

Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, eds., *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

The idea of the Cold War held — and continues to hold — a powerful place in the history of the United States, both at home and abroad. Whereas the post-World War II geopolitical rivalry between Washington, Moscow, Beijing, and other metropolises ended more than two decades ago, scholars have only recently begun to uncover its cultural hegemony, let alone interrogate it as a conventional frame. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell's edited volume, entitled *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, epitomizes such efforts to expand the disciplinary landscape of Cold War studies beyond the realms of diplomacy and politics, while simultaneously challenging its spatial and temporal borders.

According to Isaac, Bell, and the twelve other contributors to this volume, the Cold War is much more than a neutral, epochal category in U.S. history. Its conventional application, above all, belies the reality that the Cold War meant different things to different peoples in different societies and environments at different times. Much like the concept of modernity, the idea of “the” Cold War and its multiple meanings thus necessitate profound reflections in order to be correctly understood and placed within proper historical contexts. Scholars, the co-editors convincingly contend in their introduction, “must always be aware of the constitutive, knowledge-producing function of these periodizing schemes, even as they are modified, criticized, and repudiated” (7-8). The Cold War idea in U.S. history, despite what many Americans and non-Americans may think, is no exception.

Whereas this conceptual argument alone merits high praise and should prove to be much useful to Left History's readership for decades to come, *Uncertain Empire's* most rewarding contribution is the seminar-like conversation that takes places between authors within its very pages. As one quickly finds out, it is one thing to say that the Cold War is fluid; it is another to define the parameters of such fluidity. Much like the conflict itself, this volume eloquently highlights how “cold” post-Cold War negotiations over the Cold War can and should be. Divided into two sections — prisms and vistas — its first four contributions not only deconstruct the Cold War both as a category of history and analysis, but also debate each other's re-conceptualizations. Building off of these four illuminating chapters, the remaining eight narratively explore innovative, interdisciplinary case studies and, in the process, situate themselves within the preceding conceptual discussions.

Without question, the most thought-provoking exchange is that between two award-winning superpowers in Cold War studies: Anders Stephanson and Odd Arne Westad. Stephanson's provocative first chapter challenges academia's “drone-like acceptance” (23) of the Cold War and thus sets the pace for the lively dialogue that ensues throughout the book. Stephanson con-

tends that the Cold War as an idea — rather than a categorical period or a popular mindset in the United States or the Soviet Union — has yet to be properly historicized. He, above all, calls for ground-breaking shifts in Cold War studies along two key axes: time and space. Whereas most now speak of a global Cold War that took place primarily between three or more actors in the so-called Third World, Stephanson somewhat oddly asks that the conflict be re-centered in its place of origin. The Cold War — invented in 1947 by renowned U.S. columnist Walter Lippmann — was exceptionally a U.S. project and should be understood strictly as such. While there were many Cold Wars in the second half of the twentieth century, the idea of the Cold War in its original form ended in the early 1960s, following the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The aforementioned Odd Arne Westad, whose contribution follows Stephanson's, directly rebuts the latter's containment of Cold War borders, going as far as accusing the former of reductionism. "Reducing the history of the Cold War to be a section of the history of the United States," Westad forcefully contends, "is neither methodologically meaningful nor historiographically liberating" (57). The Cold War, after all, is not U.S.-driven story. The United States, in other words, did not dictate the Cold War; rather it was a product of global power negotiations. Westad—whose scholarship has, in the last decade or so, transformed Cold War studies—in turn suggests an alternative model, which essentially elaborates on his previous appeal to pluralize the Cold War, rather than center it on Europe and North America.

After reading *Uncertain Empire*, many will easily conclude that the Cold War and its myriad shades continue to be a vibrant site of contestation in academic imaginations. Some may even argue that, on a discursive level, the Cold War is far from over. And others will surely disagree. But thanks to Isaac and Bell's volume, the terrain in which "the" Cold War is discussed has been revitalized. For this reason, this book merits a long-shelf life.

Maurice Jr. M. Labelle
University of Saskatchewan

Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920-1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

In the last pages of Karush's book, the reader is situated in the world announced by the coming of the television and a new youth culture symbolised by jeans and rock 'n' roll. It seems that he or she has travelled a long journey in order to reach a point that most likely readers of the book know perfectly. As Andrés di Tella suffers in his documentary film, *La televisión y yo* (2002), most of the readers would recognise that the television is the key source in getting to understand our