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History of the SWP (USA): Cannonite Bohemians After World War II

Thursday 19 July 2012, by [WALD Alan](#) (Date first published: 1 July 2012).

Alan Wald traces the history of several “Cannonite bohemians” active in the Socialist Workers Party during the post-World War II period. His essay features the artist Laura Slobe, Peter Bloch, an authority on Puerto Rican music and art, and George Perle, a musical revolutionary associated with Schoenberg’s 12-tone technique.

This essay is dedicated to the memory of George Lavan Weissman (1916-85), exemplary Marxist intellectual. “Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one.’”

C.S. Lewis

There is a PDF of an extended edition for the web of this article, including excellent photographs, which the author considers “perhaps the most interesting part” of it [\[1\]](#)

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THOMAS CARLYLE FAMOUSLY observed: “History is the essence of innumerable biographies.” [\[2\]](#) If so, how does one write a historical account of artistic rebels and sexual non-conformists in the U.S. Trotskyist movement during the repressive years of the early Cold War? An odd collusion of circumstances, including the hardening of anticommunist stereotypes and the self-censorship of radicals, caused a widespread memory loss that was acute on certain subjects. Chronologies of world events and the recitation of “correct” political positions are no remedies; the emotional archeology is what I am after.

Institutionalized forgetting about the scope of the Trotskyist experience was on display in every venue following the deaths of Peter Rafael Bloch (1921-2008), an authority on Puerto Rican artistic culture, and George Perle (born George Perlstein, 1915-2009), a Pulitzer Prize-winning music theorist and composer once married to the sculptress and painter Laura Slobe (1909-58). Nothing written even hinted that these two iconoclasts were in the past highly educated and committed Marxists, or that revolutionary ideas oxygenated their cultural thinking at crucial moments.

Alarm over memory loss of this type is the motive for this present essay, which appraises the lives of Bloch, Perle and Slobe, along with others who sought a vexed amalgam of unconstrained cultural creativity, personal freedom, and disciplined politics in the postwar Socialist Workers Party (SWP). What can be recovered of the political and personal passions of many “outlaw” lives on the Left, especially from those who infused anti-capitalism with anti-Stalinism, are only fragmentary narratives to be steered warily into coherency. For the postwar decade, one must write a kind of ghostly history, the reconstruction of the presence of an absence in a time of persecution.

“Outlaw” Lives on the Left

The late 1940s and 1950s was an era of growing right-wing “moral panic” about “folk devils” of communism and homosexuality. [3] The national mood, soon dubbed “McCarthyism,” reinforced the predisposition of socialist organizations to promote a public, supposedly “proletarian” image of their members as conventional in appearance and behavior.

An example of the SWP’s earlier concern about the danger of alienating potential workers can be found in the 1940 book *The History of American Trotskyism*, which became required reading for members and sympathizers. In a noted passage, party leader James P. Cannon (1890-1974) describes how he opposed admission to the SWP of a long-haired man who walked around Greenwich Village with unusual clothes and a curious mustache: “I said, people of this type are not going to be suitable for approaching the ordinary American worker. They are going to mark our organization as something freakish, abnormal, exotic: something that has nothing to do with the normal life of the American worker.” [4]

SWP members, like participants in most organized socialist groups, became known for a conservative appearance and a “clean-cut” look, reflected in the photographs of activists as well as cartoon drawings of the “working man” that appeared in its press. Yet as this essay will show, conventional behavior in one’s personal life, or in artistic and cultural affinities, was an entirely different matter.

For many individuals, surface conformity began as politically strategic, an artificial demeanor to allow a hearing from those who might be already suspicious of revolutionary ideas as “outside” of and “foreign” to their culture. Then the Cold War atmosphere added intensified forms of state repression to the picture. Anyone who might be suspected of violating taboos had even better reasons to blend into the environs or go underground.

Marxist cultural workers could have several lives; sometimes they used different names for their political and professional activity. For many militants, such secrecy turned out to be habit-forming; much was never recorded at the time, and then it was forgotten. The exterior deportment became the history, and with the passage of time the vision of the postwar SWP became locked within a powerful stereotype — one not very attractive to young radicals today.

Decades after World War II, even when the temper of the country proved more hospitable to left-wing activism, familiar expectations triumphed over the remembrance of anomalies that might

produce a rethinking. There was an understandable reluctance among surviving radical veterans to “name names” and provide particulars of former members of any Marxist parties who had not gone public. After all, the Attorney General’s List of Subversive Organizations lasted until 1974; someone might yet end up in political “trouble.” Those who departed in the 1950s were sometimes dismissed as quitters who succumbed to alien class pressures.

There was also a disinclination to acknowledge the longtime presence in the Trotskyist movement of sexual non-conformists. Homophobia was everywhere, including the Left, and slow to slacken. The insinuation of a person’s homosexuality, accurate or not, was widely perceived as a slur upon the accused.

At the same time, the historic ethos of the Left was habitually performed as masculinist and hardboiled. Leaders set the tone by revealing little of their emotions; dwelling on the private and intimate was discouraged as “not political.” [5] While the actual love relationships of Trotskyist militants traversed a continuum from Puritans (who equated sex with heterosexual marriage) to reincarnations of the Bloomsbury Group (who shared multiple partners and sexual orientations), the ensuing silence about sexual nonconformity in the Cold War Left became the dog that didn’t bark for illuminating the movement’s affective life.

Institutionalized Forgetting

Using the pseudonyms “Trent Hutter” and “George Sanders,” Peter Bloch and George Perle were closely associated with the postwar SWP for at least 10 years each. The organization was called “Cannonite” after its leader (James P. Cannon), mainly from 1940 through the 1960s. Although there are parties, groups, and individuals throughout the world who to varying degrees identify with the Cannon legacy, not a word was published in the left-wing press about Bloch and Perle’s passing. Nowadays it seems that the history of Trotskyism is far too serious a matter to be left in the hands of “Trotskyists.”

This neglect provided a strange contrast to the spectacularly edited information appearing in the New York Times obituaries and other tributes, fulsome in praise but misleading by gaps and omissions. [6] No doubt Bloch and Perle were reticent or even cagey about their pasts, but it was the constraints of historical amnesia that induced their admirers to fail to ask basic questions about political and emotional allegiances that may have informed the two men’s cultural work.

Try to understand Beethoven, especially the Eroica symphony, without reference to Napoleon and the French Revolution. Or Gertrude Stein, especially “Melanctha,” while ignorant of her relationships with May Bookstaver and Alice B. Toklas. About Bloch and Perle we were given less than half of the story: The striking correlations between historical events and stages in their intellectual and artistic developments passed unremarked.

One is asked to believe that a 40-year old German-born man named Peter Bloch materialized suddenly in the 1960s as an authority on Puerto Rican music and art. Scholars and journalists ascribe Bloch’s choice of topic, activities, and perspective to nostalgia for his European Sephardic heritage. No one noticed that Bloch himself relied on boilerplate radical language in his first book: “For the last 15 years I have been actively involved in the struggle for the cause of Puerto Rican-Hispanic culture.” [7]

Similarly, the acclaimed atonal composer and theorist George Perle is depicted as working out his ideas in isolation from world events. At his desk or in front of a keyboard, Perle studied Vienna School composers Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and Alban Berg (1885-1945), autotelically

undergoing a succession of eye-opening revelations about 12-tone harmonic modes starting in the late 1930s. There seems to be a gag order against anyone's speculating as to what may have motivated Perle's sequence of breakthroughs in theorizing post-tonal pitch relationships.

Did it never occur to anyone that Perle's trajectory resembles what scholars have noted about the break of Schoenberg with prevailing musical idioms? As Schoenberg's chief biographer reports, this pioneering direction was "not just because of the logic of his technical development." Perle's idol was initially driven to work out his responses to his own emotional unrest, but by the 1920s he was living in the menacing political environments of Austria and Germany. At that point Schoenberg's "critique of the [musical] idioms in which society expresses itself [became] a critique of society itself." [8]

The recycled fairy tale of Perle's musical progression as the effusions of a romantic, isolated genius, calls to mind a remark by Thornton Wilder: "It is possible to make books of a certain fascination if you scrupulously leave out the essential." [9]

A Minority within a Minority

At stake in the recovery of this lost history are not just the three careers on which I am focusing, or the reclamation of a political model (the SWP), now mostly obsolete. [10] Before recounting the Marxist chapters in the lives of Bloch, Perle and Slobe, one must address the milieu of a band of Cold War revolutionists of artistic achievement and non-conformist sensibility operating outside the parameters of prevailing social conventions in their creative and personal stories.

A cultural minority within a political minority, Bloch, Perle and Slobe were among those who might oxymoronically be called "Cannonite bohemians," forcing us to rethink familiar expectations. [11] Some defied compulsory heteronormativity through non-conformist sexual orientations now said to have been anathema in their own organization. Bloch, for example, was by all accounts a closeted gay man. [12] Slobe was a bisexual woman prominent in the SWP for her political cartoons signed "Laura Gray." [13]

While I focus on the postwar SWP, offshoots and rivals of Cannonite Trotskyism had a similar ambience when it came to a conformist surface harboring a mixture of cultural and sexual rebels. Noah Greenberg (1919-66), founder of New York Pro Musica, and William Simon (1930-2000), a major specialist on sexuality and an early advocate of gay rights, were members of the competing Workers Party (after 1949 called the Independent Socialist League) throughout the 1940s. In the 1950s, the *American Socialist* magazine remained a source of politico-cultural insight and inspiration, while *Correspondence* newspaper, with its muse of C. L. R. James (1901-89), outstripped all for its focus on youth, women, and race. [14]

Then in the 1960s, celebrities emerged in the counter-culture with diverse Trotskyist pasts — Art Kunkin (b.1928), originator of the L.A. Free Press and associate of Timothy Leary; Marvin Garson (dates unknown), founder of the *San Francisco Express* (where he famously called for "Queer Power!" in 1969); Barbara Garson (b. 1941), author of "MacBird" (1966); Henry Spira (1927-98), pivotal figure in the animal rights movement; and Dave Van Ronk (1936-2002), Greenwich Village folk and blues singer.

The rumor that Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry (1921-91) was once a follower in the SWP of the Argentine Trotskyist/UFO enthusiast Juan Posadas (Homero Rómulo Cristalli Frasnell, 1912-81) has never been confirmed. [15] But obscured affinities between the Far Left and the far edges of creative non-conformity are more present than extant narratives allow. For example, in late

February 1935 James P. Cannon shared the speakers' platform in San Francisco with the California Trotskyist Norman Mini (dates unknown); 15 years later, Mini, said by Henry Miller to be a combination of Franz Kafka and Big Bill Haywood, became a mentor of the visionary science fiction writer Philip K. Dick (1928-82). [16]

Heteronormativity and Trotskyism

The defiance of sexual conventions can often be linked to a defiance of social and political conventions. It is dicey to apply contemporary terminology to the pre-Stonewall era, but this connection may explain why there was always a presence of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in and around the Trotskyist movement. Most easily identified are writers: Claude McKay (1889-1948), Florence Becker (1895-1984), John Wheelwright (1897-1940), Parker Tyler (1904-74), F. W. Dupee (1904-79), and Robert Duncan (1919-88).

The poet and journalist Sherry Mangan (1904-61), a life-long committed Trotskyist who was more of the womanizing type, was associated with many gay and lesbian artistic figures, including Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), Alice B. Toklas (1877-1967), Mary Butts (1880-1937), Robert McAlmon (1895-1956), and Maurice Grosser (1913-86), who painted Mangan in the nude. [17]

In July 1942, Mangan, who translated Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1781) and other operas, brought his closest chum, composer Virgil Thomson (1896-1989), who presided over a largely gay salon at New York's Hotel Chelsea on West 23rd Street, down to the SWP headquarters. Mangan introduced James P. Cannon to Thomson, who straight away turned out one of his "musical portraits" of Cannon (called "Professional Revolutionary"), as he had earlier done for Mangan in 1940 (called "The Bard)." [18] George Weissman, director of the SWP publishing house after 1947, recalled that Lincoln Kirstein (1907-96), gay co-founder of the New York City Ballet, would come by the Weissmans' apartment to call on Mangan, who stayed there between sojourns in Europe and Latin America.

Some postwar Trotskyists were erotically free spirits in the earlier pattern of Maya Deren (1917-61), the avant-garde filmmaker who was an active party member throughout most of the 1930s. There were also "sex radicals," attracted to the theories of Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), an Austrian-born psychoanalyst who used Marxism to argue that neuroses stemmed from the social order; his remedy, catnip to young cultural rebels, was to increase one's sexual potency. After moving to the United States in 1939, Reich started building boxes called "orgone accumulators" that he believed could capture sexual energy from the environment. Reich's patients sat inside these boxes, one of many unorthodox features of his therapeutic treatment.

Although Reich was never a political follower of Trotsky, the two men corresponded in the early 1930s and may have held a meeting. [19] Associates of Trotsky were much taken with Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933).

Reichians on the Left

Reich's younger daughter, Lore Reich (b. 1928), became an active member of the SWP youth group "International Socialist Youth" as World War II ended. [20] The artist and poet Jeanne Morgan (dates unknown), later a secretary of Cannon, met Lore as a teenager at a Trotskyist summer camp in 1945, recalling her as "a large-boned, zahftig [Yiddish for 'pleasantly plump'] girl with glossy black hair, a smiling, happy person who was sophisticated and intelligent." [21]

Lore, close to New York SWP organizer Ray Sparrow (who used the “party name” Art Sharon, 1915-85), acknowledged that she was the daughter of the famous Wilhelm, but rarely volunteered the information. Although Lore was studying to become a psychoanalyst, she did not subscribe to her father’s views. Her husband Julius Rubin (1921-2004), later an economic historian at the University of Pittsburgh, was active as well. [22] By 1951, both had renounced Trotskyism and were expounding their own economic and political theories while pursuing graduate studies.

Some members of the SWP, however, were piously devoted to Reichianism, while more were simply curious but not convinced. Christy C. Moustakis (who used the “party name” Chris Andrews, 1911-89) had served as a guard in the Trotsky compound in Coyoacán, Mexico, for 11 months. He was the son of Constantine Christou Moustakis (1883-1925), knighted by the Greek government for his political services as a Greek-American.

Christy had graduated from Staunton Military Academy and Bowdoin College, after which he received an MA in history from Harvard University. He arrived in New York City in 1938, where he was recruited to the SWP by Joseph Hansen (1910-79). In the 1940s Christy traveled around the United States showing films that he had made of Trotsky, then worked for the Militant newspaper until 1945.

In a series of letters between 1951 and 1953, Christy, no longer formally in the SWP after the latter date but still sympathetic, discussed his experiences in Reichian therapy with Demila Sanders (1911-2006), who had accepted an assignment in 1944 to assist in caring for Natalia Trotsky in Mexico. [23] Christy described how he had commenced treatment under the personal care of Reich in 1945, believing that Reich had found “a shortcut breakthrough, available to the masses because it didn’t need the long, drawn-out treatment of psychoanalysis.”

Six years later, living in Reno, he was still reading Reichian publications, but baffled by Reich’s latest pronouncements on physics, astrophysics, medicine and mathematics. His interest switched over to hypno-analysis (the combination of hypnosis and psychoanalysis), and he eventually moved to New York City where he worked as a proofreader for the *New York Times*. [24]

Trotskyist Communes

Other Trotskyists were practitioners of communal living and open, non-possessive and, occasionally, group marital relationships. This included two leaders of the SWP in Southern California in the 1940s and 1950s, Murry Weiss (1915-81) and Myra Tanner Weiss (1917-99), who were also committed to a policy of advancing women within the SWP. The Weisses, who sometimes strategized their love affairs for political reasons — including one of Myra’s with Trotsky’s grandson — inspired a commune in Los Angeles. It was first known in the late 1940s as the “New England Street Commune,” but continued into the mid-1950s under other names.

The trademark of the Weiss relationship, variously imitated by others who were sometimes called “Weissites,” was an inviolable political collaboration that was maintained even while the two conducted other heterosexual liaisons. Some of these romances persisted for decades, most famously the 25-year affair between Myra, who was three times the SWP candidate for vice president of the U.S., and the younger Henry Spira, who provided crucial Civil Rights movement coverage for the Militant under the name “Henry Gitano.” [25]

A few open partnerships in the SWP lasted until death, such as that of George Novack (1905-92) and Evelyn Reed (1905-79), who were not “Weissites” but modeled themselves on Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone De Beauvoir. Some of these couples eventually broke up, including the Weisses. In 1960,

following a stroke, Murry departed the SWP and ultimately became a therapist. This new career ruptured the centrality of his political alliance with Myra, who was also out of the SWP but despised therapy, and Murry moved in with a young radical psychologist.

A number of women in these non-monogamous relationships were proud of their autonomy, speaking candidly of their “open marriage” late in life. [26] But there were also grievances, privately expressed; the movement was still male-dominated, jealousy was not as easy to eradicate in practice as in theory, and professions of anti-bourgeois non-possessiveness could serve as a mask for sexual bad behavior. [27]

Factionalism and Narrow-Mindedness

In other respects, too, life inside the radical movement was never all puppy-dogs and rainbows. From its outset Trotskyism inherited a meme of organizational factionalism that eventually rendered most self-proclaimed Leninist parties fanatical cults, although Cannon’s was among the “least bad” of such groups. In 1943-46, George Perle bared his fangs to join the attack of Cannon’s majority against the small Goldman-Morrow tendency, an opposition that was the more foresighted in its vision of the coming postwar world. Perle, writing as George Sanders (his mother’s maiden name), was prompted to defend an orthodox dialectical materialism against Jean van Heijenoort (1912-86), a personal secretary to Trotsky who after 1949 became a world authority on mathematical logician Kurt Gödel. [28]

In the early 1960s, Peter Bloch found himself in the middle of a brutal fight in the SWP about the nature of the Cuban revolution. Although he was not aligned with any of the oppositional factions, which were marked by an excess of sectarianism, he was as “Trent Hutter” denounced by his chief U.S. patron, Joseph Hansen, as having fallen into a “cesspool.” [29]

Paradoxically, it was sympathy for the early Cuban Revolution that paved the way for the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International, a world organization of Trotskyists, and Bloch himself would play a noteworthy part in the promotion of this new confederation. After Hansen’s death, 15 years later, it was in part over the assessment of the Cuban Revolution that the SWP degenerated into a circular firing squad, all but unrecognizable today.

Factionalism, among other shortcomings, breeds narrow-mindedness, judgmentalism (the inclination to make quick moral and personal judgments about those who seem different), and a view of others as instruments for immediate political objectives. Often factionalism combines with the Anaconda of political orthodoxy, which kills creativity and autonomy by constriction.

A factional environment can also be a breeding ground for interlinked bigotries masked by an alleged concern for revolutionary purity and a “proletarian” policy. Program and orientation are foundational for a socialist movement, but a factional mentality transforms Marxist terminology into a name-calling (“reformist,” “centrist,” and “petit-bourgeois” are the most famous) more likely to produce a proletarian “mystique” than an effective presence in the working class.

No particular individual may have been to blame, but the postwar SWP, frequently factionalized, was to some degree infected by the homophobic, sexist and racist society in which it functioned. It is accordingly necessary for historians to develop a framework acknowledging “intersectionality” in the Left as well as elsewhere in society. [30] Many of these manifestations only became clear in the changed cultural climate of later years. Around 1969, for example, many of us who had recently joined the SWP as New Leftists were stunned by the surfacing of evidence of the party’s unwritten policy against membership for homosexuals. How this rule developed has yet to be fully

explained. [31]

To be sure, in the 1930s there had been leaders believed to be gay; one was Grant Cannon (?-1969, no relation to James P. Cannon), a prominent Trotskyist in Ohio, and another was Thomas Stamm (dates unknown), who broke from the Trotskyist movement in 1935 to form the Revolutionary Workers League. [32] SWP founder George Breitman (see footnote 4) recalled to me that homosexuals had been members and served in the leadership of the Newark SWP in the 1930s and 1940s; as branch organizer, he considered the matter of their sexual orientation of no importance. [33]

After World War II, however, the situation apparently devolved. One former SWP assistant branch organizer, Phil Clark (1921-92), told me that he had been forced out of his position in Manhattan in the late 1940s when a young worker complained to national leaders that Phil had made a pass at him. Phil described how he subsequently met with George Novack, who recommended, with intellectual hauteur, that he temporarily resign and get “cured” by a Freudian psychoanalyst. [34]

It was later explained that the reason for such exclusionary practices was “security” — a belief that homosexuals were susceptible to being blackmailed into informing. Inasmuch as evidence is very slight of any alarm at the time over potential blackmailers, such prohibitions were more likely motivated by ignorance and a dread of difference. [35] Expressions of the prejudiced belief that homosexuality is a sign of social decadence, and a view that potential working-class recruits would be alienated by a gay presence, were known to exist in the SWP. [36]

Mystery Figure

A narrow-minded atmosphere may be a reason why Peter Bloch was never fully integrated into the U.S. Trotskyist movement; he will always remain a somewhat opaque individual, a “mystery figure,” in the 1950s. [37] A precise appraisal of anyone’s sexual orientation can be a convoluted affair, and Bloch was particularly secretive about his. Distinctive in his appearance was only that he was thin and frail, suggestive of a small bird. [38]

Beyond the speculations of close friends, all we really know is that he lived in Uptown Manhattan where his life revolved around his mother, Else Israel Bloch, “for whom his attachment surpassed ordinary filial devotion.” [39] They shared an apartment from their arrival in 1949 until her death in 1988; she is the only person with whom Bloch acknowledged an affectionate relationship, except for Louise Fölsche (1864-1945), Else’s nanny and companion since the 1890s. Bloch’s father, an eminent Jewish medical researcher hung by the Gestapo in 1943, is scarcely mentioned. [40]

Since Bloch was a refugee, he needed to operate with some political caution. His status, before and after he gained citizenship in 1955, would be endangered if he were a known associate of Marxist organizations in the U.S. or previously in Europe. Yet he did not go fully underground. “Trent Hutter” was treated as a party member by others in the SWP; he received and wrote for the SWP Internal Bulletin, occasionally gave lectures at events sponsored by party branches, and taught classes Mountain Spring Camp, a piece of land in New Jersey where SWP conventions were held. [41] Faced with both 1950s compulsory heterosexuality and anti-radical repression, some of his personal reticence may have been because he feared a fate such as that of Oscar Wilde, who was tried and imprisoned for indecency.

Did Bloch’s SWP writing express a “gay sensibility”? Sexual identities are far too diverse to share a single responsiveness; sweeping generalizations are dubious. Bloch, however, articulated many views that certainly challenged the predominant heterosexist orthodoxies of the Left. One surprise

was his promotion of the writing of W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), a popular and highly-paid English author who resided in exile in the United States. Maugham lived openly with male companions but was circumspect about directly addressing his homosexuality. I am not aware of any other Marxist endorsements of Maugham, whose writings were skewered a few years ago in an attention-grabbing essay by one-time Trotskyist Christopher Hitchens. [42]

In "W. Somerset Maugham and the Social Question" (1960), Bloch published a long defense of the artistic achievement of Maugham in the SWP's *International Socialist Review* (ISR, no relation to today's journal of the same name published by the International Socialist Organization — ed.). Bloch even characterizes Maugham's 1938 *The Summing Up* as "one of the 20th century's most admirable books of wisdom." [43]

His argument is that the "personal philosophy" revealed there is "related to Marxist materialist thinking," and that Maugham's first work of fiction, *Liza of Lambreth* (1897), is "a pioneering one in the field of the modern proletarian novel." As a regular contributor to the same journal a dozen years later, I was so intrigued by the boldness of such claims that I initiated a correspondence to which Bloch responded with enthusiasm.

In 1960, Bloch's views on Maugham caused some SWP eyebrows to be raised, but more startling to readers of the *Militant*, Fourth International and ISR throughout the previous decade was the tenor of his articles on American musical theater, then in its heyday, and Hollywood films. [44] Bloch was particularly taken with musical plays, some of which were being made into films that had evolved from old "musical comedies" of the U.S. stage. In contrast to most on the Left, who considered almost anything from Broadway or Hollywood to be commercial fluff, Bloch saw these works as vital and original cultural achievements.

According to George Weissman, editor of the *Militant*, there emerged for this reason a general anger against Bloch's "lousy movie reviews," and many SWPers who attended his classes at Mountain Spring Camp came precisely to express their objections. Bloch was taken aback and hurt by what he found to be a tendency to judge art by "political line." [45] Yet he remained adamant in his writing: "The motion picture...is the art form of the masses of our time....Contempt for light entertainment is foolish." [46]

Among the Hollywood productions that Bloch especially admired were George Cuckor's 1954 "A Star is Born," with Judy Garland; Vincente Minnelli's 1951 "An American in Paris," with Gene Kelley; and Gene Kelley's 1952 "Singing in the Rain," also featuring Kelley. He esteemed a low-budget independent film of 1953, "Little Fugitive," about a child alone at Coney Island. [47] At the same time, Bloch wrote prolifically on Leon Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, William Faulkner's *A Fable* ("A Revolutionary Novel"), Soviet music, Gerhart Hauptman's plays (he was a supporter of homosexual and transgender rights in pre-Hitler Germany), and books and films about the Nazis. [48]

In 1983, in answer to my inquiry as to whether he had revised any of his earlier judgments, Bloch responded: "I still believe in most or nearly all of what I wrote in the Trent Hutter reviews; but I seem to remember that in one article I took a somewhat critical view of Cecil B. deMille's work; and this is something that was obviously based on insufficient knowledge; for a few years later I realized that he was a master of the monumental type of film epos, an artist and a man with deep religious convictions who wanted to be an educator through the motion picture." [49]

Looking through Bloch's post-Trotskyist writings, from the mid-1960s until his death, one finds an obvious continuity despite the additional focus on Puerto Rico; many of the issues and themes characteristic of Trent Hutter are reiterated in new contexts with politics reconfigured from his

Trotskyist years. [50]

A Marxist Education

As a semi-clandestine revolutionary in the 1950s, Bloch was a completely political person well-versed in Marxism, although he mainly wanted to write cultural articles. In these years he simultaneously published as “James Parker” for the Belgian Far Left paper *La Gauche*. His connections with the Fourth International date back to the immediate postwar era in Belgium when Bloch met Ernest Mandel (1923-95), another Jew born in Frankfurt, whose Resistance activities had landed him in the Dora concentration camp in Germany.

According to research cited in Jan Willem Stutje’s recent biography of Mandel, Bloch during his U.S. residence became the chief conduit of information between the SWP and the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, the organization from which the Cannon’s followers had officially departed in 1953. [51] Although Stutje refers to this role as an “open secret,” it is one difficult to reconstruct as Bloch later decided to eliminate the entire Trotskyist phase of his life (about 15 years) from the autobiographical materials he disseminated. [52] When providing information about Mandel for Stutje’s biography in 2002, Bloch still insisted on protecting his identity by being cited as “Karl Manfred”—a minor character in Alfred Hitchcock’s movie “Torn Curtain” (1966). [53]

At some point in the 1950s, Bloch began taking trips to Puerto Rico, on occasion with his mother, and he befriended a cousin of the Puerto Rican radical poet Julia de Burgos (1914-53). Spanish was one of the four languages in which he was fluent, and he placed a premium on his mother’s “Spanish-Jewish” (a term he preferred to Sephardic) heritage. [54] One might wonder if his attraction was encouraged by his political connection with the International Secretariat, which, led by Michel Pablo (Michalis N. Raptis, 1911-86) and Mandel, became increasingly “Third Worldist” with a focus on North Africa and Latin America. By 1960, Bloch came to his own theory of Puerto Rican economic development, believing that a substantial transformation was underway and that it could no longer be considered a mere U.S. colony.

According to Stutje’s research, Bloch was quite favorably inclined toward the SWP and anxious to assist in its smooth reunification with the United Secretariat. The main problem was the SWP’s tendency toward dogmatism and political sectarianism, especially evident in its polarizing attitude toward the writings of Isaac Deutscher. But Bloch maintained friendships with a circle of SWPers with whom he felt at ease. These were chiefly with the editors Weissman and Hansen; party members who were aficionados of classical music, such as Art Preis (1911-64) and Ethel Preis (?-1966); and artists such as Laura Slobe.

“Danger Signals in Cuba”

What happened in 1961 is not entirely clear. When both the SWP and the International Secretariat responded favorably to the first stages of the Cuban Revolution, Bloch encouraged reunification in his communications with Mandel. En route to a decisive meeting in California in the summer of 1961 with Cannon to discuss the implementation such a development, Mandel made a clandestine stopover in New York to be coached by Bloch, who paid his expenses.

Yet Bloch had in late 1960 submitted an essay to the *International Socialist Review* on Puerto Rico that was rejected, and a subsequent meeting with the SWP leadership on the matter resulted in

further estrangement. [55] In the spring of 1961 Bloch circulated a widely-discussed article in the SWP internal bulletin, "Danger Signals in Cuba," arguing that Cuba had entered the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e. had become "a workers state") but was rapidly degenerating to Stalinism due to the lack of the working-class political democracy advocated by Marx and Lenin.

Hansen rebutted Bloch by claiming that his arguments were essentially "lifted" from the U.S. "State Department," a formulation unlikely to promote a warm future relationship. [56] That seems to have ended all official contact with the SWP, although Weissman arranged a brief reunion between Bloch and Mandel in New York in 1967.

Political pressure from society and history surely impinge on character and the intimate spaces of the self, and there are individualized ways in which a multifaceted person such as Bloch was affected by the atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s. Bloch's post-Trotskyist evolution in political and cultural thinking was sui-generis. Like his reviews of musicals, films, and novels, it withstands all pigeonholing, although one can find reverberations of shaping attitudes acquired during the Great Depression and World War II.

Raised as a Jew in Germany, and from a distinguished medical family on his father's side, Bloch was drawn more to his mother's family's Spanish ancestry. As a student in the 1930s, in Germany and England, he had felt torn apart by the Spanish Civil War, characterizing his position as "not neutral but impartial." Disgusted by the violence on both sides, he experienced an attraction to the conservative cultural traditions of the Right, and the need for stability, but he also identified with the suffering of the poor.

During World War II, Bloch was drawn into the Resistance in Belgium, where his family was in hiding, and in Switzerland, to which he escaped under a pseudonym. But his politics were less internationalist than adamantly pro-Allies; he displayed a bust of Winston Churchill in his apartment and for the rest of his life expressed strong affection for the ideas of Charles de Gaulle. [57]

Bloch did not jettison such earlier views when he was recruited to Trotskyism by Mandel, just as did he not turn explicitly anti-Marxist when he became militantly anti-Castro. Following his separation from the SWP, he remade his past, claiming to have been only a journalist for European publications. He next launched a career in popular Spanish-language papers in New York, especially arts columns in Nueva York Hispano, América Ilustrada, and Canales. He also promoted concerts, poetry readings, and exhibits, and worked with radio and television. Privately he continued to admire Trotsky as a "political genius," and he traveled to Germany to lecture in public schools on his holocaust experiences.

Then came an astonishing development in 1969: Bloch was awarded a Spanish Knighthood in the Order of Isabella the Catholic for his activity on behalf of Puerto Rican culture. After this he declared that he was "a friend of Spain" and "always shall be grateful to Franco...." [58] The statement is mind-boggling in light of the Spanish fascist's record of brutality, including the deliberate execution of 20,000 supporters of the Republic after his victory.

Yet somehow Bloch was not totally deradicalized. He maintained his opposition to the Cold War policy of the West and characterized the United States as an imperialist country. He was also an anti-Zionist who was opposed to Israeli policies. During the time we corresponded, his strongest political identification remained with European social democratic newspapers, where he felt he had the freedom to say what he wished. [59]

The Serialist

The political radicalization of George Perle, a major theorist of serialism (the method of composition associated with Schoenberg's 12-tone technique), was more conventional than that of Bloch. Born in Bayonne, New Jersey, of a Jewish immigrant family that was cultured but financially insecure, Perle lived in Chicago until the mid-1920s and then on farmland in northern Indiana.

Perle's genius for music was apparent at age six or seven when he sat down at a piano obtained for his sister. The composition he played by Chopin made sense to him and he knew that he wanted to write music. Soon he was commuting to Chicago for lessons.

Perle started attending DePaul University at the height of the Great Depression and was radicalized by the time he received his degree in 1938. He next moved toward Trotskyism while obtaining a Masters of Music at the American Conservatory of Music. He joined the Chicago branch of the SWP in 1942, the same year that he finished the degree. In these years Perle, still known as Perlstein, was tall, wiry and slender, a darkly handsome man with strong-looking shoulders, high cheekbones, and an ascetic aura. [60]

The stages of Perle's musical development link to political moments in the late 1930s and after, although it would be simpleminded to claim that a growing attraction to Marxism and Trotskyism explains his art. It was in 1937, following a period of pessimism and disorientation, that Perle initially connected with what he called "the revolutionary direction in 20th century music represented by the Viennese," and in 1938 he wrote his first atonal piece. [61] After 1939, with the onset of the war in Europe, he took his first lesson with refugee composer Ernst Krenek (1900-91) and realized that he was developing a consistent theory of diatonic music.

In August 1940, the same month Trotsky was assassinated, Perle wrote three important piano pieces using the 12-tone row system, a groundbreaking departure from the diatonic scale. In 1941, on the cusp of joining the Trotskyists, he published his first scholarly essay on the theory of atonality. Three years later, in his political writing for the SWP, he explained that his understanding of musical tones was originally made visible through the Marxist dialectic, although this claim did not appear in his academic publications (which he cited as evidence). [62]

Between August 1943 and February 1946, Perle served in the army, mostly overseas in Europe, the Philippines and Japan. Relocating to New York City with his wife Laura Slobe, he used the G.I. Bill to start Ph.D work at New York University in Medieval and Renaissance Music Studies. In the New York branch of the SWP, he was an activist who also participated in arranging fund-raising, sometimes by playing concerts with violinist Seymour Barab (b. 1921), and where he wrote under the name Sanders for the Fourth International. [63]

Like Schoenberg, who arranged singing groups of workers, Perle established a chorus of SWP members in New York, people with no particular musical education. After rehearsing and then performing traditional radical songs such as "Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill" (1888), Perle arranged to cut a record for use at party functions. [64]

In 1949, Perle started teaching at the University of Louisville, where he also composed and in 1956 finished up his doctorate. In April 1951, as his ties with the SWP were loosening, he heard a transformative performance of Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* (1914-22) in a New York Philharmonic concert directed by Dimitri Mitropoulos. By the late 1950s, Perle began to be recognized as the premier scholar of Berg, eventually the subject of a two-volume work. But his academic writing actually arose out of his composing — it just got published first.

During the 1960s, teaching at the City University of New York's Queen's College, Perle progressively broke with the tradition of Schoenberg and the 12-tone method; in his view, it had become academic and he wished to remain avant-garde. In 1973 he produced what he considered to be his first mature work in post-diatonic music. In 1986 Perle was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his Fourth Wind Quintet, a masterpiece of symmetry, and also a MacArthur Fellowship.

In a September 1982 personal interview, Perle told me that the primary problem he faced in the SWP was the pressure he felt around proletarianization. There was no SWP policy obligating members to go into industry, and not everyone was asked, but the attitude of certain SWPers was that one would never be a full-fledged member without factory work. [65] After he accepted his teaching position in Kentucky, Perle decided to switch his status to that of sympathizer.

Gradually he drifted away from the SWP and maintained contact only through his former wife, Laura, from whom he was legally divorced in 1952. Upon her death he completed one of his most noted works, "Quintet for Strings" (1957-58). Dedicated "In Memory of Laura Slobe," it was a composition for two violins, one viola and a cello. The piece is remembered today for its repetition of a stark cry without any answer.

For Perle's later career, one might speculate that a version of Trotsky was artistically reincarnated as he theorized increasingly revolutionary breakthroughs in music that could be passed on and understood only by a small circle of forward-looking people: "the revolution in the language of music embodied in the works of Schoenberg, Berg, and [Anton] Webern in the early years of this century was not merely a cultist self-centered tendency that could have no significance for musical culture in general. They solve the perennial problem of operatic form in a new and unique way, integrating characteristic self-contained pieces that recall the classical 'number' opera within an overall cyclic and recapitulative design whose unity and scale are comparable only to the most impressive achievements in literature." [66] Perle appears still to be using dialectics in his developing estimation of the Vienna School.

The political evolution of Bloch and Perle after their SWP years was not merely an instance where the promise of epiphany gave way to disillusionment. Their cultural beliefs advanced in the 1940s and 1950s in association with revolutionary Marxist ideas and activism, each partaking of the other, with some vision of socialism persisting. But their relationships to the SWP turned out to be uncomfortable; they could not find their way forward within it. Bloch was on the defensive for his open-minded views, and Perle concluded that his music (regarded, perhaps unfairly, as cerebral) was not what was wanted from him. [67] Later, in separating from the SWP, the two men translated the intellectual and moral fervor of their radicalism more exclusively into the art world.

Sophisticated Lady

Perle's former wife, Laura Slobe, died suddenly in 1958 at age 49. The SWP's Militant newspaper immediately memorialized "Laura Gray" as "heroic" and "beloved," an accurate reflection of her stature as the staff artist. SWP leader Art Preis called Slobe "the greatest political and social cartoonist of our generation, " and talked of her devotion in selling the party newspaper in all weather at plant gates. [68]

Slobe's cartoons surely deserve scholarly attention; they are naturalistic and powerful, in the tradition of the Masses' Boardman Robinson, and warrant comparison to artists such as Hugo Gellert and Robert Minor. Sometimes her rugged-looking male workers resembled men whom she knew from political work. [69]

But Slobe herself never judged her cartoons to be serious art, and women in the SWP were fascinated by her for qualities beyond proletarian rectitude. Jeanne Morgan wrote an unpublished memoir of Slobe that began by recalling a 1945 discussion of younger women in the SWP about “Who is the most sophisticated woman in the Party?” The answer was Laura — for her look, manner, and style. With pale skin and light brown hair “in a corona of curls,” she presented herself as a “gentle Bolshevik...giving no quarter to others’ needs for a proletarian style and disguises.” Of interest to Morgan was also Laura’s rhinoplasty; the shape of her nose had been enhanced to produce “an exquisite long, straight, fine line profile” through plastic surgery. [70]

Born of a wealthy Jewish family in Pittsburgh, she had a mother who was a terrible, dominating woman. [71] A prodigy who entered the Art Institute of Chicago at age 16, Slobe began exhibiting two-dimensional paintings at age 19, then had a one-person show at the Art Institute of Chicago and in several galleries. Her sparse and incisive style immediately brings to mind Paul Klee and Piet Mondrian. In the late 1930s she began showing the avant-garde sculpture for which she became better known; “Vanity,” a 1935 carved plastic figure, was a much admired modern interpretation of a classic theme and can now be seen on-line. [72] The Institute still has a Laura Slobe Memorial Prize in Sculpture.

Slobe subsequently worked at the federally-funded Illinois WPA Sculpture Program from where she was “loaned” out to art centers in other states. This ended in October 1940, when she had to be removed from project roles due to a rule that 18 months of continuous unemployment was the maximum. Nevertheless she continued holding exhibits in the Chicago area until 1944. By this time, Slobe was regarded as mostly a sculptor who also did some paintings. Through her association with a circle of other avant-garde artists inclining toward Trotskyism, she met George Perle, whom she married in 1940.

In 1942 the young couple joined the SWP in Chicago. Within a few weeks, Laura was assigned to assist with a fraction of workers in the auto industry, and began drawing cartoons for the shop paper. The branch organizer, Art Preis, recognized her talent at once and encouraged her to submit to the Militant. After a visit to New York in January 1944, her first cartoon appeared on March 4, and thereafter almost weekly. Eventually the number of cartoons totaled around 430, mostly treating subjects such as the War Labor Board, the No-Strike Pledge, the murder of Emmett Till, and unemployment. They would be reproduced in Trotskyist and labor publications in 20 countries.

Moving to New York with Perle after the war, Slobe did increasingly less avant-garde art and sculpting while she held on-and-off jobs painting mannequins and creating window display art for department stores. She eventually lived in a one-bedroom apartment near 14th Street, with clippings, tear-sheets and sketches fluttering on the white walls. [73] For commercial reasons, she produced a Siamese cat image that she cast in duplicates.

But all was compromised by her precarious health. At age 22 she had been stricken with tuberculosis, requiring bed rest for two years. In 1947 one of her lungs was removed. As she struggled through the Cold War years, the longing to return to her avant-garde art — “the grotesqueries that you can make real” — became a haunting apparition. [74] Then in early 1958 she was diagnosed with pneumonia that rapidly turned fatal.

Of her personal life, only sketchy information remains. In regard to the break-up of her marriage to Perle, all that Slobe would say was: “Just because you love somebody does not mean that you can live with them.” [75] Subsequently she had affairs with both women and men. For several years in the late 1940s and early 1950s she tried living with Duncan Ferguson (1901-74), also a sculptor in the SWP who was deeply frustrated in his career. [76]

Her closest female friendship toward the end of her life was with Ethel Bloch (no relation to Peter Bloch), who joined the SWP in 1943 at age 19. One year after Slobe's death, Ethel married Arthur Lobman, after which she was known as Ethel Lobman, and both remained SWP members until their deaths four decades later.

Gender, Desire, Intimacy

For those who see radicalism as an ongoing tradition, there remain huge gaps in our knowledge of personal lives. The biographical study of many postwar activists is partly an exercise in speculation because institutionalized forgetting has obscured research. In particular, the disappearance of cultural dissidents and sexual non-conformists from memory was induced by the needs of the dominant cultural optics (liberal, neo-conservative, post-modernist) as much as by the Left's fixation on political programs and idealized precursors.

Too many of yesterday's maps have now outlived their usefulness, especially in their political coding. This is part of the reason why questions asked about sexual resistance to heteronormativity are so frequently linked to the recovery of new knowledge about inventive cultural work.

Gender, desire, and intimacy are just some of the pressing fresh categories essential for correcting "enforced forgetting" as one looks back on Bloch, Perle, Slobe, and others discussed in this essay. One method of challenging institutionalized memory loss about the Left is to raise queries about "bohemians" (sexual and cultural non-conformists) in unexpected places. The point is not to reveal any "secret histories" but to compel contemporary socialists to more fully consider the actuality of predecessor efforts.

What is required for a Marxism for the 21st century is a cultural anthropology of the Left, a recreation of the ambiguous texture of the free-form plots of lived radicalism and the sometimes-crooked paths of its politics and culture. If older frameworks continue to explain and therefore contain the history of the Left, the legacy of emancipatory socialist politics of 60 years ago is more likely to perish.

Alan Wald

P.S.

* From Against the Current (ATC) 159, July/August 2112. <http://www.solidarity-us.org/>

Footnotes

[1] See: <http://www.solidarity-us.org/pdfs/ATC%20159--Wald.pdf>

[2] Thomas Carlyle (1795-1891) was a Scottish satirical writer of history and social commentary. The quote is from "On History," available at: <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Best/CarlyleHistory.htm>.

[3] A "moral panic" refers to intensity of feeling on the part of a population about issues that are

felt to threaten the social order, an apt description of the “Red Scare” and “Lavender Scare” of the 1950s.

[4] James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), 92.

[5] George Breitman (1916-86), longtime SWP leader, observed that Cannon’s reluctance to reveal the personal was no different from that of other Trotskyist leaders of his generation such as Max Shachtman, Martin Abern, E. R. McKinney and Carl Skoglund: “the style of that time, before 1960, was quite different than after. People in general, not only those in the movement, did not discuss personal things ‘publically.’ It was considered politically out of order or a sign of weakness, except with those with whom you had intimate relations.” Letter to Wald, 19 July 1985.

[6] Sources for obituaries and tributes can be found on the Wikipedia entry for Bloch and the Homepage for Perle: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Rafael_Bloch, and <http://www.georgeperle.net>.

[7] Peter Bloch, *La-Le-Lo-Lai: Puerto Rican Music and Its Performers* (New York: Plus Ultra, 1973), 16.

[8] Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 12, 25.

[9] From a famous letter to Gertrude Stein, 16 September 1933, Edward Burns, ed., *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 143.

[10] For an analysis of the complex causes of the transformation of the SWP, see: Alan Wald, “[A Winter’s Tale Told in Memoirs \(on the history of the US SWP\)](#),” ESSF (article 22527).

[11] The terms are unlikely to have been joined together openly at the time, inasmuch as “bohemianism” often connoted rebellions that celebrated marginality and lacked a vision of mass social transformation such as the SWP advocated.

[12] Such opinions were expressed to Wald during personal interviews with George Weissman, 8 March 1983, and Ernest Mandel, 2 June 1984.

[13] This was stated empathetically to Wald in an interview with Demila Jenner, 17 July 1981. “Bisexual” was the term used by Jenner to describe herself, Laura, and one other woman in the SWP.

[14] For a discussion of Correspondence, see Rachel Peterson, “Correspondence: Journalism, Anticommunism and Marxism in 1950s Detroit,” in Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 115-160. For *The American Socialist* see: <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/amersocialist/index.htm>. There are other political currents as well. Christopher Phelps discovered an essay on “Socialism and Sex” in a 1952 copy of the *Young Socialist* (issued by the youth group of the Socialist Party), and published an informative commentary on the document and the subject in 2008 in both *The Journal of the History of Sexuality and New Politics*; the latter version is available on line at: <http://newpolitics.mayfirst.org/fromthearchives?nid=100>.

[15] The claim was discussed in several places, including: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swp_usa/message/11501.

[16] Mini is described in Henry Miller, *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Beach* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 61. Cannon discusses his sharing the platform with Mini in a letter of 25 February 1935 to A. J. Muste; I am grateful to the antiquarian bookseller Walter Goldwater (1907-85) for sharing this with me.

[17] See my dual biography, *The Revolutionary Imagination: The Poetry and Politics of John Wheelwright and Sherry Mangan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[18] Both are listed in Thompson's works, on-line at:
<http://www.virgilthomson.org/worksfiles/portraits.PDF>.

[19] See the discussion of the relationship in Christopher Turner, *Adventures in the Orgasmatron: How the Sexual Revolution Came to America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 186-90.

[20] In the 1940s and 1950s there was no national youth group of the SWP; clubs of young SWP supporters in different cities used various names. "International Socialist Youth" was used in New York, and "Socialist Youth Club" in Los Angeles.

[21] Undated letter from Jeanne Morgan to Wald, probably 1983.

[22] In a letter of 21 May 1980 to Wald, Weissman described Lore Reich as close to Sparrow and said that both she and Julius Rubin were active members for several years.

[23] Demila was originally married to sculptor Duncan Ferguson, an SWP member who shared the assignment in Mexico, and later in life she was known as Demila Jenner.

[24] Letter from Christy Moustakis to Demila Sanders, 18 March 1952, courtesy of Demila (Sanders) Jenner. Demila reported back to Christy on her adventures among many fellow travelers of Reichianism, some Trotskyists and others not, and described a meeting with Reich's older daughter, Eva Reich (1928-2008). Eva Reich can be viewed on Youtube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rU3wNgrxLwc>.

[25] Letter from Nora Ruth Roberts to Wald, 4 March 1995. See Peter Singer, *Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement* (Boston: Roman and Littlefield, 1998), for more details on Spira's activities.

[26] Myra Weiss did so at Murry's memorial meeting, according to a 3 January 1995 letter to Wald from Nora Ruth Roberts.

[27] All of the personal interviews and correspondence with women cited in this essay make references to these sorts of issues.

[28] See George Sanders, "Another Answer to Comrade Loris [van Heijenoort]," *Internal Bulletin* (New York: Socialist Workers Party) V, no. 4 (October 1943): 11-15.

[29] See Joseph Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuba Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), 122, 124.

[30] "Intersectionality" is the term in feminist sociological theory for a methodology of studying social inequality in which these three forms of oppression interrelate. For a break-through study

along these lines relevant to the subject of this essay, see W. Chris Johnson, "Sex and the Subversive Alien: The Moral Life of C. L. R. James," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 14, No. 1 & 2 (2011), 185-203.

[31] Historian Christopher Phelps has been researching the topic for several years.

[32] In a 27 June 1990 interview with Wald in Ann Arbor, B. J. Widick expressed certainty that Grant Cannon's sexual orientation was widely known in the Trotskyist movement. The belief that Stamm was gay is mentioned in a number of places, including a letter from George Breitman to Wald, 14 March 1985.

[33] Letter from George Breitman to Wald, 14 March 1985.

[34] Yet Breitman wrote me on 14 March 1985 that he was skeptical of what Clark recalled about Novack's role. Also see Patrick Quinn's obituary for Clark in *Against the Current* #40 (September-October 1992): 49. Quinn reports that After World War II "the organization [SWP] requested a number of its gay members to resign."

[35] In a letter from George Breitman to Wald, 14 March 1985, Breitman insists that he never heard any leadership body in the SWP discuss concerns about homosexuals as members or blackmail targets until the late 1960s. David Thorstad, an expert on the SWP and homosexuality, maintains that there was no policy of excluding gays for security reasons until the late 1960s. See: <http://archive.org/details/GayLiberationAndSocialismDocumentsFromTheDiscussionsO>

[36] References to these attitudes in both the Canadian and the U.S. movements can be found in the section called "The Gay Question" in a document online: <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/Raphael-1960-Trotskyism.pdf>.

[37] Letter from George Weissman to Wald, 13 February 1983.

[38] Ibid. Bloch even referred to himself in this manner; see memoir cited in footnote 39.

[39] Ibid

[40] The major source for his family history is the diary and memoir, *When I Was Pierre Boulanger: A Diary in Times of Terror* (New York: The Poet's Refuge, 2002). The volume contains photographs his mother, Louise Fölsche, himself, and a half-dozen other individuals, but none of his father.

[41] "Danger Signals in Cuba" was one such contribution to the *Internal Bulletin*; see Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuba Revolution*, 120. Hutter was described as "an SWP member" at the time when some of his private correspondence about the Fourth International was published in *The Struggle to Reunify the Fourth International (1954-63): Volume IV* (New York: Education for Socialists, November 1978), 83. Hutter's other public appearances are mentioned in a letter from George Weissman to Wald, 13 February 1983.

[42] See: <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/2004/05/hitchens.htm>.

[43] Today this book is out of print and usually not considered among Maugham's significant works, except as autobiographical source material. See Trent Hutter, "W. Somerset Maugham and the Social Question," *International Socialist Review* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1960), online at:

<https://epress.anu.edu.au/history/etol/newspape/isr/vol21/no03/hutter.html>.

[44] In a 19 August 1956 letter from Joseph Hansen to Duncan Ferguson, controversy about Hutter's reviews is cited. In a 27 October 1957 letter from Ferguson to Hansen, Trent's political assessment of Maugham is described as "farcical."

[45] Letter from George Weissman to Wald, 13 February 1983.

[46] Trent Hutter, "The Workers' stake in Bourgeois Culture: A Socialist Looks at Art," Fourth International 17, no. 1 (Winter 1956); online at:
<http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol17/no01/hutter.html>.

[47] Trent Hutter, "The American Motion Picture Today: What Unions Can Do To Get Better Movies," Fourth International 16, 1 (Winter 1955); online at:
<http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol16/no01/hutter.html>

[48] George Novack often edited these essays, but only stylistic changes — to de-Europeanize the use of pronouns and so forth — were made.

[49] Letter from Peter Bloch to Wald, 17th August 1983.

[50] This is particularly obvious in a 1983 essay called "The Unreliable Writer," where Bloch insists: "The writer who is worthy of our respect has to be a non-conformist." Peter Bloch, "The Unreliable Writer," Unveiling Cuba (November 1983): 8.

[51] See the review of Stutje by Wald, ESSF (article 14888), [A Mandel for All Seasons](#).

[52] Bloch went so far as to insist that his decision to write for Trotskyist publications in the 1950s was based merely on whether they would give him a dignified platform, not due to any political allegiance.

[53] Jan Willem Stutje, Ernest Mandel: A Rebel's Dream Deferred (London: Verso, 2009), 104.

[54] Bloch can be seen in a Spanish-language interview on Youtube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4vsa2tz8K0>.

[55] George Weissman to Wald, 13 February 1983.

[56] Hansen, Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, 122.

[57] These and similar views are expressed in long letters from Peter Bloch to Wald on 17th August 1983 and 5 November 1983. A 1 October 1983 letter from Ernest Mandel to Wald confirms that Bloch had been pro-Ally.

[58] Peter Bloch letter to Wald, 17 August 1983.

[59] Peter Bloch Letter to Wald, 5 November 1983.

[60] Letter from Jeanne Morgan to Wald, 15 July 1983. Perle legally changed his name in 1949.

[61] George Perle, *Perle on Perle: The Composer Recalls His life in Music* in an Interview by Dennis Miller (Englewood, New Jersey: Music Association of America, 1987), 8.

[62] See George Sanders, "Another Answer to Comrade Loris [van Heijenoort]," *Internal Bulletin* (New York: Socialist Workers Party) V, no. 4 (October 1943): 11-15.

[63] George Sanders, "Joseph Stalin, Music Critic," *Fourth International* 2, no.9 (March-April 1948): 56-7.

[64] Letter from Jeanne Morgan to Wald, 15 July 1983.

[65] I reported on the interview in an 8 October 1982 letter to George Breitman; the purpose was to arrange a longer meeting in New York City, on which I failed to follow through. In her letter of 15 July 1983, Jeanne Morgan wrote of Perle: "He resisted the 'proletarianization policy' of the 40s and 50s and continued his career as a musician rather than going into a factory."

[66] George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg, Volume One, Wozzeck* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), xiv.

[67] The question of cerebrality in Perle's music is debated in Leo Kraft, "The Music of George Perle," *The Musical Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (July 1971), 444-465. A number of performances of Perle's work can be viewed and heard on Youtube:

<http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en-us&q=George+Perle+youtube&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>.

[68] See Art Preis, "Laura Gray — Socialist and Militant Artist," *Militant*, 20 January, 1958, 1-2. Four years earlier James P. Cannon wrote a tribute to Slobe as a cartoonist, reprinted in his *Notebook of an Agitator* (New York: Pioneer, 1958), 334-37.

[69] Fortunately, Kent Worcester, an authority on cartoons, is currently researching a study of her work.

[70] "Laura Gray," Jeanne Morgan, 15 July 1983.

[71] Letter from George Weissman to Wald, 10 October 1981.

[72] http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/de_ms_slobe.html.

[73] Letter from Jeanne Morgan to Wald, 15 July 1983.

[74] Letter from Laura Slobe to George Perle, 3 January 1958.

[75] Jeanne Morgan to Wald, 7 July 1983.

[76] For a detailed study of Ferguson's life and art, see Alan Wald, "Sculptor on the Left: Duncan Ferguson's Search for Wholeness," *Pembroke Magazine* #19 (Spring 1987): 32-57. This was reprinted in Wald, *The Responsibility of Intellectuals: Selected Essays on Marxist Traditions in Cultural Commitment* (1992; paperback reprint, 1995).