

Editors' Note

Historians on the left would be wise to follow Daniel Guérin in understanding that the “revolution cannot be simply political. It must be, at the same time, both cultural and sexual and thus transform every aspect of life and of society.” For *Left History* this has meant publishing articles and reviews that explore the history of resistance to capitalist, patriarchal, and imperial oppressions through alternative means of organizing, not only political selves, but also social and private selves. Understanding these histories demands searching for limited source materials; it requires a close attention to the details of language and actions and their hidden or multiple meanings; and it places the historian under the constant tension of trying to reconstruct the worlds of people who often actively sought to keep their lives apart from the dominant culture, and away from the eyes of a searching state – traditionally the pre-eminent repositories of historical knowledge and evidence. It is in these explorations that left historical analysis and research has found itself overlapping with the newer, burgeoning scholarship in LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) studies – an overlap evident in previous issues of *Left History* featuring David Churchill’s “Personal Ad Politics: Race, Sexuality and Power at *The Body Politic*” (8.2), as well as in the publications of other journals with common mandates such as *Radical History Review*’s 1995 queer issue focused on American history (no. 62). The editorial collective at *Left History* decided to examine this overlap in a special issue devoted to LGBTQ studies drawn from several national contexts. We hoped this issue would reveal the territory historically shared by the left and the LGBTQ communities (and their multiple constituent parts), while also raising new questions about how, why, and where the politics and cultures of each historically diverged.

The articles that make up this issue build on well-established themes in LGBTQ and left historical studies. Brett Beemyn and Elise Chenier each emphasise the significance of place, and the urban geography of Washington DC and Toronto respectively, in shaping the histories of these cities’ gay and lesbian communities, as well as further delineating class and racial divides. Paul Jackson similarly evokes the segregated geography of Canadian-run POW camps to describe the experiences of gay men interned in World War Two. This collection of articles reminds us that the multiple forms of oppression at work in capitalist societies cannot be separated from the multiple sites of resistance: Chris West describes how science fiction fans and writers in domesticated post-World War Two America, escaped the repressive atmosphere of their lived realities through their utopian visions. Jackson argues that in POW camps with largely Nazified, and therefore intensely homophobic, inmate populations, homosexual men turned to the otherwise repressive Canadian state for protec-

tion against violence. And Marc Stein in his autobiographical essay on navigating the considerably less overt sexual politics of the academic job market, reiterates the subtle ways in which prejudice can function: one need not be openly homophobic to participate in the reproduction of hegemonic forms of oppression.

These articles also raise important new questions about the state of the queer left. Most striking is the persistence with which historically, individual struggles and sense of self, collided against collective endeavours and associations. David Berry examines how this collision preoccupied Daniel Guérin, a prominent French Marxist anarchist, and gay rights activist, personally and theoretically. It was, for Guérin, paramount that individual rights and freedoms be retained in the midst of the collective struggle for class liberation. We can see from Berry's analysis and Jackson's work how the policing of sexual identity was socially and culturally defined and therefore struck at the heart of individual identity, yet served broader political agendas. Class and sexual politics do not automatically converge although their mutual sympathies are the subject of much previous historical research. As Chenier reveals, the lines that were drawn within the post-war Toronto lesbian community are not those of class, or even race; but were rooted instead in survival strategies based in necessity, and located in the street and underground economy. Jeb Alexander, in Beemyn's analysis, was simultaneously a victimizer and victimized, punished for his sexual orientation by police, co-workers, and strangers, while looking down upon and mistreating blacks and the poor. West accordingly insists that we must not confuse cooperation, shared interests, and shared oppression with the automatic creation of a "community". Historically, as in the present, LGBTQ communities are made up of many people, with manifold allegiances.

LGBTQ historical analysis foregrounds the challenge of identity politics to the Marxist left. Marxists' insistence on the primacy of class has been profoundly shaken by the voices of feminists, LGBTQ, and civil-rights scholars, among others, who have demonstrated that for many, the primary determinant of one's experience can be gender, sexual orientation, or race, and by implication, not class. Leftist anxiety at this finding has found its way onto *Left History's* pages with Bryan Palmer's "Leon Trotsky: Planet Without a Visa," (9.1) where Palmer argues that while we must appreciate the centrality of alternate forms of discrimination to the experience of many, it is through recognizing, as did Trotsky, the universality of our class-based exploitation that the people will empower themselves and throw off their oppressors. Trotsky, like Guérin, recognized that while exploitation is a universal experience, it takes many forms and functions in the social and cultural as well as the political spheres. Thus, *Left History* seeks here to further the integration of LGBTQ issues into leftist historiography, in order to deepen our understanding of the vicissitudes of power relations that structure all aspects of life.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Leatherdale, Harold Averill, Alan Miller, and Don McLeod at the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives in Toronto who were very generous with their time and resources as we searched for a cover image and to Ben Lander for his excellent photographs of possible cover images that were far too large to scan. This is also the final issue on which Steve Penfold will serve as book review editor, and we would like to thank Steve for his exemplary service to the journal.

The Editors
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