

from a Future Time

Exiles from a Future Time

The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left

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Exiles

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INTRODUCTION

Strange Communists I Have Known

On 9 July 1945, Guy Endore, a popular novelist and Hollywood screenwriter, awoke as usual before dawn. Of wiry build with brownish blond hair and blue eyes, Endore weighed a trim 145 pounds and stood five feet seven-and-a-half inches tall, looking at least a decade younger than his forty-five years. As he reached for the pad and pencil that always rested near his bedside to record his waking thoughts, a characteristically gentle yet enigmatic smile spread across his face.

Politically, Endore was what historians of the Literary Left would regard as an orthodox “Stalinist.” In 1934, even before formally joining the Communist Party, he wrote the *New Republic* to criticize an editorial that condemned the violent disruption by Communists of a Socialist Party meeting in Madison Square Garden, which was called to defend the armed struggle of Social Democrats in Austria against the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss. The Communists’ thuggish seizure of the Socialists’ platform was one of the manifestations of the disruptive “United Front from Below” strategy of the Communist International that drove one-time Party sympathizers such as John Dos Passos (1896–1970), Edmund Wilson (1895–1972), and Lionel Trilling (1905–1975) to publicly oppose the Party. Endore, however, insisted that the Socialists, not the Communists, were responsible for creating the divisive provocation; he accused them of excluding Communists from the speakers’ list, confiscating a Communist banner, and inviting a conservative to address the rally.¹

During the early 1930s, Endore had read everything by Marx and Engels available in English, French, and German, as well as Werner Sombart’s multivolume history of capitalism. Sometime between 1936 and 1938, at the height of the infamous Moscow Purge Trials, when philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) led a campaign to expose their frame-up character, Endore took out Communist Party membership after moving from New York to Hollywood. In the fall of 1939, as the news of the Hitler-Stalin Pact drove a number of disaffected intellectuals from the League of American Writers and

When Aaron's *Writers on the Left* appeared, Freeman was gratified, as he was among the dozen writers featured in the narrative.¹⁰ Yet when novelist Josephine Herbst (1892–1969) saw Aaron's book, she reacted bitterly: "His heroes were the entrepreneurs of writing, the head-boys who have been mostly responsible for the re-hashes. . . . The entrepreneurs whom Dan Aaron wrote about were all stuck in the claustrophobia of New York City."¹¹ Herbst came from the West and frequently traveled in the 1930s; she is barely mentioned in Aaron's 500-page tome, and her novels are not among those described.

Other writers of the era griped with equal fervor about the limitations of *Writers on the Left*. In a 1974 interview, novelist Albert Maltz (1908–1985) declared it "A book without a heart" on the grounds that Aaron focused on "polemic," but not "creative work." Maltz asserted that this was due to Aaron's fear of "taking a stand," of saying that "this has merit and this didn't," lest he be tarred with the Communist brush.¹² But it is just as likely that Maltz's criticism was motivated by his awareness that his own record as a polemicist was embarrassing – due to his public recantation of his criticisms of Communist cultural policy in 1946 – which is the only time Maltz is discussed in Aaron's study.¹³ Likewise, Walter Snow (1905–1973), for many years a pro-Communist writer who strongly identified with William Z. Foster's brand of political leadership, scornfully denounced Aaron's "distortions" in a series of letters in the early 1970s that he sent to his stepson, the historian Maurice Isserman, which Snow attributes to Aaron's "major reliance [for information] on embittered renegades, especially Joseph Freeman."¹⁴ In each of the aforementioned grievances, there is the customary merging of transparent self-promotion with legitimate concern.

Nonetheless, much as one might belabor Aaron for his limitations,¹⁵ it is no easy task to narrate the story of a cultural movement engaging hundreds of writers, and influencing thousands more, over several decades. In the forty years since the publication of *Writers on the Left*, no other scholarly book on the Communist cultural movement has brought as many writers to life.¹⁶ Moreover, while various kinds of attractions to Marxism may bind together several hundred writers in an identifiable tradition, their lives and work can hardly be adequately explained by such ideological and organizational loyalties.

In the instance of Guy Endore, with whose idiosyncratic morning routine this introduction began, one has a writer whose literary value has a comparatively indirect and elusive correlation with his commitment to the Communist Party. His most explicitly revolutionary work, *Babouk* (1934), a masterful narrative set in the early period of the Haitian slave revolution, appeared while he was ideologically and emotionally drawn to the Party but

not yet a member.¹⁷ After joining and teaching novel writing at the Party-sponsored People's Educational Center in Los Angeles, he wrote his psychosexual thriller, *Methinks the Lady* (1945). His most successful novel, *King of Paris* (1956), appeared as he was severing from the Party organization, but it was written while he was still friendly to Communism's basic principles and active mainly in the anti-blacklisting campaign although no longer a member of the Hollywood branch. Did Party membership ever directly curtail the content of his literary output? Endore later claimed that certain members of the Party discouraged him from completing a nonfiction "History of Human Skill" that he had planned to publish, due to doctrinal disagreements. Yet the work he valued most, an autobiographical work called "The Gordon Family," was suppressed not by the Communist Party but initially by his own family members and then by publishers who considered it unsellable.¹⁸

To what extent is Endore an anomaly in the Communist literary movement, a poor example for understanding its cultural work? A close look at Endore's early life discloses many unique features that might usefully be deployed to assist in explaining assorted aspects of his wide-ranging creative life. Yet there are no serious reasons for declaring Endore altogether atypical, thereby discounting him from consideration as a bona fide example of the Communist Literary Left. His work cannot be set aside, for instance, on the grounds that his status as a Columbia University graduate means that he experienced a more secure or privileged youth than typical Left writers usually identified with the proletarian genre. Like several of the canonical pro-Communist writers whose experiences with colleges were minimal or nonexistent (Mike Gold and Jack Conroy, for example), Endore came from a background of financial and personal instability. His mercurial father had worked as a coal miner in Pennsylvania, although occasionally he sold an invention or made an investment that did extraordinarily well, momentarily precipitating a phase of prosperity that never lasted. His mother, unable to cope with extreme poverty, committed suicide at a young age, after which Endore was shunted to an orphanage.

Unlike Conroy's and Gold's writing, however, the backbone of Endore's literary reputation never rested on a working-class or strike setting, a narrative of "bottom dog" life, or a "socialist conversion" story. Endore's forté was and would remain a remarkable series of rich, subtle, and elegant – but often violent and erotic – fictionalized biographies of Casanova, Joan of Arc, Rousseau, Voltaire, the Marquis De Sade, and Alexander Dumas.¹⁹ "Most Endore" was a phrase coined by Marxist theater and film director Herbert Biberman (1900–1971), one of the "Hollywood Ten," to refer to a style char-

Introduction

revolutionary romanticism discussed in Chapter 1—shall return as well in new forms as the tradition wends its way to a kind of tragic “reconciliation with reality” after 1956.

Since dates of publication, and dates of life spans, are indispensable to this cultural history, my general practice has been to date a pertinent author, event, or book in parentheses at first mention, unless the dates themselves are part of the narrative. However, this is violated on certain occasions, such as when there are lists of individuals contributing to a publication, or when the date seems relatively inconsequential. Often dates will be repeated when the publication or individual is considered in dissimilar contexts, or at distant points in the narrative. For individuals still alive as the book goes to press, I furnish only a birthdate. In a few cases I provide a question mark where I have been unable to definitively determine the date of birth or death of an individual, or else I indicate “dates unknown” where I have been incapable of discovering them.

There are many cultural workers who appear in cameo, or as part of lists of names, in this volume; they will be more fully fleshed out in subsequent ones, and their cultural legacies will likewise be appraised at that time. Still, I recognize that of the hundreds of individuals named throughout the narrative, some will be quite familiar to specialists of various kinds, while many more will be entirely unknown to the general reader. Therefore, at first mention of a person, I have provided brief biographical “tags” to help bring the name to life in some significant way (usually by identifying a person’s field of work but also by sometimes indicating nationality, color, sexual orientation, political background, and so forth), and I have also provided an insert with photographs to reinforce the sense of the writers’ individualities. Still, the use of tags can be hazardous if the reader employs them narrowly, and, of course, readers may wonder why certain tags are employed in some cases and not in others. The explanation for decisions as to whom to tag, and how, partly flows from the author’s surmise that, at this point in the recovery of literary history, a general reader is likely to assume a writer to be Euro-American and heterosexual unless otherwise identified; Jewish only if the name is identifiably such; and so forth. I regret any poor judgment calls that I have made in the use of both tags and dates.

American Jeremiad

Recording Angel

On the afternoon of 28 June 1961, the former *New Masses* editor Joseph Freeman (1897–1965) lugubriously trudged over to the old red-brick Baptist-Congregationalist church on Washington Square South in New York City to attend the memorial service for the writer Kenneth Fearing (1902–1961), dead of lung cancer at age fifty-nine. The next day, Freeman mailed a seven-page report on the event to poet Horace Gregory (1898–1982), the friend and political associate of both Freeman and Fearing since the Depression era, when Fearing’s verse seemed a beacon for the cultural Left.¹

The death of Fearing, the premier poet of the Communist cultural movement who turned maverick mystery writer, thirty-two years after the stock market crash of 1929, occurred at perhaps the nadir in the history of Left-wing poetry. Just five years earlier, the old Communist Literary Left, which had inspired and then disappointed all three men, was dealt a near-death blow by Khrushchev’s revelations of Stalin’s crimes, coming in the wake of nearly a decade of Cold War witch hunting. The only poets of national reputation who called themselves large “C” Communists after that date were Walter Lowenfels (1897–1976) and Thomas McGrath (1916–1990). As Fearing died in 1961, a nascent New Left was birthing beneath the placid surface of U.S. society evidenced by the burgeoning civil rights demonstrations in the South and elements of “Beat” culture in the urban North and West. Within three or four years this new radicalism would burst forth as a powerful and transformative social and cultural force encompassing the Free Speech, anti-Vietnam War, Black Power, and Women’s Liberation movements.

Fearing, whose sensibilities were formed during the 1920s and who reached maturity in the 1930s, who lived on as a lonely Left-wing fighter on the cultural front in the 1940s and 1950s, and who anticipated New Left cultural and political attitudes in his Kafkaesque view of modern bureaucracy and neo-Luddite themes,² died on the eve of the emergence of the New Left. Freeman, who was a genuine bridge from the old *Masses* (1911–17) to the *New Masses* (1926–48) until forced out of the Communist movement

tension between the claims of practical politics and literary craft. Left poets and critics fell out along a spectrum as to their notions regarding the degree of difficulty permissible in socialist verse; they were equally diverse in their beliefs about the degree of proximity a poem's content had to have to the exigencies of the class struggle. Then, as now, the conceptual problem of combining an experimental and difficult form with a non-elitist content remained a conundrum without general resolution.

It is not surprising, then, that from the zenith of the Communist Party's cultural influence in the mid-1930s to the various stages of its demise in the post-World War II era, the Party-led cultural effort would episodically erupt in feuds and factions, sometimes resulting in the antagonizing of an individual writer and in a few instances small groups of writers. Usually disputes arose when writers objected to unfair political judgments made about their work.²¹ Moreover, while the Communist movement's self-willed dependency on the Soviet Union for cultural as well as political leadership at times exacerbated the problem of developing appropriate forms for Marxist poetic expression, many of the attitudes precipitating disputes were indigenous to the cultural Left in the United States, and some issues were simply inherent in the very nature of literary practice. Hostility to difficult modern literature, for example, yoked certain Communist writers firmly to one of their arch political enemies, Max Eastman, who was Leon Trotsky's U.S. translator.

Poems for Workers

When the Communist movement was founded in 1919, only two years after the Russian Revolution, the form of poetry favored by U.S. Left activists and political leaders was very much in the tradition of workers' songs, ballads, and folk culture, partly homegrown and partly the product of class-conscious immigrant workers. This literary heritage distinguished turn-of-the-century socialist publications such as the *Comrade*, which featured poetry by Edwin Markham (1852–1940), Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852–1930), and Horace Traubel (1858–1919).²² Before World War I, such styles and themes had been championed by worker-bards of the Industrial Workers of the World such as Ralph Chaplin (1888–1961), Arturo Giovannitti (1884–1959), and Joe Hill (1892–1915).²³ In the first decade of the Communist Party's activity, popular anthologies such as *Poems of Justice* (1929), edited by Thomas Curtis Clark, with a foreword by Zona Gale (1874–1938), and *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* (1929), edited by Marcus Graham, a pseudonym for anarchist Shmuel Marcus, preserved this working-class literary legacy alongside more

broadly radical poetry that often had been written by British romantics or Transcendentalists in the United States. It was also not exceptional for Left poets to appropriate the images and metrics of biblical passages and Christian hymns.²⁴

Poetry published in the Communist movement's *Daily Worker*, *Young Worker*, and *Workers Monthly* (which replaced *The Liberator* in 1924), was mostly in this vein. To some extent this orientation received official imprimatur when the Communist Party issued the volume *Poems For Workers* (1927), edited and introduced by Manuel Gomez. "Gomez" was a pseudonym for the Jewish Communist activist Charles Francis Phillips (1895–1989), who, despite his *nom de plume* (he also used "J. Ramirez" when he collaborated with Michael Gold on a 1923 *Proletarian Song Book*), was neither a Latino nor a Spaniard. He later became a Wall Street financier.²⁵ In a flamboyant gesture, Gomez announced that his edition of worker-poetry was counterposed to all other such collections, including Upton Sinclair's *The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest* (1915). Gomez's profession to originality was his belief that he had assembled the only volume in the English language truly written for the working class. In his preface there were no references to literary form, other than an implicit assumption that the language and style of the poetry must be accessible to his mental picture of the working-class audience to whom the poems were addressed. As for content, Gomez explained:

Workers will see in these poems an earnest [sic] of the invincible sweep, the elemental necessity, the suffering and heroism, the sacrifice and courage, the bitterness and devotion, the steady persistence, the already dawning triumph, of the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations for the overthrow of wage-slavery and the establishment of a new society.²⁶

Despite the sentimentalized view of the class struggle, Gomez's outlook is in the tradition of literary "utility" championed by Whitman—especially in Whitman's non-hierarchical and democratic poetry of the open road, and his aspiration to create a public language demonstrating its power in public speech.

The zeal to promote working-class literature sprang from genuinely generous motives but also embodied a temptation to indulge in anti-intellectual, subjective, and partisan simplicities. On the generous side, the impulse to use art to draw attention to socioeconomic oppression usually produces poetry that tries to render clear and more concrete the relations of domination in society. The resulting themes are often premised on a belief in the persuasive power of poetry, which means that the poetry aims to inculcate

Another selection from *Poems for Workers*, Joseph Freeman's "Slaves," suffuses conventional rhyming quatrains with a modern perspective to dramatize the psychological consequences of the tyranny of industrial society:

Again the grinding of the iron gods,
The old familiar fury of the wheels;
Again the accustomed clamor of the rods,
The giddy belting, and the room that reels;

The dim light dancing, and the shadows shaking,
The little sudden pains, the mute despairs,
The patient and the weary hands; till, waking,
At dusk, we tumble down the crazy stairs.

Freeman does not lecture the reader about wage slavery's similarity to chattel and ancient slavery; instead, suggestive synecdoche and claustrophobic atmosphere evoke the emotions one associates with alienated labor. Machinery becomes reified into brutal gods, while the workings of capitalism are likened to Sisyphean labor. The diminishment of nature (dim light, shaking shadows) combines with machinery to cause the workers' physical and emotional debilitation, pain, and despair. The poem's climax is a reverse epiphany with the worker "waking" at the end of day to stumble down the "shaky" old factory stairs additionally made "crazy" by the distortions wreaked upon the senses due to his exhaustion.

Poems for Workers probably represents the zenith of the indigenous working-class poetic tradition in the United States prior to the 1930s; the temptation to engage in proletarian didacticism evidenced here is mild compared to that found in the pages of the Communist journal *Young Worker* throughout the 1920s. "Clarity and Action" by S. Max Kitzes (dates unknown) is typical of the juvenilia published therein:

Clear your road through Education;
Fight the Night: its dread and fear.
Kill all Hate and Superstition;
Greet the Dawn with hope and cheer.

Dawn is Red. And so's our Banner.
Rise Young Worker: main and might!
Close up the Ranks! Concert your Power!
And change your force and plute-planned plight.³⁷

Other verses by aspiring young poets in the Communist movement bore titles such as "The Red Dawn," "Song of Youth," "Freedom," and "Hail, Young

Workers!"³⁸ On occasion, established poets contributed in this vein to the *Young Worker*, such as Sara Bard Field (1882–1974) and John G. Neihardt (1881–1973).³⁹ The latter's "Cry of the Workers" begins:

Tremble before your chattels,
Lords of the scheme of things!
Fights of all earth's battles
Ours is the might of kings!
Guided by seers and sages,
The world's heart beat for a drum,
Snapping the chains of the ages,
Out of the night we come! ⁴⁰

Simultaneously, the *Young Worker* published short essays explicitly defending a functional approach to poetry. For example, "The Poetry of Revolution," by Virgil Geddes (1897–1989), later famous for his taboo-breaking plays in the areas of incest and adultery such as *Native Ground* (1932), declared:

What we need is an immediate poetry, whose every word and song has been dictated by an unrestrained impulse, that is seeking the light of a new day in its cry for liberation. A poetry that is born out of the despair of our smoky and grimy existence, yet the ardour of which helps us to rise and escape momentarily from our predicament. And this verse should have a purpose, or rather, it should be sufficiently intentional and clearly inspired as to be an encouragement to surmount our present conditions by the vision of a new order. It should be like the joy of a streak of pure blue sky shining through, and apart from, the Depression of sooty smoke-stacks.⁴¹

This direct fusion of romanticism and proletarianism for didactic purposes, so prevalent in the 1920s, would remain a part of the Communist cultural tradition, especially in poetry of young activists, novice poets, worker-poets, and midwestern and southern regional poets. What is noteworthy is that there appear to be no references to Soviet cultural policy to justify such an orientation; the extreme, reductive utilitarianism sometimes decried as a "Stalinist" aberration of overpoliticized art had its own indigenous roots in U.S. radical culture.

Of course, there still remained in the 1920s the poetic tradition of Greenwich Village Bohemianism typified by the *Masses* and the early *Liberator*. This cultural milieu stood somewhat at arm's length from Communist Party organs and institutions, and to some extent blended in with the liberal magazines of the pre- and post-WWI period.⁴² *May Days: An Anthology of Verse*



Above: Joseph Freeman, poet, Don Juan, and *New Masses* editor in the 1930s. (University of Michigan)

Top right: A. B. Magil, the son of a Hebrew scholar in Philadelphia, became a full-time Communist Party journalist and functionary. (Courtesy of A. B. Magil)

Middle right: A self-portrait by Herman Spector, an avant-garde Left poet in the late 1920s and early 1930s who reworked forms and themes of the High Modernists. (Courtesy of Synergetic Press)

Bottom right: Sol Funaroff, the guiding spirit of *Dynamo*, a pro-Communist journal of modern poetry, whose haunting verse invoked themes from Apollinaire. (Courtesy of Nathan Adler)





Top left: Genevieve Taggard, a prominent Left poet for three decades and professor at Sarah Lawrence College. (New York Public Library)

Bottom left: Ruth Lechlitner, a leading Left poet of the 1930s, was responsive to feminist and environmental concerns. (Courtesy of Anne M. Corey)

Above: Joy Davidman, poet, novelist, and film critic, was a Communist party member first married to pulp writer William Lindsay Gresham and later to Christian apologist C. S. Lewis. (Marion Wade Center, Wheaton College)

Chronology

- 1936 Spanish Civil War begins. Moscow Trials begin. National Negro Congress held in Chicago. South Side Writers Group forms.
- 1937 Second American Writers Congress held. *Partisan Review* relaunched in December independent of the Communists. *New Challenge* publishes one issue as a pro-Communist Black literary publication.
- 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact signed on August 24. *Black and White*, West Coast literary magazine led by Communist Party members, founded and lasts until 1940. Third American Writers Congress held.
- 1940 The Rapp-Coudert Committee of the New York State Legislature investigates Communist teachers at Queens, Hunter, Brooklyn and City College of New York. Dozens of teachers are fingered by informers and fired for being members of the Communist Party, or hiding their membership. Leon Trotsky assassinated in August. Negro Playwrights Company formed. *The Clipper* succeeds *Black and White*, lasting until 1941.
- 1941 Fourth American Writers Congress held. Germany invades the USSR on June 21.
- 1942 Communist Party membership hits peak of 85,000. Communist Party becomes Communist Political Association (CPA). Pro-Communist *Negro Quarterly* launched and lasts until 1944.
- 1943 Launching of Hollywood Writers Mobilization.
- 1944 *Negro Story* launched and lasts until 1946.
- 1945 Communist Party reformed; Earl Browder deposed and expelled in February 1946.
- 1946 *Jewish Life* is launched, renamed *Jewish Currents* in 1958. Founding of *Hollywood Quarterly*.
- 1947 House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) investigates Hollywood, resulting in conviction of the "Hollywood Ten" for "contempt of Congress." *Mainstream*, a literary journal, launched by pro-Communist writers and lasts for one year. Organization of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts.
- 1948 In March, *Masses & Mainstream* (from merger with the *New Masses*) appears, lasting until 1956 when its name is changed to *Mainstream*. Henry Wallace's Progressive Party campaign is launched. Communist Party leaders arrested under the Smith Act.
- 1949 CIO expels all known Communists and Communist-led unions. *Harlem Quarterly* launched and lasts until 1950.
- 1950 Alger Hiss convicted of perjury. Hollywood Ten begin prison sentences. *Freedom* newspaper launched in Harlem and lasts until 1955.
- 1951 HUAC investigation in Hollywood creates blacklist of hundreds of screenwriters, actors, etc. Communist Party leaders sentenced to prison.
- 1952 Culmination of Prague Trials.

Chronology

- 1953 Death of Stalin on 5 March. In June, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed for alleged espionage.
- 1954 Michael Wilson's *Salt of the Earth* and Kazan/Schulberg's *On the Waterfront* released. John O. Killens's *Youngblood* is published.
- 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott begins.
- 1956 Nikita Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech in February admits Stalin's terror. USSR suppresses rebellion in Hungary in November. By 1958, Communist Party membership drops to a few thousand.
- 1959 Cuban Revolution. Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* performed.
- 1961 *Freedomways* launched and lasts until 1976.
- 1962 SDS issues the *Port Huron Statement*.
- 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. leads March on Washington. Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*. *Umbra* Black poetry journal launched and lasts until 1975.
- 1965 Death of Joseph Freeman.
- 1967 Death of Michael Gold.
- 1971 Publication of *Between the Hills and the Sea*, by Katya and Bert Gilden.
- 1976 Death of Walter Lowenfels.
- 1980 Death of Muriel Rukeyser.
- 1987 Death of John O. Killens.
- 1990 Death of Thomas McGrath.
- 1999 Death of Aaron Kramer.
- 2000 Death of Ring Lardner Jr., last of the "unfriendly witnesses" of the Hollywood Ten.

West's sisters were also active in the Communist movement. While West may have dropped his Party membership after 1956, he continued his ties to the movement and expressed sympathy for the Soviet Union. As late as the mid-1980s West contributed to a Party-led journal about his favorable impressions of the Soviet Union; see "Appalachian Young People Visit the USSR," *New World Review* 52, no. 2 (March–April 1984): 27. Yet he also contributed to *Jewish Currents* in the years after its editors were castigated by the Party as renegades.

61. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of these claims. Two of the violent high points of his life as a Communist militant came in 1933, when West was beaten unconscious while serving as an organizer for the National Miners' Union in Harlan, Kentucky, and 1948, when the Ku Klux Klan torched his home. See the West Papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. When West was active in the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon defense efforts, the Gastonia Strike, and many other events in the history of southern radicalism, he was often forced to operate clandestinely and at great personal risk. In the 1950s he was hauled before Senate Internal Security investigating committees and vilified by the southern press.

62. West's project might be usefully discussed in light of the "romantic nationalism" that Jerrold Hirsch sees as a crucial component of the Popular Front. See his essay, "From Play-Party to Popular Front: B. A. Botkin, Folklore, and Proletarian Regionalism," *Intellectual History Newsletter* 19 (1997): 29–37. For a more critical view of West as one who romanticizes Appalachia, see Richard Marius, "Don West's Sermon on the Mount," *Appalachian Journal* 10, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 361–65.

63. West, *In a Land of Plenty*, p. 128.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

65. There was only one John Reed Club in the South, at Commonwealth College in Arkansas, and West never held membership in the League of American Writers nor signed any of its public statements. Only two of his poems, "Dark Winds" and "Southern Lullaby," were included in Hicks et al., *Proletarian Literature in the United States*, pp. 198–99.

66. See Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Merlin, 1963).

67. Edwin Berry Burgum, "Three Radical English Poets," *New Masses* (3 July 1934): 33–36. For details about the "Auden School," see Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).

68. The theses are reprinted in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969).

69. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., *Twentieth Century Authors* (New York: H. H. Wilson, 1942), p. 1380.

70. Taggard's essay and the editors' comment appear in *New Masses* (25 Sept. 1934): 18–20. An additional essay was published on the topic, but this was mainly

a polemic against Max Eastman which did not take clear sides on the original dispute. See Granville Hicks, "The Vigorous Abandon of Max Eastman's Mind," *New Masses* (6 Nov. 1934): 22–23.

71. For comparison, see Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), pp. 126–71.

72. The phrase is from Martin Buber in reference to the Russian populist Landauer.

73. Michael Löwy, "Marxism and Utopian Vision," *On Changing the World: Essays in Political Philosophy from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 22.

74. Max Blechman, "Preface," in Blechman, ed., *Revolutionary Romanticism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1999), p. xvi.

75. Horace Gregory, *Poems, 1930–1940* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1941), p. 90.

76. An excellent discussion of Whitman's stature in Left poetry can be found in Alan Golding, *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), especially pp. 94–100. A more recent discussion can be found in Carman, *A Race of Singers*, pp. 43–78.

77. Nelson Algren, "Strength and Beauty," *New Masses* (20 Aug. 1935): 25.

78. Hughes expressed this view in his introduction to the 1946 International Publishers edition of *I Hear the People Singing: Selected Poems of Walt Whitman*. The introduction was reprinted in *American Dialogue* 5, no. 3 (Spring–Summer 1969): 8.

79. Robert Hayden, "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night," in a 1942 unpublished manuscript, "The Black Spear," courtesy of Robert Chrisman.

80. Patchen, in fact, wrote disparagingly of Whitman at times, but the influence was nevertheless abundant. See Raymond Nelson, *Patchen and American Mysticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

81. This interpretation of Whitman can be found in Paul Zweig, *Walt Whitman: The Making of a Poet* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 3–8.

Chapter 2

1. About half the books written by Gold identify him as "Michael" and the other half "Mike," and his *Daily Worker* column switches back and forth as well, so I follow suit and alternate between the two names.

2. "'The Red Decade' – a valuable study of America's literary Left of the 30s," by A. P. Towle (pseud. for Philip Stevenson), *Daily World*, 28 April 1962, p. 4. Actually, in the cartoon strip to which Stevenson refers, it was not Crazy Kat himself but a sidekick who specialized in bouncing rocks.

3. "Out of the Fascist Unconscious," *New Republic*, 26 July 1933, pp. 295–96.

Index

- Day, Dorothy, 40
 Day Lewis, C., 35; *The Magnetic Mountain*, 34
 de Beauvoir, Simone, 92
 Debs, Eugene, 98
 de Ford, Miriam Allen, 256
 Dell, Floyd, 10, 15, 55, 72, 189, 191, 232
 Denning, Michael, 322, 331 (n. 1)
 Dennis, Eugene, 178
 Dewey, John, 1, 85
 Dickinson, Emily, 23, 125
 Dickstein, Morris, 344 (n. 25)
 Direction, 287
 Dixler, Elsa, 383 (n. 85)
 Dodd, Martha, 259
 Dodson, Owen, 264, 275, 276
 Don, Sam, 167
 Dorsett, Lyle, 379 (n. 23)
 Dos Passos, John, 1, 52, 55, 67, 124, 132, 195, 310; *Most Likely to Succeed*, 64; *Manhattan Transfer*, 66
 Dostoyevski, Fyodor, 44
 Draper, Theodore, 353 (n. 25)
 Dreiser, Theodore, 51, 55, 77, 98, 353 (n. 27)
 Du Bois, W. E. B., 83, 86, 90, 264
 Du Bois, Shirley Graham. *See* Graham, Shirley
 Duncan, Isadora, 128
 Dunbar, Paul Laurence, 88, 264, 271
 Dupee, F. W., 122
 Durant, Kenneth, 181, 231; biographical sketch of, 232
 Durem, Ray, 285–86; *Take No Prisoners*, 286
 Dynamo, 203, 206, 208–10, 213, 305, 316, 319

 Eastman, Max, 16, 18, 55, 67, 82, 113, 170, 183, 231, 324; *Artists in Uniform*, 186
 Eberhart, Richard, 128
 Elective affinity, xiv, 72, 80, 95, 112
 Eliot, T. S., 10, 21, 62, 128, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198, 217, 226, 253, 301, 307, 311, 320; “Geron-tion,” 196–97; “Burial of the Dead,” 198; *The Waste Land*, 198, 204; “What the Thunder Said,” 204, 222; “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” 199, 204–5; “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” 238
 Ellison, Ralph, 92, 94, 132, 206, 259, 266–67, 276, 278, 283, 284, 285; biographical sketch of, 286–89; “Hymie’s Bull,” 287; *Invisible Man*, 289, 294; “The Black Ball,” 296–97; and Communist Party, 387 (n. 73)
 Eluard, Paul, 43
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 37
 Endore, Guy (born Samuel Goldstein): bio-graphical portrait of, 1–6; *Methinks the Lady*, 2, 5; *The Werewolf of Paris*, 2, 6; *King of Paris*, 3; *Synanon*, 3; *The Crime at Scotts-boro*, 3; *The Sleepy Lagoon Mystery*, 3; *The Story of G. I. Joe*, 3; *Babouk*, 4, 263; “His-tory of Human Skill,” 5; “The Gordon Family,” 5
 Engels, Frederick, 1, 77

 Fabre, Michel, 357 (n. 76)
 Falkowski, Ed, 40
 Farrell, James T., 91, 124, 316; *Judgment Day*, 319; *A Note on Literary Criticism*, 184–5
 Fascism, 12, 73, 123, 318, 319
 Fast, Howard (pseud. E. V. Cunningham), 98, 170, 187; *Spartacus*, 168
 Faulkner, 54, 55
 Fauset, Jessie, 264, 280, 285; *Comedy American Style*, 280; *The Chinaberry Tree*, 280
 Fearing, Kenneth, 9–11, 132, 210, 213, 216, 222, 226, 227, 318, 320, 321, 323
 Federal Theater Project, 93
 Federal Writers Project, 91, 94, 104, 132, 203, 206, 215, 268, 271, 272, 273, 276, 281, 285, 289
 Feminism, 7, 234, 251, 252, 261, 304, 322. *See* also Gender; *Women and the Left*
 Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, 43
 Field, Ben. *See* Moe Bragin
 Field, Sara Bard, 25, 67, 232, 337 (n. 39)
 Fighting Words, 254
 Filreis, Alan, 351 (n. 17), 365 (n. 43)
 Finkelstein, Sidney, 175; *How Music Explains Ideas*, 175
 Fischer, Marjorie, 259
 Fishbein, Leslie, 338 (n. 42)
 Flanagan, Hallie, 93, 301
 Flexner, Eleanor, 132, 259
 Flynn, Elizabeth Gurley, 48, 49, 253
 Flores, Angel, 187, 373 (n. 111)
 Foley, Barbara, 350 (n. 7), 353 (n. 29), 387 (n. 74)
 Folk Music, 4
 Folsom, Franklin, 78, 169, 170, 183, 190

Index

- Folsom, Michael, 338 (n. 42), 343 (n. 25)
 Foner, Philip, 279
 Force fields, xiv, xvi, 7, 72, 74, 135, 316
 Ford, James, 80, 92, 278, 294
 Forsythe, Robert. *See* Crichton, Kyle
 Foster, William Z., 4, 13, 92, 99, 178, 288; “The Fascist Phase of Imperialism,” 173
 Fox, Ralph: *The Novel and the People*, 127
 Fraden, Rena, 359 (n. 76)
 Frank, Joseph, 32
 Frank, Waldo, 180
 Frazier, E. Franklin, 281, 288
 Freedom, 81
 Freedomways, 81, 86
 Freeman, Harry, 10, 181, 183, 190
 Freeman, Joseph (born Yosef Yehuda Arye ben Yitzhak Aaron Halevy, pseud. J. F. Evans), 3–4, 7, 9–12, 15, 42, 63, 66, 70, 72, 74, 75, 78, 108, 109, 110, 111, 115, 119, 124, 132, 178–91, 195, 203, 217, 231, 300, 324–25, 332 (n. 9); “Slaves,” 24; *An American Testament*, 67, 120, 170, 83, 188; *Dollar Diplomacy*, 111; *The Soviet Worker*, 111; *Voices of October*, 111; “Edmund Wilson’s Globe of Glass,” 122
 Freeman, Mary Wilkins, 18, 336 (n. 20)
 Freeman, Ruth, 10
 Freiheit, 61, 180
 Freud, Sigmund, 26, 165
 Friar, Kimon, 307
 Friday, 217
 Frost, Robert, 114, 219, 307
 Fugitives, 16
 Funaroff, Sol (pseud. Charles Henry New-man, Steve Foster, Sil Vnarov), 132, 207, 216, 226, 227, 233, 250, 272, 321, 322; “What the Thunder Said,” 204; “Possessed by Death,” 204–5; biographical portrait of, 204–14; *American Writing*, 206; “Bellbuoy,” 206–6; *The Spider and the Clock*, 207, 210, 216; *Exiles From a Future Time*, 207, 213; “How Objective Is Objectivism?,” 209; “The Love Campaign,” 209–10; “Unem-ployed: 2 am,” 210; “Uprooted,” 210; “The last Superstition,” 211; “To the Dead of the International Brigade,” 211; “Dusk of the Gods,” 212; “Iron Calf,” 213; “King Porter,” 213; “Medieval Jew,” 213; “Tough Scufflin’,” 213; “The Exiles,” 213–14
 Futurism, 34, 35, 43, 44, 52, 54, 323

 Gale, Zona, 18, 97
 Gannett, Lewis, 77
 Garfield, John (born Julius Garfinkle), 239
 Garlin, Sender, 78, 166–67, 180, 182, 183
 Gastonia Strike, 29
 Gayden, Fern, 270
 Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and the Left, xiii, 82, 90, 94, 301, 307
 Geddes, Virgil: *Native Ground*, 25; “The Poetry of Revolution,” 25
 Gellhorn, Martha, 254, 381 (n. 63)
 Gender, xiv, 95–102, 229–61
 Georgakas, Dan, 331 (n. 5), 336 (n. 24)
 Gessner, Robert, 265, 384 (n. 8)
 Gilbert, James B., 335 (n. 19), 338 (n. 42)
 Giles, Barbara, 32
 Gilkes, Lillian Barnard, 259
 Ginsberg, Allen, 42, 44; *Howl and Other Poems*, 42, 43
 Ginsberg, Louis, 42
 Giovannati, Arturo, 18, 336 (n. 3)
 Goetz, George (pseud. Victor Francis Calverton), 13, 26, 167, 187
 Gold, Michael (born Itzok Granich, also known as Irving or Irwin Granich), 5, 6, 7, 14, 26, 34, 37, 71, 75, 77, 78, 82, 89, 91, 101, 104, 105, 109, 117, 119, 121, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132–33, 135, 181, 193, 194–95, 201, 203, 216, 218, 293, 296, 317, 318, 321, 323, 324, 343 (n. 21); *Proletarian Song Book*, 19; “Change the World,” 39, 59, 67, 68, 71; bio-graphical portrait of, 39–70; *Jews Without Money*, 40, 42, 46, 48, 55–59, 105; “Towards Proletarian Art,” 41; “A Great Deed was Needed,” 46; “Ghost Story,” 46; “Nails,” 46; “Tenements,” 46; “To One Dying,” 46; “A Freshman at Harvard,” 49; “Down the Airshaft,” 49; “Homecoming,” 50; “Birth,” 51; *Money*, 51; *A Damned Agitator*, 52; “Strike,” 52; *Hoboken Blues*, 52, 53; *Battle Hymn*, 53; “Fiesta,” 53; “A Reply to Faulkner,” 54; “Death of a Negro,” 54; “Why I am a Communist,” 56, 253; “Jews of the World,” 58; “Strange Funeral in Braddock,” 61; “Ode to Walt Whit-man,” 62; “A Wreath,” 62; *Charlie Chaplin’s Parade*, 62; “Tom Mooney Walks,” 62; “A Bourgeois Hamlet of Our Time,” 68; “A Word as to Uncle Tom,” 91; “Notes from Kharkov,” 106