

readers without being condescending. The 360 pages of *Uneasy Alliance* may be a little slim for a cornucopia, but in the breadth and variety and quality of its contents, Hans Bak and his team have ample reason to be proud of their achievement.

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Van Gosse, *The Movements of the New Left 1950-1975 – A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. 203 pages; ISBN: 0312133979 Paperback; \$ 13.95.

The overall aim of this compact volume – the latest contribution to The Bedford Series in History and Culture – is pedagogical, namely to allow “readers ... to study the past as historians do” (v). Although the potential audience is wider, this book is thus primarily directed at students and is, as it says, “short (and inexpensive) enough to be a reasonable one-week assignment in a college course” (v). The book consists of a short introduction (38 pages) followed by 45 documents (most of which have been shortened) all preceded by a “headnote that situates it historically and provides key information about its author” (vii). At the back of the book there is chronology of key events in the history of the New Left followed by a select and thematically organized bibliography for further study. In focus in the following are thus both this concept and its specific execution with regard to the New Left.

As signaled by the “movements” and the periodization (1950-1975) Van Gosse aims at advocating an inclusive view of the New Left in opposition to the widespread practice of conflating the New Left with the (mainly) white student movement SDS, which is often seen as occupying the place in between the civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement, and whose “official” history, from the break with the League for Industrial Democracy to its fragmentation and radicalization, coincides neatly with the decade of the sixties. The introduction is thus entitled “A Movement of Movements” as is Gosse's discussion of the historiography of the New Left that appears in Jean Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (eds.), *Blackwell's Companion to Post-1945 America* (Blackwell, 2002) in which the argument of inclusivity is unfolded at greater length. In the volume under review, a broad definition of the New Left is simply put forth as “both more accurate and more useful in introducing students to the complex political dynamics of ‘the Sixties’” (vii). “In particular”, says Gosse, “I hope this book challenges students to think about the commitment shared by all of these movements to a radical understanding of democracy and how that resonates in American history” (vii).

This common ground of a radical understanding of democracy (which I will return to) and its ascendance is by Gosse related to three broad historical developments: firstly, World War II brought African Americans out of the South and into the Army or the North, experiences putting into perspective social structures; also women found themselves in changed circumstances because of the war; secondly, the cold war in

many ways de-legitimized the Old Left, which had the effect of severing the “liberal-left alliance” (5); and thirdly, continued economic growth seemed to undermine class-based politics as many advanced into the middle classes. This, says Gosse, “combined with containing Communism abroad, became the basis for the dominant political consensus that historians call cold war liberalism” (5) – which in certain ways is linked to what David Farber calls “growth liberalism” (see Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994). This consensus was largely based on a perception that American society basically was sound and in an economic position to both fight Communism overseas and cure its social ills at home through (minor) reforms. Yet, beginning with the “pent-up demand of black Americans for civil rights” (5) this consensus was slowly undermined as more and more people lost faith in the ability of established liberalism to solve a number of increasingly visible inequalities. Added to this was a growing discomfort with the established nuclear policies. These were largely what Gosse calls the “Seeds of Dissent the 1940s and 1950s”, the first section of the introduction. The subsequent sections are called “The Movements take off, 1960-1965”, “The Cold War Consensus Cracks, 1965-58”, “High Tide and Ebb Tide, 1969-1975” and “Conclusion: The Movements Go Their Own Way”.

These periods, which I will not discuss further, constitute the background or narrative against which Gosse asks the reader to think the documents from the various groups and individuals he has selected, ranging from the “Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Tom Hayden, Martin Luther King Jr., Betty Friedan, and Malcolm X ... the Mattachine Society [gay rights], the Congressional Black Caucus, the Young Lords Party [a “Puerto Rican revolutionary nationalist group”], Father Daniel Berrigan, and Congresswoman Bella Abzug”. The voice of these people and groups are presented in “a broad range of source types, including manifestos, testimonies, speeches, newspaper advertisements, letters, and excerpts from books” following each other chronologically (vii). This has the effect, if read continuously, of presenting a wide range of more or less simultaneous political voices each with their specific grievances in relation to the dominant power structures. As such, the volume works perfectly fine in relation to its own stated goal of pluralizing the New Left. It is indeed illuminating to read John Kerry’s testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee as a representative of Vietnam Veterans Against the War sandwiched between Congresswoman Bella Abzug’s call for fuller share of political power to women and representative Charles Diggs, Jr.’s speech to the Congressional Black Caucus Dinner in which he talks about judging “our interest by something more substantial than party labels. And [that] there are times when we must challenge both major parties and candidates of every persuasion ...” (171).

Yet this specific utterance, as well as the collection itself, makes one wonder about the coherence of the New Left, and thus the practice of grouping these diverse movements together under the label the New Left; and this brings me back to the common ground mentioned above, namely a “radical understanding of democracy”. What these movements shared, says Gosse, “was the importance they placed on the dignity

of each individual and the right of every American to full citizenship. This was a radically new vision of democracy, and it changed the United States in fundamental ways" (1). Given that such a vision seems very similar to the founding principles of the U.S. – the 10th point in the Black Panther Party's "Ten-Point Program" in the collection is simply a long quote from the Declaration of Independence – the political impetus merely seems a wish for inclusion and as such the perception of its "radicalness" is certainly illustrative (both in relation to the past and the present). Indeed, what was new about the New Left – apart from its reliance on strategies summed up by Gosse as "speaking truth to power" and "the whole world is watching" (3) – was its emphasis on the individual in opposition to the weight given to the collective (usually socio-economic class) in the old left. What is interesting, however, is why such a renewed emphasis on the individual necessarily is seen as linked to the left. Part of the reason may be found in the fact that the individual whose dignity was sought recognized (and included) was often linked to a specific under-privileged group defined either by ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Yet, if the overall goal merely is inclusion, why is this labeled leftist? Often, however, this was not the sole goal. Part of the newness of the New Left should also be located in wishes to think the individual more explicitly in relation to notions of community (defined in various ways). This comes out very succinctly in the statement from "Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) in which it says: "*Chicanismo* simply embodies an ancient truth: that man is never closer to his true self as when he is close to his community" (143) as well as in the editorial of the pacifist-founded magazine *Liberation* (1956) where it is given a more formalized political spin: "The politics of the future requires a creative synthesis of the individual ethical insights of the great religious leaders and the collective social concern of the great revolutionists" (50). But as American politics moved towards the right with Nixon, some of the movements tilted towards collectivist concerns and in certain ways thus began to resemble the Old Left.

What remains, however, is that part of the political turn of this period was a renewed emphasis on the individual and a range of qualitative aspects of life in a postindustrial society, i.e. possibilities of participation, creativity, self-fulfilment and growth as opposed to uniformity, standardization and homogenization. The left has thus never been the same after, and is somehow still struggling to reconcile this (cultural) individualism with larger notions of collectivism (as seen in the "new" policies of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair). That a certain libertarianism was a strong streak of the larger cultural atmosphere at the time is perhaps evident in the fact that the "rights revolution" has not been reversed by the "ascendance of conservative politics" (apart, perhaps, from the specific circumstances of the Patriot Act) – "... in many cases [this has rather] extended the claims of radical democracy even further" (36). The legacy of the New Left has thus been a double-edged sword: the emphasis on a politics of recognition has surely brought about a range of welcomed changes; yet this emphasis has simultaneously pushed to the background questions of economic inequality. This is evident, although in a somewhat twisted way, in Thomas Frank's newest book *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*

(Metropolitan Books, 2004) in which he argues that many people voted against their economic interests in exchange for the cultural recognition George W. Bush offered.

As far as the legacies of the New Left is concerned Gosse is both celebratory and weary. The "battle", he says, "between the New Right, born in the 1960s, and the descendants of the New Left may continue for a long time to come" (38). Gosse is (deliberately) not very precise here – the focus of the book is after all on history, and by opening an inclusive window on the New Left, he widens the interpretative spectrum of its legacies. Thus, by not foregrounding any specific movement, the book certainly lives up to its intention of leaving the reader with a sense of the many issues and aspects both connecting and dividing the various movements. Since a representation of the depth and size of the various movements is extremely difficult, this selection wisely opts for width. This might have the (welcomed) effect, as discussed above, of putting pressure on, or at least calling into question, the notion of a New Left. One aspect of this relates to the sometimes rather blurred lines demarcating a movement from its wider cultural contexts. Gosse argues that "Black Power [and] feminism succeed because it was as much a cultural revolution, a new way of understanding the world, as an organized movement" (32). Yet, despite, or rather because, this collection points in the direction of a questioning of its own basic concepts, the New Left and movements, it is indeed inductive of a discussion of the political dynamics that to a large extent gave – and continues to give – shape to American postwar politics. With this in mind, as well as the concise introduction, headnotes as well as many interesting documents, this book as well as its concept is thus highly recommendable.

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Anthony Dunbar, ed., *Where We Stand: Voices of Southern Dissent*. Montgomery: New South Books, 2004. 234 pages; ISBN 1-5883-8169-2; \$24.95.

Scandinavians have a tendency to see the American South through a prism of stereotypes, most of which are promoted through Hollywood films and other popular media. Now discerning readers have an opportunity to open their minds and challenge their prejudices by meeting Southerners whose politics are similar to what one might find in Madison, Wisconsin; Ann Arbor, Michigan; or Berkeley, California. *Where We Stand* is a collection of twelve in-your-face essays that pull no punches. The authors, all critical thinkers, represent journalists, academics, lawyers and political activists who are unapologetically committed to a liberal America. The writing is clear and accessible to the average person, forsaking the cumbersome and precious *academese* of most professional journals. One might even hope that such a book would become a best seller, reaching a far wider audience than intellectual students of American culture. As fodder for debate, it is outstanding.

All twelve authors write compelling essays with a shared point of view. Their common concern: the future of America. Their common despair: the deepening