essential part of a maturing process that prepared labor for future battles with capital.

The international context is helpful on the point of demonstrating that white workers could be won to the cause of abolition, even as they did not forget their resentments against propertied individuals who identified with antislavery. The case of England is particularly illustrative. Patricia Hollis has argued that it was not surprising that English abolitionists "should arouse first the suspicion and then the hostility of working-class radicals." Finding the roots of the problem in the bourgeois desire for control of the poor, Hollis argues: "Working class radicals believed that emancipation was both a species of moral humbug and an extension of economic exploitation for both black and white." Generalizing from a confrontation at one public meeting she contends: "Breaking up an anti-slavery meeting had become a statement of class consciousness by working-class radicals." But Hollis argues from too narrow a base of evidence and wavers between identifying the Tory radical Richard Oastler as an abolitionist and as one of those who led the attack on the antislavery campaign (1980, 299, 302, 309–11). There is also David Brion Davis's view that the antislavery movement in England "reflected the needs and values of the emerging capitalist

order,” although Davis further notes that in the 1790s radical artisan organizations maintained links to the antislavery cause. Davis observes that most abolitionists “were far less concerned with extending the potential impact of their ideology than with the need to prevent a direct challenge to property rights in general” (1975, 350, 361, 364–65).¹

Yet there is ample evidence that the causes of labor and antislavery were much more closely linked than recognized either by Hollis or Davis. Seymour Drescher broadens the perspective beyond the point of bourgeois class interest in his comment that the significance of the antislavery movement lay in the fact “that for the first time in history the non-slave masses, including working men and women, played a direct and decisive role in bringing chattel slavery to an end.” Drescher has also found that the antislavery movement stimulated factory reforms (1987, 145 and 166). Betty Fladeland, who writes that she began her study sharing Hollis’s impression that conflict and antagonism dominated relations between antislavery and labor, observes she was struck by the surprising level of cooperation emerging in the 1830s. If we follow the career of prominent leaders over time we find, for example, that William Cobbett switched from abolition baiting to proemancipation. Focusing on the careers of several antislavery leaders, Fladeland concludes that these individuals moved “to gain justice and independent rights for working people and the range of their consideration extended to rural tenant farmers and to artisans as well as to industrial workers.” The antislavery movement in England, she writes, “was both for the people and by the people to an extent we hitherto failed to realize” (1984, xi–xiii, 175).

Richard Blackett’s work has further shed light on the extent of working-class support for abolition. Blackett notes that concentrating on organized abolition groups has led to underestimation of such support. The evidence, he writes, regarding abolitionist lectures indicates that “their appeal went far beyond the middle-class ‘respectables’ of local communities.” Even Samuel Ringgold Ward, who of Black abolitionist visitors to England was most partial to the aristocracy, “gained significant support from poor and working-class people.” As a group the visitors “continued to emphasize the common experiences of oppressed peoples.” Following the 1846 World Temperance Convention, Frederick Douglass spoke to large public meetings attended by many workers. Following enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, fugitive slaves such William Wells Brown, J. W. C. Pennington, and Henry Highland Garnet spoke at public meetings about the destruction of human

potential inflicted by slavery. "The working classes," Blackett writes, "who continued to attend their lectures in large numbers, saw in these fugitives examples of successful resistance to oppression. . . . Blackett's work also reveals that British workers seized on the ideas presented in the U.S. slave narratives and in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "for implicit in the argument for the emancipation of the black slave were principles that would also free the wage slave." Chartists sometimes disrupted meetings addressed by white middle-class abolitionists, but noteworthy is the fact that Black speakers "ran into no similar opposition from their working-class audiences" (Blackett 1983, xii, 18, 21–22, 106, 147, 198, 200–201).² Chartists resented what they saw as the hypocrisy of the middle class, but they also recognized the genuineness of what U.S. Blacks had to say.

On the much-discussed issue of British labor's response to the Civil War, Philip Foner has shown that Marx and Engels were quite correct in their view that the working class played a key role in preventing British intervention on the side of the Confederacy. Marx had written the famous words: "It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England that saved the West of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic" (quoted in Foner 1981, 82). Marcus Cunliffe has contended that "recent scholarship has considerably modified the notion that while the British aristocracy leaned to the Confederacy, the lower classes were staunchly committed to emancipation and to Union victory." Cunliffe bases his generalization largely upon findings provided by Royden Harrison and Mary Ellison (Cunliffe 1979, 19, 109). Going far beyond Cunliffe, J. M. Herson Jr. in the *Journal of Southern History* even wrote that "possibly a majority of British workingmen sympathized with Confederate independence" (1967, 361–62).

With regard to Harrison it is necessary, as Foner points out, to pay attention to the evolution of his views. Harrison did at one time emphasize that the British working class had within it "influential trade union leaders, editors, and advisors, who, in their hatred of the North, made friends to the Confederacy." He further argued that public meetings in favor of the Union were not particularly significant. But by 1961 Harrison wrote that public meetings proved that the workers stood by the Union, and in 1971 he wrote that British workers "came down decisively on the side of Abraham

Lincoln and against all recognition and support for the Slave Power” (Foner 1981, 15–18). Mary Ellison relies excessively upon newspaper accounts and her work is seriously flawed by the fact that she simply assumed pro-Union meetings were contrived while pro-Confederate gatherings were spontaneous. She does not substantiate her views about the pro-Union meetings with evidence and she also fails to prove that meetings to support the Confederacy were gatherings of workers. She conjures up something of the “outside agitator” image concerning pro-Union speakers who addressed Lancashire audiences. Quotations from statements made by the Marquis of Hartington tell us something of the opinions of one aristocrat, but it is not at all clear what this shows about the state of mind of Lancashire workers (Ellison 1972, 6, 54, 58, 80, 102–3, 173).³

Foner conclusively shows that British workers repeatedly challenged the pro-Confederate opinions expressed in some labor newspapers. He reminds us of the great importance of labor assemblages in distressed Lancashire that gave short shrift to Confederate propaganda, rejected calls for British intervention in the Civil War, and expressed detestation of slavery and sympathy with President Lincoln’s program to save the Union. Foner’s conclusion is that the Civil War in the United States “was one of the major factors responsible for the growth of working-class internationalism in Britain in the 1860s.” As the dust on this historical discussion settles it is clear that the New York workers who wrote in 1864 that “the hearts and prayers of the British workmen have been with the free workingmen of the North” had judged the situation accurately (Foner 1981, 25–96).

When we turn to the issue of relations between U.S. labor and anti-slavery, it should first be kept in mind that contemporary observers frequently noted labor support for abolitionism. In 1842 the English visitor Joseph Sturge wrote that at Lowell he had been informed “that many hundreds of the factory girls were members of the Anti-slavery society” (1842, 143). In commenting about the origins of the “Come-Outer” wing of U.S. reform, Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote that this was developed largely by the antislavery movement, “predominantly a people’s movement, based on the simplest human instincts, and far stronger for a time in the factories and shoe-shops than in the pulpits or colleges.” The “Come-Outers,” Higginson wrote, were “fearless, disinterested, and always self-asserting” (1898, 114–15).

In some twentieth-century scholarship there has been a tendency, however, to focus on aspects of conflict between labor and antislavery. Marcus Cunliffe writes that “even radical historians have not been able to show convincingly that the antebellum labor movement in the United States had much sympathy with the antislavery campaign” (1979, 23). Joseph G. Rayback concedes that labor expressions of hostility to abolitionism were rare and that following the Wilmot Proviso “the old distrust of abolitionist objectives and motives disappeared.” But in the end he says of the workers: “There is little evidence to reveal that they fought wholeheartedly against the continued bondage of the black man. They were suspicious of abolitionist motives, resentful of abolitionist indifference to wage slavery, critical of the methods used, and of the potential benefits to be derived by the potential ‘freedman’” (Rayback 1943). Williston H. Lofton is somewhat equivocal in his analysis. On one hand Lofton writes that as opposition to slavery grew in the North “labor leaders and labor papers gave increasing support to the anti-slavery cause” and further that with the coming of the Civil War “the northern working classes gave the government their loyal support.” But Lofton also contends that while it was probably true that workers were not sympathetic toward slavery, “the majority of labor leaders and workers were skeptical of the appeals of the anti-slavery groups to join their crusade, an active minority was opposed to abolitionism and sought to drive it out of those communities where it had begun to gain a following.” Regarding antiabolition mobbism, Lofton (1948) simply observes that such mobs were “not composed only” of working people.

Both Leon Litwack and Lorman Ratner concentrate on the antagonism. Litwack sees labor competition as the crux of the problem, writing that “organized labor reinforced working-class antipathy toward Negro labor competition.” He writes that anti-slavery advocates “who were themselves often oblivious to the plight of northern industrial labor, found few friends in trade-union ranks.” Much of the problem lay with Irish immigrant workers who “soon channeled their frustrations and anger into hatred of the Negro,” but even in regard to German immigrants Litwack states that “public sentiment gradually permeated the ranks of the new immigrants and modified their racial tolerance (1961, 159–60, 163, 167). Paying particular attention to the views of such figures as Seth Luther, George Henry Evans, and William Leggett, Ratner contends that for

the spokesmen of Northern workingmen abolition posed the problem of deflecting attention away from the plight of white laborers and also threatened to flood the Northern market with emancipated Blacks (1968, 62).

Jonathan A. Glickstein has furnished a thoughtful discussion of the abolitionist view of the labor market, taking note of the fact that by the mid-1840s Garrison “was no longer the narrow opponent of labor movement activity that he had been in 1831” and that several political abolitionists had actively taken up the question of land reform. But while Glickstein cites considerations that would support labor-antislavery cooperation, the abolitionist understanding that theirs was a labor movement—by destroying servile labor “abolition would advance the cause of free labor”—he sharply limits the basis for unity. Abolitionism could provide a basis for punitive incentives for labor and abolitionists often saw poverty as intractable and having salutary effects. Their acceptance of traditional republican ideals was only qualified. In Glickstein’s hands the notion that abolition was an expression of bourgeois individualism somewhat obscures the radical nature of the movement (see Glickstein 1979).

There have also, of course, been scholars who have ascribed a larger role to the elements of unity. Philip Foner views labor’s role in destroying slavery as a process, a process that had to overcome the abolitionist tendency to ignore labor demands and the inclination of land reformers to argue that elimination of wage slavery was the only major issue facing the working class. But Foner emphasizes that organized workers understood the basic distinction between slavery and free labor: wage workers could organize to better their conditions. The land reformers, he notes, increasingly turned against slavery. He does not fail to mention that the followers of Karl Marx who came to the United States after 1848 “soon became the most effective opponents of slavery in the labor movement.” Foner refers to the fact that in a number of instances Black and white workers went out on strike together and also observes that Frederick Douglass spoke out frequently on behalf of wage-workers’ efforts to organize. His chapter on the question begins with the statement that the struggles of U.S. labor before the Civil War “were interlocked with the struggle against Negro slavery” and he concludes the chapter with the comment that the workers “had tipped the scales to end the political domination of our national life by the slave power” (Foner 1947, 1:266–96).

Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker also notes elements of unity in his consideration of the impact of antebellum Southern labor struggles upon slavery. He calls attention to antislavery views articulated by several Marxian-oriented Southern groups and adds: "the marked militancy of Southern wage workers in the 1850s is part of the whole pattern of increased opposition to slavocratic domination, which is so significant a component of Southern history in the pre-Civil War decade." He does not underestimate the force of racism in limiting the development of the labor movement and preventing a fully effective challenge to Bourbon rule. But at the same time he places the emerging labor movement within the general context of popular, democratic struggle and emphasizes that the hatred of the Southern masses, Black and white, for the slaveholders was of "great consequence" in defeating secession.⁴

Balanced approaches to the question of labor and antislavery are to be found as well in the works of Bernard Mandel and Herman Schlüter. Mandel uncovers the nub of the problem: "One of the most difficult problems of the labor movement in the struggle against slavery, like that of the European workers in the democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century, was to find a way to cooperate with the middle class against a common enemy without losing its identity and its independent program." He adds that although workers did not satisfactorily solve this problem in the antebellum period, "they did contribute greatly to the movement which finally brought about the destruction of chattel slavery." In the 1830s, as a matter of fact, farmers and artisans constituted the backbone of the abolitionist movement (Mandel 1955, 62).

Schlüter argues that it was the working class and not the property owners of New England that listened to the abolitionists. He writes that as with the sentiments of unorganized workers "so also the first organized workingmen showed an understanding of the question of Negro slavery and sympathized with the Abolitionists in their efforts to abolish the institution." Schlüter writes that some workers shared a "certain natural suspicion" toward middle-class reform but he still concludes: "The mass of the organized workingmen of the Northeastern portion of the country remained hostile to Negro slavery; they were among the most enthusiastic agitators in the Abolitionist cause" (Schlüter 1965, 39, 47, 67, 68).

Historical scholarship that has appeared since the 1970s strengthens the conclusion that the working class must be numbered among the

forces of antislavery in the antebellum United States. Alan Dawley, in his study of the industrial revolution in Lynn, connects artisan opposition to slavery to resentment over the threat of aristocracy and land monopoly. Dawley writes: "Although white workers feared the competition of non-white laborers and shared the racism of a white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant culture, they hated the institution of slavery, identified with the slave, and grouped overbearing Lynn manufacturers together with slavemasters as 'a set of lordly tyrants'" (Dawley 1976, 65).

Leonard L. Richards's work provides extremely useful evidence that the typical anti-abolition mob was made up of "gentlemen of property and standing." His work also emphasizes the participation of artisans in the abolitionist movement. Concerning Utica, Richards reports that many abolitionists were manufacturers but "many more were artisans such as chairmakers, coppersmiths, glassmakers, printers, harnessmakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and joiners." Those most likely to engage in racist violence were not whites competing with Black labor but members of the professional and mercantile classes aggrieved by threatened loss of social dominance (Richards 1970, 140, 150).

Eric Foner's essay, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Ante-bellum America," is an interesting effort to see the resolution of labor-abolitionist tension in the free-soilism of the Republican Party. Foner traces the sources of the tension to the division between evangelical abolitionism and the radicalism of artisans influenced by Enlightenment deism. The essay carefully distinguishes responses to abolitionism from attitudes toward slavery and makes the important point that "inherent in the notion of 'wage slavery,' in the comparison of the status of the northern laborer with the southern slave, was a critique of the peculiar institution as an extreme form of oppression. . . . The entire ideology of the labor movement was implicitly hostile to slavery." In their commitment to the Republican cause, the advocates of land reform furthered the cause of antislavery. Foner's essay is also valuable for the comment that the labor-oriented critique of slavery in the antebellum years later "rose like a phoenix" to inspire the great labor struggles of the decades after the Civil War (Foner 1980, 57-76). Yet there remains the need for a closer examination of the interaction between labor and antislavery. What is brought into view is a process of change, in which individuals altered or modified even

strongly voiced views. The fact that land reformers and abolitionists ultimately found themselves jointly under the tent of Lincoln Republicanism suggests we might go back and reconsider the magnitude and limits of their earlier disagreements. That the labor movement had difficulties in relating to a movement in which representatives of the U.S. bourgeoisie had extensive influence was to be expected. What was remarkable were not the difficulties but that to a large degree they could be surmounted. That they could be surmounted was related to the fact that the labor and abolitionist movements served to validate each other. In sum, in relations between labor and antislavery there are patterns of contradiction, but above all there was a trend toward convergence.

The work of such scholars as John Jentz, Edward Magdol, Bruce Levine, and Sean Wilentz is opening the way to a closer view of the question. Jentz reveals that examination of antislavery petitions from New York City covering the period 1829–39 shows that artisans were the largest groups of signers. The abolitionists were effective in building an artisan constituency. Following the 1834 riot, the percentage of artisans among signers of antislavery petitioners rose, and this occurred after evangelicals came to the fore of the abolitionist leadership. As abolitionism lost support among the city's merchants, artisans became the backbone of the struggle. Several factors helped to explain the shift. The antislavery Painites were an integral part of the artisan community. Artisan radicals were opposed to mob violence. And, most importantly, slavery contradicted basic values of radical artisan culture, independence, liberty, and equality.

Jentz cites evidence that modifies an earlier emphasis upon the antiabolitionism of land reformer George Henry Evans. In 1835 Evans upheld the constitutional rights of the antislavery Tappan brothers. Earlier, Evans's paper, the *New York Daily Sentinel*, justified the Nat Turner insurrection. Evans said of the rebels that "if their object was to obtain their freedom, those who kept them in slavery and ignorance alone are answerable for their conduct." And there is Evans's most interesting reply to critics who charged him and his supporters with fanaticism:

Instead of considering ourselves as justly chargeable with "excessive enthusiasm" in favor of the slaves, we conscientiously declare that we believe that we have been negligent in relation to their cause, and our only excuse is, that the class to which we belong, and whose rights we endeavor to advocate,

are threatened with evils only inferior to those of slavery, which evils it has been our principal object and endeavor to eradicate. We might, however, have done more for the cause of emancipation than we have done, and we are now convinced that our interest demands that we should do more, for EQUAL RIGHTS can never be enjoyed, even by those who are free, in a nation which contains slaveites enough to hold in bondage two millions of human beings. Jentz observes that there were two distinct realms of reform, the empire of labor and the evangelical empire of abolition. It should be added that these two worlds often intersected and found grounds for cooperation. Jentz notes that Northern workers were unsympathetic to slavery and to immediate abolition until they saw that slavery was a threat to civil rights and free soil. Antislavery grew as events forced awareness upon the workers. On the abolitionist side, attacks upon labor marked only the early years of the movement (Jentz 1977, 192, 202, 212–14, 216, 221, 254, 282).

Edward Magdol explored in depth the class status of the abolitionist rank and file and found workers to have been heavily represented. Regarding women factory operatives in Lowell, Magdol connects the signing of antislavery petitions with resentment at being perceived as “factory slaves.” “Putting their names on antislavery petitions,” he writes, “represented only another way of declaring their overdue independence. These working-class signers thus asserted their rights as workers and as women virtually at the same time that they joined a protest against enslavement of black laborers.” Magdol observes that workers “brought a broad current of mainstream America to the common cause of abolitionism.” Perhaps most importantly Magdol makes the point that “working-class petitioners helped to dispel the theory that Northern white workingmen opposed abolitionism because they feared black job competition following emancipation of the slaves.” He also provides evidence that factory workers as well as artisans were found in the antislavery ranks. Further, Magdol’s work suggests that the notion that worker involvement in Free Soilism merely represented the selfishness of whites who desired to preserve the western territories for themselves is at best imprecise. Workers were among those challenging the Fugitive Slave Law and expressing sympathy with the hunted slaves. Magdol’s work effectively undermines any claim that

relations between labor and abolition were mainly marked by conflict (Magdol 1986, 72, 83, 86, 97, 130).

Bruce Levine's work tells us more than previously known of the full scope of German immigrant worker opposition to slavery. "In the U.S., as in Europe," he writes, "German artisans felt themselves menaced not only by the development of industrial capitalism but also by a powerful landed aristocracy resting upon a servile labor force." The similarity between the U. S. planters and the Junkers was hard to miss. In an essay focused on German workers in Chicago, Levine remarks that German America was not politically monolithic but also that within that community the most fervent exponents of antislavery "arose from among the plebeian Jacobin organizations and the radical intellectuals associated with them." As the Civil War approached the influence of these radicals increased. Levine's research supports his conclusion that working people played a leading role in the antislavery struggle (Levine 1984, 40; Levine 1983, 169, 171; Levine 1980).

Sean Wilentz's study of artisan New York City is helpful in revealing the multi-faceted nature of labor's response to slavery. We have the briefly influential artisan radical Thomas Skidmore who believed slavery was "the quintessential American crime against nature." Skidmore represented a bold application of the Paineite vision of a democratic United States. In the 1830s what we have is support by many artisans and craft workers for abolitionist petitions to Congress existing alongside a "political culture of the streets" that joined in attacks upon antislavery New Yorkers. The labor press vehemently censured antiabolition mobbism but, according to Wilentz, distrust of the Black community was widespread among New York white artisans (Wilentz 1984, 186, 263–69).

A more accurate evaluation of labor in relation to antislavery would be furthered by more extensive study of the views set forth by leading abolitionists. Garrison, of course, as well as others sometimes set forth views that would complicate efforts to unify but more attention needs to be paid to such figures as Nathaniel Rogers, John A. Collins, Henry Clarke Wright, Gamaliel Bailey, and Thomas Skidmore. There exists no comprehensive study of the view taken by Black abolitionists of the labor movement. And we would also be well served by research that thoroughly probed the writings and speeches on this question by such personages as Birney, Garrison, Weld, Phillips, Smith, the Tappan brothers, the Grimke sisters, and

Lydia Maria Child.

Prolabor views are frequently to be found in the writings and public statements of some of the most prominent abolitionists. Noteworthy are Lydia Maria Child's comments upon reading George Eliot's *Silas Marner*. "What a significant fact it is in modern times," Child wrote, "that the working class are so generally the heroes. No princes in disguise are necessary now to excite an interest in the reader. The popular mind is educated up to the point of perceiving that carpenters, weavers, etc., are often real princes in disguise. The longer I live, the more entirely and intensely do my sympathies go with the masses." Again, in a comment about the novel she observed: "Aristocracy is *always* my aversion, whether in the form of English noble, Southern planter, or Boston respectable. Adam Bede the carpenter, Silas Marner the weaver, Uncle Tom, and Old Tiff [slave character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Dred*] interest me more than the elegant superficiality of all the high-bred classes. I honestly *believe* in the dignity of labor."⁵

The range of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's concerns encompassed the cause of the working class. In Higginson's indictment of slavery the point was made, his biographer writes, that in stressing the superiority of a leisure class, slavery stressed the inferiority of any laboring class. While living in Newburyport, Higginson led a campaign in 1850 to found a free evening school, and for two years he taught in this institution, geared to the needs of immigrants and laboring children. That same year he wrote a local newspaper editor, urging that gentleman to spare an hour from cutting "proslavery scraps" for his exchange column and instead "visit those local poor where economic support was dependent upon the income of children eight to fourteen years of age" or visit places where fathers "walk the streets all day looking for work." In 1852 he took the side of the locked-out workers in the Amesbury-Salisbury labor dispute. Workers had been dismissed from their jobs because they would not accept a lengthening of the work day. Higginson collected money, food, and clothing for the strikers and also declared in a public statement: "We have been assured that the interests of capital and labor are identical. But if it turns out that this is an error, and that the interests are distinct, then there is no question which of the two is most important. *Labor must be protected first.*" While desiring peaceful means of settling disputes, Higginson also noted: "If the time has come when capital does *not* meet

labor as an equal—refuses to conciliate, and it aims only to command—then it is quite time for the community to know it and act accordingly” (Edelstein 1968, 121, 124–27).

William Lloyd Garrison did express in the first number of the *Liberator* his opposition to those he saw as attempting “to enflame the minds of our working classes against the more opulent, and to persuade men that they are condemned and oppressed by a wealthy aristocracy.” But Garrison, described by the abolitionist Ellis Gray Loring as having come to Boston as a “poor and solitary individual of the working class,” was sensitive to the situation of labor. Worth careful consideration is his 1832 report, published in the *Liberator*, of what he observed during a tour of Rhode Island. The editor declared:

Although I have long since withdrawn from the field of politics, I feel a strong interest in the perpetuity of that system which fosters and protects the industry of the American people; consequently, the unexpected sight of these huge establishments, all alive with power, gave me no inconsiderable pleasure—pleasure, however, mingled with pain—for I fear it will be found, in almost every instance, that an exorbitant exaction of labor and time is required of the operatives; that the education of the children is neglected; and that unnecessarily severe regulations are made for the government of the factories. I am decidedly in favor of the ten-hours-a-day plan: any extension beyond this space of time, without an adequate remuneration, is, I conceive, a pitiful fraud and wretched economy. Ample repose is needed to restore the wasted energies of the body and the buoyancy of the spirit, and to cultivate the mind. Let our rich capitalists beware how they grind the face of the poor; for oppression injures the value of labor, begets resentment, produces tumults, and is hateful in the sight of God. (Garrison 1831; Merrill 1971, 1:168; Ruchames 1971, 2:209)

Some further insight into Garrison’s view of the labor question in relation to slavery can be gleaned from his words to a London audience in 1846. Making clear his own working-class origins, Garrison declared: “I have desired to see the working-people of Old England; I have desired to see those who dare to risk something of character, of personal interest, and, it may be, of personal safety, in their endeavors to remove the wrongs and abuses which

are found, unhappily, on this side of the Atlantic. I sympathize in every effort of reform that is going on among you." He affirmed that "he who would scorn the labourer, who would look down on him, is a tyrant." It would not be said of him, Garrison stated, that he capitalized on the popularity of abolitionism in England but did nothing to cheer on the workers "in their labour to effect redemption for themselves." He would stand with those in England who sought the extension of the voting franchise and other reforms.

Turning to the United States, Garrison noted that slavery exerted a "disasterous influence" upon the entire nation. He spoke frankly of problems in enlisting white labor's support for the antislavery cause, but he proceeded from the premise that the interests of white and Black labor were linked:

Slavery has done another evil thing—it has infused hatred into the bosom of the working people of the North, against the working of the South. I lament to say, that as yet but a small portion of the working people of the North are Abolitionists; they look down upon the colored people with aristocratic feelings, they despise and persecute them; they won't allow them to have any trade; and thus are rivetting their own fetters, while they are putting the galling fetters of slavery on the necks of their brothers in the South. It is the design of slavery to foster this hatred among the working people; and the slaveholders ask the people of the North, "Do you wish these slaves to come into competition with yourselves? If they are emancipated they will take the bread out of your mouths; don't go for emancipation." And the working men take heed to such instructions, and say, "We won't go for emancipation." Thank God there is no hope for the working people of the North till they take the chains off the working people of the South. (Garrison 1846)

In a recent article John Ashworth has written that "the rise of wage labor called into question many traditional assumptions. In societies that were changing in this way, people altered their attitudes and practices in an attempt to bring them in line with the new realities... slavery came to appear as a greater and greater evil." If capitalist hegemony eventually spurred abolition it must also be remembered that the existence of the working class is organically linked to the growth of antislavery. As wage labor historically became the norm, slavery increasingly appeared as an aberration,

even if Southern planters sometimes argued slavery was the solution of the labor question. Since both the labor and abolitionist movements showed it was possible to organize, to agitate, and to become politically active for the purpose of changing the position of labor in society, these movements tended to reinforce each other. Rhetoric, even rhetoric of sharp disagreement, cannot be ignored, but what these movements did, what they represented, must also be understood. The organized labor movement, whatever its suspicion of bourgeois hypocrisy, remained committed to the republican heritage of free debate and right of petition that also nourished antislavery. The abolitionists, although they often could not agree there was such a thing as “wage slavery,” legitimized the idea that there were limits as to what could be bought and sold on the market, that human beings, at least, should not be commodities. John Ashworth writes: “There had to be rigid separation between those areas of life where the market could rule and those where it was forbidden” (1987, 822, 824). When all is said and done, the abolitionist movement was of critical importance in establishing the precedent that the rule of a powerful, propertied interest could be overturned and that precedent remained to be drawn upon by those who wanted further changes in the property arrangements of U. S. society.

This essay is an extension of work to prepare a documentary history focused on the theme of labor and antislavery, undertaken in collaboration with Philip S. Foner. Professor Foner has generously shared with me his very extensive collection of primary source documents that informs much of what is said here.

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NOTES

1. See also Davis 1987. In this rejoinder to criticisms voiced by Thomas L. Haskell, Davis writes that English employers wished to instill certain values in the working class, those of “thinking causally, keeping promises, learning to calculate, compute, and taking responsibility for the remote consequences of one’s actions.” It should, however, also be noted that

such values suited the needs of an authentic working-class sensibility.

2. John Blassingame writes about the reception accorded Douglass in Britain, "Working men contributed their labor to prepare halls in which Douglass spoke, attended his lectures in considerable numbers, sent antislavery petitions to the United States after hearing him, and sang ballads about him" (See Blassingame 1979, lvii).
3. Ellison frequently omits evidence of equivocation. On one hand she writes that Manchester received Henry Ward Beecher with skeptical interest" but on the other notes that the presence of a large audience to hear his views "must have reflected some degree of approval." She also sees no significance in the fact that the hungry Lancashire workers did not resort to demonstrative protest or riot for the purpose of restoring the cotton trade.
4. See Aptheker (1954). Aptheker gives further attention to this general theme in his book, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement* (1989).
5. See Meltzer and Holland (1982, 383, 392). At the very least Child was equivocal about the bourgeois transformation of U. S. society. "Property reigns so supreme in the social compact," she wrote, "that the growth of souls is trampled like a weed under its feet, and human life is considered of far less importance." She was, however, also convinced that commerce with all its evils, is gradually helping the world onward to a higher and better state. It is bringing the nations into companionship, and it has already taught kings and diplomatists that war is a losing game, even to the conqueror." See Child (1850, 255).

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Conrad's Hamlets, Intertextuality, and the Process of History

Günter Walch

+In the second half of this century, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* has become one of the texts most fully appropriated by literary criticism. This critical interest has been considerably intensified by the realization that the novel, while telling us at the most immediately approachable level that it is a moral tale "about" personal honor, cowardice, and courage, is also emitting strong signals telling us that, deep beneath, it has other concerns and that these concerns are indeed central to its core. *Lord Jim* is of course many things to many people. But while some modern readers have not been able to see anything but nothingness under the surface, many others have apparently felt that the book echoes questions they identify as their own, questions addressed to their own time, questions revolving around a need for historically significant activity, the possibility of action, how to act as an effective participant in the historical process and the interrogation of the individual act.

These are the kinds of questions which meet with the most conflicting responses. Indeed, some critics today will maintain that these questions are irrelevant, since the text, any text, and this one in particular, has no reference to anything outside itself. I will argue that it does have external reference, and that we should take seriously Raymond Williams's definition that the ships in Conrad represent "a knowable community of a transparent kind" (1973, 141); and that Conrad, furthermore, and this is my principal thesis, situates *Lord Jim* in the movement of history both in the past and in the present, or rather, consciously opens up his text to that movement. One of the most important means employed by Conrad in order to open up his text to the process of history is his way of handling the intertextuality of the novel. What I would call Conrad's

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most deliberate and forceful intertextual decision in *Lord Jim* makes a Renaissance text, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a presence in that novel. Another move made by Conrad toward the same end is his narrative reference to the 1848 revolution in Germany. Both inclusions, the one intertextual, the other probably not intertextual but historical though fictive, have been largely ignored by previous criticisms. On the rare occasions on which they have not been completely ignored, as in the case of *Hamlet*, no particular significance has been attributed to them. It will be my contention that *Lord Jim* belongs to that category of works which make very conscious use of their intertextuality, which insist on their intertextual composition, and thus affirm their own historicity.

It is the peculiar heuristic narrative structure of this novel, previously recognized and formally described, which induces topical responses of the kind mentioned and which makes the novel appear amazingly "modern." The modernity of *Lord Jim* to readers after the middle of the twentieth century also resides, as Fredric Jameson has pointed out (1981, 216—17), in the existential terms in which Conrad encodes the human experience of the sea. The sea is the privileged site of his strategy of containment, but is at the same time a place of workday activity. It thus allows both images of human activity to emerge, and metaphors which point toward a more general meaning of the narrative. After Jim's first experience of a heavy storm at sea and his first failure as a young sailor,

He felt angry with the brutal tumult of earth and sea for taking him unawares and checking unfairly a generous readiness for narrow escapes. (Conrad 1974, 7–8)

This personalizing experience of the sea as the great violent adversary of man—set in an ironical framework since it defines the limits of Jim's romantic heroism—is shortly afterward generalized by the narrator:

There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention—that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control,

with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hopes and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest: which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he has seen, known, loved, enjoyed, or hated: all that is priceless and necessary—the sunshine, the memories, the future; which means to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life. (Conrad 1974, 8)

The existentializing interpretation of nature has been described by Jameson as an early manifestation of what was later in the century to claim the status of a formulated philosophy, existentialism. It enables Conrad to tell the story of the quest (for an “indefinable something”), and this is pursued by means of the heuristic narrative structure *even though* the source of what we are invited to consider in anthropomorphic and ethical terms as “evil” is transposed from society to nature, and represented as the existentialized sea. The object of the quest appears to be as elusive to the author as it does to the reader, since it owes its elusiveness not to a mere technical narrative invention (such as a device generating suspense) but to being emblematic of a genuine paradox. It sets in motion that quest which in turn generates the heuristic narrative structure so characteristic of *Lord Jim*. To it *Lord Jim* owes its standing as a vivid text outside the literary museum, as its critical reception testifies. At the same time this is due to the fascination engendered by the object of the quest. In a well-known passage in another of his works, Conrad himself tries to circumscribe the meaning pursued in another intense quest, namely for what lies hidden in the heart of darkness in the story bearing that title:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illuminations of moonshine. (Conrad 1925, 48)

Needless to say, this impressionistic concept of narrative meaning constituted a major break with the mainstream tradition of storytelling associated with the English and European novel since the

eighteenth century. The kind of imagery found in its language, its impressionism in perfect accordance with the heuristic structure of narration both in *Heart of Darkness* and in *Lord Jim*, not only proves the “misty halo” comparison to be a perfectly adequate abstraction, it also may seem to show Marlow at work as a post-modern protocritic. This may sound self-contradictory since Marlow is also archaic insofar as he represents interference of the author in the narrative, which Conrad was himself obviously rejecting. But Marlow’s “authorial” activity is *inside* the story, not outside. His interventions remain his own, as vehicles of his scrutiny, and thus become themselves objects of Conrad’s narrative exploration.

Marlow himself is introduced by an omniscient narrator, appropriately underexposed, in the fourth chapter, when Jim discovers the white man in the Eastern police court where his official inquiry is held:

And later on, many times, in distant parts of the world, Marlow showed himself willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length in detail and audibly. (Conrad 1974, 24)[

In doing just that, Marlow provides the reader with the material, the elements of which allow the meaning of the tale to be worked out. It is outside, not like a “kernel” but like a “haze.” It can be worked out by showing—in J. Hillis Miller’s words—“the interaction of its different elements in their reference to one another.” Miller goes on: “These the critic must track, circling from one word or image to another within the text in the unending spirals of the hermeneutical circle. Only in this movement of interpretation does the ‘meaning’ exist” (1970, 212). Although this circular “movement of interpretation” will be shown not to constitute the sole repository of meaning, it nevertheless accurately defines the space occupied by the modern hermetic critic inside the text. Marlow is thus archaic, a representative of authorial interference in the text, and at the same time so modern as to contribute decisively toward making this text eligible as a poststructuralist exemplar, as a self-generative and self-interpretative text which, it is maintained, defies any approach from outside its confines.

For Miller, Conrad’s handling of the three structuring principles which he believes are fundamental to fiction—“temporal form,” “interpersonal relations,” and “relations of imaginary and real”—between them create an “overabundance of possible explanations”

which “only inveigles the reader to share in the self-sustaining motion of an unending process of interpretation,” a “weaving movement of advance and retreat” (1970, 220). This constitutes the text’s “meaning,” a word which seems to call for quotation marks each time it is used.

This hermetic circularity can only be maintained if one insists, as Miller consistently does, that the text has no foundation outside itself. He is therefore quite dismissive of Norman Sherry’s description of the factual contexts of *Lord Jim* (see Sherry 1966), because historical documents are themselves “fundamentally enigmatic,” affording no fixed point of reference (Miller 1970, 224). All this raises fundamental questions about our approach to history and therefore to the history of literature, and the literary text itself.

The enigma of the historical document, its alleged inscrutability in terms of history, situates the historical document in the same category as the literary text, or indeed any other text. What follows is that the ultimate, but no doubt problematic, approachability of history through language, through its prior textualization, and indeed through its functional narrativization, is replaced, in the theory and practice of criticism, by a strategy of inscrutability. Whatever discontent with the various forms of linear history may have started this line of argumentation at the outset, as a result the process of history, the process of wresting a realm of freedom from the realm of necessity,¹ would itself be unrecognizable, submerged in a sea of boundless textuality, in a *texte général*. All this forces the problem of mediation to move into the foreground.

In his brilliant analysis of *Lord Jim*, Jameson identifies the two major strategies of containment by which Conrad displaces the novel’s “socially concrete subtext of late nineteenth-century rationalization and reification,” thus providing for a “built-in substitute interpretive system” (Jameson 1981, 266) whereby, I would suggest, it becomes possible for author and reader both to face and not to face history. These strategies to Jameson constitute the above-mentioned protoexistential metaphysics of personalizing nature as the ultimate villain, against whom Jim must do battle in the first part of the novel, laid on the ship *Patna*, in order to prove himself; and the melodramatic strategy of containment in the second part of the novel set in Patusan, based on the ideological notion of *ressentiment*, of which Nietzsche was the primary theorist, by which, in order to “resolve” Jim’s dilemma, malevolent nature is transposed back to human agency in the person of Gentleman Brown.

While this shows how the text, by the way it deals with history, is made possible, it has not been sufficiently understood to what a degree Conrad in the same process deliberately makes the text reach out searchingly into history in order to emphasize the importance of what generates the energy behind the narrative structure of *Lord Jim* in the first place. This is the interrogation, in spite of all apparently insurmountable difficulty, of the responsible act and the—historical—possibilities of action. Far from closing his text to history in this important respect, Conrad opens it up in order to admit representatives of critical periods in European history, one from the revolution of 1848, the other from the Renaissance.

The first is of course Stein, whose story marks “the passing of the heroic age of capitalist expansion” “when individual entrepreneurs were giants” and who has subsequently settled down to the tranquil life of a prosperous merchant. He finds compensation for his loss of participation in political life in his collection of butterflies: beautiful images, an “allegory of the ideology of the image” and thus of Conrad’s own choice of impressionism as a project to wrench “the living raw material of life” (Jameson 1981, 236–38) from history in order to estheticize and thus preserve it in the imaginary. But it must be emphasized that Stein’s loss, while thus compensated, includes the loss of his geographical and political home. He is an emigrant, a refugee from Germany, where he took an active part in the revolution of 1848. And in spite of his exclusion from active political life and disillusionment, his sympathies with the young man who is, as Stein must and does understand, trying to live his ideal, are not just something one affords as another kind of (fairly selfish) compensation, but in fact go well beyond the purely personal level. He helps Jim to set up his new existence in Patusan, which is, whatever its character and outcome, striving after integration in a social community.

The significance of Stein as an emblematic figure from history is emphasized by his pivotal role in the construction of the narrative. He forms a strategic link between the first part of the novel, in which the events surrounding the *Patna* are probed with such extraordinary innovative modernist intensity, and the second part set in Patusan, which is so often criticized for its romantic mood and melodrama (F. R. Leavis magisterially condemned it as “decidedly

thin" (1969, 190), where both commercialized mass cultural discourse and modernist discourse can be seen to emerge in one and the same work.

And it is in this sensitive buffer zone that Conrad's figure from the Renaissance theater is brought in, Hamlet. The presence of *Hamlet* in *Lord Jim* cannot be doubted. Its significance exceeds by far that of a thematic analogy expounded in terms of character traits such as ardor, idealism, a sensitivity to brutality, and coarseness, even occasional squeamishness common to both Hamlet and Lord Jim, or in the fact that both consider suicide when life becomes unbearable.² In the important twentieth chapter, Marlow acquaints Stein with Jim's previous history, and then Stein "diagnosed the case for me" as a problem of "how to live": "'In general, adapting the words of your great poet: That is the question. . . . ' He went on nodding sympathetically . . . 'How to be! *Ach!* How to be'" (Conrad 1974, 155). As if this were not enough to tell us that he wants us to read Jim's story through the Renaissance tragedy, Conrad mentions Shakespeare's name in the twenty-third chapter as a further reminder. The reader, once alerted to the intertextual composition, will also notice one more character borrowed from *Hamlet*. It cannot be a coincidence that we have a Cornelius in *Lord Jim* as well as in *Hamlet*.³ In *Hamlet*, Cornelius is of course a minor courtier and a nightmare of an actor's part sharing in the first act (with the other minor courtier, Voltmand), a single line, "In that, and all things, will we show our duty," whereupon they are off to Norway with Claudius's message to the uncle of Fortinbras. But "duty" is a cue for *Lord Jim*. Here the part is much expanded. This Cornelius, too, is characterized by a readiness to serve. Both Corneliuses serve evil men, that's the obvious parallel, but in the novel, Gentleman Brown's underling is made even more disgustingly corrupt than the boss himself in an attempt to depict the latter's evilness as yet more exalted.

Lord Jim is rich in animal metaphors indicating the threat to humans of the fall from human to animal status through the working of the mysterious rottenness which the novel explores. Thus the *Patna* officers crawl about in the boat like animals, looking like curs, and then like "three dirty owls" (Conrad 1974, 90). Jim, in the end physically as well as metaphorically in the same boat with them, later reports to Marlow: "If I had opened my lips just then I would have simply howled like an animal" (91). On the same

principle, Holy Terror Robinson is compared to an old horse, Blake to an enraged cockatoo. Cornelius creeps around like a disgusting beetle (a negative association with Stein's collection of beautiful butterflies and earthbound beetles), is silent like a fish, and generally appears like vermin, like a suspicious cat, a worm, a frightened chicken.

Gentleman Brown, on the other hand, merely has sharp crow's feet, and during his fit he claws the air like a mythical figure, half man, half animal. As a melodramatic transposition of the ultimate villain back from nature to human agency, Brown, Conrad's Claudius, is endowed with mythical traits in order to enlarge his status as Jim's adversary. After all, Claudius is no mean evildoer. But we ought not to press the intertextual logic too hard for congruity, I think. In fact, it seems that Conrad uses Shakespeare's text, in one important function, to allow the reader an awareness of the *differences* between the stories, thus putting his own story into historical perspective.

As Thomas M. Greene has pointed out, "all major works grow from a complex set of origins." But the root which the work privileges has a special importance, for "when . . . intertextuality becomes self-conscious, it tends to become etiological, and we are able to analyze the function of the subtext in terms of a specific retrospective vision." Conrad's construction of a "secondary etiology" is a powerful one operating, as it does, as a construction "of meaning connecting the past to the present" (1982, 16–18).

In this way we are given in both texts the continuing reflective concern with the situation of the human being mentioned above. For instance, a clue for Conrad's application of animal metaphors to humans was there ready for him in Hamlet's speech in his dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—once again surely no coincidence.[

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel, in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.
(II, ii, 321–26)

Later in the scene Hamlet will heap abuse on himself for being, among many other things, "an ass" and "a stallion," which in the context signifies a male whore. (Compare the birds and "the famous ape" in III, iv, and Hamlet's reference to Claudius as "a paddock" and "a bat" in the same speech.)

But while in his peculiar situation Hamlet is questioning “this quintessence of dust,” since man delights him not, and yes, “nor woman either” (II, ii, 303–9), Stein’s commentary, while examining a perfect specimen of a butterfly, is quite blunt: “Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece” (Conrad 1974, 152).

The significant difference signalled to us by Conrad’s appropriation of *Hamlet* is the diminished stature of the bourgeois hero and the shrinking of his scope of action. We are even made to compare the ideological sources that inform both protagonists. In Shakespeare’s play, “Paris” denotes the source of a conventional aristocratic upbringing for Laertes, while Hamlet has been exposed to the wealth of Reformation thought and Renaissance learning at “Wittenberg.”

Conrad, with similar care, stresses Jim’s cultural background and is clearly fully aware of its functions. Jim’s father is a parson and in that capacity “possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions.” Where the feudal prince (like Horatio, to emphasize the point in the play) has absorbed the humanist knowledge, philosophy, and ethical standards generated and taught at places like Wittenberg, in a gigantic European effort to overcome the medieval reliance on an unquestionable “knowledge of the Unknowable,” Jim’s “vocation for the sea had declared itself,” as Conrad writes, through “a course of light holiday literature.” When Jim is finally in the training ship for officers of the mercantile marine, he will “forget himself” “in the babel of two hundred voices” on the lower deck and “live in his mind the sea-life of light literature,” in which he sees himself performing great heroic deeds, “saving people from sinking ships” or “in a small boat upon the ocean” keeping “up the hearts of despairing men—always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book” (1974, 4–5).

In *Lord Jim*, the intertextuality brought into play by the author very much involves the interplay of, and play on, literary genres. Conrad actually develops an intertextual generic discourse. The classical tragedy is made to clash with modern mass literary discourse, all deployed by Conrad’s innovative narrative strategy. Conrad’s description of the social functioning of commercialized mass-media discourse is of strategic importance not only (and

obviously) for the story, since Jim, for the first time aboard that very training ship, is of course living in his imaginary life the scenes in which he will fail in real life. It is even more important as a cultural critique because Conrad grasps the connection between the operation of commercialized mass-media discourse and alienation when only a little later he describes the actual enslaving life at sea with its monotony, harshness, and constriction as “the prosaic severity of the daily task that gives bread” and “whose only reward is in the perfect love of the work.” And, Conrad adds significantly, “This reward eluded him” (1974, 8). Jim’s isolation from life is thus described not just in terms of manipulation, but in the more fundamental terms of alienation: of a social situation, in other words, in which the results of labor, in which commodities, institutions, and ideologies confront people as alien powers which dominate them.

Conrad’s keen awareness of the social role of “light literature” also helps to generate the structure of the novel. For all “the degraded romance language” of the second part of the work where “Conrad goes on to write precisely the romance...caricatured before” (Jameson 1981, 213), it must also be realized that his romance language is functionally inscribed by him and may therefore be said to deconstruct itself. It remains true, of course, that that reappropriation also takes place because, from Conrad’s point of view, a symbolic “solution” to Jim’s problem in terms other than these is hardly conceivable. That Conrad is aware of the clash, and of this very conflict, is once again shown by his introduction of *Hamlet* at that crucial point of transition, so as to provide a historical perspective view of his latter-day Hamlet. At the same time, a whole aesthetic of historical literary form could be developed from the confrontation of the two texts in Conrad’s novel: Hamlet, in an unceasing process which also constitutes the plot of the play, both searches for significant ways of action and examines himself and also the world for possible meaning, for ways of achieving “the important acting” in the play as he himself says (III, iv, 108). Jim, on the other hand, by strictly severing the private from the public, excludes his own self from his brooding scrutiny which he fixes instead passively on the “villainy of circumstances” (Conrad 1974, 89). The search for meaning cannot be sustained by the romantic hero. Instead, a whole system of overlapping narrative media and situations needs to be created, which then constitutes the innovative exploratory structure of the novel.

Now that the presence of *Hamlet* in Conrad's novel has been established it also becomes clear how important it is in highlighting the social significance of Jim as another "Lord," a lord of illusions. Where the Prince of Denmark is rudely confronted with the harsh facts of his personal life, and, through that experience, of the political and social life of his country, groping in the historical dark for solutions beyond feudal custom and convention, the latter-day Hamlet is strictly confined to his imaginary life of illusions. The prince relentlessly abuses *himself* in the monologue already quoted (II, ii), for being "a dull and muddy-mettled rascal" and a "John-a-dreams." This is part of his activity in the play. He fosters no illusions about himself. Jim on the other hand emerges from his failures, as from the very first on board the training-ship, with an exalted and increased "sense of many-sided courage" solely generated out of his illusions about himself. He is actually contemptuous of the boy who acted in accordance with the code of duty and courage as someone who has shown a "pitiful display of vanity. . . . When all men flinched, then—he felt sure—he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas" (7). His illusions about himself and his contempt for the rest of humanity imbue him with an egoism which Conrad calls variously "exalted," a "superb egoism," "a sort of sublimated, idealized selfishness," or, when it comes to his relationship with the colonial people of Patusan, whose leadership he takes over, "a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness" (306, 304, 130, 182). It is a sublimated selfishness, as Conrad shows in his story of 1900 in an historically most significant way, which all too easily becomes murderous to the people exposed to it.

With fitting irony, Conrad emphasizes the romantic idealism of his hero by reference to his immaculate outward appearance. He stands out by being invariably clad in impeccable white, which points of course to his soft and rotten core. His white suit stands in deliberate contrast to Hamlet's "nighted colour," the "solemn black of his "inky coat" (I, ii, 68, 77–78). Eventually, as it turns out, both figures will be forced to act according to the actual prosaic situation afforded by life. But the failure of the selfish romantic hero, all in brilliant white, can no longer be presented in terms of tragedy. It is another important use Conrad makes of Shakespeare's play to convey the seriousness to him of the terms which he deems inescapable for an honest "solution" to the problems raised by *Lord Jim*. It is evidence of Conrad's historical

and aesthetic plight as much as a solution. But at the same time Conrad, by anchoring his text through his various intertextual moves both horizontally, drawing on his own geopolitical experience and that of his class, and vertically, by his use of the European literary tradition, confirms the need of that quest for the meaning which sustains both texts. Conrad's text, while closing itself off by substitute interpretative systems, also reaches out into history.

We have, after all, also the evidence of the two Malayan helmsmen in the police court, evidence on the level of everyday working life. When the *Patna* accident happens, they look questioningly across to the white men, "but their dark hands remained closed on the spokes" (19–20). Asked later during the interrogation for their thoughts during the accident, the younger replies he wasn't thinking of anything. The older helmsman "explained that he had a knowledge of some evil thing befalling the ship, but there had been no order; why should he leave the helm" (72). He also, upon inquiry, names the long list of ships in which he has done duty.

It is all made to appear perfectly simple when we are allowed to listen to these Malayan sailors. History is in evidence after all. Its workings are evoked by the unassuming everyday activity of the Malayan sailors who do not seem equally cut off from the "reward" yielded by their labor by the process of alienation Jim is shown to be so helplessly an object of. Both this and Hamlet's question for significant activity are introduced by Conrad deliberately in order to counteract and break through the hermetic confines established by Jim's surrogate life of textual illusion, to reestablish the flow of communication between literature and life. In doing so, Conrad achieves even more than a cultural critique of twentieth-century commercialized mass-media discourse and its consequent inertia. In a fascinating way, he simultaneously anticipates the later twentieth-century notion of self-constitutive circular textuality which is epitomized precisely by Jim's paradox, and subjects it to a rigorous critique.

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NOTES

1. See Jameson (1981, 19), who refers, of course, to Marx (1967, 3:820).
2. See Gillon (1976, 53–69). Gillon also points out verbal echoes in *Lord Jim* from *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, and the sonnets. I am indebted to Thomas Moser of Stanford University for information concerning Conrad's references to *Hamlet* here and in his letters.
3. The parallel has also been commented on by Thomas Schultheiss (1966). Schultheiss also points out the analogy between Jewel and Ophelia which I have neglected in my paper but which emphasizes the presence of the Renaissance play in the novel.
4. References are to act, scene, and line, from Shakespeare (1974).

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On Toby Terrar's "The New Social History and Colonial America's Press Legacy"

In his article "The New Social History and Colonial America's Press Legacy: Tyranny or Freedom?" (*Nature, Society and Thought*, vol. 2, no.1 [1989]: 45–75), Toby Terrar uses a creative, almost poetic approach in analyzing the free-press tradition of the United States. However, as I have said to him in our several exchanges over this topic, I would like to see him take more account of the general historical framework sketched by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

Colonial America was largely the result of the bourgeoisie, the Europeans, "chasing...over the whole surface of the globe" and nestling, settling, and establishing connections everywhere in the need for a constantly expanding market, as feudalism gave way to capitalism. The bourgeoisie was contradictorily both a revolutionary and an emerging exploiting ruling class at the time the U.S. Constitution and the ideas behind it were being conceived and born. At the time of the American Revolution, the colonial bourgeoisie had an added revolutionary dimension in that they were fighting against British imperialism.

It is true that the oppressed groups and classes—indigenous Americans, African Americans, women, religious minorities, and poor farmers and workers—were struggling, and this struggle contributed to the freedom principles enshrined in the Constitution. But, from the Marxist standpoint, the main content of the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment clause on press freedom, is a reflection of emerging bourgeois values and relations of production; and, since the Constitution was written at a time when the bourgeoisie was still a revolutionary class, it is a progressive document for the era of its origin. Professor Aptheker has made this point in several writings, including *Early Years of the Republic*.

The oppressed groups and classes from the colonial era, upon

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which Terrar focuses, at most share with the colonial bourgeoisie the main influence on the original Constitution. Terrar attributes to the farmers, artisans, laborers, Quakers, Indians, Blacks, women, and others of the time the political and economic wherewithal and objective social base for a level of liberation struggle that really only comes about with the creation of the industrial working class. The advanced free press, and other ideas of the day have a sort of utopian-socialist objective base—Quaker communities and other immigrants seeking religious freedom, primitive-communist indigenous communities, Jeffersonian farmers, slaves seeking freedom.

These formations are not, however, the main ancestral units of U.S. social and economic history. The main development of the United States is as modern industrial capitalism and its ancestral formation is colonial manufacture and mercantile capitalism, not the utopian-like socialist communities mentioned above. It is as capitalism that the U.S. system gives rise to a working class (with critical ally roles for oppressed nationalities, farmers, and women); that is the objective basis for our higher-level understanding of the potential of the First Amendment and the Constitution.

Thus, I have limited support for an approach that implies that the Constitution has been fully or inherently socialist from the beginning; or that we just need the historical facts to show that Constitutional original intent was really socialist; or that the First Amendment was conceived in a concrete, materialist way. No, the Constitution's original intent was a bourgeois precursor to socialist ideas just as capitalism is a precursor to socialism.

One might say Terrar reinterprets the Constitution; the point is to change it.

An active and dialectical approach is needed: a negation of the negation, wherein there is a qualitative break with some of the old in the Constitution, while preserving the progressive old in it. That qualitative break may take the political and legal form of a mass movement for constitutional amendment; in the case of press freedom, an addendum to the First Amendment. This would include the right to put the mass media to use for the benefit of the vast majority of the people and exclude the broadcast of racist, anti-working-class, and warmongering ideas

The Constitution in 1787–91 was again a reflection of the contradictory revolutionary-exploiting bourgeois class and of the precursor (utopian) socialist oppressed groups and classes. The First Amendment

reflects this complex class situation. Terrar has described it from the standpoint of the oppressed classes, but the First Amendment also reflects the bourgeoisie's class struggle with the feudal ruling class and the national-liberation struggle against British imperialism. Therein is bourgeois idealism's emphasis on reason and therefore freedom of thought—speech, religion, press—without primary attention to being—food, shelter, work. The bourgeois-idealist philosophers' influence (and the influence of the idealism among the oppressed groups Terrar highlights) limited the First Amendment freedoms to relative abstractions. Advance comes through a qualitative development of the concept of freedom in a manner that parallels Marx and Engels's materialist critique of Hegel and other idealists, requiring the concrete basis for real, mass press and speech freedom.

The First Amendment most fully encapsulates the idealist notion that freedom of thought is the highest priority in a free society. The prime importance the framers gave to thought (over being) reflects that issue's status as the main question of philosophy, as Engels labeled it. This may be why it was dealt with in the very first amendment. In other words, as idealists, the framers thought that if they guaranteed freedom of ideas, then freedom of being would follow. Materialists, of course, hold that freedom of being is a necessary foundation for freedom of thought and ideas.

In sum, a dialectical- and historical-materialist approach to the heritage of free press in the United States will be a powerful counter to cold-war distortions of that tradition.

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On Truitt's "On the Question of Technological Determinism"

In his paper "On the Question of Technological Determinism," Willis H. Truitt (this issue, 421–41) does a superb job of laying out the main objections to the primary proponents of technological determinism, namely G. A. Cohen and William H. Shaw. He also puts forward his own original, dialectical- and materialist-interpretation of Marx's theory of historical change. I must agree with Truitt's claim that, contrary to Cohen, the productive forces are not reified, autonomously self-transforming facilities. I must also agree that the forces of production do not strictly determine the substance of production relations, social consciousness, and the superstructure, and that determinist pictures are typically linear and undialectical. However, Truitt's lack of attention to Cohen's functional formulation of historical materialism condemns his analysis to a weak form of interactionism. Without taking the development of the productive forces as at least explanatorily basic, if not causally prior in all circumstances, an essential element of historical materialism is lost. I will not attempt a systematic response to technological determinism, Truitt's critique, or even his own original formulation of the problem here. Rather, I will suggest that since the functional aspect of Cohen's reformulation of historical materialism is left unexamined by Truitt, his own account fails to confront some of the major problems facing current understandings of Marx's theory of history.

At issue here essentially is Cohen's claim that, according to historical materialism, people change their production relations in order to accommodate changes in the productive forces. This leads many critics to conclude that, on this account, all changes in production relations can be reduced to prior changes in the productive forces. This is called technological determinism as production relations are said to be determined by developments in technology. "Technological determinism" of course is a significant misnomer in that, according to Marx, it is the productive forces, that is, technology *along with* human productive abilities, that comprise the productive forces. This, of course, leads Cohen and others to call it more correctly "productive force determinism."

If Cohen is saying, as Truitt and other believe, that all changes in production relations can be reduced to prior changes in the productive forces, Cohen is obviously wrong. Richard Miller, for one, has made much of how Marx found changes in production relations, changes that were significantly affected by politics and other super-structural relations, to have profound effects on changes in the productive forces (1981, 100–105; 1984, chap. 5). Since the causal line “goes the wrong way”, as it were, Cohen must be wrong.

Truitt’s response to this is to present an interactionist dialectical picture of change over time. He says that

to characterize social change as the result of changes in the forces of production exclusively is to emphasize only one side of a dialectical movement and to suppress the temporal aspect of the process. (435)

Truitt attempts to interject the human aspect into current understandings of historical materialism such that “dialectical self-determination” supplants the determinist picture. For Truitt,

When we assign causal priority to the productive forces, we should remember that the productive forces (the technologies) are human inventions, i.e., they are determined as they determine. Notice this is a conception of reciprocal or dialectical causation. (434)[

Hence, when Shaw cites Marx’s famous passage that “the hand mill gives you a society with a feudal lord, and the steam-mill gives you a society with the industrial capitalist”, Truitt concludes that Shaw

fails to give any importance to Marx’s claim in the same passage that “men change their mode of production.” Had he done so it would have opened up the reciprocal connection between people and the machines they build. Put another way, that the hand-mill gives you a feudal lord does not ensure that it also sustains him in political power. (436)[

The type of production relations required by the productive forces, as I understand it, sets structural constraints on human action. Nonetheless, according to Truitt, human action provides the dynamic for change over time that is lost in the determinist picture.

I have a great deal of sympathy for Truitt’s formulation of the

problem. However, he leaves the productive forces on the same explanatory plane as production relations; and this is an unacceptably large shift from the basics of historical materialism.

All this derives, I believe, from a mistake in assessing what it is that is “determined” by the productive forces. Being explanatorily primary, changes in the productive forces “determine” the goals for changes in production relations. Productive forces determine the functional requirements of the system. In this sense Miller’s objection is vitiated. The changes in production relations he cites are precisely those required to meet the goals of developing the productive forces. Let me now present a very brief explanation of Cohen’s functional formulation such that the deficiency in Truitt’s analysis can be made clear.

Cohen argues that the nature of society’s relations of production and their influence on the productive forces are functionally explained by the requirements of the productive forces. The main question for Cohen must then be, are the production relations functional for the development of the productive forces, and, if so, does this serve to explain the essential aspects of the relations of production? Since all functions are not necessarily explanatory, Cohen argues that only some functional outcomes may explain the relevant institution. If we wish to discern which functions are explanatory, and not incidental, some “feedback” mechanism must be identified such that the tendency to produce benefit “f” entails the institutions “e” which produce “f.”

To be clear, Cohen uses the classic example of the beneficial effects a long neck has for a giraffe, where the feedback mechanism involved entails chance variation (causes the long neck) and natural selection (explains the continued occurrence). We must identify the causal mechanism involved in order to explain why the relations of production are functional for developing the productive forces, and that the social relations exist because of this fact.

Jon Elster has made much of the fact that no mechanism comparable to that in biology exists in the social sciences connecting the beneficial effects to the functional social relations (1982; 1983, chap. 2; 1985, chap. 1). However, many types of “elaborations,” as Cohen calls them, have been proposed.

Intentional elaborations, equilibrium accounts, and many others have been suggested by Philippe van Parijs and others (1981, chap. 1; 1982, 504). None have as yet proved to be fully adequate. The

essential question then for historical materialism and Marxian historical investigations per se is, can we employ functional explanations absent fully fleshed-out elaborating mechanisms? Cohen believes, contrary to Elster, that absent such elaborations, we can still find functional explanations to be explanatory given certain “provocative correlations.” He compares our predicament to the situation faced by biologists before Darwin. Clearly they knew about and used the functional relations of certain biological features to explain evolution even though they were unaware of random mutation and natural selection as the relevant feedback mechanisms.

Cohen freely admits that he does not know how productive forces “select” the right production relations. That, he says, is the task at hand. We should be open, I believe, to explore different forms of microfoundational explanations until one, or more than likely several, turn out to be useful. The problem is not that Cohen gives us what Truitt calls an “anthropomorphic” conception of the productive forces such that productive forces “selecting” production relations endows these inanimate objects (or better, fetishizes them) with a sort of agency. Rather, the question is what sort of mechanisms operate to ensure that such a selection is made? I have in mind here theories of race, gender, socialization, and religion along with different methodologies such as game theory, genealogy, and the sort of detailed historical investigations that Cohen, as an analytic philosopher, is loathe to do.

The one significant objection similar to that raised by Truitt comes from Levine and Wright (1980, 55), who suggest that Cohen’s functional argument is “fatally mitigated” since historical counterexamples exist where nonoptimal relations are produced. They say, for example, that the idled forces of production could not have selected the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. However, this is a change in production relations produced intentionally by the state apparatus for the purpose of revitalizing the productive forces. The microfoundational explanation here, that is, the elaboration, is an intentional one, and a key example of how the state functions to preserve the social relations of production in times of crisis. In that sense the productive forces did select the Civilian Conservation Corps, as a response to needs arising from the stagnation in the development of the productive forces.

Even if we agree that these are instances of disfunctionality, Levine and Wright’s counterexamples cited by Truitt, namely

Germany in the beginning of Hitler's era and production relations created during the U.S. Depression, are crisis examples. It should not be surprising that a significant amount of dysfunctionality should be found at times of extreme crisis. Would we reject a functional explanation of the human body's immune system when AIDS forces it to destroy this essential protective mechanism?

Certainly we are dealing with problems that are, given Truitt's correct emphasis on human agency, much more complex than those in biology. The question I would leave to Truitt is: does your account maintain that the productive forces are at least explanatorily primary such that Cohen's functional account makes sense? If not, why not, and how can we defend the form of interactionism seemingly advocated in this alternative to technological determinism as a Marxian theory of history? Along with Cohen, I just do not see how we can interpret the famous paragraph in the "Preface" in anything other than a functional fashion (Cohen 1978, 278–9). And if this functional interpretation is accepted, what sorts of elaborations or microfoundational explanations would best serve to direct historical research given this position? Some stand, at least on the explanatory primacy of the productive forces, must be taken.

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Response by Willis H. Truitt

The forces of production do develop over *time*. But *temporality* is the decisive aspect. The appearance of new productive forces sets the stage for further developments in the relations of production, culture, and politics. At the onset of an epoch the new productive forces “functionally” dominate work relations. But as contradictions accrue and antagonistic interests come into play, political intervention becomes probable.

My view is not a weak interactionism—I think this comes closer to a characterization of Richard Miller’s position. Rather, I have insisted that in early periods of the development of new productive forces, what G. A. Cohen calls “selection” takes place. But in place of “selection” I would substitute “causal determination.” We can see this “determination” in vastly different contexts. The appearance (invention) of the bow radically transformed visual perspectives and work relations of late Paleolithic hunters (see my article “Art and Science” in *Science and Nature* (nos. 9/10, [1989])). And as craftsmen’s tools could not compete productively with machine manufacture, previously semi-autonomous producers were *causally* forced to seek employment in factories or elsewhere. So I do take the development of the productive forces as basic, and perhaps as causally prior. Still, with regard to causal priority, how do we handle the fact that modifications in the productive forces or the introduction of new productive forces are the result of practice or of the transformative power of human labor itself? By noticing, I think, that labor power is the inescapable common causal (productive) agent in the whole of human history.

Therefore, to answer Gold’s question, we can say, in a *temporally* qualified sense, that the productive forces are explanatorily primary without, at the same time, embracing G. A. Cohen’s extreme version of what I have called “technological determinism”—in this way saving human agency, which nearly vanishes in Cohen’s account. “Functional” determinism weakens as the forces of production mature and come into conflict with the relations of production. As to Gold’s question about what sorts of elaborations or microfoundational explanations would best serve to direct historical research, I must confess that I am unprepared to answer, mainly because it is a technical problem better left to Marxist political economists.

Replaces ad

Book Reviews

Discriminate Deterrence: Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, Government Printing Office, 1987, 69 pages.

A Pentagon report by a commission including such names as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Samuel Huntington, and William Clark, one that claims to set U.S. military strategy for the next two decades, must receive more than ordinary scrutiny. *Discriminate Deterrence* was initially heralded in the bourgeois press as suggesting that nuclear arsenals should be reduced and more attention should be paid to conflicts in the third world. As ever, the court press got it at best only half right.

If implemented, the recommendations of this report would bring the doomsday clock closer to midnight and the planet closer to extinction. The authors' close ties with high-level congressional, administrative, and military officials make it impossible to disregard them as careening loose cannons.

Over the last fifteen months the Commission has received valuable counsel from members of Congress, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs, and the President's Science Advisor. Members of the National Security Council Staff, numerous professionals in the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency, and a broad range of specialists outside the government provided unstinting support. [And they are not finished.] Commission members will remain on call to deliberate further on aspects of this report and related issues.

Despite former President Reagan's reassuring words that "a nuclear war should never be fought and cannot be won," his commissioners are more forthright.

There should be less ambiguity about the nature of this [nuclear] deterrent. The Alliance should threaten to use nuclear

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weapons not as a link to a wider and more devastating war—although the risk of further escalation would still be there—but mainly as an instrument for denying success to the invading Soviet forces. The nuclear weapons would be used discriminatingly, for example, attacks on Soviet command centers or troop concentrations.

The commission also endorses Star Wars, calls for a de facto breaching of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and issues harsh words against a nuclear test ban.

The implicit call for nuclear arms reductions is for the purpose of better overthrowing Soviet power and halting all social progress.

It should not be thought that the decline in the U.S. nuclear arsenal was achieved at the cost of military effectiveness. Rather, it resulted mainly from technical innovations that made it possible to substitute conventional weapons for nuclear weapons in most anti-air and anti-submarine roles. Additional reductions should be achievable as new technology makes it practical to use conventional weapons to attack many ground targets that currently require nuclear weapons.

The authors reject “for the foreseeable future” the possibility of pursuing agreements to eliminate all nuclear or all chemical weapons. Thus they seek to dismiss in one stroke Mikhail Gorbachev’s ambitious plan to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. They insist that

past reductions in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, undertaken in pursuit of our unilateral objectives, have been larger than the total reduction in the number of Soviet warheads that would be accomplished together by the INF treaty and the 50 percent reduction hoped for from START.

The report concedes that the strength of Soviet power makes “our threat to use nuclear weapons against them...progressively less credible...High tech is not an American monopoly...American technology today is less superior than it used to be.” What is questioned, at least rhetorically, is the doctrine of “massive retaliation” and “deterrence,” its close cousin. “We cannot rely on threats expected to provoke our own annihilation if carried out.” The authors acknowledge that this doctrine of turning Europe into a mass coffin has helped to generate a powerful peace

movement; “planners have neglected the problem of Alliance disunity in a selective attack (the opting-out problem).” Despite this realism, however, they turn for a solution to “smart” weapons, the Stealth system, ballistic missile defense, and Star Wars.

Breaking the close unity between the Soviets and their Eastern European allies is seen as a primary U.S. objective, along with fomenting ethnic conflict in the USSR itself.

[Planners] have not given enough thought to our prospects for exploiting tension within the Soviet empire (and giving the East Europeans some reasons to think about opting out)...Alliance preparations for war should include specific plans to exploit Eastern Europe’s potential disaffection from the Soviet Union.

As at home, ethnic conflict is seen as the ultimate trump card.

Repeated insistence by peace forces on the suicidal insanity of nuclear weapons has inevitably had its effect even on this commission. Military planners have attempted to turn a setback into victory by exploiting public revulsion at nuclear weapons and arguing for increased spending on conventional weaponry. Conventional arms buildup is an essential component of “discriminate deterrence.” Calling for “conventional reductions,” the report insists that the USSR has a large advantage in tanks, artillery, and other heavy equipment. The authors call for

continued growth in the equipment that makes our ships, aircraft and other “platforms” more effective—such as advanced non-nuclear munitions, conventionally armed tactical missiles, sensors and communications systems.

They cautiously add that the United States “might gain from” the reduction of U.S. and Soviet forces stationed in Europe. This is presumably an instance of the U.S. economic crisis—specifically the balance-of-payments issue—intruding on U.S. military policy.

Areas of regional conflict play a laboratory role for the United States, as Vietnam did in an earlier period. With Israeli assistance, South Africa has developed a new jet fighter (the Cheetah) that, using recently acquired Boeing in-flight refueling aircraft, can strike as far north as Dar es Salaam. The southern Africa theater should be kept in mind when pondering the commission’s chilling comment that “in the past forty years all the wars in which the United States has been involved have occurred in the Third World.” Setbacks to imperialism are acknowledged, as is, by implication, the peace and

solidarity movement, when reference is made to the “rancorous disagreement about the nature of our interests.”

Our failure in Vietnam still casts a shadow over U.S. intervention anywhere, and other setbacks—notably those we suffered in Lebanon—have left some predisposed to pessimism about our ability to promote U.S. interests in the Third World. Our ability to persevere in such wars is always questionable... We are sometimes constrained by the need to “save” forces or advanced technologies for a possible confrontation with the Soviet Union—even though our potential adversaries in the Third World are themselves acquiring increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

What is to be done? The report offers a ringing endorsement of “low intensity conflict,” with the assurance that “U.S. forces will not in general be combatants,” in spite of increased placement of “diplomats and information specialists, agricultural chemists, bankers and economists, hydrologists, criminologists, meteorologists, and scores of other professionals” in the third world.

The commission is particularly concerned with the contentious question of military bases in Central America and Southeast Asia.

One long-term trend unfavorable to the United States concerns our diminishing ability to gain agreement for timely access, including bases and overflight rights... We have found it increasingly difficult and politically costly, to maintain bases in the Third World. Many of our friends there become vulnerable to nationalist charges that they are surrendering sovereignty.

Bases in Panama, the Philippines, Spain, and even the Azores are in jeopardy. What to do? Increasing spending on Rapid Deployment Forces is suggested. But the commission sees the growth of social progress in Nicaragua, peaceful policies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and in particular the policies of Indonesia, as a threat requiring special attention.

Other aspects of this report merit our attention. Continued growth and increasing strength of Japan and China are envisioned. The report includes cold-blooded suggestions of wars on “the Soviet periphery” and plans to manipulate crises as Gerald Ford did with the Mayaguez incident.

Our budgetary strategy should also provide for continuing and strengthening the Defense Department’s planning for a “surge

capability.” In a world of stop-go budgeting, we need better ways of spending the money when the light suddenly turns green—when, say, Congress responds to some sudden threat or crisis by making substantial new funds available. Thus argues this report

In spite of their efforts, these hard-boiled practitioners of *Realpolitik* have labored and produced a mouse of a report that has a total air of unreality about it. Although the growing power of peace forces world-wide has obviously influenced the world and shaped this report, they do not mention this factor. They do not acknowledge that a few transnational corporations are the ultimate beneficiaries of the maneuvering and spending they propose. They take for granted Washington’s role as world policeman with the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other states. They do observe that “resources available for defense will probably be constrained more than in the past, principally by concern over the national debt and pressures for social spending.”

It is incumbent upon peace forces to turn the momentum of this report against the commission and its backers. Calls for international disarmament negotiations must be strengthened. We must emphasize the perils of increasing reliance on conventional weaponry and the emphasis on low-intensity conflict. Above all, we should stress that every dollar spent on military madness means another dying child, another homeless person, another blighted life. Discriminate deterrence is no improvement over the original variety.

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Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers. By Barbara Christian. New York: Pergamon Press, 1985, 261 pages, paper, \$16.95.

Barbara Christian, the first Black woman to receive tenure at the University of California (Berkeley), is associate professor in the Afro-American Studies Department and active in the Women’s Studies Program. She has also worked in community education programs in both the East Bay/Berkeley areas and in New York

City through the SEEK program at City College. Her concern for communicating with people outside the ivory tower is evident throughout this volume of critical essays on Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, and others. Christian sets the tone for this collection of review articles (many of which were previously published in periodicals including *The Black Scholar*, *Feminist Issues*, and *In These Times*) with an introduction framed as a conversation with her 10-year-old daughter, who wants to know why they can't play a game together. Christian replies,

"'I'm working,' ending the discussion, I think. Her skeptical face bends down. 'You're not teaching,' she retorts. 'You're just reading a story'"(ix).

Christian explains to her daughter (and her readers) that "just reading a story" is revolutionary work for a Black woman who could not have been conceived of as a reader, or might have been killed for reading, just a little more than 100 years ago. She points out that for many long centuries Foucault's library in which the European male reader is surrounded by books about books has been closed to Black women, except as domestic workers to dust the volumes. Reading is thus a privilege, a joy, a duty. The Black woman reader rewrites the texts, interpreting them from the perspective of the history of her people and her own experience.

Like Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), Christian tries on different critical labels to explain her theoretical stance as critic: formalist criticism, expressive criticism, operative criticism. ("I'm listening to the voice, the many voices created by Alice Walker in this book and looking at the way she's using words to make these voices seem alive, so you believe them" (ix). She also identifies herself with Marxist criticism in musing with her daughter about why she and her friends always discuss literature in the kitchen: "Because communities revolve around food and warmth, at least until they generate enough surplus to have women or blacks or some other groups do it for them and they can retire to the library" (xii). "Ah, Marxist criticism?" she asks herself.

But Barbara Christian will never retire to the library. Her reading and writing about reading will remain centered in the community. For, like Eagleton, she believes that the point of literary criticism is what you do with the text, whether or not you use the text to agitate for a better world. "People *do* things, one of which might

be writing, to help themselves and other people ask questions about who they are, who they might be, what kind of world they want to create, to remind ourselves that we do create the world" (xiv).

In examining the role of Black women in African-American literature, as both subject and object, Christian never isolates the text from its socioeconomic context. Indeed the genres she chooses to discuss in her opening chapter resist formalist analysis. How could the mulatta of nineteenth-century African-American novels be analyzed without reference to the rape of African slaves by the Southern slave master? And the spirituals, slave narratives, and work songs of an enslaved and newly emancipated people must be discussed in terms of economic and political realities.

Christian's analysis of the work of Zora Neale Hurston begins with a history of the Harlem Renaissance, which is also the personal history of this great novelist who arrived in New York to begin her career as a writer at the time that Harlem began to emerge as the cultural center of North America. Just as Hurston's life chronicled new adventures and possibilities for Black women, so the heroines of her novels broke the traditional molds of tragic mulatta or dumb mammy, evincing complexities of character that paved the way for the rich literary creations of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.

Christian includes several essays on Toni Morrison in this volume, one of which addresses the concept of class in Morrison's novels. Like Walker, Morrison necessarily portrays the intersection of racial and sexual discrimination which oppresses her characters. But Morrison has "illuminated in her four novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby*, the definition of woman in relation to race and class assumptions." Pecola Breedlove is cut off from the community she longs for not only by the color of her eyes (and skin) but by the poverty of her family. Christian's reading of Morrison's story "has to do with the concept of class as a major factor upon which the societal norm of what a woman is supposed to be is based" (72).

Class and race conflicts also affect the male characters in Morrison's novels. Christian notes that in *Song of Solomon*, whose protagonists are male, class consciousness is key.

For though Milkman's quest for his identity is the dominant thread of the novel, the major obstacle he must overcome is the deadening effects of his father's need to own as much property as possible in order to protect himself against racism. And

Milkman is accidentally propelled on his search for himself as a result of his desire for gold. That journey leads him back through his personal past to a racial history that had been vehemently opposed to materialism and greed. It is a history that was created from the suffering imposed upon his people by the greed of others. (77)

One of the most interesting chapters in the book is the last one, an essay not published previously, which compares the treatment of motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*. Here Christian analyzes the ideologies of motherhood as presented by the Nigerian and African-American novelists. She first studies what anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and historians have to say about the meaning of motherhood in early twentieth-century Nigeria and in the U.S. South. Her readings lead her to assert that motherhood is central to African philosophy and spirituality, but that although women are revered for their reproductive capacity, their identities are so tied to motherhood, that they have a very hard time leading independent, productive lives. Emecheta's central character, Nnu Ego, although intelligent and creative, feels worthless until she bears a child. Then, when the child dies on a day she has gone to the market to sell goods to supplement her husband's small income, she attempts suicide. When she has another child, she vows to stay home with him to insure his safety and her identity as a mother.

Christian's examination of the ideology of motherhood in the U.S. South shows the many tangled threads of cultures and oppressions that affect the lives of African-American women. There are the beliefs of the African-American community, those of the white community, and the white community's views of Black motherhood. The dominant community, while professing to revere women and motherhood, does nothing to support women and their children.

Like Iboza society, motherhood is the prescribed role for women in American society, but this prescription is not so much ritualized as it is enforced by the limited options available to women. Little is known by young women about what motherhood will really mean for them, the most important omission being that they, not the society, will be totally responsible for their children. Further, because of the history of slave mothers, such sanctification surrounds Afro-American motherhood that the idea that mothers should live lives of

sacrifice has come to be seen as the norm. Another element that Walker stresses is significantly different from Emecheta's emphasis. For in America, racism results in violence inflicted upon black children in society, while in Iboza children are beloved. (231-232)

Barbara Christian views herself as a feminist and her essays as Black feminist criticism, but her feminism, while focusing on female writers and protagonists, does not exclude the views and the plights of men and children. Her critical stance is grounded in history, and she insists on the importance of economic and social conditions that shape the work of literature and our response to that work. Her book continues the tradition of a Marxist-feminist dialogue and reveals how the intersection of class, race, and gender oppression shapes the works of major African-American writers.

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