While *The Right and Labor in America* offers a series of interesting vignettes, its structure does not always hang together cohesively. Many readers will likely find themselves picking and choosing the chapters most relevant to their interests. But overall, Lichtenstein, Shermer, and their contributors should be commended for contributing to a deeper understanding of the essential role of labor in the shaping of contemporary American culture and politics.

Barry Eidlin
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Gillian McCann, *Vanguard of the New Age: The Toronto Theosophical Society, 1891-1945* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

So many interesting social and religious movements occur along the edges of a culture. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge founded the International Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. They championed mysticism and spiritualism in what they saw as an apocalyptic battle with science and materialism. The answers to the problems of the modern world, they maintained, were to be found in a body of esoteric knowledge - the "secret doctrine" - that had been entrusted to a group of Masters who had achieved immortality and were now living in India and Tibet. Theosophy claimed to be at once syncretic (drawing together the best elements of all religious faiths) and prophetic (proclaiming the imminent advent of the new age). It was doctrinally amorphous and division and crisis marked the history of the international movement. New prophets were proclaimed, utopian colonies founded, groups expelled, and the tensions between the American section of the movement and the international headquarters in Adyar, India were never effectively resolved. Nonetheless, the movement helped to introduce eastern culture to the west ("sympathetic orientalism"), and individual theosophists played a significant role in the independence movement in India and the Irish Literary Renaissance. There is a statute of Olcott outside the railway station in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The Toronto Theosophical Society (TTS) was by far the most important grouping of Theosophists in Canada, and Gillian McCann's fine study traces both the internal workings of the Toronto society as well as its considerable impact on Canadian culture. In the first instance the TTS was shielded from some of the major scandals that rocked the international movement by the steadying influence of the central character in McCann's narrative, Albert E. S. Smythe. Born in the north of Ireland Smythe was introduced to theosophy on his way out to Canada by William Quan Judge, the president of the American Theosophical Society. Young Albert's conversion was immediate and complete. A journalist by profession he founded the TTS in 1891 and effectively led the

Society for the next fifty years. His son, Constantine (Conn) Smythe, was the famous hockey and horse racing impresario, who (surprisingly given his most famous aphorism) joined the Society at his father's death. Membership grew steadily and reached a high of 844 in 1922. The Society held regular meetings (leaving copious minutes), had its own building, its own publications, and sponsored many public lectures on a wide range of social and philosophical topics. The TTS was also surprisingly well-managed: it survived two world wars and the great depression, although its membership had declined in 2003 to about fifty. Somewhat ironically it had almost no relationship with the new age spirituality of the 1960s, which also anticipated anxiously the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

Never numerically large, the TTS clearly punched above its weight culturally, and as "the vanguard of the new age" provided a lively domain for the propagation of many modern and progressive ideas. Socialists (such as Phillips Thompson), feminists (such as Flora MacDonald Denison), and pacifists (of varying degrees) were all drawn to the Society. Smythe himself came out strongly in favour of the admission of Jewish refugees to Canada and in opposition to the rise of fascism at home and abroad. The contribution of Toronto Theosophists to Canadian nationalism and the arts was especially remarkable. The links between the TTS and Canadian painting through Lawren S. Harris and Frederick Housser (the former ran away with the latter's wife) are reasonably well known; indeed Ann Davis in *The Logic of Ecstacy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920-1940* has shown how theosophy provided one important part of a broad spiritualist context that shaped Canadian painting. At the same time William Arthur Deacon set out to cultivate the soul of the new nation through his unstinting support of Canadian literature, while Roy Mitchell, a true visionary, was closely connected to the development of Canadian theater through his early work at Hart House.

The presence and importance of Theosophy and the TTS suggest the need for a richer understanding of Canadian religion - some Protestants were not just Protestants - but locating the movement within such a reconstruction is no easy task. For readers of Left History the story of the TTS confirms the importance (as Ian McKay has argued) of utopian thinking in the articulation of social and political critiques. These religious visionaries clearly challenged the social order. The TTS helped to open a very closed Protestant community to "eastern" ideas, especially concepts of Karma and reincarnation; it directly challenged the Christian missionary project in India; it provided a safe forum in the city for many progressive thinkers (including Emma Goldman); and its members were among the first Torontonians to give their bodies to be burned. At the same time the history of the TTS reflects some of the more conservative, even anti-modern, aspects of Canadian culture. Its spiritual critique of modern science shared a good deal with faith healers, Christian scientists, and Protestant fundamentalists. Like the Masons it claimed an allegiance to a body of esoteric

knowledge that continues to defy all understanding. And its devotion to eastern religions (however sympathetic) had little to do, as the author points out, with the way religion was actually practiced in those parts of the world. In this regard Theosophy may have been more closely aligned with other groups who at the same time were adopting "eastern" rituals, such as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

Religion itself remained a problem. Most Toronto Theosophists retained at least a nominal association with their Protestant denominations and could not rid themselves of all the prejudices Protestant culture had implanted. D. P. Pandia, a south Asian scholar and noted authority on the culture of India, was treated very insultingly because of his colour by some of his TTS hosts, and, although Theosophy claimed to be an amalgam of all the world's great religions, Toronto Theosophists could not bring themselves to include Irish Catholics in their new transcendent dispensation. The Roman Catholic Church (and especially the Holy Father) remained beyond reach of the powers of universal enlightenment.

At the end of her fine study the author herself speculates whether the TTS was a mystical sect trying to move society to a new age or a late Victorian debating society with a rather large (but unthreatening) agenda of concerns. I imagine it was both.

William Westfall
York University

Víctor Macías-González and Ann Rubenstein, eds. *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012).

Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico is an innovative collection of essays on men and masculinity in Mexico. The book aims to understand the ways in which the relationship between biological sex and social gender has changed in Mexico. Through the study of modern masculinities the book also seeks to capture the multiple economic, social, political, and cultural changes that have taken place in the country from the 1800s to the 1970s. The collection includes essays on male and female masculinities, same-sex and cross-sex sexualities, as well as men who dressed like women and identified with diverse genders. As Ramón A. Gutierrez highlights in the Conclusion of the volume, these essays challenge the traditional worldwide known figure of the macho male and its counterpart the submissive female, which prevailed in the myth of *mestizo* nationalism. This myth suggested that all Mexicans were descendants of indigenous and Spaniards and indirectly prescribed one model of femininity and masculinity across the nation. Instead, these essays offer diverse models of masculinity coexisting in modern Mexico. In