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INTRODUCTION

Since last summer’s invasion of Lebanon, we, perhaps like many of our readers, have been examining our past assumptions and actions regarding the Middle East. As an editorial collective we have been talking, reading, and thinking together about how to engage in a serious review of Israeli and US policy and of the complex social, economic, and political questions involved in the simple phrases “Arab-Israeli conflict” or “Palestinian question.”

One result of our review is that we have been somewhat astounded by our own previous ignorance. We have not arrived at a unified position, nor have we really strived for one, but collectively we have come to a new awareness of the importance of directly addressing issues in the Mideast — no matter how “uncomfortable” they may make us — in order to develop a serious critique of US policy at least, and of international political forces and trends at best.

In future issues we hope to engage in such questions more directly. Here we are pleased to present Fuad Faris’s article “Lebanon After the Israeli Invasion” as a start in our effort to conquer our ignorance and to better understand the complex dynamics of Middle Eastern political struggle. The article allows us to see the Lebanon situation in a fuller historical context and to get away from the easy, but misleading, categorization of Christians, Jews,
and Arabs which we have been given to explain Middle Eastern politics. Faris helps us to see the roots of the Phalangists and the current divisions in regard to internal Lebanese politics and to Lebanon’s complex relations with other Arab states, Israel, and the US. He begins one important part of our political education by suggesting that there are important differences among Christian and Arab groups in the area and that an informed analysis must take such differences into account.

Of course, one short article leaves us with many questions which must also be answered if we are to develop a more useful analysis. Faris mentions the positive, progressive hope of the National Front in Lebanon, but we need to know more about such groups just as we need to know more about leftist forces within the PLO and within Israel. What are the positions of such groups? How do they connect to different international left alignments? What are their bases within their communities? Any hope for a clear left socialist position on the Middle East is dependent on our knowing more about indigenous left formations there.

Similarly we need to know more about the reality and the illusion of religious issues in defining politics in the region. Faris explains how French confessional politics was used to divide people and to create a sense of false religious, rather than class unity. But surely Moslem fundamentalism is a force in the area, as is Jewish traditionalism. What hope is there for overcoming religious definitions of problems and achieving a fuller socialist approach?

As with so many leftists we have often sought to avoid the irrational religious disputes of the world, or to redefine them as class or national problems. Can we really do this in the Middle East, or is the effort too easy for us, a way of laying our categories on the questions?

Please bear with us as we explore such questions in future issues. For now we are happy to begin the discussion with a piece which sets a serious, nonpolemical tone while still raising the critical political questions which we have avoided for too long.

* * *

Motherhood continues to be, as it has always been, a politically charged issue. However, these debates are taking place in a political context quite different from that in which the women’s movement first raised the issue. Where the women’s movement once examined motherhood as a social institution in order to challenge its role in defining and restricting women’s lives, motherhood is now raised, by the New Right and some left groups as well as some women’s groups, as the basis for women’s participation in social movements. (See RA, Vol. 16 No. 1-2, and the letters column in this issue.) Where the terms and experience of mothering were once examined to reveal its complex relation to the deeply rooted norms of heterosexuality, mothering is now seen by some as the essence of femininity. And where the women’s movement once viewed motherhood as one of many institutions and relations reproducing male dominance, and saw motherhood itself as a complex group of activities (including housework as well as childrearing), motherhood is now defined more narrowly in terms of childrearing. Correspondingly, changes in childrearing are seen as the primary, if not exclusive, way to change gender roles.

It is within this changing political and ideological context that Judy Housman reexamines Nancy Chodorow’s The Reproduction of Mothering, a book produced within (and made possible by) the “second wave” of feminism, but one which can take on very different mean-
ing in the current period of antifeminist backlash. Housman’s article is less a specific critique of Chodorow’s work (although she raises important questions about the assumptions behind and areas of focus in that work) than a reraising of issues which once surrounded the work and are now in danger of being forgotten. She urges us to reconsider our assumptions about gender and sexuality, and what challenges to male power might mean for the future of differences between men and women. And she warns us against pessimism in the face of these deep-seated ways of relating; she emphasizes the impact which changes in other social institutions can have on the norms of motherhood itself.

We are also reprinting in this issue Peter Bradbury’s analysis of sexuality and male violence, which explores some of the same questions. It represents at attempt by one heterosexual man to explore, in a very personal way, the roots of his masculinity. In that sense, it embodies a consciousness-raising exploration of self, much like the activity through which women first raised the cluster of issues which gave rise to Chodorow’s work. Bradbury raises important questions about the ways boys are raised in a male-dominated culture, their relation to women and domesticity, their construction of sexuality, and their habit of using physical violence in intimate relationships. We urge that both articles be read as much for the questions they pose about each other as for the insights which each provides.

CORRECTION

In Vol. 16 No. 1–2 of Radical America, this photograph was incorrectly credited. It was taken by Pamela Harris. We are sorry for the error.

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In Section I, I relate events that occurred after the Israeli invasion started in June. In Section II, I try to place these events in their historical context to better understand them. Finally, in Section III, I try to assess how the situation may develop in the next few months.

I. THE INVASION AND THE FEW MONTHS AFTER

Shortly after the Israeli army withdrew from Beirut in late September, the (newly reorganized) Lebanese army started a campaign of roundups in the city. These roundups, which lasted for the best part of October, were primarily conducted in the shantytowns and poorer sections of West Beirut, not in the residential areas. It was the first large-scale operation by the Lebanese army since the 1975-76 civil war.

I would like to say a few words about these roundups and the way they were carried out, because they illustrate rather well the antisocial character of the present government.

Although they were conducted by the army, the roundups should be viewed as the continuation of past actions by the Phalangist militias and their allies, but now under the cover...
of legality. In this there is no surprise. The Lebanese army, as presently constituted, is dominated by elements sympathetic to the Phalangists. The relationship between the two is in fact deeper than this simple connection, and goes back to the historical role played by the Phalangists vis-a-vis the Lebanese state over the last forty years. I will come back to this history later, but for now I want to make a few points explicit about these roundups:

FIRST, it is true that they first rounded up Palestinians, but later they went after Egyptians, Sudanese, Syrians, and other non-Lebanese Arabs, who were charged with not being legal residents of Lebanon. As you might expect, these were all poor people, like the poor Mexicans who cross the US border without legal papers and who end up doing the most menial work. Rich and well-to-do Egyptians, Syrians, and even Palestinians invariably have all necessary legal papers. Therefore they have not been bothered, and will not be bothered, by the Lebanese government.

SECOND, once they finished with people without proper identification, they went after people who had built their houses on private or government land without permit. During the first three weeks of October, the Lebanese army demolished whole sections of squatting homes occupied by poor Lebanese from the South or the Beka valley. When the army brought bulldozers to destroy what it said were illegally built houses in Ouzai (a neighborhood near the airport), there was a bloody confrontation with the residents (all Lebanese) which ended up in the death of several people.

THIRD, the roundups in West Beirut provoked a public outcry, not only among progressive circles in Lebanon but also in Europe. So much so that both the French and Italian governments, whose troops are part of the multinational peacekeeping force in Beirut, found it necessary to warn the Lebanese government against taking further repressive measures. The Lebanese government’s answer was that it was conducting routine roundups, disarming all armed elements in the capital, and that it intended to exercise its authority in both East and West Beirut. Up to this moment, however, the army has not disarmed any armed element in East Beirut, which effectively remains under Phalangist control.

This last point raises a crucial question about where the center (or centers) of authority lie in the present government. For one thing, the government’s defensive and apologetic attitude concerning actions by its military indicates that some of these actions went beyond what was officially sanctioned by the government. Furthermore, part of the reality is that the Lebanese army cannot —
of legality. In this there is no surprise. The Lebanese army, as presently constituted, is dominated by elements sympathetic to the Phalangists. The relationship between the two is in fact deeper than this simple connection, and goes back to the historical role played by the Phalangists vis-a-vis the Lebanese state over the last forty years. I will come back to this history later, but for now I want to make a few points explicit about these roundups:

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This last point raises a crucial question about where the center (or centers) of authority lie in the present government. For one thing, the government’s defensive and apologetic attitude concerning actions by its military indicates that some of those actions went beyond what was officially sanctioned by the government. Furthermore, part of the reality is that the Lebanese army cannot—and will not—displace the Phalangist militias from East Beirut and other parts of the country which they control. Not only is the Lebanese army no match for the Phalangist militias but, more importantly, its officer corps includes people with opposing loyalties, with many who are outright sympathizers with the Phalangist militias.

Perhaps the most important center of power in Beirut now lies with the Phalangist militias (or more precisely, with the so-called Lebanese Forces of which the Phalangist militias form the core). And because these militias do not owe allegiance to the government, they are a threat to its authority. The challenge represented by the Phalangist militias is indeed quite serious because, with Israeli backing, they are considerably more powerful than the Lebanese army. This may appear paradoxical, since the Lebanese president (Amin Gemayel) is himself a Phalangist. Is there indeed a conflict between Amin Gemayel and other members of the Phalangist Party, on the one hand, and the Phalangist militias allied with Israel, on the other?

The Lebanese Forces Against The Phalangist Party?

Divergences within the Phalangist Party have existed for a long time, and in fact part of its history over the last four decades. There were always elements in the party that promoted its paramilitary function, while others among its leaders were more concerned about fending off its reputation as an authoritarian and paramilitary party.

During the 1975-76 civil war and the troubled years following it, the Phalangist militias gradually took charge of setting party policies. In the process, Bashir Gemayel, as commander of the Phalangist militias since 1976, became increasingly influential in party affairs. His older brother Amin, who represented the “civilian” wing of the party and who had been the favorite up until 1975 to assume the party leadership, eventually faded out in Bashir’s favor.

There was therefore no surprise this past July when, at the height of the Israeli onslaught on Beirut, Bashir Gemayel announced that he was a candidate for the presidency. Within the Phalangist party he was the architect of its alliance with Israel. He was the most staunchly anti-Palestinian, and the Phalangist whom Israel favored most. On August 23, Bashir Gemayel was elected president by a moribund parliament that was revived for the occasion by the presence of Israeli guns.

But, after the PLO withdrawal from Beirut, Bashir as president faced a new situation. The Palestinian “threat” was removed from Beirut and the Lebanese National Movement was forced underground. No longer just the commander of the Pha...
langist militias, he now wanted to govern the country. For this he had to find new internal alliances that would not only legitimize his presidency, but would also save him from becoming a Lebanese proconsul for Israel. In this effort, Bashir could count on the support of traditional politicians as well as the support of the “civilian” wing of his own party; they all had an interest in restoring the social-economic-political order which existed in Lebanon before the civil war, and which made Lebanon more dependent on the Arab world than on Israel.

The contradiction between Phalangist rule and Israeli domination in Lebanon came to a head just a few days after Bashir’s election. In a now well-documented encounter between Menachem Begin and Bashir Gemayel in Nahariyah, Begin accused Gemayel of being ungrateful for all that Israel had done for the Phalangists. Gemayel on the other hand declared that Begin was making impossible demands on him and Lebanon.¹

This conflict in fact reflected a similar conflict within the ranks of the Phalangist Party, with the militias taking an overt pro-Israeli position, and with the “civilian” wing of the party trying to keep a distance from Israel. Thus, whereas the militias have refused to make concessions, however minimal, for the sake of “national reconciliation,” the “civilian” wing wants to govern Lebanon by finding ways to accommodate some of the traditional opposition groups as well as the Arab states.

The intra-Phalangist conflict also reached the crisis point as a result of the Israeli invasion. In the few days before his assassination, Bashir Gemayel, in his quest to become the uncontested leader of his party and the country, met several times with the commanding officers of the Phalangist militias. He wanted to discuss ways of integrating the militias into a Lebanese army that would be solely responsible to the government. But just as in his meeting with Begin, Bashir reportedly found himself at loggerheads with his military officers, who preferred to keep their militias outside the authority of a government that might not give top priority to the war against the Palestinians.

Who Killed Bashir Gemayel?

Not much has been said in the American media about the assassination of Bashir Gemayel. By contrast, considerable coverage has been given to the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

Both events are, however, intimately related—not in the sense that the assassination led to the Israeli occupation of Beirut, which in turn allowed for the massacres to take place. In fact, from the various depositions in front of the Israeli panel of inquiry, it has become clear that (1) Bashir’s assassination was only an excuse for the Israeli army’s entry into Beirut, which had been carefully planned by the Israeli general staff, and (2) the joint Israeli-Phalangist operation into the Sabra and Shatila camps was also part of the attack plan, even though the killing inside the camps may have gone beyond what Israeli generals had explicitly allowed.

The real intimate link between the two events (Bashir’s assassination and the massacres) is that they were conducted by the same forces, pursuing the same political objective. The objective is to create a Palestinian-free Lebanon under a government that is subservient to, and wholly dependent on, Israel. As it is turning out, the pursuit of this objective is fraught with problems and may still backfire.

Perhaps the large-scale killing in the camps was never explicitly ordered by Israeli officers. And perhaps the liquidation of Bashir Gemayel was never explicitly ordered by Israeli intelligence either. But the fact is that in both events, the instrument that carried out the action (namely special units from the Phalangist militias together with some units from Saad Haddad’s force) was
an instrument created by Israel and wielded by people with a vested interest in the continuation of Israeli domination of Lebanon.

One result of the assassination and the massacres is that the Israeli government, under harsh internal and external criticism, has been trying to deflect the blame to the Phalangist militias. If the public outcry continues, the Israeli government will have to find scapegoats for its action. Sharon and some of the other Israeli generals may have to be dismissed. But in addition, if public pressure continues, Israel may have to distance itself from the Phalangist militias. If this turn of events does take place, it will have important internal repercus-

sions in Lebanon. Without Israeli assistance, the Phalangist militias are considerably weaker and may lose the edge to control the situation.

The events surrounding the assassination and the massacres have also embarrassed the new government of Amin Gemayel. Amin Gemayel and others in the Phalangist party have taken great pains in exonerating themselves from any responsibility. But herein lies the danger. If the government can now keep its distance from the Phalangist militias, without fear of immediate retaliation from them, it is in part because Israel is busy repolishing its public image after the invasion and the massacres, and probably prefers that the mili-
ties do not try for the moment to confront the government. On the other hand, nobody in Lebanon is now powerful enough to disarm the militias — not even the Lebanese army (which in fact is neither powerful nor trustworthy). The Phalangist militias are therefore biding their time now, hoping that circumstances will soon enough change in their favor.

On October 24 the Phalangist militias organized a mass rally in East Beirut. It was a show of force — and a warning that they do not intend to disarm until all “terrorists and foreigners” (which are code words for Palestinians and Syrians) have been forced out of Lebanon. In the meantime, Amin Gemayel and the government are trying to build up their strength — unfortunately not by reorganizing the army and securing its allegiance against the Phalangist militias, but by expanding the multinational peacekeeping force. Put simply, the Lebanese government views its own authority as being eventually erected on a large influx of foreign troops (and foreign money). The irony in all of this is that we have a government which claims a mandate to rid the country of all foreign troops (notably, Israeli and Syrian), but which is also most eager to introduce other foreign troops (American, French, Italian).*

*The Lebanese government is not talking about a few hundred or even a few thousand American, French, and Italian soldiers. From the numbers mentioned, what is envisioned is a full-fledged foreign army that will fully assume the role of a national army. When Amin Gemayel came to the UN, and then visited Washington, Paris, and Rome, he repeatedly said that his government wanted a multinational force that would include no fewer than 30,000 soldiers, as well as an expansion of the present 7,000-strong UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon (New York Times, Oct. 21, 1982).
II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: 
THE PHALANGIST PARTY 
AND THE LEBANESE STATE

Let me mention a few dates in the history of the Phalangists. The founder of the party, Pierre Gemayel, first thought of creating a nationalist youth movement when he was attending the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin. Many years later, Gemayel explained that “There [in Germany] I was struck with admiration. We orientals are, by nature, an unruly and individualistic people. In Germany I witnessed the perfect conduct of a whole, unified nation.” He went on to explain that he was particularly impressed with Germany’s sense of discipline, order, purpose, and nationalist zeal that were manifestly absent in his native Lebanon.²

The Phalangist party was formally created on November 21, 1936, by five French-educated middle-class professionals, all Christian. They included a pharmacist (Gemayel himself), a lawyer, two journalists, and an engineer. Gemayel was designated the “superior leader” (in French, le chef superieur), which is still the way they refer to him today. The party’s motto, which in a way sums up what it is all about, is God, Fatherland, Family.

From the late 1930s until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, the Phalangists were always the party defending the state. So much so that political commentators in Lebanon called it “the party of the state.” Whenever the state was in crisis, and the army (always weak and with conflicting allegiances) was hesitant in coming to its defense, the Phalangists would invariably play the role of the “shock troops” in defense of the state.

Now what was this Lebanese state that the Phalangists were most eager to defend?

The modern state of Lebanon was created in the 1920s. After the First World War, England and France divided up the Ottoman booty. England took control of that part of the Levant which comprised Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq, while France carved up two new states, Lebanon and Syria, out of the remaining area.

In 1926, the French Mandate authorities equipped Lebanon with its first and only constitution. This constitution maintained and extended the so-called “confessional” system of government in Lebanon. The cornerstone in this form of government is the distribution of all government posts and public offices on a religious or confessional basis. While confessionalism suited rather well French colonial policy of divide-and-rule, it was to contribute greatly to the strife and unrest in Lebanese political life many decades later.

In 1943, the so-called National Pact was adopted by the then dominant political forces which had just chosen complete independence from a declining France. The National Pact extended the 1926 Constitution and reaffirmed its confessionalist form.

Still in effect today, the National Pact stipulates that the president of the republic be Maronite, the prime minister Sunni, the speaker of the parliament Shiite, the deputy speaker of the parliament Greek Orthodox, the chief of the army Maronite, and so on. Seats in the parliament are distributed according to a 6-to-5 Christian-to-Moslem ratio, and appointments in the civil service according to a 1-to-1 Christian-to-Moslem ratio.

What I have just described is the general makeup of the Lebanese state. However, this distribution of power on a confessional basis, far from being what its apologists have presented as a “fair representation of the country’s communal balance,” in fact served only to preserve a semifeudal system of government over the uneven capitalist development of a service-based economy. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Lebanese economy flourished as a result of a vigorous growth in its commercial and banking sectors, as well as in tourism. But the other side of the coin was a gradual depopulation of the countryside, a deterioration of
agriculture, and the expansion of Beirut as a typical Third World metropolis (a glittering center surrounded by miserable shantytowns).

The Main Contradiction

Contrary to general impression, the commercial and financial class in Beirut (headed by a small plutocracy that has had a virtual monopoly on government positions) has maintained a contradictory attitude vis-a-vis the state of Israel over the last thirty years.

Indeed the boom of the service-based Lebanese economy in the 1950s and 1960s was the direct result of the emergence of the state of Israel and of the Arab economic blockade against it: (1) starting in 1948, the port of Beirut carried all the transit that used to be carried by the port of Haifa; (2) the oil pipelines from the Arab hinterland passed through Lebanon and Syria instead of Haifa; (3) were it not for the blockade, the surplus capital that transited to Europe and the Americas through Lebanese brokers would have been handled in Israel; and (4) because Israeli aircraft were not allowed flight over any Arab country, Beirut managed to become the Middle East’s center of world air transport. Thus it was to the benefit of Lebanon’s commercial-financial class to keep the Israeli economy sealed off from the Arab world as much as possible — and therefore not to reach a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such a settlement would have brought strong competition from Israeli commercial and financial power.

On the other hand, the presence of a large number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, itself the result of the non-resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was a destabilizing factor. As a refugee problem in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Palestinian presence was (at worst) an irritant to the Lebanese socio-economic order. As an organized movement, the Palestinian presence later became a serious threat to a state that could neither contain Palestinian activities nor repel Israeli punitive raids against Palestinian centers in Lebanon. In alliance with Lebanese opposition groups (left parties, trade unions, and student organizations), the Palestinian movement in Lebanon incurred the wrath of the parties defending the status quo. First among these was the Phalangist Party.

The 1975-76 Civil War

This was the immediate background of the Lebanese civil war. Having reaped the benefits of being the West’s exclusive broker in the Middle East, largely because of the Arab economic blockade against Israel, the commercial-financial class in Beirut found itself in the early 1970s caught up in all the consequences of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. Its well-being was threatened by the emergence of an organized Palestinian resistance, which not only led to stepped-up Israeli attacks on Lebanese territory, but which was also the natural ally of revolutionary forces within Lebanese society.

In its struggle against the Palestinian movement, the Lebanese state called on the army first. In the early 1970s, as the Lebanese army repeatedly proved itself unable to control the situation, the Phalangist militias and other right-wing paramilitary groups intervened. Mass demonstrations and general strikes invariably ended up in bloody confrontations. The spring of 1975 marked the beginning of the civil war, when the Phalangist militias and their allies launched a campaign of harassment and armed provocation against Palestinian and Lebanese opposition groups.

However, by attributing the internal tensions and the rise of a militant Left exclusively to the Palestinian presence, the right-wing militias miscalculated their ability to pursue successfully their offensive against the Palestinian resistance movement. This opened the door for the intervention of various outside forces in the civil war — pri-
III. WHERE THE SITUATION MAY GO FROM HERE

Of all the parties involved in the Lebanese conflict, the US and Israel are for the time being the most powerful. The two have strong interests in Lebanon, sometimes converging and sometimes diverging, and both will seek to control the situation to their advantage.*

What is at stake is the nature of the present Lebanese government and, in particular, its internal and external alliances. Let me therefore start by summarizing what would be, from the Lebanese government's point of view, the most opportune development in the next few years.

Ideally, the people in power in Lebanon would like to recover their role of middleman between the West and the Arab hinterland. This means the renewal and expansion of their economic relations with the Arab states, especially the oil-producing among them. If they want to meet the same degree of success as in the 1950s and 1960s, the banks, import-export companies, and other commercial and financial concerns in Beirut will have to be far removed from Israeli competition. This in turn means that they have no special interest in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict or in normalizing economic relations with Israel.

But, at one and the same time, they also want to reduce the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and eliminate any semblance of organized opposition that may disrupt the working order of the service-based economy. This, of course, would put Leba-

*I should be careful in what I will say. I do not mean that Israel is the equal of the US in the Lebanese, and more generally, Middle-Eastern situation. It is true that Israel could not continue its aggressive policy were it not for American military and economic aid. But Israel is not a puppet state of the United States, and therefore does not always act in a way which is in the best interest of its American patron. There has never been a master plan, according to which all reactionary forces determine their policies and actions.

Don McCullin, 1979, Young Palestinian with portrait of Arafat

marily Syria and Israel, both of which feared the consequences of a victorious Lebanese National Movement in alliance with the PLO.

The civil war and its aftermath are now history. Throughout the last eight years, the forces of change in Lebanon remained alive against all odds. These forces also kept alive the promise of a renewed struggle for a democratic Lebanon and for Palestinian self-determination.

Contrary to what it tried to achieve, the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982 did not put an end to the Palestinian quest for national self-determination, nor did it eliminate progressive forces in Lebanese society.
non back to where it was ten to fifteen years ago — and up against the same contradictions: How to profit from the Arab world economically without, simultaneously, having to face internal problems of an unbridled service economy? And how to profit from the Arab world economically without, simultaneously, having to face the Palestinian problem and the non-resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Israel and the United States

As for Israel’s interest in Lebanon, it is not only to eliminate any form of organized Palestinian resistance (in order to pursue the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip unhindered), but also to bring Lebanon into its sphere of influence (economically and politically). Ideally, Lebanon would be turned into a “North Bank,” which would in many ways reproduce Israel’s domination of the West Bank. But such a development would require the demise of the commercial-financial class in Beirut. And it would also require the political fragmentation of Lebanon (for example, turning the country into a federation of smaller and weaker cantons), since the unity of the country would be an obstacle to Israeli penetration.

This is not just speculation. There is already considerable evidence supporting this analysis of Israeli policy in Lebanon. Israeli entrepreneurs, armed with various plans for the Lebanese market, followed closely in Israeli soldiers’ footsteps. No sooner was the Israeli army in control of major towns in southern Lebanon than Israeli commercial and financial concerns were opening branches in them. During July, the second month of the invasion, the (one-way) trade earned Israel 4 million dollars; during August, the flow increased to nearly 8 million dollars; and during the first three months of the invasion, Israeli export to Lebanon exceeded the total value of Israeli export to Egypt for all of 1981. Were it not for the intervention of the US on behalf of the Lebanese government, Israel would have demanded (and obtained) landing rights for El Al airlines at Beirut airport as well as branches for Israeli banks in East Beirut.

As for the Israeli plan to control areas inhabited by a hostile Lebanese population, it is not always by reliance on local surrogates (such as Saad Haddad’s militias). A more effective means of control, which also justifies the Israeli army’s continued presence, is the old principle of divide-and-rule. This was well illustrated by the measures taken by the Israeli military authorities in the Shouf area, where rival (Druze and Maronite) clans were all given arms by the Israeli army. Factional battles in the Shouf are now weekly occurrences, and Israeli army units are routinely brought in to stop the fighting.

The Shouf district is the northernmost area occupied by Israel. It borders the strategic Beirut-Damascus highway. Israel has so far resisted American pressure to withdraw from the Shouf. A token pullout from the Shouf would strengthen Amin Gemayel’s new government, as well as (temporarily) placate those who are despairing of an Israeli withdrawal with American assistance.

The American government’s view is different still. Policymakers in Washington talk about “seizing an opportunity.” This is the opportunity of strengthening the US position in the Middle East, and maintaining what they call the West’s “vital interests” in the region. In the words of a White House official, “We are in a much better strategic position than we’ve been for 35 years. The Russians are less of a worry, and there is plenty of oil around so that we don’t have to worry as much about Arab oil power.” So the view from Washington is how to best use the Israeli card so as to strengthen and maintain the West’s economic and political domination of the Middle East. To put things bluntly, the US will threaten the Lebanese and other Arab governments with a prolongation of Israeli occupation (of Lebanese and other Arab
territories) whenever these governments seem inclined to follow independent policies.*

But there is also a limit to this kind of political blackmail. If Israel is given a free hand in its policy vis-a-vis the Arab world, and in particular concerning its occupation of Lebanon, it may provoke the opposite: recurrent upheavals will sweep away conservative Arab governments and endanger the West's economic interests in the region. The problem, of course, is that Israeli policymakers cannot be turned on and off at Washington's will.

This is in fact a major source of tension between the US and Israel. There is no need, from the US point of view, to allow Israel to assume a role that exceeds the role it has historically played (namely that of a watchdog for Western interests in the Middle East). Therefore there is no need to allow Israel to now impose its own view of what Western policy in the region ought to be. It is better to have Israel as a malleable ally than as an arrogant partner.

The differences between the US and Israel outlined above are differences within the imperialist camp. These differences do not touch the West's long-term economic interests in the region, and will remain differences on the degree of independence Israeli policy will be allowed from American policy.** The US neither has a particular interest "moderation."

This policy of permanent military readiness, and decisive superiority over Arab armies, has had other effects. For example, it is now an open secret that Israel has developed a nuclear military capability and is intent on not letting surrounding Arab states use nuclear energy, even for nonmilitary purposes (witness, for example, the bombardment of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981).

More far-reaching is the effect of this policy on the Israeli economy. With a view to cover what it can of its arms needs, Israel has become a major arms-producing country. Before 1973, Israeli arms exports did not exceed $10 million a year; by 1976, they reached $300 million (in current US dollars); by 1979, they had doubled to $600 million; and in 1980, they doubled again to $1.2 billion. More significant still are Israel's military expenditures, which, throughout the 1970s, consistently came to more than 20 percent of its gross national product. This is particularly striking when compared with Brazil, which is the leading arms merchant of the Third World (just ahead of Israel): Brazil's military expenditures never reached more than 1.5 percent of its GNP. (Information on the Israeli arms industry is from The Nation, Dec. 4, 1982.)

This Israeli military independence is only relative, to be sure, and does not contradict the fact that the Israeli economy is sustained only because of an ever-increasing amount of American subsidies. In recent years, Israel has been receiving more than one-quarter of total American foreign aid. For fiscal year 1983, the Reagan administration is proposing $2.5 billion in grants and loans for Israel, which represent 28 percent of the total foreign assistance budget (New York Times, Dec. 7, 1982).
in, nor will it demand, a complete Israeli pullout from Lebanon.

However, while these differences cannot be the cause (at least directly) of a showdown between the US and Israel, the same is not true of their respective friends in Lebanon.

Pro-Israeli Lebanese versus Pro-American Lebanese

The Lebanese proponents of an “American solution,” or what they imagine an “American solution” ought to be, include Amin Gemayel’s new government as well as the commercial-financial establishment in Beirut. Somewhat ironically, the main support they will receive will be less from the US than from the conservative Arab governments, which all share the same conspiratorial view of a powerful Israeli lobby holding captive an otherwise benign American policy in the region. Given the importance of the oil-producing states for the West, these Arab governments will certainly be more effective advocates of an “American solution” in Lebanon than the Lebanese government itself.

The pro-American camp in Lebanon is now most fearful of Israel and the proponents of an “Israeli solution.” The latter include the Lebanese Forces (the coalition grouping the Phalangist militias and other proto-fascist groups) as well as

Don McCullin, Palestinians Surrendering to Xtian gunmen, 1976
Major Saad Haddad's mercenary force in southern Lebanon. With the PLO out of Beirut and the imminent danger of a "leftist-Moslem" takeover removed, these various groups no longer have a function to perform in the view of many of their former supporters. Most significantly, they do not have the support of the commercial-financial establishment, which is now fully part of the pro-American camp. Although the stronger militarily, the Lebanese proponents of an "Israeli solution" are the more isolated publicly. With Israel restricted by its own internal opposition and busy repolishing its tarnished image, the pro-Israeli camp in Lebanon is now only maneuvering for better tactical positions (sometimes without Israeli consent*), and is not in a position to directly challenge the pro-American camp. The main danger represented by these right-wing militias is that their several thousand members may prefer to precipitate a crisis rather than see their cause abandoned in a diplomatic chess move.

By way of recapitulating the preceding argument, Lebanon's present government is not only deluding itself on the nature of the main contradiction that governed Lebanese life over the last three decades, namely the contradiction of being for the Arab world economically but against it politically (or being for Israel's economic isolation from the Arab world but against assuming the political consequences of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict). The Lebanese government is also deluding itself and its public on the extent of American support it can get for rebuilding its economy, strengthening its army, imposing its authority on the right-wing militias, and securing a complete Israeli withdrawal.

If there are factors really working against Israeli occupation of Lebanon, then these must be of a different kind.

Lebanese Resistance Against Israeli Occupation

True, Israel's invasion of Lebanon was a setback for the Lebanese National Movement (the loose coalition of opposition parties, groups, and associations). But it did not remove the reasons for its existence. On the contrary, if anything, the invasion has put into sharper focus what separates the Lebanese National Movement from its opponents—the (pro-Israeli) right-wing militias as well as the (pro-American) Gemayel government.

Openly linking their fate to Israel's presence in Lebanon, the right-wing militias appear for what they are: an instrument of Israeli domination. As for the new Gemayel government, a public disillusionment is setting in, barely three months after the beginning of its term. After the initial euphoria generated by American statements of support, Lebanese government officials are growing desperate in their quest for a quick American-sponsored Israeli withdrawal.**

The Lebanese National Movement is calling for a united Lebanese stand in the face of Israeli occupation, not counting on American good will to force an Israeli pullout. Of course, Lebanese so-

*This is, for example, what is now happening in many of the villages and smaller towns in southern Lebanon, where control has been delegated to right-wing militias, leaving the Israeli army in charge of the larger towns and major communication lines. In these rural areas, the right-wing militias have been far more ruthless in their treatment of the population than in the large towns, where on more than one occasion Israeli troops prevented them from commandeering refugees' belongings or from murdering them.

**Their despair is such that they now seem willing to consider options that were totally out of consideration in September. On November 29, Amin Gemayel called on the Soviet Union to play a role in Lebanon, adding that "US participation in helping Lebanon restore its sovereignty does not rule out relations with other countries." This was the first public sign of the Lebanese government's frustration with the lack of progress made by the US to rid Lebanon of Israeli troops (The Boston Globe, Nov. 30, 1982).
ciety is not yet free of all the internal differences that led to the civil war. A united stand against Israeli occupation will therefore not be on the basis of an equal participation from all sectors of the Lebanese population. But, for now, Lebanon is facing an overriding threat: the threat of losing its very identity as a united country with a reasonably cohesive and independent society (with all its peculiar internal problems still to be resolved). In this sense, Lebanon today is threatened with the same fate that befell Palestine in the 1940s.

How well is the Lebanese National Movement facing this threat? According to Israeli official sources, there have been eighty-three “terrorist” attacks against Israeli soldiers from the assassination of Bashir Gemayel on September 14 through November 30. This does not include the explosion in the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre on November 11, in which ninety people were killed. What we are therefore witnessing is continual attacks on Israeli troops, on the average of more than one a day. Of course this kind of guerrilla action will not by itself force an Israeli withdrawal. In fact, as guerrilla attacks are stepped up, we can expect Israeli retaliation (in the form of more roundups, punitive measures, harassment, and so forth), but also depending on the extent to which the Israeli government can sustain fur-
ther loss in public support (both at home and abroad).

The potential for resistance is not only in guerrilla action, however. Various other acts of resistance are occurring daily (and increasingly reported in the Beirut press). There has been passive non-cooperation with public orders, boycott of Israeli goods, and refusal to deal with Israeli military authorities.

As the Gemayel government proves unable to achieve the stated goal of total evacuation of foreign troops, the Lebanese National Movement will draw more public support, and will become the rallying point of the opposition to Israeli occupation.

The Price For Israel’s War Policy

Another important factor working against Israeli presence in Lebanon is the high price Israel has paid to carry out the invasion — and will probably continue to pay to maintain the occupation.

Back in mid-July (the second month of the invasion), Israeli government officials estimated that direct and indirect costs for the war in Lebanon had reached $3 billion. If we estimate that the war cost at least twice as much by the time the PLO withdrew from Beirut at the end of August, a conservative figure for the war cost is $6 billion. This does not include the costs of maintaining the occupation since September, and various other costs resulting from it, such as the decrease in tourism, estimated at $100 million, and the loss of business with Egypt.

True, the Israeli economy has made huge profits by penetrating the Lebanese market. But these are relatively small, of the order of $10 million or less per month, i.e., less than 1 percent of a conservative figure for the total war effort in Lebanon. At the end, it is the American taxpayer who is asked to foot the bill, or at least a considerable part of it, for Israel’s war policy.

The very high cost of the war in Lebanon is now compounding the problems of an Israeli economy with a galloping inflation (well in excess of 100 percent in recent years), and with a very high increase in the cost of living (almost 100 percent in 1981).

This difficult economic situation has led to internal dissension in Israel and, not least of all, a fairly widespread opposition to the government policy in Lebanon. Without overestimating the strength of this opposition now, it may well turn out to be that extra obstacle necessary to stop a further Israeli war adventure. It also underlines the importance of withholding American aid to Israel, which is now essentially sent to cover the war cost much more than to alleviate the endemic problems of the Israeli economy.

Footnotes

2. Interview given to the weekly Beirut Magazine, Feb. 1, 1968. Again in November 1981, describing his visits in 1936 to Italy and Germany, Pierre Gemayel said that he saw “well-organized, hard-working, disciplined youth toiling to build a dynamic, well-ordered society. I wanted to create an organization in Lebanon that could instill the same kind of civic and moral courage I saw the Italians and Germans developing in their youngsters” (The Nation, June 19, 1982).
7. Ibid.

FUAD FARIS is a Lebanese currently living in the United States.
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the question of the artist and politics remains for some a difficult one

for Victor Jara

d this morning the two of them have gotten
into a discussion of whether the
artist really needs to get involved in politics

in fact they are both artists: one might be
a painter or a musician a writer
the other a dancer or a sculptor
maybe a potter someone in theater

anyway the question just seems to have
come up this particular morning over
a relaxed cup of coffee somewhere in
the United States where both of them live

they seem to agree that “in the Sixties”
as the phrase goes there were people dying
in the war so artists here felt the need
to respond react protest take part in
the peace movement but that now it seems

“nothing is really happening” as one of them
puts it “except the personal stuff
which is really important too and I feel
that the best way for me to contribute
is to do my own work now by myself”

but they don’t want to be isolated
either — — — they are glad for each other and for
all the artists with whom they can share their
work ideas and pleasant companionship
like this morning’s coffee and in their minds

or in their artistic vision so to speak
they see the world as a giant cafe
where seated at tables in Europe Africa
Asia Latin America other artists
are calling out to them “artists of
the United States! good morning have a nice day”
and waving their hands

— Dick Lourie
why do you write so many political poems? 
over the last twenty years my refrigerator
has kept getting filled up with eggs, milk, tomatoes, 
beef, carrots, cheese, pie, coffee, celery, 
lettuce, bacon, bread, cream, oranges, and
now it won’t hold anymore.

why do you write so many political poems?
Vietnam. Millions and millions of little bones.

why do you write so many political poems?
the following article appears in
every newspaper every day:
“last night a woman was raped here. 
authorities have speculated, however, 
that she may have consented, or that by her 
behavior or the way she was dressed 
she may have in some way provoked 
the alleged attack.”

why do you write so many political poems?
Headline: “FAGS MURDERED”.

why do you write so many political poems?
after Wounded Knee in 1876
I forgot, until Wounded Knee in 
1973, and then I forgot
again — — — please excuse me.
why do you write so many political poems?
that night on the popular TV comedy
show the best joke was “Two Polacks” “Two Spics”
“Two Irish drunks” “Two little Japs”:
the great American gift of laughter.

why do you write so many political poems?
an overwhelming majority of the
poets I spoke with told me that despite
their efforts they could not find anything
to rhyme with “Karen Silkwood”, “Soweto”,
“Chile”, “multi-national”, “Puerto Rico”, or “Love Canal”.

why do you write so many political poems?
when I try to recall the phone numbers
of old friends, all I can find in my head
is a seemingly endless list — — — under
the heading BLACK PEOPLE WHO GOT KILLED YOUNG — — —
of names I don’t recognize, which repeat
over and over until they start to
become vaguely familiar: Addie Mae
Collins, Phillip Gibbs, James Earl Green, Denise
McNair, Carol Robertson, Cynthia
Wesley, and more; they go on and on.

— Dick Lourie
FOUR DECADES OF CHANGE:

Black Workers in Southern Textiles, 1941–1981

Mary Frederickson

Black workers in the southern textile industry have experienced rapidly changing patterns of employment during the last forty years. Before 1940 fewer than one southern textile worker in ten was black and 80 percent of black workers toiled as “mill laborers” in nonproduction jobs. By 1978 one of every five workers was black, and black workers held one-fourth of all operative positions. At present, black workers represent the largest group of recently recruited workers within the industry; in many southern mills they are a majority of the workforce. The political importance of black workers’ entry into and mobility within the textile industry can be measured in terms of their role in ongoing organizing efforts within the textile industry. The solidarity of black textile workers in local southern communities and their role in grass-roots organizing for social, political, and economic freedom in the decades after World War II laid the groundwork for the crucial role played by southern black workers today.¹

The employment shift which has occurred in the southern textile industry in the last four decades followed a period of sixty years in which black workers in the South faced restricted opportunities in a regional manufacturing system which rigidly segregated workers on the basis of race and sex. The argument will be made here that despite the overt exclusion of black workers from textile manufacturing between 1880 and 1965, black
men and women have always played a critical role in the growth and development of the industry in the South.

First, behind the statistics which indicate small percentages of black employees in the South’s most important industry, were thousands of workers for whom the title “mill laborer” masked work which ranged from the least skilled to the most skilled of any performed in the mills. Second, black workers comprised a reserve labor pool which management could and did tap whenever necessary. Although black workers were only occasionally used as strikebreakers, their mere presence in proximity to southern mill communities functioned as a potential threat to white job security and served to keep the demands of white operatives to a minimum. Mill owners continually considered hiring greater numbers of black workers and did so whenever a shortage of white labor appeared imminent. For example, during both World War I and World War II the percentage of black workers in the mills increased slightly. But not until the 1960s did the long-awaited severe shortage of white employees finally transpire and result in the hiring of black workers in significant numbers. After 1965, black men and women were actively recruited for production jobs for the first time.

THE HISTORY OF BLACK PARTICIPATION IN SOUTHERN TEXTILES

The long history of black participation in the southern textile industry began before the Civil War when slave labor was responsible for spinning and weaving in the home production of cloth. Slave women on southern plantations often returned from a day of hard field work to “spin, weave, and sew well into the night.” In the Southeast the transition from home to factory production was made by bondswomen and bondsmen who were either owned by industrial entrepreneurs or hired out by their owners to work in the small ante-bellum mills which dotted the streams and rivers of the Piedmont. Prior to 1860, no one questioned the ability of black workers in handling industrial work. To the contrary, industrialists praised the virtues of black labor over white, and slave labor over free.²

Emancipation brought a new occupational structure and a redefined status for the black worker. In plantation areas the transition from slavery to share-tenancy resulted in black workers attaining virtually the same economic rank as non-landowning whites. In cities and small industrial towns, however, skilled and semi-skilled positions that had been filled by black slaves were newly defined as “white.” The change was most noticeable in textiles. As the number of mills in the South more than doubled between 1880 and 1900, the spinning and weaving jobs went to white workers, predominantly women and children who left small farms to work in textiles. Most operatives had been black before the Civil War, but by 1900 blacks made up less than 2 percent of the labor force in textiles.³

Industrialists had bargained with white southerners and granted them limited amnesty from direct competition with black workers for positions as operatives. Moreover, racial lines were drawn within the mills which reflected new twentieth-century patterns of racial segregation throughout the South. As part of the extreme racism of these years, an ideology developed that simultaneously mirrored and reinforced the occupational segregation of black workers in textiles. As Herbert Lahne wrote in 1944, “There appeared to be no limit to the supposed justifications of the exclusion of the Negro from the work of operatives — Negroes were said to be temperamentally, morally, physically, etc., etc., unfit to be anything but laborers. All these reasons were, of course, beside the point.”⁴
The reorganized labor system in southern industry was intact by 1915; in textiles, the region’s most rapidly expanding industry, the new occupational codes which virtually excluded black workers from operative positions were usually informal, but a 1915 South Carolina law gave succinct expression to them. The law (not rescinded until 1960) necessitated separate weaving and spinning rooms for black and white employees. In this way black workers were banned from the primary work areas of the mills. The ruling read in part:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, That it shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation engaged in the business of cotton textile manufacturing in this State to allow or permit operatives, help and labor of different races to labor and work together within the same room.5

The act had a second clause, however, which excluded

firemen as subordinates in boiler rooms, truckmen, or . . . floor scrubbers and those persons employed in keeping in proper condition lavatories and toilets, and carpenters, mechanics and others engaged in the repair or erection of buildings

from its application. There is evidence that mill owners violated this statute whenever convenient or necessary, although the second clause of the ruling left considerable leeway for hiring black employees in a variety of positions. Textile entrepreneurs across the South clearly wanted the flexibility to hire whomever they pleased, but as concessions to white southerners they gave white employees priority, hired black workers as needed, segregated the workforces within the mill, and liberally interpreted the title “mill laborer.”

MILL LABORERS AND INDUSTRIAL OBSERVERS

It was as “mill laborers” that black workers in southern textiles performed tasks which ranged from cleaning floors to installing electrical wiring to repairing looms to constructing mill buildings and mill housing. In the years after black workers were segregated out of operative positions, thousands of black employees continued to perform essential functions within southern mills. The work of black men and women included the most arduous tasks of lifting and loading bales of raw cotton and rolls of finished goods, as well as assignments in the opening and carding rooms, the sections of the mill with the highest concentrations of cotton dust. In addition to doing the most disagreeable jobs, black workers made the lowest wages paid in the textile industry, a result both of their confinement to certain jobs and of outright wage discrimination on the basis of race. Sex provided a third discriminatory factor, for white men made more than white women and black men earned more than black women. Race was the predominant wage determinant, however. For example, in Georgia, in 1938, black men made 65 percent of the wages paid to white men; black women earned only 56 percent of the wages paid to white women; and black men were paid 78 percent of the wages paid to white women.6

Clearly black workers received lower wages than their white counterparts, even within identical job classifications, but it is of greater long-range significance that the 80 percent of black workers categorized as “mill laborers” actually held a wide range of jobs within the mills. As early as 1900 an Atlanta cotton manufacturer testified before the United States Industrial Commission that he never attempted to work black and white labor together — “except when the white help goes out to get a can of snuff the colored sweepers run the loom.” A 1922 study of 2,750

29
women in ten textile firms (840 of the women were black) reported that black women were found in all of the twelve occupations in which white women were employed, although the black women also worked at cleaning and feeding, two jobs not performed by the white women. A sample of 115 black employees who worked in textiles in LaGrange, Georgia for twenty-five consecutive years (between 1925 and 1969) listed thirty-eight job classifications; among these workers were master plumbers, skilled carpenters, card strippers, card tenders, picker tenders, mechanics, machine fixers, landscapers, and a woman who stenciled flower designs. A survey of seventy textile mills in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina in 1951 reported that black workers were employed as painters, plumbers, carpenters, and electricians as well as truck drivers, sweepers, and janitors. Finally, in the late 1960s Richard Rowan reported in his study of black workers in southern textiles that “Close scrutiny of the jobs in the laborer category would probably result in some of them being reclassified as semiskilled. . . . the nomenclature remains basically the same that it has been since the early 1900’s.”

The positions which black workers held in textile mills were more varied and required greater skill than southern industrial lore has recorded. Moreover, mechanics, teamsters, painters, carpenters, and sweepers had considerable mobility within the mill. Unlike white operatives who could not leave their spindles or looms, black workers had the freedom to move from one section of the mill to another. As roving workers, black employees observed industrial work and learned about the overall operation of the mill. When blacks worked as mechanics and loom cleaners they became familiar with industrial machinery, and as carpenters, electricians, and painters they were among the few workers in textiles who labored as craftsmen within an industrial setting. Thus, black workers employed in textiles prior to 1965 became “industrial observers,” knowledgeable about the organization of the industry and the hierarchy of the workforce, and accustomed to the pace and environmental conditions of industrial work. Hired in significant numbers in many mills, these workers formed a substantial cohort of minority textile employees, forerunners of the thousands of black workers who moved into operative positions after 1965.

The work histories of two Georgia textile workers illustrate the role of the “industrial observer” in more concrete terms. Both Julian West and Minnie Brown grew up in Westpoint, Georgia, where their fathers worked in the mill. When West turned eighteen in 1932 he entered the mill as a full-time worker. Brown got a mill job in 1942, when she was twenty-eight years old, after having worked for over a decade as a domestic worker. Both West and Brown retired after 1975, and their worklives spanned four decades of change for black workers in the industry. Their own careful descriptions of their work delineate the parameters of their industrial experience and demon-
strate the subtle distinctions which have to be
made when correlating job descriptions with job
classifications. 8

Julian West’s family moved to Westpoint in
1920 when he was six years old, after his father
got a job as a sweeper in the mill. When teenagers,
Julian and his two brothers went down to the mill
with their father to help out in the cloth room for
a few hours a day, and by the time West was
eighteen he had a full-time job cleaning and
“chucking cloth.” West left the mill in 1943, went
to Michigan for several months, and when he re-
turned asked for a job in the carding department.
Hired immediately, West stayed in the carding de-
partment until he retired in 1978, and it was in the
card room that West became an “industrial ob-
server.” Familiar with the mill since he was a child,
knowledgeable about the cloth room where he had
worked with his father and two brothers, West
entered the card room as a sweeper in 1943. Pro-
moted to lap racker in 1948, West became a card
tender in 1965. But West knew how to tend cards
long before he got promoted to a card tender’s
position. As he explained,

Well, you see, when I was a lap racker I’d
put up a bolt of cotton on this card ma-
chine. Well maybe now the end of that card
has stopped. I mean the cotton has broke
out and the card has stopped or either kept
running and run over. Well, I would go over
there. Now the card tender, he’d possibly be
way down the line somewhere, and he got a
card up here that’s overrunning. Well, I
would stop and pick that cotton up and put
it back in there and start it back to running,
although that wasn’t my job. But I’d do it,
see, and that’s the way it’d run.

For seasoned “industrial observers” like Julian
West, transition to a production job did not in-
volve additional training. By allowing West to
“learn cards” and help the white card tender,
management had ensured his training, and when
the time came that West was needed as a card
tender he was well prepared:

They wouldn’t bother you, you see it
was alright if the racker would help the card
tender keep his job up. I had to be around
the machine anyway because I had to service
the machine. What I mean by that is that I
had to keep enough cotton up here for the
card tender to run. I couldn’t let the cotton
go out of the machine. And at the same
time, when I got through supplying the
machine, putting enough cotton on the ma-
chine then see I had to sweep around it and
keep the floor clean and all that kind of
thing. So every chance I got to get up an
end, as we call it, and start that machine
back running, well then it was a help to that
card tender, and finally, a long time before
they gave me a job running them, I’d learned
how to do it. One day the boss came out
there and he asked me, “Julian, you reckon
you could run a set of those cards?” I told
him “yes, sir.” And the next morning he
gave me a job on them.

Unlike Julian West, who changed positions
three or four times during his worklife in the mill,
Minnie Brown worked for thirty-four years in the
same job. Hired in 1942 as a “cleaner,” she retired
in 1976 in the same position. As a child, Brown
“had been used to going to the mill carrying my
daddy’s dinner”; years later, when one of the few
jobs available to black women opened up, she was
eager to apply because the wages were much high-
er than those she could make as a domestic work-
er. Brown’s job as a cleaner took her “all through
the mill from one end to the other.” But Brown
did not just clean. Through her “white friends” in
the weave shed and spinning room she learned how
to weave, decided against spinning (“I’d seen how
it was done all right, but I didn’t fool with it”),
and settled on work filling batteries:
I’d be caught up with my job, you know, and I’d go down there and they’d let me fill batteries. Just every night I’d go on back down there to the weave shed. I’d get down there and they’d say “start up there.” And I’d throw that spool in and whip it around there and like that. And I began to like it. They had so many to do. I didn’t charge nothing ’cause I was just learning. They’d say “when you get ready just come on down here,” and I’d say “all right.”

The testimony of workers like West and Brown confirms the existence of an informal work structure within the mills which differed from the formal job and wage classifications used by management. While classified in “non-production” jobs, both West and Brown performed tasks which directly affected production. Moreover, within “segregated” mills West and Brown worked side by side with the white workers who trained them. White employees expressed appreciation for the help they received and, according to West, would reciprocate with cash payment or favors. Thus, everyone benefited in some way from the operation of this informal system. White production workers received much-needed assistance, black workers got industrial training and some extra pay, and management gained from increased production without additional wage costs. In the long run the industry benefited most because it got a well-trained reserve workforce of black men and women eager to move permanently into higher-paying jobs as production workers.

**FARM-TO-FACTORY MIGRATION AMONG BLACK TEXTILE WORKERS**

The historical and political significance of this group of “industrial observers” is twofold. First, the experience of black textile employees in the decades between 1900 and 1940 was that of southern urban/industrial workers, not isolated subsistence farmers or sharecroppers. Like their white counterparts, these first-generation black textile workers came from agricultural backgrounds to take jobs within the mills. But the movement of black workers into industrial work in textiles was a three-step process involving three generations of employees. The initial stage involved migration from farms to southern urban/industrial communities and jobs as sweepers and cleaners in the mills. The second step, taken by the children of this first generation, involved the obtaining of jobs at the level of picker tender and lap racker. The final step, by the third generation, included the large-scale movement of black southerners into operative positions beginning in the mid-1960s.

Second, within the context of local southern communities these individuals formed a small but important group of workers whose ability to earn regular cash wages augmented their standing within the black community and their power within the larger community. For example, among the 115 long-term black workers in the LaGrange, Georgia, mills at least 40 percent owned their homes and many had credit at local furniture and clothing stores. It was the norm for the children of these workers to finish high school, and many sons and daughters of this black community graduated from college. Active in church work, a majority of the LaGrange sample served as officers, deacons, or lay preachers within local black congregations.

The experience of black textile workers in LaGrange was not unique. In Westpoint, Georgia, in the “relatively progressive community” in which Julian West grew up and then raised his own children, the prevailing philosophy of life was based on the adage “If you work hard you can make it.” Black families coming into town from nearby farms sought to buy a plot of land, build a house, and send their children to school.
workers who became textile operatives after 1965 did not come from the agricultural sector. Rather, their families were already part of a southern urban/industrial workforce, and they were second- or third-generation city dwellers and often second-generation mill workers. But unlike southern white textile workers, black workers had experienced little mobility within the mill, and had made their homes in communities shut off from equal access to full political, economic, or social participation even in the larger community of textile workers. The combination of these two factors, familiarity with industrial work and industrial skills on the one hand, and the denial of equal participation on the other, made southern black textile workers more predisposed to both collective action and union organizing than the white workers who had preceded them into the mills.

For example, when Jim Thomas’s grandson became a textile operative in the mid-1960s, his knowledge of industrial work was based in part on his grandfather’s experience in the card, picker, and opener rooms of the Unity Spinning Plant in LaGrange from 1929 to 1954. Young Thomas’s familiarity with factory town living came from his father’s position in the Elm City Weave Room in the 1950s and his own childhood spent in LaGrange. For Julian West, who grew up in the black community in Westpoint, Georgia, and whose father had retired from the mill, a job in textiles meant continuing his father’s fight for civil rights within the workplace. Inside the mill, working for equality meant fighting for the union, and West’s allegiance was second nature. In the plant, West worked for the union, and at home he fought to keep his children out of the mill and send them to college.

Both Jim Thomas’s grandson and Julian West worked in tandem with previous generations of black textile workers. The children of people who believed that “if you were going to survive in this society you had to be able to hold a job” struggled
to provide their own children with the opportunities for work which they had been denied. Taught by their parents to "go ahead but be careful," black workers in the period between 1940 and 1980 used their positions within the community and the plant to fight for the right to fill jobs they could already perform, to have access to better jobs, and to earn wages equal to those of white employees.

RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

Another version of the multi-step migration pattern by black workers who have become textile operatives occurred in eastern North Carolina and in low-country South Carolina where mills were built and still operate in small rural communities. In these areas the children of black sharecroppers have quit farming and come into the mills in a way which initially appears to duplicate the farm-to-factory migration of white workers in the years between 1900 and 1940. But the lives of black workers migrating to the mills in the 1960s and 1970s have been influenced as much or more by their experience off the land as by the fact that their parents were sharecroppers. For example, when James Boone, a black North Carolinian in his early twenties, took a job as a doffer in 1971, he came into the mill after already having worked for several months in textiles and as a store clerk in Washington, D.C. Boone had grown up in the country outside Roanoke Rapids, but he had come into town to attend high school, and unlike the white tenant children who had migrated to textile communities in the 1920s, he was familiar with the local J. P. Stevens plants. His father had worked for many years in a paper mill and was a proud member of the International Woodworkers Union of America. When the textile workers union came to Boone's plant in 1974, he was "rarin' to go."11

In more rural areas, many workers still live with family members who farm; they have depended on the land when work was irregular in the mills, and vice versa. One advantage of this dual farm/factory worklife by families has been that as black workers organized in the mills they had resources and options rarely available to earlier generations of white workers who lived in company-owned housing. For example, in a study of mill workers in a rural North Carolina community, Dale Newman reported that two black workers involved in collective action to improve working conditions in the plant expressed "sensitivity to the possibility their actions might result in losing their jobs but as they were both landowners, they and their wives were willing to take the chance."12

CHANGING PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT

The number of black workers in the textile industry has changed dramatically within the last forty years. Between 1940 and 1978, the participation of black textile employees multiplied sixfold (from 24,764 in 1940 to 152,458 in 1978). The greatest increase in black employment occurred between 1966 and 1968 when in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia the proportion of black workers rose from 10 to 15 percent. In South Carolina and Georgia, the southern textile-producing states with the highest black populations, the percentage of black workers within the industry traditionally has been higher than the regional average. For example, in South Carolina in 1920, black workers comprised 10 percent of the state's textile workers, at a time when the industry average was 2.6 percent. The representation of black workers has been consistently highest in Georgia, where between 1966 and 1968 the percentage of black employees increased from 14 to 18 percent with black men comprising 22.5 percent of all male textile employees in the state in 1968. The gains made in black employment in the textile industry in the 1960s continued and were
consolidated in the 1970s. By 1978 black workers in Georgia held 28 percent of all available jobs within the industry, and 34 percent of all black employees worked as operatives. Looking at Georgia and the Carolinas combined in 1978, black workers held 26 percent of all positions and 32 percent of all operative jobs.\(^\text{13}\)

The pivotal point at which textile employment in the South opened to black workers occurred in the mid-1960s, a period which black workers refer to as "the change," and which Richard Rowan described as "a virtual revolution in employment in the southern textile plants." But the groundwork for this transformation was laid in the 1940s and 1950s. In the forties with the growth of wartime industries and the subsequent diversification of local manufacturing within the South, textile firms began losing employees. As one Macon, Georgia manufacturer lamented,

About World War II on, things started getting kind of rough. A lot of other industries came to this area and your skilled people, such as loom fixers, were the first ones they would hire away from you. They would move in here with the same wage scales they had up East, which was way above what we were paying down here.

The hiring of black workers increased during the 1940s. In the LaGrange sample of 115 long-term

![Arrow Shirt Factory, Atlanta, Georgia](image_url)
until 1965, delivered the mail to a plant where the receptionist, a white woman who sat in the front office, always called him “boy.” Harris, then a man in his mid-thirties, repeatedly tried to get the woman to address him by his first name. In 1970, Harris, newly elected as one of two black members of the local city council, became assistant personnel manager in the mill where this receptionist still worked. No words were exchanged as the two adjusted to a new hierarchy which placed Harris in a supervisory role, but as Harris recalled, “I hadn’t forgotten, and I’m certain she hadn’t either.”

Nevertheless, once black workers could not be denied jobs in the production areas of the mills, Julian West emphasized that “The atmosphere changed. They changed and I changed. We got closer together in every way.” The opening of production jobs to black workers in southern mills affected the ways in which black and white employees interacted in the workplace, and the higher wages earned by black workers new to operative positions brought material improvements to homes and businesses within the black community. Integration of the schools in most southern towns and cities followed closely behind integration of the workplace. But a man like Floyd Harris will tell you that despite integration in the workplace and the schools, the mill community he lives in “remains segregated, like it was.” John Foster agrees that “segregation is still a part of this society,” and adds that “You still have the same basic feeling being a minority, and you know that in everything you do, you will succeed or fail through how you respond to the majority.”

Tangible differences between the totally segregated society of the past and the partially integrated communities of the South today include the fact that black children no longer have to leave the region to become successful, that a decent education in an integrated public school is attainable for both black and white, and that black workers are not denied industrial jobs on the basis of their race. John Foster agrees that “There is a marked difference now, and people who couldn’t get away from here fast enough are coming back comfort-
ably.” Foster grew up in Alabama in the 1930s, served in a segregated unit in World War II, headed the mill-run recreation program for black workers while fighting for civil rights on the grass-roots level in the 1950s and 1960s, and today is an employment manager for a major southern textile company. Reflecting on the changes he has experienced, he concluded:

I consider myself now as living in two worlds, the one I remember and the one that I’m involved in now. Now the younger black doesn’t have the hesitancies that I have in a lot of situations because of the changes in the local area and in the southern region since he’s been growing up. I find myself cautioning him about my experiences and about his relationship to the white majority.²⁰

Foster and Harris, who are among the few blacks who have been promoted to white-collar jobs in textiles, are uncertain of what will happen next. They are concerned that black workers have not moved into management jobs as rapidly as they did into operative positions. And they noted that the affirmative action program, “the tool that has helped us get into these areas,” is under fire both on the federal and local levels. It is arguable that the impetus for continued black equality in hiring, wages, promotion, and seniority cannot come from within the textile industry itself, but must be promoted by unionized workers on a regional and national basis.²¹

TEXTILE UNIONS

Beginning in the days of the CIO, textile unions in the South came to symbolize both the hope of equality and the promise of justice under the law. In the 1950s and 1960s a black man like Julian West found himself fighting for the union in battles that were waged once or twice a year. In his plant in southwest Georgia, votes for and against the union consistently divided along racial lines:

I was for it. If we could have got it in there everybody felt like they would have bettered themselves. Where we didn’t have a union and didn’t succeed in getting it, well then we just had to put up with what we did have. White voted it down. It meant equal rights. The white voted it down to keep me down. If the white had voted the way the black voted then the union would have gotten in, would have taken over control. Then that would have made me get just as much as they get. They just didn’t want it, it was a matter of keeping it segregated.²²

West viewed the refusal of white workers to vote for a union as a political act intended to maintain the status quo both within the plant and within the community.

Since the 1960s, just as the textile industry has relied on black labor to run the mills, so have the textile unions depended on black southerners to organize, to win elections, and to fight decertifications. The effects of black participation on efforts to organize in textiles are evident in recent union elections across the South. For example, the favorable vote at the Roanoke Rapids plants of J. P. Stevens in 1974 was ascribed to a 70 percent black vote. Neither the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) nor the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) records the race of its members in the South, but unofficial tallies indicate a black majority. It has been argued that the unionization of textiles depends on black workers looking for the “promise of the civil rights movement.” In fact, the most active black leaders in the textile unions grew up in southern urban/industrial areas, learned their organizing skills in the civil rights movement, lived outside the region in New York, Chicago, or Detroit, and then returned South. These activists, together with local union leaders from both urban
But although many southern black women came to textiles from nonindustrial backgrounds, they have brought with them to the mills a firm commitment to improving their lives by working together, the way their mothers worked within the church. The two women who became the leaders of the organizing drive in Macon, Georgia "prayed for those yeses to come" as the NLRB official counted the ballots at the Bibb Company's Bellvue plant in the spring of 1980. For one woman, an inspector in the mill for three years before the election, working for the union was "working for God by working for humanity."

This continued dedication on the part of individual workers willing to work together for the common good is critical for the eventual success of textile unions in the South.

CONCLUSION

In the last four decades southern black textile workers, once considered marginal, invisible mill laborers, have become the region's most prominent group of industrial employees. But even in 1940, black workers in fact formed a significant part of the workforce in most southern mills, held a variety of essential positions, and also observed and performed production jobs whenever possible. After World War II, black textile workers became a well-trained reserve workforce ready to replace those white workers leaving the mills for jobs in a newly diversified southern economy. Knowledgeable long-term workers and important local leaders within well-established black mill communities, many black textile workers fought for unionization within the mills and for civil rights legislation within the larger community.

But while black workers have brought about substantial changes within the textile industry, they have also inherited many of the traditional problems characteristic of this labor-intensive, low-wage industry with predominantly unskilled or semiskilled jobs. Textile workers today, as in the first decades of the twentieth century, are among the nation's lowest-paid industrial workers. In the fall of 1980 the average wage for cotton textile workers within the region was $5.21 per hour, compared to a national average manufacturing wage of over $8.00 per hour. Black operatives, like generations of white operatives before them, are exposed to the crippling effects of byssinosis from exposure to cotton dust. Moreover, in the early 1970s many southern mills, faced with labor shortages and government pressure to reduce cotton dust levels within the mills, began to invest in new, automated machinery which simultaneously increased production and reduced the size of the workforce. As a result, the number of US textile workers, at over one million through the 1950s and slightly below a million in the 1960s, declined to 779,620 workers in 1966 and 754,296 workers in 1978. The industry has never regained the employment levels which existed before the recession of 1974-1975. In the Southeast (with three-fourths of the workers), 95,000 jobs have been permanently lost. Figures on the 1981-82 recession are beginning to appear and indicate that the effects may be worse than in 1974.

At present unionized workers in textiles across the Southeast are being pressed for concessions on a model patterned after the auto industry — but in plants where operatives make one-fourth the wage of auto workers. Textile employees from North Carolina to Alabama are on short-time; in South Carolina, twelve mills closed in the last six months of 1981.

As the most recently hired workers, black employees are bearing the burden of much of the current downturn in textiles. The rapid movement of black workers into the industry in the 1960s and 1970s transformed the industry and altered the interaction between management and labor; but now the problems of plant closings and unemployment, antiunion wage battles and decertifications have replaced industrial segregation as
the problems faced by black textile workers in the South. The solutions will be hard-won. Today, as black workers lead efforts to organize the southern textile industry, their long and complex experience as southern industrial workers enriches and informs that work, just as their participation in the civil rights movement of the 1960s serves as a model for achieving the right to bargain collectively in the 1980s. The struggle to earn wages that equal the national average industrial wage, to participate in industry decisions about automation and health and safety, and finally, to gain union representation will demand all the strength and courage of the men and women now running the looms of the South.

Footnotes

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Conference on Recent Black American History at Boston College, February 27, 1982. I would like to thank Jim Green and Herbert Hill for their helpful criticism.

8. The information and quotations which follow are from interviews with Julian West and Minnie Brown in Westpoint, Georgia on April 20, 1982. The names of those interviewed have been changed to protect their privacy. All interviews conducted by the author.
10. Data about the Thomas family from *Callaway Beacon*, Vol. 6, No. 35, September 6, 1954; West interview.
15. Interview with John Foster, Shawmut, Alabama, April 20-21, 1982.
16. Interview with Floyd Harris, Westpoint, Georgia, April 20, 1982.
17. West and Foster interviews.
18. Harris interview.
19. Interviews with West, Harris, and Foster.
20. Foster interview.
21. Interviews with Foster and Harris.
22. West interview.
23. F. Ray Marshall and Virgil L. Christian, eds., *Employment of Blacks in the South: A Perspective on the


29. Interviews with Harris, Brown, and Ivey.

30. Newby, "Long Campaign," 1B.


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long distance, while I edit films
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watch every man who came into the bar
& later every woman; your body
never quite filling your clothes—
pants baggy, shirt blowing.
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for keeps like blood sisters,
that I can count on you.
Splice: dog sleeps in the sun,
columbine grows behind a shed,
a door swings open
& you walk towards me—
your arms outstretched, your face
a shock of summer light.

Robin Becker
MOTHERING,  
THE UNCONSCIOUS,  
AND FEMINISM

Judy Housman

The women’s liberation movement cuts deep in calling for changes in who we are and in how we live and love. It calls for deep-seated changes in our characters and in the content of our most intimate relationships and examines our most private behavior and fantasies. It has opened up questions of gender and of power relations between men and women which pervade all aspects of our social and personal lives, but about which orthodox Marxists and liberal theorists have largely remained silent. The women’s liberation movement and other autonomous movements have complicated our understanding of what is politically significant. Exploring, within consciousness-raising groups and elsewhere, the complexity of how this oppression takes hold has led to rejection by feminists of simple Marxist answers (“women’s oppression is merely the result of exclusion from the workplace.”) Certain socialist-feminists have drawn upon and given a new political significance to the more open strands of Marxism. They have been drawn to exploring the cultural forces which shape not only behavior, but feelings, fantasies, and desires, and to exploring the tensions which remain between individuals so molded and the society within which we must exist.

Nancy Chodorow undertook her work* at a time when the women’s movement was redefining the terrain of political discussion and action. In the antiwar movement with its

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emphasis on draft-age men, and only slightly more subtly in the New Left in general, women found their participation was marginalized at the same time that the New Left espoused equality of all people. Partly in reaction to our exclusion, women came together and rediscovered what the New Left’s illusory cross-sex solidarity made us forget: that we were women, that we were marginalized as such, and that our personal relationships reflected a pattern of domination. Together women uncovered and challenged hitherto invisible norms surrounding housework, childcare, sexuality, and sex roles. This challenge to standards of normalcy and deviance, prescribed gender roles, and sexual repression was taken up and deepened by the later emerging lesbian and gay movements.

The myth of equal access to political decision making and political power in the New Left was exploded. Women articulated the ways in which male bonding, structural aspects of heterosexual couples, and the confining of women to less visible “nurturing” roles restricted our participation in the world at large and in the New Left itself. In this context, challenging unequal division of labor and authority within the family, within heterosexual couples, and in relations between women and men in general was viewed as crucial. In particular, women challenged exclusive female responsibility for parenting. We challenged it for the direct way it limited the participation of mothers and because of the way the association of women with mothering reinforced subservience. One place in which the division of childcare and housework was challenged was within the individual relationships with husbands and boyfriends, but that challenging was backed by the bonds women forged within consciousness-raising groups and our public challenge to sex roles.

Nancy Chodorow uncovered another reason we had to challenge women’s primary responsibility for childrearing. The persistence of female oppression suggested it has deep psychic roots within typical male and female character structure. Women who projected themselves as strong and powerful within the public sphere sought to explain why they experienced themselves as intimidated and defenseless in intimate relations with men. As the women’s liberation movement won legitimacy, we sought to explain why the attempt to create non sexist structures was only very partially successful.

Nancy Chodorow examined the implications of mothering — i.e. the fact that for girls the primary caretaker is someone of the same sex, for boys someone of the other sex — for gender-related character structure. She indicated how primary parenting by women psychically adapted men and women to the oppressive sex roles they inhabit. In so doing, she gave a psychological depth to our understanding of the way in which the political shapes the personal.

Nancy Chodorow’s work is now set within a different political context. There is a turning away from the feminist impulse to articulate women’s needs independently of the traditional roles of mother and sex object. A powerful New Right has reasserted pre-New Left norms: patriarchal and paternal authority, the locus of personal sustenance to be located in the family and the family alone, hierarchical obedience and discipline, rigid regulation of sexuality. Certain leftists, in imitation of the New Right, would proclaim themselves the true “Friends of Families” sanitizing the challenge to traditional norms represented by gays, lesbians, women sexually active outside of marriage, and single mothers. Portions of the peace movement would have women’s participation in antiwar activities be as nurturers of the next generation and would silence discussions of sexual harassment or abortion crucial to challenging traditional female roles.

In the current changed context, Nancy
Chodorow’s work takes on a different and dangerous meaning. Her work ceases to be taken as a (partial) explanation for the social creation of men and women as they now are and becomes a formula for change in and through changed family structures. The way to end sexual domination is through the equal participation of fathers in childrearing. Women’s ability to act for changed relationships between the sexes is seen to lie in their role as mothers and within individual struggles with men concerning parenting. Amazingly, lesbians and, indeed, all women outside of heterosexual couples with children are rendered invisible and irrelevant to feminist struggle. Absent is the acknowledgement of the powerful political meaning female bonding has taken on in the context of the women’s liberation movement. Regarded as secondary are the daily, hourly social pressures outside the family — through schools, religion, the mass media, peer groups — which reinforce sexual inequality and shape the meaning given to the sexual division of labor within the family. At a time when the New Right is demonstrating its sophistication in using religion, the mass media, and the state to shape and control sexuality and sex roles, Chodorow’s work appears to suggest that the politics of personal life can be separated out from the politics of society. Rather than examining the politics of personal life, feminist politics is defined by changes in personal life, and personal life is reduced to family life.

The slogan “the personal is political” has frequently been given unfortunate interpretations which are used to justify two distortions of feminism. On the one hand, the political is reduced to the personal: changes in lifestyle are seen as political actions in and of themselves. Alternately, the personal is repressively reduced to the political: our personal life in the here and now is to be dictated by an ideal image of the kind of person one ought to be in a changed society. Nevertheless, the slogan articulates and develops the best of the women’s liberation movement’s heritage from the New Left. It indicates that changing our sense of self and the content of our personal relationships and commitments must form a part of the process of political change. At the same time, it indicates a recognition that aspects of our seemingly individual and private life remain embedded in and deeply affected by social institutions which are independent of our immediate control. Here, neither the personal nor the political is taken to determine the other. Rather, the two sides of the slogan indicate a tension between the changed ways of relating to oneself and others that we are trying to effect in the here and now, and a society which does not support such change, a society whose psychic hold captivates us even as we resist its terms.

I am concerned that our new theories retain the open and exploratory quality of the early women’s liberation movement. It would be unfortunate if our new sophistication about the family resulted in a new, albeit expanded, rigid and dogmatic set of answers. My aim is, thus, to set The Social Reproduction of Mothering within the feminist exploration of the roots of the personal within the political, while calling attention to questions which remain excluded.

**CHODOROW’S ARGUMENT**

There are ways in which prevailing institutions damage men and women’s characters and ability to relate to others in similar ways. However feminists, and with them Chodorow, particularly focus on the differing nature of the damage done to men and women. They note that women have a greater difficulty sustaining an independent identity and a sense of individual and distinct needs. Men, on the contrary, tend
to be unable to sustain a sense of connectedness to others, to notice and take seriously the needs of others, and to see their identity as partially rooted in close, emotional relationships. Even when we attempt to form structures which don’t reinforce these gender-related character traits, these incapacities often persist.\(^1\) Remembering that our alternative structures are embedded in the larger society seems insufficient to explain the depth, for example, of male disdain for women or of the power of families over our imaginations. We carry our ways of relating to others with us.

Chodorow attempts to explain the persistence of such character traits without attributing them to innate biological difference. She focuses her attention on the powerful forces of character formation at work in infancy and early childhood. Her central claim is that the differing typical early experiences that males and females face in our culture (and with some variation across all cultures in which women do the predominant mothering) shapes adult male and female fears and incapacities, abilities and possibilities in asymmetrical ways. She unravels the psychodynamics of prevailing forms of childrearing. Her work, thus, gives a psychological depth to the way in which the political is understood to shape the personal.

Chodorow’s starting point is that in examin-
ing cross-cultural data two generalizations can be made:

(1) Women are devalued in all societies. While women do different things in different societies, there is always a sexual division of labor. Furthermore, whatever cultural role women assume is accorded less power and prestige than that which men assume. She cites Margaret Mead on this point “If such activities (like cooking and weaving) are appropriate occupations of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important.”

(2) Whereas women and men exhibit different character traits in different societies, cross-culturally women tend to cluster at one end of the spectrum with respect to certain character traits while men tend to cluster at the other. For example, women are more likely than men to define themselves through their relations to others and to be personally involved with friends. Men, on the other hand, tend “to be independent participants rather than involved with friends.”

Since what women do and are like differs in different societies, such generalizations are not to be explained biologically. Chodorow seeks an explanation in terms of social patterns which tend to prevail cross-culturally and thus focuses
and more “nurturing,” even as women must develop greater self-confidence and assertiveness. Given the recognition of the positive and negative aspects of both female and male character structure implicit in this position, Chodorow’s identification with this point of view is not surprising. But the historical reality for women both of oppression and of partial self-definition through supportive female networks makes this demand as perverse as equating the elimination of racism with the elimination of any racially distinctive culture. A nonracist society would not make irrelevant any particular identification with being black. Rather it would allow, as would a nonsexist society, such an identification to free itself of its defensive component.

There is a tendency within the Left to regard difference as merely an occasion for oppression and power relations, rather than offering a source of potential celebration and appreciation. The call for the elimination of difference (the homogenization of culture) connects to a gray flannel vision of socialism that is less than inspiring. (After the revolution everyone will have enough strawberries to eat. But I don’t like strawberries! After the revolution you will like strawberries). Does the push to end variety mask a desire to get rid of autonomous movements and the troublesome tensions between distinct groups so that we can get on with the “real work” of class struggle?

There is in fact a degree of tension between the kind of equality which genderlessness as a goal suggests (the lessening of male-female role differences and the consequent increase in male-female solidarity) and a positive identification with femaleness and other women. We need to explore the concrete ramifications of this tension as we build an autonomous women’s movement with the power to connect with and have an impact on other social movements.

Biological differences as well as historically created differences between the sexes could remain salient in a nonoppressive society. The possibility that biological sex could remain a source of identification is angrily rejected by many feminists. This rejection is understandable in light of repressive ideologies that use biological differences to argue for constraining female roles. But I believe that there is also a component of the fear that Dinnerstein writes so forcefully of: fear of recognizing the contribution to our human existence of our animal and instinctual roots. And it is this fear, in part, which underlies the retreat from the explorations of sexuality which were so powerful in the early women’s movement and which remain more necessary than ever today in the face of the repressive New Right.

THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF SEXUAL OPPRESSION

Chodorow’s insufficient attention to the unconscious is paralleled by an insufficient attention to the effects of the larger culture. They are the two sides of a too-exclusive focus on the “actual” and the immediate. Chodorow’s account is of individual families: how families with a certain structure produce men and women with particular types of character and a desire to enter into families which reproduce this structure. I want to argue that by naming individual families as the source of gender differences and power relations she reproduces the public/private split which has been used to restrict both the activities of women (Women’s place is in the home) and the impact of feminist politics (What do you mean, a specifically feminist analysis of militarism?). In so doing, she fails to recognize how deeply into the unconscious the dominant culture reaches. How we incorporate our experiences, even our earliest experiences, is shaped
by cultural norms and the unconscious fantasies they give rise to as well as by our immediate situation.

Nancy Chodorow’s work assumes a split between personal life and public life defined as paid labor. Her analysis presents the family as reproducing itself through an autonomous dynamic. Families in which women mother and fathers are psychologically unavailable are the effect of the psychodynamics of this form of family structure in the previous generation. Early childhood experience within families is taken to produce the sort of men and women who enter into such families in adult life. But such an analysis neglects the institutions (schools, church, the mass media) and the forms of social organization (sports, culture, bars, youth culture, female friendship and kinship networks) which publicly establish the norms regulating personal life.

Somewhere the social reproduction of character is lost in Chodorow’s model. Instead the actual structure of the child’s particular family is assumed to be the force effecting the reproduction of gendered character. Unacknowledged are the powerful ways in which cultural norms inform the experiences of those whose situations do not conform to cultural ideals. Without attention to the impact of the larger society on character formation, we are at a loss to explain why children of depression families in which the mother worked and the father took on major childcare responsibilities often assumed quite traditional sexual roles. While such children were affected by the nonnormative aspects of their situation, they were also aware of and affected by the social shame attached to their family’s structure. Both the situation within the child’s home and its relationship to societal norms affect the development of character. If cultural norms remain unchallenged by political struggles, childrearers will continue to be caught between those aspects of childrearing which they do control and the impact of the larger society. Jane Lazarre illustrates precisely this tension in her book On Loving Men when she discusses her torn feelings in dealing with her son’s request to wear a dress for coolness in summer. And children will continue to deny their actual experiences in the interest of appearing “normal.” Thus the common experience of children who go to female doctors, even children whose mothers are doctors, who persist in playing games in which only the boys are doctors and all the nurses are girls. When questioned, why do such children insist, contrary to their own experiences, that these questions are silly, that “only boys are doctors, girls are nurses”?

It is not to deny the richness of Chodorow’s work to note that she places the later fate of the child squarely in the hands of the early caretaker. She reflects the middle-class hope that even if one can pass on neither an inheritance nor a skill at least by proper socialization one can bequeath to one’s children the character traits that will enable them to make it in this world. Working-class parents tend to be more fatalistic recognizing reluctantly that “You can’t bring up your own children.” The differing attitudes in part reflect the realities of the situation of each. But the middle-class dream of proper upbringing equipping one’s children for life is increasingly undercut by the influence of the media and the schools, by the vicissitudes of the economy, and by a peer culture which to a certain extent cuts across class boundaries. The failure to explore (and perhaps a fear of) youth culture is related to a problem we discussed earlier, Chodorow’s failure to explore the effects of movements in redefining and reshaping one’s way of feeling and living and of giving new meaning and significance to characteristics which persist.
Chodorow has made the important contribution of connecting sex-linked character traits which help perpetuate male-domination to the asymmetries of parenting. But neither our theories nor our strategies for change can view this aspect of sexual oppression in isolation. We must come to understand the ways in which the larger culture takes up, articulates, reinforces, and implicates these sex-linked propensities within a system of social domination.* We need to acknowledge the daily, hourly pressures in everyday life: work, peer groups, popular culture, advertising and the media, which reinforce whatever initial propensities exist. We must explore the concrete social forms which express male rejection of women: the ways in which interest in sports facilitates a bond between father and son against the mother and how the gang, the fraternity, and the locker room function as means of controlling female behavior (and in particular female sexual behavior). We must recognize that the socialization of children is not and has never been solely accomplished within isolated families. We need to explore the changing nature of female kin and friendship networks in order to build upon their positive aspects while changing negative content. Furthermore, we must acknowledge our continuing discomfort with sexually determined roles despite internal and external pressures towards conformity. Without an analysis of these factors we are left in the dark as to what besides individual confrontations between men and women will bring about the transformation in childcare responsibilities which Chodorow has demonstrated is necessary.

Chodorow’s separation of social organization into the mutually affecting, but structurally exclusive areas of family and work fails to provide the theoretical underpinning for demands which attempt to break down this division. Chodorow shows how the fact that many women lack a significant attachment to paid work reinforces their investment in mothering. But the underlying structuralism tends to suggest a separation between feminist demands on the workplace and feminist demands on the family. A focus which examines childrearing as exclusively confined to the family fails to give a theoretical backing to demands concerning childrearing which modify the workplace. The recent case of a firefighter who was ordered to stop breastfeeding her infant during breaks raised the important issue of the embodiment of gender-related norms in the work rules governing traditionally male fields. Calling for the modification of the
workplace to allow for needs around childrear-
ing has the potential for raising the general ques-
tion of modifying the workplace to accord with
human needs.

CONCLUSION

By itself, Chodorow’s theory substitutes a
psychological pessimism almost as deep as
complete biological pessimism. Change in the
relationship between the sexes awaits a new
generation of children mothered by men and
women who have not themselves been warped
by their upbringing. There is a legitimacy to a
pessimism which recognizes the depth of inter-
nal resistance, while acknowledging the possi-
bility of partial change. Robin Morgan articu-
lates this in a love poem to her ex-husband as
their relationship disintegrates during her
struggles against oppression as a woman:
“You’re trying very hard. I know that and you
can’t imagine how I wish it were enough.”
But if we do not try to discover and work toward
the kind of political climate which creates
pressure on men to regard women’s concerns in
new ways, we are left with women endlessly
obessing and adjusting to the incapacities of
men. Men are able to shrug off responsibility for
a response with “That’s the way I am.” But the
experience of the women’s movement has indi-
cated that consciousness-raising groups have
helped support a changed sense of self for
women. Furthermore, consciousness-raising
groups, women’s caucuses, task forces on sex-
ual harassment and battered wives, and so forth
have been at least partially effective in placing
pressure on men to change their way of relating
to women and of viewing themselves. We must
reaffirm the sense that some change is possible
in the here and now.

Chodorow’s work participates in a dilemma
which confronts the feminist movement as a
whole. Sexism is frequently an intimate enemy,
manifested within particular personal relation-
ships. But sexism also permeates our entire
culture and is upheld by a complicated, inter-
connecting set of institutions and ideologies.
The sexism within individual relationships is in-
formed by and supported by institutionalized
aspects of women’s oppression. There is a ten-
sion in developing a politics which supports per-
sonal relationships as an arena for feminist con-
frontation, without restricting feminist struggle
solely to this sphere. A strong women’s move-
ment can provide support and a broader context
to individual confrontations while addressing
the institutions and ideologies which uphold
inequalities reproduced within individual rela-
tionships. In the absence of such a movement,
however, the attempt to reorganize individual families can become one more retreat from confrontation with the larger society to a supposedly insulated private life. Even Readers Digest’s new magazine Family agrees on the need for greater male involvement in parenting. Our disagreement is about why and to what end such involvement should take place. Ending the oppression of women, even changing the sexual division of labor within families, cannot be accomplished solely by adjustments within individual families. If we forget this, we risk also forgetting the centrality of female solidarity, political and personal, as a locus for political change.

As feminists, we must formulate the discussions which will uncover the complex, interconnecting factors which create and reinforce sexual domination. But at a time when the New Right is using the power of Church and State to restrict women’s reproductive and sexual freedom, we must not allow the domain of feminist struggle to be restricted to the rearrangement of the sexual division of labor within individual families. Our explorations clearly deepen the politics of struggles around sexuality, reproductive control, and violence against women which feminism has politicized and claimed as its own. However, the insights feminism has unleashed must also be brought to bear on the politics of the movement against military intervention, nuclear war, and racism which have traditionally been regarded as the province of the male-dominated mixed Left. Prevailing concepts of “manhood” support racial violence and militarism as well as sexism. The task of unraveling the complex and pervasive significance of gender for all our political struggles is an integral part of our work as socialists as well as feminists. For feminism at its best has hooked into something deep to our lives.

The feminist thinking which has grown out of the women’s liberation movement has multiplied the occasions of confusion, puzzlement, and exploration of the issues of sexual domination. It addresses relationships and dynamics which are at once individual and social. Feminists have had to develop a politics and a way of thinking about politics which is open and allows for the exploration of the subtlety and the many-faceted nature of the occasions of male domination. It has, of course, identified certain areas such as the family, sexuality, and women’s control of their own bodies as vitally in need of further exploration. But at it best its recognition of the importance of these areas has not been at the expense of closing off discussions of other areas of significance. My hope is that the discussions which take off from Chodorow see her work as opening up new areas that we must incorporate into our politics. My fear is that it will be taken to identify ultimate causes which (is all) we must address. Jessica Benjamin warns us that “A politics which denies . . which tries to sanitize or rationalize the erotic, fantastic components of human life will not defeat domination, but only play into it.” In developing a politics which tentatively opens up and tries to address a complex reality, feminism has developed methods which can enrich the exploration of the nature and connections between different forms of domination (racism, homophobia, ageism, and economic exploitation as well as sexism). It has given a new depth to politics through raising the possibilities of linking our private pains to their public dimension. Because of the newness of the subject matter it uncovers, the openness of its methods, and its concerns with personal dynamics within the process of revolutionary change, feminist politics and politics which are in sympathy with feminism have sometimes been criticized for being slow-moving. But this
may be the necessary consequence of refusing a premature clarity which is reached at the price of blindness to complexity. And the strength of our politics is based, in part, in the depth of our vision.

Footnotes

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SEXUALITY AND
MALE VIOLENCE

Peter Bradbury

Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

— Sylvia Plath

This article is an attempt to redress an uneasy balance. For the most part it is women who have made painful attempts at unraveling and understanding what is involved in violence. Men have remained, on the whole, conspicuously silent — not that in our various roles as doctors, psychologists, sociologists, politicians, and teachers we haven’t spoken and written reams about the phenomenon of violence and frequently acted as though we had some special access to the experience of victims of violence. What we have done is to distance ourselves from violence through professionalism or exclamations of horror; to depersonalize and thereby evade the crucial issue which women cannot confront for us: what it is to be violent, and what that violence means for our existence as men.

While men inflict violence on each other, and women sometimes initiate or participate in violence, it is usually the case that in the context of our private lives it is men who are violent and women who are the victims. In the sphere of organized, “legitimate” violence,

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for example in war or sports like boxing, violence becomes a contest between men (often with women as the prize). But in life as it is experienced from day to day, that is not the case.

I have chosen to concentrate on sexual violence, since it is here that there is least understanding. The most recognizable form of sexual violence is rape. But I want to get away from the habit of discussing rape as a singular event and look more at the distressing range of violations which are sexually related and which, it seems to me, make rape not simply a possibility but a logical outcome of what our society generally sees as "normal" sexual relations. Not only is that the case, but the very act of ascribing normality to particular forms of sexual behavior — heterosexual fucking — sets up the conditions for violence. The reasons for aggression toward gay men and lesbians are very complex, but in this context I shall see them as stemming from the arrogant reduction of sexuality to the power of the phallus. This allows men a sense of justice in the intrusions they make on homosexuals, yet ironically it is tied up in the threat and danger posed by nonheterosexual relationships and behavior.

While I am convinced that in various forms the entire range of human relationships is sexual, I shall confine my arguments to behavior which at some point becomes recognizably sexual, involving some form of sensuousness and the expression, however indirectly, of desire. Similarly, I shall limit the sense in which I understand violence. It can be argued that in subtle ways all kinds of manipulation and control are violent in that they operate against someone's will or against their best interests. But I will be particularly concerned here with acts which, through physical power or verbal coercion, inflict an immediate damage on the victim. That damage may be emotional or mental as well as physical, and it may be inflicted through verbal abuse, threat, imprisonment (whether in a state institution or in the home), or physical assault.

PATRIARCHY, THE FAMILY, AND THE STATE

Since the sixteenth century, the development of capitalist commodity production and its necessary organization around large stabilized workforces and markets has meant the development of wage labor and a consequent fragmentation of personal and work life. Where once it was possible for the majority of people to live and work together in community-based families, sharing to some extent (though not completely) the work involved in producing necessities, capitalist production has made such a structure impossible to maintain. With fewer men in control of the larger scale of productive activity, families have been forced to release members into a segregated workforce for a large period of the day, thus entrenching already-existing dominations of women by men and drawing a harder line between their accepted spheres of operation.

Together with this change in the productive life of communities has come the development of professional, scientific institutions and ideologies whose position in the managerial and technological organization of the industry has given them the power to determine what most of us perceive as normal, good, or inevitable. Thus, through filters of education, media, and legislation, and the sharing of these in private talk, we come to take as our assumed starting point the relationship between work and the family, and the respective roles of men, women, and children in it.¹

Patriarchy predates this history, and an extensive discussion would analyze the importance of patriarchy in making such a history possible. Patriarchy is a system of governance by which all men have some stake in determining the lives and histories of the women and children assigned by whatever system to their care. The hierarchy
which operates within this structure of governance is thus shared out among the men, rather than including women who are reduced alike to their reproductive and domestic roles. Those women who break out have, at least until the recent advent of the women’s movement, done so on male terms and individually.

The difference which capitalism has made to patriarchy is to take it out of the hands of individual men or communities and place it in the more scientific, professional hands of the state. Men are still invested with the dominant role within the family, and are encouraged to exercise the power they have developed over the history of our “civilization.” Yet this power has been narrowed considerably. State control, say in Britain, has taken over many of the functions once attached to the position of individual patriarch. Education, the public care and welfare of children, taxation, and various forms of legislation around divorce, contraception, and so on, are now secularized concerns handled by a professional bureaucracy. To that extent, the state has become the supreme patriarch. The extent to which individual men still exercise their power seems to depend on the intrusive power of the state in a particular society.

While violence, like patriarchy, predates capitalism, it has developed new expressions and generated new forms of control and channeling. It has also, as I have already mentioned, generated new forms of analysis and explanation. It has been argued, by Sartre and Marcuse among others, that violence occurs because, as men, we too are victims: of the aggressive alienation of work, of the constant bombardment of our senses and egos by capitalist media (including advertising). Our isolation in the workplace and the frustrations and schizophrenia induced by the lack of control that goes with it — so the argument goes — supply ripe conditions for individual aggression. And — it

David Hockney, 1974
continues — because we eventually return to the home, the most available object of aggression is the woman. Where work becomes scarce (as in Britain now), violence is more readily enacted on other men as well as women, and it becomes more of a public show, gang-based rather than simply individual. We could add that racial and class tensions also become involved at this point.

Now at one level that is a convincing argument, and one that I would offer limited support. Yet it remains both descriptively evasive and nonexplanatory. It doesn’t confront the issue of why, after all, it is men on the whole who are violent and women who are the victims of that violence (though, as I have said before, this means neither that women are passive as victims nor that they don’t have the capacity to strike back with their violence). Because to the extent that we are victims, we still hold a power — as men — to enact rage and authority on those who have no power, or who have struggled for it against enormous odds. And despite the authority vested in us as men — as husbands, fathers, sometimes as professionals — we still choose, deliberately or otherwise, to enact that power with the hand, to communicate not in a language of gentleness but in and through the skin.

THE LANGUAGE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

How do we learn, as men, to speak a language of domination? There are many reasons, some of which can be seen if we look at what happens as we go from birth to what we have learned to call adulthood. The language we speak to our mothers moves, in that time, from the most intimate and sensual — the shared utterances of skin and first speech — to the tyrannical, the instrumental, and the dismissive. At some time between birth and, say, twenty, we learn to recognize our mothers as servant, nurse, giver of birth — that is, as socially inferior beings from whom, by a process we learn to ignore or disparage, we have somehow sprung. In this conflict between recognition and denial, we lose the language of intimacy and the knowledge of our mothers we must once have had. The reality of the woman who gave birth to us and brought us up is reduced in our perceptions to its physicality.

This is the first violence, the severing of intimacy. We learn to identify with the father, real or absent, either through his example and teaching, or through the powerful indoctrinations of the media and education. Ironically, as sons we are in a position both to dominate and to be dominated. We dominate because, as male children, there is some special status attached to us and our
development. We are encouraged to demand from our mothers, and later from other women, the nurturance and physical care that our early helplessness made necessary. We learn quickly that there is no need for us to produce the minutiae of our material or emotional lives: it will be done for us while we get on with the job of becoming men.

Many of us, I think, become little tyrants in the course of this development. A conflict arises, however, between our sense of the power thus given to us and the everyday position of the mother in the home. While it is generally the case that discipline is ritualized in the province of the father — that is, we are dealt with when He comes home — the small and seemingly inconsequential disciplines and controls are enacted by the mother, especially at the early stage. While the generalized and dramatic discipline of the father engenders respect and in some cases awe, partly because of his physical presence and partly because of his continual absences from the home, the littler disciplines of the mother come into conflict with our sense of her as servant and nurturer. I can remember early expressions of my own violence being "caused" in this way by the indignant resentment I felt at being punished by someone who was simply a physical presence and one who, at the same time, was clearly scorned and not respected by my father. Even as an adolescent the bitterness and rage I felt at my father's unjust tyranny of discipline didn't make me as indignant and resentful as my mother's more desperate and less damaging methods of discipline.

It seems to me also that the father, seeing the naked conflict between the dominating and the being dominated, challenges his own intimacy with the mother and sides with the son. This is what happens in the film Ordinary People, in which the director takes the side of father and son, seeing them as the "natural" allies against the mother and eventually forcing her out of the script altogether. That didn't happen in the same way to me, but I recall as I think about it an ongoing struggle in which my father attempted to enlist my support against my mother, usually in terms of my intellectual development. My refusal for a variety of reasons to comply with this engendered its own set of violences, which operated through a kind of rage and fear at the power over me of this distanced, petty man.

The violence we enact first against our mothers is sometimes physical: we push them away, or hit out, or "terrorize" in our boyish games. Or, as we grow older, it is carried through a look, through silence, or through tone. As we become adults, have girlfriends, lovers, wives, and mates, we have already learned the habits of violence which, to my mind, become almost so automatic
as to be inevitable in some form: whether the violence is enacted on someone else or turned inwards in self-destructiveness, it is still there, part of the abrasive conflict between ourselves and the world.

One way of understanding this, I think, is to look at the languages of men which precede violence against women and to a certain extent against other men as well: languages which reduce women to their physicality while organizing their sexuality around a reproductive or passive model, and release men to determine the range and variety of their own sexuality. I don’t, here, mean language merely as the spoken or written word, but as the range of means by which relationships are communicated and articulated. As words are a way of organizing thought and perception, so fucking, for example, is a way of organizing desire. If our desire is tied up with the kind of attitudes to women discussed so far, then that will become apparent in our fucking. If we are challenged by the woman we desire, then it is inevitable that fucking in some way becomes violent, involving the play of physical power which is the most concrete basis for our domination.

As agents of patriarchy, reproducing it to a greater or lesser degree as individual men, we have developed a language of what I would like to call determinations. This, I should stress, is a language which cuts across class and racial boundaries and is present in educated and illiterate speech alike.
The articulate language of academia is just one example, albeit a very powerful one, of this "language of determinations." Because it is limited and to a certain extent fossilized, it can be learned by passing through endurance tests in the development of specialized vocabularies. What I mean is something more basic: it is a language which, on the whole, is removed from the minutiae of private life and which reflects a concern with broad, assumed categories of behavior and perception.

OUR DAILY NEEDS

We learn such a language during the process discussed earlier of growing into adulthood. But it doesn't stop there. Most of us, as men, have not on the whole had to attend to the satisfaction of our daily needs. At work, these are supplied by the employer and frequently administered by women and low-paid workers — especially non-white people — such as tea women, secretaries, and cleaners. This will vary according to class position: bosses have secretaries, workers don't. But the structure of the patriarchal-capitalist workforce is such that even the worst-paid male workers can be sure that there will be someone, usually a woman, less skilled and less well-paid and doing more shit work. If not, then there is the home, where our needs are supplied by mothers, wives, girlfriends, and daughters. What is most extraordinary is that it is not just a single, narrow set of needs that is satisfied by women, but a majority of them. Our subsistence is supplied and our egos are cosseted either by a tactful woman companion or by some victory in the war for possession of women as objects. Our frustrations are soothed and our desire is received.

This satisfaction of our ongoing daily needs has, on the whole, given us as men the freedom and opportunity to develop a language which need confront and contain only the truth of our own, self-contained, masculinist world. Our assumptions and perceptions thus become so generalized as to part company with the recurring machinery of daily life. It is frequently pointed out that men are perfectly good at doing things which need some general engineering perceptions, but that the finer details are often missed. I think that's very true. We need look only as far as the kitchen or child's bedroom to see it in action. I remember being taken aback and mortified when I was looking after children on a daily basis and was pleased with myself for the success I was having in getting them dressed in the morning. The problem was, I kept asking their mother what they should wear, where the socks and knickers and other little things were kept, until she got so pissed off that she pushed me aside and did it herself. It is a question, I think, of men failing to take responsibility for the things we regard as petty but which are primary and essential to life.

The fact that as men we are taught and encouraged to think and feel in generalities means that we demean those areas of production which we see as petty. For the most part, it is women who carry out those functions, and they therefore take on an appropriate status. Those of us who have somehow been forced to recognize the importance of such activities find that the recognition challenges our sense of our own importance so thoroughly that we can frequently become abusive as a result. An example: seeing myself as a writer, I often locked myself away from the house I was living in to get on with the job of writing, which I valued very highly and expected everyone else to value as well. This meant that childcare, cooking, and cleaning up became the responsibility of those whose work was less important than mine. This is a familiar scenario. What I think is significant is that when I was challenged about my withdrawal, physically and emotionally, I became frustrated and resentful that she did not understand the importance of what I was doing. I also managed to channel guilt into my
response, which ended in clenched fists, verbal abuse, and finally my kicking a hole in the kitchen door. I suspect that in various ways the same kind of violent response has been experienced by most men.

"NAGGING"

The most common experience of such a response is to what we have learned to call nagging. Nagging is insistence. Yet as men at work or in education we live daily with many forms of insistence to which our response is different. Why is it, then, that when it is women in the home who insist that we recognize a need or that we do something really useful, we often respond in rage or assault? One reason is that what is being insisted on frequently confronts us with what we want to evade, thus forcing us to consider or act on something which alters our sense of ourselves. Another is because it denies the harmony, agreement, and collusion on which our authority and importance are based. What makes it irritating to the point of violence is that this is a truth coming from nowhere, from beneath us. The supposed invisibility of its source has changed, and we are confronted with what we do not wish to accept. Thus, for those of us involved in alienated work situations, the expected language of comfort and ego building has altered. It has become a language suggesting truths that are threatening in both their sense and their delivery.

Because women are understood in terms of their reproductive function, their domestic position, and their physicality, it is in those terms that the phallic power of male sexuality is expressed in penetration. Because they operate for us in the physical domain, it is women’s bodies we penetrate. When we can’t penetrate women’s minds we deny their importance, evade their questioning, and relegate them to petty categories. For the most part this works, and over the centuries women have been forced to comply by developing languages of their own which we call “intuition,” “gossip,” and so on. It is when that language threatens to move out of our control, or challenges our understanding and authority, that we become violent. For it is only through abuse, assault, and battering that we can establish and maintain the dominance which supplies us with our sense of ourselves.

Similarly, when women begin to assert their own sexuality, especially if that does not involve a dominant position for the man, the response is frequently automatic violence (though sometimes it is organized, as in gang rape). Attacks on lesbian women, on prostitutes, and on women who appear aggressive in some way (for example, academics) seem to me the result of this kind of reaction. A combination of phallic arrogance and threat is involved. In the more frequent cases of rape within the family, for example, the threat may not be there but the arrogance is, on top of the assumption that — because a girl or a woman is no more than her body — it doesn’t really matter.

Given the reality of violence, it has become the habit to explain it away as a legitimate response to nagging, or an urgency of desire. Where the extent of violence becomes intolerable, as in the case of the Yorkshire Ripper murders, we either reduce the question to one of “individual psychosis” and thus evade our own complicity, or fall back upon our position as “protectors.” Much of the public urgency surrounding the Ripper investigation was the indignant response to the threat he posed to other men’s women. Indirectly, the same response made it possible for the prosecuting counsel to make a moral distinction between the prostitutes and the murder of women who were girlfriends or daughters.

Much of what needs to be done is being done now. Women are organizing perhaps more than they have ever done before to resist and combat
the proliferation of sexual violence. But rather than retreating into silence, men need to come out now with attempts at getting to the bottom of why we resort to violence, and doing something about it at that level. Pious moralism is more dangerous even than silence. This article, while making no claims to being exhaustive, is an attempt to move the discussion of violence on to our ground, where we can make some sort of contribution to understanding and resistance.

Footnotes

1. Two accounts of this history that I have found useful and absorbing are Ann Foreman, *Femininity as Alienation*, London, Pluto, 1977; and Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life*, New York, 1976.

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Notes

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Capitol Punishment

Terrorist
Kook
Loner

who didn’t want a nuclear war
(who would?)

was shot dead by federal sharpshooters
who, attempting to hit his tires,
hit his tired old body as well,

fitting punishment for the crime
of holding hostage a national icon
that suspiciously looks like an MX
except that you gotta buy them in dense-packs
can’t get ’em in singles

or can ya? The prez says he’s willing to talk
about a deal

Even-up, one 66 year-old terrorist
        loner
        kook (with a criminal record
that included leafletting without permission)
for one national icon
that suspiciously looks like an MX

But then, mainstream movement that
secretly meets with the president
might not want a terrorist,
let alone a kook,
certainly, god forbid, not a loner
to challenge respectability and media time

do you really think you’d miss the Washington
monument
in the mass confusion of Armageddon
or am I getting too picky.

John Demeter
December 10, 1982

At a time when narrative forms of fiction are out of favor with many critics, Ernie Brill’s collection of loosely related short stories demonstrates the strength available in writing with a clear-cut political perspective, realistic dialogue, and fully developed characters. The social setting is an area of health care rarely touched on in the popular media: the world of hospital orderlies, nurse’s aides, practical nurses, and the terminally ill. Brill has been there, having worked as an orderly in hospitals in Boston and San Francisco.

The author has a near-perfect ear when it comes to rendering dialogue, and the momentum of many of his stories is built around the taut, often funny, usually acerbic interchanges between his protagonists. The title story which concludes the book is one of the best and it illuminates Brill’s major concerns. Moses Green, a black worker who had been employed in the asbestos industry, is in a hospital to see how diagnostic tests have turned out. Middlebrook, the white doctor assigned to him, knows that Moses has only a short time left to live and is in anguish about whether to give him a report which cites corporate indifference as being responsible for his illness. Because the report is not absolutely definitive, the timid Middlebrook elects to withhold the information.

While waiting in the corridor for his appointment, Moses establishes a friendship with a restless lad of about ten named Joshua. The high-spirited youth confides that he and his sister get home from school about an hour before either of their parents and regularly reenact the Battle of Jericho. They sing wildly, thrust with makeshift swords, and dance vigorously to shake down the walls of their enemies’ fortresses. Josh gives a demonstration which immediately brings over a white guard who is apprehensive about the noise and camaraderie of the white child and a black man old enough to be his grandfather. Later, following a confrontation in which a black guard assists his white compatriot, Moses thinks of Emmet Till and Little Rock and muses:

Why was it they always went after the children, working them over as soon as they were ready to walk almost? Was it to let them know early where they stood in life — sock it to them quick, or was it that plus more — that cowards prefer children?

Back in their respective homes, the boy and the old man each reconsider the day’s events. Josh, realizing how grave his new friend’s illness is, identifies him with the Biblical Moses who will not enter the Promised Land. Moses starts to use his oxygen equipment to aid breathing and imagines people mocking him with new words to an old tune: Old Mose Green with his breathing machine/Old Mose Green with his breathing machine. Slowly, through his own reasoning abilities, he correctly identifies the source of his disease and begins to tally how many coworkers have been similarly stricken. In a reverie, his mind mixes scenes from throughout his life with those of Little Joshua darting about in his Jericho dance and an imaginary campaign in which he rallies his fellow workers in one last struggle against the employers. But, of course, it will never be. As scraps of song and moments from the past mix with hallucinations, we realize Mose is dying. At the end, he sees his departed wife and says, “Time to turn in, honey.” One of his grandchildren tugs on his arm and pleads, “Carry me home, grandpa, carry me home.”
What works so well in this story is that rather than belaboring the calumny of capitalists and racists, the story is securely rooted in an old worker’s common sense and a child’s rebellious imagination. The political points are registered through implications and resonances and even the most negative characters are depicted as having some virtues. In other tales, the most sympathetic figures often snarl and shout at one another as lustily as they address their real foes. Following an altercation at the hospital, a member of a small radical group asks, “Point of clarification. Mac is the other r.n. — the right-center one?” The exasperated hero responds, “Right-center, right schmenter,” and drawing on other characters denounces his comrade’s “horrible habit of categorizing people like news analysts or generals, as if working people were one undistinguished mass and not older women who slept with birds and young women who ate cupcakes and had ulcers, served oolong tea to the FBI, wore yellow sweaters, underwent divorces.” However, when this outburst is over, the hero reflects upon the generous sentiments behind sometimes stupid or even obnoxious tactics. Unlike so many authors, Brill refuses to take the convenient option of using a disagreement about tactics to disengage from the struggle for change or to cut himself off from militants in that struggle.

Brill amplifies his political observations with a variety of sophisticated literary devices. In some like “Autumn Leaves,” which deals with the Kennedy assassination, they fail; but in most, like “Crazie Hattie,” dramatized by Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis for public television, they are quite successful. The action in “Crazie Hattie” begins with a group of hospital workers watching Nurse Superintendent Judy Lodge, white and fortyish, berating Nurse’s Aide Hattie Perkins, black and sixtyish. Lodge scolds Hattie for her methods, says she endangers the safety of their patients, and threatens to have her dismissed. Part two of the story is a transcript of the official memorandum Nurse Lodge writes for her superiors. The concluding segment is mainly an interior monolog by Hattie in which all the events of the first two sections are seen from her point of view. Without resorting to simplistic frames, Hattie astutely diagnoses Nurse Lodge’s motivations and stakes out her own territory, ending with her imagined retirement to a haven in the Caribbean, The Torrid Zone:

They got evenings there where the stars are dripping like they was split open melons, that’s how they look — it’s like the whole sky was like my purse only brand new and a whole lot bigger — and maybe I’ll find me some magician stud, some magic man, who can turn these rhinestones into diamonds and who appreciates and respects a woman of my bearing.

Like most stories in I Look Over Jordan, “Crazie Hattie” does not end with a decisive triumph for the main character. Much as Hattie and others like her may rage at the system and struggle against it, given their political and economic situations, they are fortunate if they can force even a minor concession and usually must settle for a stalemate. However admirable they may be, they also come with bad breath, nasty tempers, and a high quotient of irrational behavior. But these ordinary and flawed people have values that argue for the possibility of a better America, and Brill, very much in touch with the living language, captures these values in their many individual cadences and vocabularies. His guarded optimism reflects an American talent irrevocably rooted in the revolutionary aspirations of the 1960s but one tuned to the realities of the 1980s.

Dan Georgakas


Staughton Lynd’s Shutdown is a model of radical political history written by an active participant in the nation’s most important struggle against plant closings. It is an important addition to Singlejack’s impressive list of “little books” written by workers about work and work relations. This book — which is longer and more ambitious than previous publica-
tions — describes historical and political events that transcend individual work experiences. *Shutdown* is also a more overtly political discussion, one that will have a major bearing on the debates over shop closings and will undoubtedly sting the officers of the Steel Workers and other international unions who have actually retarded the rank-and-file struggle to reopen plants under worker control.

RA readers have already seen part of Lynd’s account (“What Happened in Youngstown,” July–August 1981) and now the full story is available. It is a story that takes advantage of historical subjectivity without falling into the errors participant observers often make. In the tradition of *Rank and File*, the “personal histories by working class organizers” edited by Alice and Staughton Lynd, this partisan account of workers’ struggle shows how workers themselves can interpret this past with present-day questions in mind.

Written in a clear, accessible style, *Shutdown* painstakenly reconstructs the events that led to the shutdown of three major Ohio steel mills between 1977 and 1979, and shows how workers and their allies responded. Simply by setting out the complex chronology of events, Lynd contributes to our understanding of the shop closing problem. Indeed, what stands out in this contemporary chronicle is the importance of timing. By waiting in critical instances the workers suffered serious harm.

*Shutdown* begins with useful biographical sketches of the main participants in the struggle and then proceeds to an explanation of how major steel companies refused to invest in modernizing their Ohio plants and decided to shut down instead. Lynd describes the human impact of the closings on communities and then explains how an “Ecumenical Coalition” of church groups began an effort to reopen the Campbell Works at Youngstown under employee-community ownership. There might have been more discussion of the role played by the Institute for Policy Studies and specifically by Gar Alperovitz who developed the visionary plan for reopening the steel works. The plan, which required massive federal loans, stipulated a private, profit-making corporation in which workers owned part of the stock rather than a workers’ cooperative owned entirely by former employees. Apparently, the capital-intensive nature of the industry and the need for enormous equity capital required such a model. Lynd is convinced that the structure of such an Employee Stock Ownership plan would have worked. Whether the plan could have been allowed to work is quite another matter. Lynd discusses the various problems with existing worker-run firms and states that although public ownership is the only long-term answer to plant closings, the Youngstown struggle showed that plans should not depend too much on the federal government. In any case, the merits of the plan aside, the most exciting descriptions are devoted to workers discussing how “Community Steel” in Youngstown would be run.

In an earlier review (RA, March–April 1979) Lynd remarked that the struggle to reopen the Campbell works brought workers face-to-face with questions of socialism, and they then brought these questions before the community. This may have been one of the reasons the Steel Workers’ international leadership played such a negative role in the struggle. But it does raise the question for Lynd of whether or not socialists wouldn’t get better results by working horizontally for alliances between unions and community groups, rather than focusing entirely on reforming or capturing big international unions. Lynd also discussed the need for including shop closing issues in collective bargaining. He would not of course rely entirely on such a strategy. The lessons of the struggle against the Brier Hill plant shutdown was that the activists who occupied the company offices for a few hours, should have maintained their sit-in. The need for direct action also seems clear in the recent fights against shutdowns in Canada and Britain.

One problem the book raises requires more discussion. When Ed Sadlowski ran as a reform candidate for Steel Workers president he suggested that some steelworkers could be supported to use their talents in less alienating, more useful occupations. To Youngstown steelworkers this sounded like a sellout. But clearly workers and unions in sick industries need a strategy for demanding new kinds of jobs to
replace those being eliminated. The Communications Workers will be bargaining along these lines based on a study which predicts the efforts of new technology in their industry. However, it would clearly be disastrous for workers to concede to shutdowns and abandon direct action so that their unions and lawyers can negotiate for job training programs. Unfortunately, shutdowns force workers to defend their jobs and their job security first and foremost, but these kinds of crises often show that workers are not just economic creatures. If workers can mount struggles to reopen industries under their own control they can begin to discuss how to change the jobs they work and the products they make. Labor history shows us that so-called defensive struggles can unleash creative visions of the future. When all seems to be lost people sometimes begin to discuss the validity of the status quo.

Shutdown will stimulate discussions on many important questions about a socialist future. It will also be read by activists involved in the day-to-day struggle to save jobs and communities.

Jim Green


Andrzej Tymowski who compiled, translated, and edited the excellent documentary The Strike at Gdansk (available for $2.00 plus postage from the address above) has put together another timely, important report on the Polish workers’ struggle. For leftists who have been frustrated and angered by the journalistic coverage of Poland under martial law, Solidarity Under Siege is an enlightening if not encouraging publication.

In a sympathetic but rather apolitical article in the New York Times Magazine (August 22, 1982), John Darnton says the notion of a “state of war” existing in Poland is a curious one because there has been so little blood shed. He wonders if Solidarity doesn’t use the phrase as a “psychological crutch” — “a way of covering what some concede is their shame over the fact that there wasn’t more resistance.”

Of course the Polish state, not Solidarity, declared an official “state of war” December 13, 1981. In any case, as Tymowski writes in his introduction, Poland is in a peculiar sort of propaganda war of “Orwellian proportions.” “Its unique and determining feature was the absolute isolation imposed on everyone . . . in the first hours” after martial law was declared.

Solidarity Under Siege includes many important documents like Solidarity’s Radom statement issued on the eve of martial law as well as Tymowski’s own perceptive comments on topics like “Did Solidarity Go Too Far?” “The answer in hindsight is no, there was nothing that could have prevented the coup. Short of Solidarity’s repudiation of everything it stood for, an attempt at military intervention was inevitable.”

The most important documents for understanding Solidarity’s current possibilities (as of the summer of 1982) are the contrasting strategic statements by Jacek Kuron and Zbigniew Bujack.

Kuron, a leading intellectual of KOR (Committee for Workers’ Self Defense), and a moderate in early Solidarity debates, now repudiates two of the movement’s key principles: (1) open participation and activity at all levels, and (2) the concept of a “self-limiting revolution” designed to avoid Soviet intervention. He now believes that it would be “a mistake to ignore the imminent possibility of direct, all-out conflict with Soviet power.” Therefore Polish society must create a centrally controlled national resistance movement to defeat an occupation. Kuron does not call for armed resistance against occupation like the opposition to the Nazis. In fact, he condemns terrorism and wants an organization that would head it off. According to Kuron:

A well organized, mass resistance movement is the Poles’ only chance. Only such a movement can negotiate a compromise. Only such a movement can turn back the tide of terrorism; and, in the event that no one from the government steps forward with a compromise, only such a movement
can reduce the risk of Soviet retaliation. . . . The occupying regime’s strength lies in its ability to keep society disorganized by shifting a small number of pacification squads from one location to another. For this reason — the contrast to our strategy before August 1980 — we must now organize around a central nucleus and accept its discipline.

Against Kuron, Zbigniew, Bujack argues for a continuation of the widespread, decentralized resistance that would eventually force the state to seek a social contract that would allow for economic gains and reduce sabotage. As Bujack says of Solidarity:

Before December 13, strong centralizing tendencies began to appear within the union. Increasingly, decisions were being made at the Regional and national levels. Conditions today call for exactly the opposite: decisions need to be made at the factory level and lower. . . . Such a decentralized structure protects against infiltration, reduces the extent of losses in case of detection, and makes it much more difficult for our activities to be disrupted.

Even in this desperate period of history Solidarity continues to inspire advanced forms of political discussion about how to mobilize workers’ resistance and to carry on the struggle for self-determination. Anyone who has followed the emergence of Solidarity from its dramatic appearance two years ago will want to read this excellent collection on Solidarity Under Siege.

Jim Green

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511 Lincoln Street
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Dear Radical America:

I am writing in response to the essay “Feminism and Anti-Militarism” by Margaret Cerullo and Marla Erlien (RA, Vol 16, Nos. 1 & 2).

Cerullo and Erlien make many important points in their essay. However, I am concerned with that part of their essay which addresses the way women have been characterized or stereotyped as mothers when they enter anti-war politics. Of course it is oppressive and sexist, as Cerullo and Erlien argue, to suggest that women can only enter anti-war politics as mothers, or that a woman who is a mother is thereby defined only as a mother. Yet I think that the authors ignore the possibility that being a mother might constitute a significant or even decisive influence on a woman’s politics. They state that “To assert our needs and interests as women, as opposed to as mothers, can become as difficult in the movement as it is in the society at large” (their emphasis, p. 51). I wonder if they mean to suggest by this statement that women who are mothers do not have, as mothers, a particular set of interests (or values, or experiences, or attitudes). If this is what they do think, I wonder why they do.

I would suggest the following possibilities. First, the physical and psychological experiences of pregnancy and childbirth may well be a distinctive experience for a woman such that she then has (or may have, or may be led in the direction of having) a characteristic attitude towards life and death, boundaries between people, violence, etc. This attitude may be different than that held by all men and by women who have not had children. Second, the psychological effects of caring for children (discussed in detail in recent works by a number of feminist theorists, including Chodorow, Dinnerstein, and Harding) may also lead in the same direction.

Now these points are not meant to suggest that women should be mothers; or that mothers “must” have certain attitudes. Yet Marxist theory has long claimed that one’s participation in social labor is essential to determining one’s politics. And socialist-feminist theorists have shown that the having and raising of children is an essential aspect of social labor. There may well be something distinctive about the condition of biological and psychological motherhood which would make for a distinctive contribution of mothers to political life, including the anti-war movement. Obviously, what this distinct contribution would be is a matter for mothers to decide. However I question the manner in which Cerullo and Erlien, if I have understood them correctly, seem to deny this possibility. Perhaps they do so because they accept the sexist image of motherhood as the only basis on which motherhood can be understood. Perhaps they believe that “motherhood” as a political identity is inherently sexist, whereas the sisterhood of feminism (women as women) can be liberating. However, just as female identity had to be reclaimed from a sexist culture, so, hopefully, will that of “mothers.”

Roger S. Gottlieb

Response

Our wariness about identifying motherhood as the source of women’s opposition to militarism grows out of problems that arise in our present historical context. Since at least the 1980 election, a “gender gap” has visibly surfaced in voting patterns and most strikingly in men’s and women’s increasingly divergent views about war and peace, evident both in polls and surveys and, dramatically, in women’s activism in the disarmament movement. Roger Gottlieb is not alone in attributing women’s opposition to war to our distinctive relationship to issues of “life and death, boundaries between people, violence,” etc., via mothering. But women have always been socially defined as mothers. And our history includes not only opposition to but also complicity with militarism. After all, mothers have traditionally sacrificed their sons, with pride, to the fatherland. Our question was how to explain the historical break with these traditions. Our challenge was to those who answered by emphasizing continuities with women’s traditional identity where we saw a rupture.
We recalled the early women's movement because that revealed that women's involvement in antiwar activities led to challenging our prescribed identities — as mothers and sex objects — which we had carried from the culture into the movement. Feminists developed a critique of the nuclear family, childrearing, the denial of women's sexuality, thereby both exposing the operations of male power and deepening our understanding of the roots of war and imperialism in our way of life. We opposed women's traditional roles as nurturers and comforters. Such roles burdened us with responsibility for softening the daily assaults of an inhuman public sphere and inhibited us from acting against male power within the private sphere. We saw that both as mothers and sex objects our role was to service the needs of others. Our immersion in the needs of others prevented our discovering our own needs and desires. With this recognition came the assertion of a female sexuality unbound by the cultural norms. The rupture with men lay here, not in the demand to legitimize nurturance. Sisterhood became the power base from which we resisted the guilt, the (internal as well as external) accusations — selfish, demanding, castrating — that accompanied our break with women's traditional behavior and roles.

We restate this because these perceptions seem distant from our present. The current attack on abortion rights dramatically reveals to women the resilience of the culture against feminist demands. In our article, we drew on our experience in trying to keep the issue of abortion alive in a peace movement that was welcoming the participation of the Catholic Church. When women raised the issue within disarmament organizing, the old abuses were hurled — selfish, putting your own needs first, etc. — the same accusations antiabortionists make to women demanding abortion. The difficulty many women have had in resisting such accusations reveals a key to the New Right's ability to gain ground. The values that have traditionally kept women in their place are deeply internalized and have yet to be uprooted. We need a political articulation which supports women's challenges to values that have denied our needs in the name of the needs of others, the greater good, nurturance, etc. When women's distinct contribution to politics is articulated instead in terms of traditional female values, we sacrifice our own rebellion against our role in the culture. The issue is whether we can embrace motherhood as a political identity without carrying the traditional — self-sacrificing, desexualizing — terms of motherhood into politics. Roger Gottlieb holds out hope, but fails to make concrete how advocating nurturance as an opposition breaks with its self-sacrificing meaning for women.

Margaret Cerullo and Marla Erlien
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