

**International Conference**

**Wars of Position: Marxism and Civil Society**

**8-10th June 2017**

**People’s History Museum, Manchester, UK**

**Key-note speakers: Kevin Morgan (Thursday), Jodi Dean (Friday), Neil Faulkner (Saturday)**

**Wars of Position: Marxism and Civil Society**

‘In Russia’, wrote Antonio Gramsci, ‘the State was everything’ and ‘civil society primordial’; in the highly-developed West, civil society formed ‘permanent fortifications’ which the revolutionary party would have to occupy and transform in order to take and hold power.

No Marxist parties in the West made a revolution. Historical analysis of their failure has been abundant, but insufficiently attentive to parties’ approaches to civil society in Gramsci’s sense (i.e. social practices and institutions outside the government, judiciary and repressive state apparatus). This international and interdisciplinary conference is at once historically grounded and attuned to contemporary debates on the Left. It brings together: analysis of the theory and practice of twentieth-century Marxist parties in relation to civil society; analysis of contemporary Left movements’ approaches to civil society; analysis of the ‘idea’ of communism today and the relevance or obsolescence of ‘the party’ in the twenty-first century.

The conference is part of the AHRC-funded project, Wars of Position: Communism and Civil Society led by Dr Ben Harker at the University of Manchester, run in collaboration with the People’s History Museum.

<http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/english/research/projects/wars-of-position/>

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**Finding the People’s History Museum:**

**Address: PHM, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester M3 3ER:**

<http://www.phm.org.uk/visit-us/how-to-find-us/>

* **On foot:**The mhttps://www.slideshare.net/AgeingBetter/2017-micra-annual-public-lecture-ready-for-ageing-nowuseum is on the corner of Left Bank and Bridge Street in the Spinningfields area of Manchester city centre, 5 minutes’ walk from Kendals/House of Fraser on Deansgate
* **By bike:**Bike racks are located outside The Left Bank cafe bar entrance on Bridge Street.  Visit [Transport for Greater Manchester cycling pages](http://cycling.tfgm.com/) for more information on cycling in Manchester
* **Rail stations:**- Salford Central (2 min walk)  
  - Manchester Victoria (15 min walk or 8 mins on **free**Metroshuttle 1 or 2)  
  - Manchester Piccadilly (20 min walk or 10 mins on **free** Metroshuttle 1, 2 or 3)  
  - Manchester Oxford Road (20 min walk or 10 mins on **free**Metroshuttle 2 or 3)
* **Metrolink stations:**- St Peter’s Square (10 min walk)  
  - Deansgate-Castlefield (15 min walk)
* **Bus stop (1, 8, 12, 25, 26, 31, 32, 36, 37, 50, X34):**Bridge Street (2 min walk)
* **Free Metroshuttle stop:**- No 1: Byrom Street (3 min walk)  
  - No 2: John Rylands Library, Deansgate (4 min walk)  
  - No 3: Byrom Street in peak times only; Mon-Fri, 7.25am – 9.30am & 4.30pm – 7.20pm (3 min walk) / John Dalton Street (5 min walk)
* Visit [Transport for Greater Manchester Metroshuttle pages](http://tfgm.com/buses/Pages/metroshuttle.aspx) for more information
* **Car parks:**New Quay Street, Spinningfields/Bridge Street (2-5 min walk)
* **Special Discount Parking Voucher:**Valid at the New Quay Street, [Spinningfields NCP Car Park](http://www.ncp.co.uk/find-a-car-park/car-parks/manchester-spinningfields-jv/) (M3 3BE).  Pay only £6 for a whole day’s parking and you could save up to £16.50 in parking charges.  Park first, then pick up a discount voucher from the museum’s Info Desk **\*please check availability of discount vouchers with the museum before your visit\***
* **Free parking for disabled drivers – when a valid Blue Badge is displayed in the vehicle  
  (as of 2013):**- On-street parking meters, without time limit (nearest meters: New Bailey Street)  
  - Pay & Display machine parking bays, without time limit (nearest bays: Stanley Street by Mark Addy pub)  
  - Designated on-street accessible parking bays, without time limit (nearest 5 bays: St Mary’s Street, off Deansgate, side of Kendals/House of Fraser)

**Places to visit in Manchester:**

The Working-class Movement Library, the Crescent, Salford. Salford. Vast archive holdings relating to British and Irish labour movements. Small exhibition currently open about Marx and Engels. Check online for opening times. 20 minute walk from PHM: <http://www.wcml.org.uk/>

John Rylands Library: Gothic library with various exhibitions and reading rooms. 5 minute walk from PHM. <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/>

Chetham’s Library. Oldest public library in English-speaking world, famously frequented by Marx and Engels. 10 minute walk from PHM. <http://library.chethams.com/>

Manchester Art Gallery: 10 minute walk from PHM. <http://manchesterartgallery.org/>

Whitworth Art Gallery: 40 minute walk from PHM or short bus-ride (42, 142, 143)

Home: Cinema and theatre with exhibition spaces: <https://homemcr.org/>; 10 minute walk from PHM

The Lowry: Salford Arts Centre and venue with L.S. Lowry paintings in abundance. Take a tram to ‘Media City’ from Exhibition Square, St Peter’s Square or Deansgate / Castlefield.

**Places to eat:**

Home: reasonably priced food in arts cinema; see above; <https://homemcr.org/venue/food-drink/>

Indian Tiffin Room, ten minute walk from PHM; gets busy so book. <http://www.indiantiffinroom.com/restaurants/manchester/>

Scene (Indian food, Spinningfields). 5 minute walk from PHM. <http://www.scenedining.com/>

Lebanese: 5 minute walk from PHM <https://www.comptoirlibanais.com/locations/manchester/>

Northern Quarter Restaurant: 20 minute walk from PHM: <http://www.tnq.co.uk/#tnq-northern-quarter-restaurant-home>

Popular Brazilian restaurant; five minute walk from PHM; <http://www.bembrasilrestaurants.com/>

Pies and beer; 20 minute walk from PHM: <http://www.pieminister.co.uk/restaurants/manchester/>

**Pubs, Bars**:

Gaslamp; self-styled ‘subterranean drinking den’; 3 minute walk from PHM. <https://www.thegaslamp.co.uk/>

The Brink: 3 minute walk from PHM; <http://www.brinkmcr.co.uk/#new-page>; opposite the Gaslamp.

The King’s Arms: pub with theatre upstairs; 10 minute walk from PHM: <http://kingsarmssalford.com/>

Marble Arch Inn; 20 minute walk from PHM; pub with microbrewery; does food; <https://whatpub.com/pubs/MAN/9747/marble-arch-inn-manchester>

The Castle: Manchester institution; pub and venue; 20 minute walk from PHM in Northern Quarter (near Piccadilly Station); <http://thecastlehotel.info/>

Beermoth Café: Bar with many beers. 10 minute walk from PHM: <http://beermoth.co.uk/cafe/>

**PROGRAMME**

**Thursday 8/6/17:**

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| **10.00-10.30** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Registration, Tea, Coffee** | |
| **10.30-12.00** | **ENGINE HALL**  **Keynote One: Kevin Morgan**  'Communism and civil society: the negation of the negation?'  **Introduction / chair: Ben Harker** | |
| **12.00-1.00:** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Lunch** | |
| **1.00-3.00** | **PANEL ONE** | |
|  | **COAL STORE:**  **Reading British Communism:**  **Chair: Glyn Salton-Cox**  **Jonathan Roscoe**, ‘Communism at the crossroads: the crisis at the Left Book Club in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet pact’  **Marzia Maccaferri**, ‘*Marxism Today* and Italian Communism: a case-study for Marxism and civil-society’  **Herbert Pimlott**, ‘“New Model Party?”: the Communist Party’s ‘hegemonic apparatus’ as ‘the scaffolding” for ‘oppositional culture’ in the UK, 1977-1983’  **Joseph Darlington**, ‘*Red Rag*: A Magazine’s Journey from Communism to Civil Society’ | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM:**  **New Lefts:**  **Chair: John Connor**  **Rory Scothorne**, ‘Left out of Britain?: democracy, autonomy and nationalism on the Scottish radical left, 1968-1979’  **Alan Hooper**, ‘Traditions, transitions and revolutions: the New Left in search of hegemony’  **Nick Stevenson,** ‘The responsibilities of the intellectual and the critical legacies of Orwell: Communism, the New Left and Anarchism’  **Madeleine Davis and Ross Speer**, ‘Gramscism, the New Left and the problems of socialist strategy: the case of *7 Days*’ |
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| **3.00-3.30** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Tea and coffee** | |
| **3.30-5.00** | **PANEL TWO** | |
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|  | **COAL STORE**  **Novel Formations:**  **Chair: David Alderson**  **Glyn Salton-Cox**, ‘Uncivil society: Engels, Margaret Harkness, and the Lumpenproletariat’  **John Connor**, ‘Lukács, popular democracy and the novel’  **Thomas Travers**, ‘Historical novel of late capitalism: *Libra* as war of position’ | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM**  **Politics, Civil Society, Letters:**  **Chair: Marzia Maccaferri**  **Mila Milani**, ‘The Italian Communist Party and the failure of a ‘transnational’ party cultural journal  **Marie-Cécile Bouju**, ‘The PCF publishing houses 1920-1950: serving Marxism?’ |
| **5.00-7.00** | **PROCESIONAL WAY / ENGINE HALL: Drinks Reception. Launch of Project Exhibition, ‘British Communism’s Culture Wars’** | |

**Friday 9/6/17**

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| **10.00-12.00** | **PANEL THREE** | |
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|  | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM**  **Archives, Agency:**  **Chair: Janette Martin**  **Meirian Jump**, Marx Memorial Library, ‘Radical archives as radical agents’  **Stefan Dickers**, Bishopsgate Institute, ‘Radical archives versus radical archiving’  **James Darby**, PHM, ‘Working on “Wars of Position.”’ | **COAL STORE**  **Counter Cultures:**  **Chair: Madeleine Davis**  **Christina Petterson**, ‘Bourgeois society and the Christian self’  **Joanna Bullivant**, ‘Music in the Communist Party of Great Britain: the case of Alan Bush’  **Daniel Weinbren**, ‘The singing schmutter strikers: British Communists and cultural contestation during the Third Period’.  **Elinor Taylor**, ‘Jonathan Lethem’s *Dissident Gardens*: contemporary genre and communist historiography’ |
| **12.00-1.00** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Lunch** | |

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| **1.00-3.00** | **PANEL FOUR:** | | |
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|  | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM**  **Civil society:**  **Chair: Robert Jackson**  **Marco Vanzulli**, ‘Labour, civil society, classes’  **Yohann Douet**, ‘Civil society as a strategic and historical concept in Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks’*  **Baraneh Emadian**, ‘Civil society in the light of the capital-nation-state’  **John Varty**, ‘Post-Marxism, civil society and the critique of Marxism’ | **COAL STORE**  **Exploitation:**  **Chair: Nizan Shaked**  **John Smith**, ‘Marxism vs Euro-Marxism’  **Bárbara Sepúlveda Hales**, ‘Who benefits from the gender pay gap?: A Marxist feminist analysis’  **Vicente Ségure**, ‘Unions in the war of position: an analysis of the decomposition of Chilean unions’  **Alex Tebble**, ‘Karl Marx and the capitalist vampires: is exploitation an injustice?’ | **MEETING ROOM**  **Masses, Movements, Marxism**:  **Chair: Phil o’Brien**  **Lev Centrih**, ‘The failure of socialist civil society in 1980s Slovenia (Yugoslavia)  **Tauno Saarela**, ‘Finnish Communism and ideological institutions in the 1920s’  **Ken Cheng**, ‘Proletarian mass, modernist party: the invention of German orthodox Marxism, 1875-1899’  **Sebastian Berg**, ‘Marxism and the Greens: a comparison of parties and movements in Britain and Germany’ |
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| **3.00-3.20** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Tea and coffee** | | |
| **3.20-4.50** | **ENGINE HALL**  **Keynote Two: Jodi Dean, ‘**The Actuality of Revolution’  **Chair: Elinor Taylor** | | |

**Saturday 10/6/16:**

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| **10.30-12.00** | **PANEL FIVE** | |
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|  | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM**  **Mediations:**  **Chair: Joseph Darlington**  **Nizan Shaked**, ‘Form and finance: contradictory mediations in the non-profit museum system’  **M. A. Nolan**, ‘An egalitarian gaze: worker photography in inter-war Britain’  **Johan Pries**, ‘People’s houses and people’s parks as cultural and political space in the early Swedish labour movement’ | **COAL STORE**  **Inside Gramsci’s Laboratory**: C**ivil Society and Social Transformation**  **Chair: Mila Milani**  **Francesca Antonini**, ‘Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will: political strategy and civil society in Gramsci’  **Robert Jackson**, ‘Civil society and “molecular” transformation’  **Mark McNally**, ‘Gramsci, the party and realist democratic strategy’ |
| **12.00-1.00** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Lunch** | |

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| **1.00-3.00** | **PANEL SIX** | | |
|  | **ARCHIVE READING ROOM** | **COAL STORE** | **MEETING ROOM** |
|  | **Wars of Position Now:**  **Chair: Francesca Antonini**  **Karen Buckley**, ‘Civil-society and twenty-first century transformations’  **David Alderson**, ‘Identity politics and the cultural politics of freedom’  **Chris Harris**, ‘Three waves of black working-class organic intellectuals in the Twentieth and Twenty First Century’ | **Class, Party, State:**  **Chair: John Smith**  **Mike Makin-Waite**, ‘Democracy / alliances / class / strategy: six communist formulae’  **Daniel Gerke**, ‘The political third table: class and the new materialism’  **Jörg Nowak**, ‘Louis Althusser’s critique of the Communist Party and the question of the post-revolutionary state’  **João Arsénio Nunes**, ‘Wars of position and war of movement in the history of the Portuguese Communist Party, 1930-1975’ | **Intellectuals:**  **Chair: Henry Stead**  **John Narayan**, ‘Huey Newton’s wars of position: survival pending revolution’  **Daniel Egan**, ‘Beyond “a grain of salt”: the military foundations of Gramsci’s war of position’  **Ottokar Luban**, ‘Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas on the process of realising a socialist society’  **Masashi Hoshino**, Orwell and Representation of the ‘People’ |
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| **3.00-3.20** | **PROCESSIONAL WAY**  **Tea and coffee** | | |
| **3.20-4.50** | **ENGINE HALL**  **Keynote Three: Neil Faulkner,** ‘The debt economy, the hollow society, and the crisis of revolutionary agency in the early 21st century.’  **Chair Ian Parker** | | |

**Abstracts / Notes on Contributors**

**David Alderson**, ‘Identity politics and the cultural politics of freedom’

Recriminations on the socialist and liberal Left over Brexit and the election of Trump as President of the US have focused on something called ‘identity politics’, holding it responsible for the abandonment of more ‘inclusive’ projects. There is often much to be said for these critiques, but equally they risk reifying the very categories of identity whose effects they claim to challenge by admonishing us to get back to the ‘real’ issues, usually those of class. Frequently, though, the politics of class, where they are not linked to a project of transcending capitalism, are identitarian themselves (the defence of a certain ‘interest’). Other categories in whose name the critique of identity is made – society, nation, community – are still less satisfactory, because they serve to obscure division.

A different kind of critique of contemporary identity politics – not to mention the expanding range of ‘phobias’ that have accompanied them – might be one that returned to the conditions in which they first emerged in order to acknowledge those politics necessity and continuing relevance, while emphasizing their one-time universalist aspirations to render freedom a general condition rather than the preserve of a group defined by either wealth or ‘cultural difference’. This means returning to the prefigurative dimensions of such movements and linking them to contemporary critiques of both inequality and work itself as fuelling moralistic and anti-cosmopolitan *ressentiment*. This paper will sketch some of the theoretical resources for doing so in order to move beyond the essentially liberal politics of identity and prejudice towards a politics of freedom. In part, the claim of this paper will be that we have been substantially frustrated in this respect by the antihumanist theory that remains dominant.

David Alderson ([David.alderson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:David.alderson@manchester.ac.uk)) works at the University of Manchester, and has written widely on gender, sexuality and the neoliberal transition. His recent books are *Sex, Needs and Queer Culture: From Liberation to the Postgay* (Zed, 2016), and *For Humanism: Explorations in Theory and Politics* (co-edited with Robert Spencer; Pluto, 2017).

**Francesca Antonini**, ‘Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will: political strategy and civil society in Gramsci’

Gramsci’s ‘pessimistic’ analysis of the growing authoritarian character of civil society in the 1930s combines with an ‘optimistic’ faith in the potential for socialist transformation and the elaboration of an effective political strategy for the workers’ movement. Discussing key texts from Notebooks 13, 14 and 15, I will investigate first the dynamics that characterise civil society in ‘western’ (but, *mutatis mutandis*, also ‘eastern’) countries. According to Gramsci, contemporary state formation displays a ‘massive structure’, insofar as the politicisation of the masses requires a soft but pervasive control over civil society – in this ‘totalitarian’ perspective state apparatuses like the bureaucracy and the police play a pivotal role.

However, this realistic analysis of the ‘democratic-bureaucratic’ nature of contemporary societies does not impede Gramsci from elaborating an extremely refined theory of a required party, summarised in the formula of the ‘Modern Prince’. As clearly emerges from his notes, thanks to a critical reappraisal of the categories of spontaneity, discipline, culture and so on, he elaborates a political strategy that would provide a ‘moral and intellectual reform’ of civil society and consequently, that would open the door to a socialist revolution.

Francesca Antonini ([fraantonini@hotmail.it](mailto:fraantonini@hotmail.it" \t "_blank)) is a teaching assistant at the University of Pavia (Italy) and she is doing archival research for the Gramsci Institute in Rome. Her main research interests include Antonio Gramsci’s thought, the history of Marxism and Communism and European intellectual history of 20th century.

**João Arsénio Nunes**, “War of position” and “war of movement” in the history of the Portuguese Communist Party (from the 1930s to 1975).

In the landscape of European Communist Parties, the PCP occupies a particular position. Often mentioned as one of the most orthodox and sectarian CPs of Soviet compliance, its behavior in the course of the “carnation revolution” of 1974-75 was for many a surprise, in that it seemed to go contrary to the orientation of Soviet diplomacy at the time of the Helsinki agreement. Nowadays, as the sole Western European Communist party that managed to survive the crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union while retaining a relatively strong electoral basis, it surprises again as one of the parliamentary supporters of the center-left Socialist government.

In this paper I investigate the historical roots of the social influence of the PCP and its limits, and how both were reflected in the important role the party was able to play during the revolutionary period, as well as in its failure to consolidate a form of revolutionary power.

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**Sebastian Berg**, ‘Marxism and the Greens: a comparison of parties and movements in Britain and Germany’

Civil society has become increasingly concerned with environmental issues over the last 40 years. In Germany, Marxism played an important role in the environmental movements of the 1970s and 1980s. This includes the early Green Party, which at the time defined itself as a movement party. Many of the party’s founders had come from various so-called k groups (k standing for Kommunismus/communism), representing competing strands of Marxism. In both the broader green movement and the Green Party, Marxists had to develop working relationships with non-Marxist (sometimes deeply conservative) co-activists. In Britain, Marxism was absent from the PEOPLE party that later became the Green Party, even though not from environmentalism in general. This paper (i.) analyses the elements of Marxism that became important for green movements in both societies. It (ii.) asks why we can observe different trends in the German and British green parties: while it has gained in importance for Greens in Britain, it has lost influence in the German case. It (iii) investigates whether the ‘k group paradox’, identified by political scientist Joachim Raschke as a distinguishing feature of the German Green Party, can be applied more generally to the green movements in both societies – the paradox that the most doctrinal among the Marxists trans-morphed into the most pragmatic greens and the less rigorous ones into the more uncompromising.

Sebastian Berg, [Sebastian.Berg@ruhr-uni-bochum.de](mailto:Sebastian.Berg@ruhr-uni-bochum.de) is a reader in Social and Cultural Studies within the English and American Studies Department of Ruhr University Bochum (Germany). His main research interests are antiracism and multiculturalism, the history of the left, social movements, and political ecology. He currently analyses activist and academic discourses on climate change.

**Marie-Cécile Bouju**, ‘The PCF publishing houses 1920-1950: serving Marxism?’

Founded at the same time as the French Communist Party (PCF) in December 1920, the publishing houses of the PCF – Librairie de l’Humanité from 1920 to 1924, Bureau d’Editions from 1925 to 1939, Editions sociales internationales from 1927 to 1939, Editions sociales from 1944 onward – were meant to serve propaganda from the French section of the Komintern. What place did the propagation of Marx and Engels’ works hold among their activities? While the militants’ training was indeed at the heart of what the PCF called “publishing work”, the publication of theoretical works was not considered a priority. This paradoxical situation lasted until the Popular Front, when the headsof the Communist Party’s publishing housesgained more independence. However, it was not until the early 1950s that the PCF truly aimed to become the primary French publisher of Marx’s work. We will showthe reasons for this paradox, which lies at once in the political culture of the PCF, French intellectual and editorial life, and the Komintern’s strategy.

**Marie-Cécile Bouju (**[marie-cecile.bouju02@univ-paris8.fr](mailto:marie-cecile.bouju02@univ-paris8.fr)), Lecturer in Contemporary History, Paris 8 University (Saint-Denis, France), Academic Biography: Lecturer in Contemporary History, Paris 8 University (Saint-Denis, France); Member of the EA 1571 “Center for Historical Research: History of Power, Knowledge and Societies”; Member of the editorial board of *Maitron, dictionnaire biographique: mouvement ouvrier, mouvement social*, directed by Claude Pennetier and Paul Boulland.

**Karen Buckley**, ‘Civil-society and twenty-first century transformations’

The twenty-first century has seen new forms of organising on the Left that may give greater depth to Gramscian civil society and wars of position as serious contenders to globalising capitalism. Set against the liberal capacity thus far to propagate a voluntary and associational civil society of its own making, this paper considers a Gramscian remaking of civil society in the UK context. It examines Left-styled responses to austerity and strategies for a new politics emanating in recent times from Momentum and the World Transformed, the People’s Assembly, and the Kilburn Manifesto. It takes up different meanings attributed to austerity—from cuts to public services; an entire remaking of education and health systems; and a political means of furthering longer-term dynamics. It examines a variety of strategies such as those centring on a new politics, a manifesto for change, and a people’s movement to end austerity. The remaking of civil society in Gramscian terms may, in this context, contribute to twenty-first century wars of position and transformations.

Karen Buckley ([Karen.buckley@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Karen.buckley@manchester.ac.uk) ) PhD, is a Hallsworth Research Fellow at the University of Manchester working on ‘The making of the global working class’.

**Joanna Bullivant**, ‘Music in the Communist Party of Great Britain: the case of Alan Bush’

Assessments of music in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) have, understandably, had much to do with the most prominent musician active in the party, the composer Alan Bush (1900-95). Colin Mason’s assessment of his ‘Nottingham’ Symphony as the British ‘Leningrad’ notwithstanding (Mason 1954), Bush’s music did not achieve the wider cultural impact of the work of the CPGB Historians’ Group in Britain or of Shostakovich in the Soviet Union. In addition, his outspoken defence of Soviet communism over decades of Party membership have supported a perception of Bush as a thoroughgoing Party man, for whom communism necessitated the transformation of his musical style into a conservative, national idiom and the sacrifice of career prospects to ideological commitment.

Informed by extensive scrutiny of Bush’s documents pertaining to the CPGB, this paper will argue that his relationship with the Party demonstrated a complex negotiation of national, ideological, artistic and personal priorities. His efforts to foster musical activity in the CPGB suggest that Bush both shaped and was shaped by the Party, but also that the possibilities of work within the organisation often clashed with his ideas of how to foster a truly socialist musical culture in Britain.

Consequently, this paper proposes a new model of Bush’s identity as a British communist, one drawing on various models of modern and communist selfhood (Taylor 1989; Hellbeck 2006; Morgan et al 2007). Not only does this model challenge suppositions regarding the meaning of Bush’s change of musical style, but also clarifies his negotiation of individual identity and Party commitments, in turn providing new perspectives on the significance of music and musicians in the CPGB.

Joanna Bullivant ([joanna.bullivant@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.bullivant@music.ox.ac.uk)) is currently Lecturer in Music at Magdalen College, Oxford, and Teaching Fellow in Music at King’s College London. Her book, *Alan Bush, Modern Music, and the Cold War: The Cultural Left in Britain and the Communist Bloc* will be published by Cambridge University Press in July 2017.

**Lev Centrih**, ‘The failure of socialist civil society in 1980s Slovenia (Yugoslavia)’

The political concept of socialist civil society had been introduced in Slovenia (Yugoslavia) in the middle of 1980s, in a time of deep economic (dept) crisis which soon evolved to the crisis of political system. It was coined by the leftist political alternative, based in critical journals and in the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia. The concept in question essentially stood for the independence of the social movements, media and intellectuals from the socialist State; as such it was directly polemical with the concept of socialist self-managed society coined by Edvard Kardelj in the early 1970s. While Kardelj anticipated the process of the withering away of the State, his critics argued that the socialist State through the decades actually became stronger rather than weaker; the idea of the State abolishment should have been forgotten, new rules of relations between institutions and social agents should have been introduced instead; in other words, the dominant role of the League of Communists was challenged. The concept of the socialist civil society was developed at the peak of the Yugoslav renaissance of the Marxist critique and thought in early 1980s. The paper will elucidate the turbulent political development in which Slovene leftist intellectuals eventually got rid of the Marxist conceptual framework (class analysis); at the end they won their professional autonomy but they also gave up on the class based social actions.

Lev Centrith ([levcentrih@hotmail.com](mailto:levcentrih@hotmail.com)) PhD, is a sociologist and historian based in Ljubljana - Slovenia. He is a member of the editorial board of the Sophia publishing House (Ljubljana). His research interests include: history of the Yugoslav communist movement, fascism, political catholicism and historical agrarian question. Selected publications; book: *Marksistična formacija. Zgodovina ideoloških aparatov komunističnega gibanja 20. stoletja* (A Marxist Formation. A History of the Ideological Apparatus of the 20th Century Communist Movement), Založba cf, Ljubljana, 2011; research paper: *The Road to Collapse: The Demise of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia*, RLS Southeast Europe, Belgrade, 2014.

**Ken Cheng**, ‘Proletarian mass, modernist party: the invention of German orthodox Marxism, 1875-1899’

“Marxism” first took shape as a codified, programmatic doctrine within the political sphere of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD)in the late nineteenth century. Following the lead of Marx's “Critique of the Gotha Programme” (1875), Friedrich Engels and his protégé Karl Kautsky constructed Marx's economic theories into the “orthodox” creed epitomized by the SPD’s1891 “Erfurt Programme.”German Social Democracy would guide the workers’ struggle towards its “nature-necessary goal,” in accordance with the “scientific” laws of historical development.

Existing accounts of German orthodoxy have generally emphasized its dogmatic faith in the automatic emergence of proletarian class-consciousness under capitalism, which served to justify the SPD's gradualist, parliamentary-democratic mode of activity. However, my paper will challenge this prevailing interpretation, by arguing that “Erfurt” Marxism was also crucially underpinned by a “modernist” conception of the workers’ party and its role in civilizational advancement.

The orthodox theorists envisaged the SPD as operating within the distinctive setting of German modernity, simultaneously characterized by the *decadence* of bourgeois intellect and the increasing *proletarianization* of “science” as a cultural form. In this framework, the Marxist party programme was conceived as a popularizing instrument of radical social Enlightenment. With reference to writings such as Engels’ *Evolution of Socialism from Utopia to Science*(1880)and Kautsky’s *Class Struggle*(1892), my paper will outline the key parameters of this modernist vision, before drawing out its implications for the intellectual history of Marxism.

Ken Cheng ([ken.cheng.10@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ken.cheng.10@ucl.ac.uk)) University College, London**,** recently completed a PhD at the Centre for European Studies, UCL, which examines the pre-1914 doctrines of German orthodox Marxism and French revolutionary syndicalism. He is particularly interested in the historical relationship between revolutionary politics and modernist culture.

**John T. Connor**, ‘Lukács, Popular Democracy and the Novel’

With this paper, I want to think together Georg Lukács’ political and literary theory, specifically his understandings of the novel and the people during and after the Popular Front. Lukács’ reception in the West, and in Anglo-American literature departments especially, remains tied to a selective tradition of ‘Western Marxism,’ its biases a New Left triangulation of literary pro-modernism and Left internationalism; it is the early Lukács that qualifies for inclusion in this canon, with limited forays as far forward as *The Historical Novel* (1937-8), though here for the sake of critical method rather than political purpose, and all offset by the scandal of Lukács defence of contemporary realism and apparent complicity with Soviet and satellite state power. The time is ripe for revaluation of Lukács’ interest in the forms of literature and socialist democracy. Realism is again relevant, released from the stigma that attached to it in the West during the cultural Cold War, and populism has returned as a question of urgency in contemporary theory and ballot-box politics. From Lukács’ interest in the novel as a laboratory of popular representation, I will plan to pivot to contemporary fictions likewise interested in the project of a progressive, democratic populism.

John Connor ([jtlconnor@hotmail.com](mailto:jtlconnor@hotmail.com)) will shortly be joining the faculty of King’s College, London as a Lecturer in Literature and Politics; he previously taught English at Colgate University. He is finishing a monograph, *Modernism, Socialist Culture and the Historical Novel*, and researching a second project on the Soviet-World reception of British Communist, proletarian and anti-colonial writing.

**Madeleine Davis and Ross Speer**, Gramscism, the New Left and the problems of socialist strategy: the case of *7 Days*

 For British Marxists convinced, as Perry Anderson was in 1965, of the political predominance of civil society over the state in the west, and therefore of the imperative for a socialist strategy rooted in civil society, the idea of creating and sustaining a popular socialist publishing organ that might transcend the marginality of the far left papers was a recurrent goal. This paper considers the brief career of *7 Days*,  ‘a socialist photo-news weekly’ produced for six months from 1971-2. Independent from any existing group or party but supporting all those ‘who are making the foundations of revolutionary change’, *7 Days* was a collaboration between people from *New Left Review*, *Black Dwarf*, Women’s Liberation Workshop, *Idiot International* and Gay Liberation. Aiming to rival the serious ‘bourgeois press’ in journalistic quality and production values and to be distributed through commercial channels, 7*Days* struck out along lines beyond the traditional preserve of left activism: as well as engaging with women’s and gay liberation it covered mental health, children’s issues, science, culture and sport, and had weekly in-depth photo-features. Drawing on the published *7 Days*, on the recollections of participants, unpublished editorial documents and correspondence, the paper aims to reconstruct a largely forgotten history and to address some questions about its significance. While my own interest is mainly in the implications for enhancing historical understanding of the strategic perspectives and political practice of the New Left, this history is also relevant to researchers in other fields. To this end the paper is intended to complement and publicise a linked project I have initiated, with financial support from the Amiel Melburn Trust, to digitize the material for the benefit of researchers.

Madeleine Davis ([m.j.davis@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.davis@qmul.ac.uk)) is Senior Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary University of London). Here recent publications include ‘Edward Thompson’s ethics and activism 1956-1963: reflections on the political formation of The Making of the English Working Class’, Contemporary British History, 2014, and ‘Reappraising British socialist humanism’, Journal of Political Ideologies, 2013, 18 (1) pp. 1-25.

Ross Speer (ross.speer@queens.ox.ac.uk) is a DPhil student at the University of Oxford currently working on a thesis on Louis Althusser’s Aleatory Materialism. For the last two years he has been conducting research into the activist dimension of the British New Left on behalf of the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust.

**James Darby, ‘Working on “Wars of Position”’**

This presentation will describe how the CPGB archive material central to the ‘Wars of Position’ project was catalogued and listed (the personal papers of three late 20th century British Communists Monty Johnstone, John Attfield and Paul Olive). These figures were chosen as they could be described as “loyal dissidents” within the party who were able to analyse and criticise international Communist parties and Soviet Russia. I’ll be talking about how material made available through the project has shed light on internal divisions within the British Communist Party and how we have promoted these previously inaccessible archive collections to researchers and the broader community.

James Darby (james.darby@phm.org.uk) is a qualified archivist working at the Labour History Archive & Study Centre at the People’s History Museum in Manchester. He has been a cataloguing archivist on the ‘Wars of Position; Communism and Civil Society’ project since February 2016. Before coming to Manchester James was an archive assistant at the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness for over 3 years. He studied Archive Administration at Aberystwyth University and has a first degree in Economic & Social History from the University of Leicester.

**Joseph Darlington, ‘*Red Rag*: A Magazine’s Journey from Communism to Civil Society’**

This paper engages with the Marxist-feminist magazine *Red Rag* (1972 – 1980), its history, its contents and its wider relevance within the 1970s British left. The paper will begin with an overview of the publications’ evolution, as traced through its graphic design. From its first incarnation as an academically-inclined hard left journal, the magazine develops from issue 2 onwards into a magazine with a closer resemblance to the countercultural underground press. Using materials sourced from the CPGB archive, the paper will then go on to trace the Party’s internal discussions about the magazine from its origins in the CP’s National Women’s Advisory Committee to the eventual expulsion of the *Red Rag* editorial collective. This expulsion allowed *Red Rag* to start including non-Party women among its contributors and encouraged its shift towards a more countercultural presentation of its Marxist-feminist dialectic. By studying the historical experience of the *Red Rag* collective this paper will reflect upon the limits of the CPGB’s engagement with second wave feminism in its early years and the conflicts between commitment and criticism which resulted.

Joseph Darlington is Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Digital Animation with Illustration at Futureworks Media School. He is editor of *BSJ: The B.S. Johnson Journal*, Chair of the Social Science Centre Manchester and released a short story collection in 2016 called *Avon Murray*. Academic email: [joe.darlington@futureworks.ac.uk](mailto:joe.darlington@futureworks.ac.uk), Twitter: @Joe\_Darlo.

**Jodi Dean**, ‘The actuality of revolution’

Class struggle names the political heart of the economy (as every capitalist and bourgeois economist knows). Communicative capitalism names the economic form of the practices associated with contemporary democracy.  Class struggle under communicative capitalism appears as resurgent capitalist power and a fragmented Left because of the material conditions of globally networked telecommunications. What is to be done? Rebuild the Party.

Jodi Dean is the Donald R. Harter ’39 Chair of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. She is the author or editor of twelve books, including, most recently, The Communist Horizon and Crowds and Party, both published by Verso.

**Stefan Dickers**, Bishopsgate Institute, ‘Radical archives versus radical archiving’

**‘Radical archives versus radical archiving’**

What really is a ‘radical archive’ in 2017? Are the archives we once considered ‘radical’ now mainstream? This archive will talk about the notion of what is a ‘radical archive’ and suggests that the day-to-day practice of an archival repository in terms of accessibility, collecting and sharing its materials can often be more radical than the actual content of the archives it holds.

Stefan Dickers ([Stefan.Dickers@bishopsgate.org.uk](mailto:Stefan.Dickers@bishopsgate.org.uk)) is the Special Collections and Archives Manager at Bishopsgate Institute and looks after and develops the Institute's numerous other collections on the history of London, the labour movement, co-operation, freethought and humanism,  protest and campaigning and LGBTQ History.  He qualified as an archivist in 2001 and began at Bishopsgate Institute in 2005.  Previous to this, Stefan worked in the archives of the London School of Economics and Senate House Library.

**Yohann Douet**, ‘Civil society as a strategic and historical concept in Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks’*

Gramsci forges his own meaning of ‘civil society’, different from the meaning it had in classical political philosophy, and for Marx (Bobbio, 1967). He conceives civil society, which is constituted by hegemonic apparatuses, as articulated with political society, in an ‘ integral State .’ They are dialectically united and are two distinct ‘ moments’ (economic structure being a third moment) of the socio-political whole (‘ historical bloc’). Gramsci's conception has significant *strategic* implications. In particular, it refutes liberal conceptions of civil society as a space of free initative and communicational activity. On the one hand, subaltern groups can indeed organize and express their interests in civil society more freely than in political society, which is *directly* in the hands of dominant classes. But on the other hand, this autonomy is only relative, since civil society remains dominated and ‘interpellated’ (Thomas, 2009) by political society. In a capitalist society, civil society is not a neutral place : it remains, to a great extent, ruled by the bourgeoisie. But we have to elaborate a strategy aimed at overthrowing this rule.

Since he wants to conceive such a strategy, which must be linked to a specific *historical* context, Gramsci makes different ‘cartographies’ of civil, corresponding to different *periods.* Thus, in the Middle Ages ‘the State was a mechanical bloc of social groups’ relatively separated from each other. Was there a real civil society ? Did the Church, the main ‘hegemonic apparatus’, perform the function of civil society ? Maybe only ‘modern’ States are really ‘integral’, and encompass civil society. But there are different kinds of modern States. We must at least distinguish between the East (where civil society is weak) and the West (liberal States) ; between liberal States where civil and political societies remain clearly distinct and ‘contemporary dictatorships ‘ which ‘strive to incorporate every autonomous activity within State activity’ (Notebook 25, §4) ; and between Fascist Italy and USSR, which seem to be two opposite kinds of such ‘ dictatorships’.

Yohann Douet ([y.douet@laposte.net](mailto:y.douet@laposte.net)) is a PhD student at the University of West-Paris (Paris-Ouest Nanterre). Main research fields are Marxism, Philosophy of the Social Sciences and Philosophy of History. In my thesis, I study Gramsci's notion of history, through his conception of epochs and historical breaks. I am a member of the editorial committee of the French review Contretemps.web.

**Daniel Egan**, ‘Beyond “a grain of salt”: the military foundations of Gramsci’s war of position’

Gramsci’s use of military metaphors was central to his social theory and political practice. His argument that revolutionary strategy in advanced capitalism must take the form of a war of position challenging the hegemonic power of the ruling class in all of its forms rather than a war of maneuver directed toward the seizure of the state has become an important component of contemporary left politics, serving as the core of what may be termed a ‘Gramscian’ political strategy. There is an interesting contradiction here, as the centrality of the military metaphor for such a strategy has come to be associated with a shift of strategic emphasis away from the coercive power of the state, that is, the institution that wields military power in support of the ruling class. This has resulted in an underappreciation of the significance of the metaphor of war for a counter-hegemonic political strategy. This is reinforced by Gramsci’s admonition to take military metaphors ‘with a grain of salt,’ which has been taken much too literally in the subsequent development of a Gramscian revolutionary strategy. There is in fact more room to evaluate the Gramscian war of position in terms of its metaphorical foundation; we can, in other words, take the military metaphor with more ‘grains of salt’ than Gramsci allowed. Doing so will highlight the significance of the relationship between strategy and tactics in the war of position as well as the continued relevance of the party as the organizational form of revolution.

Daniel Egan (Daniel\_Egan@uml.edu) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He is the author of *The Dialectic of Position and Maneuver: Understanding Gramsci's Military Metaphor* (Brill, 2016) and is currently working on a project examining how Marxism has addressed the relationship between capitalism, war, and revolution.

**Baraneh Emadian**, ‘Civil society in the light of the capital-nation-state’

This paper assesses Poulantzas’s critique of Lenin’s category of ‘dual power,’ which also targets Gramsci, considering him as an advocate of the topographical metaphors of the Leninist tradition. According to Poulantzas, the notion of dual power is grounded on a robust separation of the state and civil society, whereas the state must be conceived as a “material condensation of a relationship of forces,” riven with class struggle as well as being a locus of strategic potential. Despite Poulantzas’s objection to Gramsci, however, they both have a similar conception of the modern state as expanded and integral, submerging civil and political society. Therefore, while the state in this sense becomes omnipresent, it is no longer transcendent and beyond civil society. Nonetheless, Poulantzas’s idea of the penetration of the dominated classes into the state and its ‘democratisation’ (rather than dismantling) seems hardly possible in the absence of a real ‘insurrectionist’ strategy.

The paper argues that the difficulty of actualisation of Poulantzas’s idea of ‘transition to socialism’ and democratization is related to the role of the state as the ‘sovereign power,’ which comes to the fore in its relation to other states and the possibility of war. Employing Karatani Kojin’s conception of civil society as a form of ‘intercourse’ [Verker] or exchange (inspired by the young Marx), this paper attempts to rethink the quandary of the modern state and civil society – or capital-nation-state in Karatani’s words – in relation to other states rather than observed merely in terms of the interior of the state.

Baraneh Emadian ([emadian.b@gmail.com](mailto:emadian.b@gmail.com)) studied philosophy at the University of Toronto and holds a PhD in political philosophy from the University of Westminster. She has published essays in *Critique* and *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*. She has also written and translated philosophical books in Farsi. She lives in London.

**Neil Faulkner***,* ‘The debt economy, the hollow society, and the crisis of revolutionary agency in the early 21st century’

The neoliberal counter-revolution of the late 1970s/early 1980s inaugurated a new phase in the development of world capitalism. It can be defined as ‘global financialised monopoly-capitalism’. It is characterised by: low investment; low growth; a permanent ‘underemployment equilibrium’; the dominance of finance, debt, and speculation; a hoovering of wealth to the top; rampant corporate power; the relative impoverishment of the working class; and the wholesale plundering of ‘the commons’. The economic crisis is related to a crisis of the international order – which is breaking down in war, mayhem, and mass displacement – and of the planetary ecosystem – which now faces an existential threat.

Capitalism, always deeply exploitative and crisis-ridden, is now more parasitic and pathological than ever in its history. The crisis is intractable, the global elite without solutions, and the implications for humanity and the planet are catastrophic. International working-class revolution has never been more urgent.

Yet neoliberalism has inflicted massive defeats on the working class, hollowing out civil society, crippling labour organisation, and engineering a dystopian social order characterised by atomisation, alienation, and anomie. The centre cannot hold, but the political polarisation triggered by the crisis is primarily to the right, not the left, towards a ‘second wave’ of nationalism, racism, and fascism comparable with that of the interwar period.

A question of supreme historical importance therefore confronts us: what is the agent of socialist revolution in the early 21st century? I will argue that this is *the* central political question of our epoch – everything else is froth – and I will make some tentative suggestions towards an answer.

Dr Neil Faulkner. FSA is an archaeologist, historian, writer, and political activist. He is the author of *A Marxist History of the World*, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*, and *Creeping Fascism: Brexit, Trump, and the Rise of the Far Right.*

**Daniel Gerke**, ‘The political third table: class and the new materialism’

To many observers, class today appears as something ephemeral, decentred and irreducibly subjective. Contemporary political realities, such as the fact that the working-class cannot be reliably counted on to avoid endorsing reactionary parties, have led both apologists for capitalism and the post-Marxist left to either eschew class as a substantive category or to view class as *purely* categorical and therefore divorced from a multiplicitous human reality. This has proceeded hand in hand with the philosophical hegemony of post-structuralist and postmodern thought. Indeed, until quite recently, those who have defended the reality of class and its centrality to historical investigation have been castigated for having, in the Derridean sense, a quasi-religious faith in the wisdom of the Western metaphysic.

In recent years, however, the hegemony of both post-structuralist idealism and class-sceptical post-Marxism has faltered. Since the global financial crisis, radical booksellers have helped Marxist political economy and theory stage a significant comeback. Simultaneously, in the field of continental philosophy, a resurgence of metaphysical, materialist and realist thinking has collected, since 2007, a loose school of thinkers under the name of *speculative realism*. My paper aims to interrogate the possible lines of combination and alliance between the Marxist tradition and this new philosophical materialism. Looking in particular at the work of Graham Harman and Ray Brassier, my paper will ask whether class is an *object* in the sense defined by these thinkers. It will address:

* The objective reality of class
* The difference between class consciousness and the consciousness of the *observer*
* The weakness of postmodern and ‘correlationist’ theories of class vs the Marxist tradition
* The relationship between objectivity, class consciousness and ‘civil society’
* The prospects for a new philosophical and revolutionary praxis

Daniel Gerke ([drgerke@hotmail.com](mailto:drgerke@hotmail.com)) is a second year PhD student at Swansea University, working on the influence of 20th century European Marxism (Lukács, Sartre, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School primarily) on the work of the Welsh cultural critic and novelist Raymond Williams. Research interests include Marxist theory, psychoanalysis and literary and philosophical realism.  Twitter: @drgerke1

**Chris Harris**, ‘Three waves of black working-class organic intellectuals in the Twentieth and Twenty First Century’

Following Gramsci, I define Black working-class organic intellectuals as revolutionary-nationalist/communist activists who engage in praxis by organizing political campaigns, proletarian race and class alliances, socialist cultural production and mass education to erode the *old* hegemony of the Bourgeoisie in African-Canadian civil society, and eventually construct a new proletarian hegemony in its place.

The first wave of Black working-class organic intellectuals were Black workers, peasants, intellectuals, and Black women in the U. S. Communist Party from the 1920s-1940s.The second wave of organic intellectuals were Black Power activists in the U.S. and Canadian Black Power movements. During the 1960s and ‘70s Toronto’s Black Left grew rapidly under the influence of the Black Panther Party (BPP), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). From 1967 to 1971, Canadian Black revolutionaries were inspired by the Panthers and the League inviting them periodically, to help educate and organize Toronto’s Black working class against Canadian capitalism and imperialism. The BPP and LRBW helped Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals understand their own experience of internal colonialism[[1]](#footnote-1) as an oppressed national minority in Canada -- a White settler capitalist imperialist nation. Representatives from the Panthers and the LRBW were invited to educate African-Canadians about their struggles against U.S. imperialism and the possibilities of building a similar movement in Canada. On April 2, 1970, the AAPA sponsored a rally in Toronto featuring two Panther leaders. The meeting was attended by 200 African-Canadians who came to hear the Panthers speak about their struggles. From 1972 to 1975, the Toronto chapter of the U.S. based African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) was organized to build material support for national liberation movements in southern Africa.

In the last decades of the 20th century and first decades of the 21st century, struggles against police brutality and Black-on-Black violence produced a third wave of black working-class organic intellectuals in the 21st century.The Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) emerged in the late 1970s to become the leading force in the struggle against police brutality in Toronto. From 1978 to 1992, and under the leadership of Dudley Laws, BADC organized thousands of African-Canadians in mass protests against police shootings of Black unarmed civilians. As a result of the protracted struggle BADC engaged in against police brutality, it won an important anti-racist reform with the establishment of the Special Investigations Unit. However, in the ‘90s, the organization was undermined by a level of imperialist state repression, comparable to the COINTELPRO campaign against U.S. Black Power initiated by the U.S. Imperialist state in the 1960s and ‘70s. At BADC from 2007-2009, I initiated a radical adult education project to educate and train Black working-class youth in gangs to become Third Wave organic intellectuals in the 21st century. The Freedom Cipher Program was organized alongside the second wave organic intellectual and Canadian Black Power elder, Norman “Otis” Richmond. In recent years, the Freedom Cipher developed a spontaneous revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy to organize an anti-racist cultural movement led by BADC youth to wage an ideological struggle against mainstream gangsta rap, a bourgeois ideology which influences the common sense of Black working-class youth through the promotion of negative stereotypes, capitalist consumerism, gangsterism, and African-American genocide.

Chris Harris [wasun67@hotmail.com](mailto:wasun67@hotmail.com) Harris holds a PhD in Sociology and Equity Studies from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. From 2000-2009, Chris was the lead youth organizer at Black Action Defense Committee (BADC), an anti-police brutality organization since the late '70s. At BADC Chris focused on educating and training youth in gangs to enter the working-class. In recent years, Chris founded Freedom Justice Academy: a Gramscian radical adult education institute focused on the production of socialist hip hop, indigenous solidarity, and social justice education with working-class immigrant and refugee women in Toronto.

**Alan Hooper**, ‘Traditions, transitions and revolutions: the New Left in search of hegemony.’

Concluding an essay on the New Left in 'The Reasoner' in1959 E.P. Thompson, in a moment of optimism, claimed that while 'the bureaucracy will hold the machine' the New Left 'will hold the passes between it and the younger generation'.While this referred specifically to the dynamics within a party its conception of the process of struggle has a distinctly Gramscian flavour in proposing a conquest of power as running as much through wider social forces as through institutional structures.At the time Thompson made this comment the work of Gramsci was only beginning to enter the consciousness of the English-speaking left. In an assssment of the assimilation of Gramsci's thought David Forgacs was to argue thirty years later that it had been 'central to the theoretical reconstruction of Marxism in Britain at all stages since the late 1950s'. In this paper I will assess how the two key theoreticians of the first New Left- Thompson and Raymond Williams- developed their own distinctive perspectives in relation to Gramsci's contribution, in particular the notion of hegemony.At a time of great theoretical and political uncertainty on the left I will examine whether the'Anglo-Marxism' of Thompson and Williams can provide strategic and tactical perspectives to confront the tides of right-wing populism sweeping through the Anglo-sphere. Birkbeck College.

Alan Hooper ([alanfhooper@hotmail.com](mailto:alanfhooper@hotmail.com)) currently lectures at Birkbeck College, specialising in topics with a Political Economy focus. He previously taught at a number of British and foreign universities as a politics and history lecturer.His longest period of employment was at the University of Hertfordshire where he was a lecturer in politics from 1979-2000. During this period he and his colleagues developed a focus upon the 1960s . As a result of this they produced an edited volume entitled *New Left, New Right and Beyond. Taking the Sixties Seriously* (Macmillan, 1999).

**Masashi Hoshino**, Orwell and Representation of the ‘People’

The word ‘people’ has both positive and negative senses. The sovereignty of the ‘people’ is usually considered to be the basis for democracy; and yet the ‘people’ can also be appropriated in populist discourses which result in exclusion of certain groups within the society, such as immigrants. This dual character of the ‘people’ is partly derived from the fact that the ‘people’ cannot be fully represented; as Rousseau formulated in the *Social Contract*, the general will of the people is inherently not representable. This also entails the difficulty to grasp the ‘people’ as a totality. This paper argues that this difficulty is inscribed in George Orwell’s wartime pamphlet *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941) which explains his idea of democratic socialism. By focusing on the passage in which Orwell presents an image of the English people, I will argue that Orwell’s dilemma lies between his intention towards a totality of the English society which he identifies with the ‘common people’, and the aesthetic he employs which inevitably arrives at a ‘chaotic’ image of the ‘whole of England’.

Masashi Hoshino ([masashi.hoshino@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:masashi.hoshino@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)) is a Ph.D student in the English department at the University of Manchester. His thesis discusses utopian aspects in the works of British writers in the 1930s and 40s, especially David Gascoyne, Humphrey Jennings, and George Orwell. He occasionally works as a translator from English into Japanese.

**Robert Jackson**, ‘Civil society and “molecular” transformation’

While contemporary discussions of the macro-processes of state formation often invoke Gramsci’s conception of civil society, there is less study of the connections between civil society and the ‘molecular’ aspect of social transformation in the anglophone literature on his thought. Drawing on the recent renaissance in Gramsci scholarship, I will examine the constellation of concepts (personality, individuality, conformism) deployed by Gramsci in order to explore these contested micro-dynamics of social transformation.

I will focus, on the one hand, on the category of ‘molecular’ transformation and on the temporality of social change in Gramsci’s thought, and, on the other hand, on the nature of the agency that realises it, his historical reflections on the concept of individuality and the formation of the collective will. I will give specific attention to Gramsci’s use of the category of ‘person’ to negotiate the ‘strangely composite’, fractured and fragmentary character of the lived experience of the subaltern groups under conditions of modernity.

Highlighting some resonances between Gramsci and more recent thinkers, e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, I will discuss both the resources provided and the challenges posed by Gramsci’s conception of social transformation. I will argue that these are suggestive sources for the development of political strategies and emancipatory projects in our own time.

Robert Jackson ([R.Jackson@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:R.Jackson@mmu.ac.uk)) is a Lecturer in Politics at Manchester Metropolitan University, where he teaches political theory and Gramscian approaches to international politics. He specialises in critical theory with a particular emphasis on the thought of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács. He is the co-editor of a forthcoming volume entitled *Gramsci Past and Present* (Brill) that displays new and innovative Gramscian scholarship. He has recently published articles with *Science & Society* and the *International Gramsci Journal*, and a forthcoming article, ‘On Bourdieu and Gramsci’, with *Gramsciana: Rivista Internazionale di Studi su Antonio Gramsci*. He was a co-organiser of the recent *Past & Present* international Gramsci conference at King’s College London in June 2015.

**Meirian Jump**, Marx Memorial Library, ‘Radical archives as radical agents’

The Marx Memorial Library holds one of the most important radical archives of international socialist history in the world, gathering together original records, printed materials and artefacts dating back to the eighteenth century, with the twentieth century as its primary focus. Strengths include the International Brigades and the Popular Front, radical print and publishing, and peace and solidarity campaigns.  
  
The Library is also an education charity focused on engaging with non-academic/traditional audiences, including young people, trade union activists and the local community.

The Library is striving to reanimate the archives – through professional management – and integrate their value as a living archive with our work at the MML on contemporary social and political education.   
  
The central question addressed in this paper is how to bridge the historic gap between our archive, and access to it, and our unique education programmes. Our archives have been produced by activists and workers in struggle. How do we bring these to life, not only as informative historical artefacts, but as agents for actively engaging and understanding current issues and debates?

These questions will be examined within the historical context of the MML, founded in the 1930s as a ‘workers’ school’, and within current debates around the future of political education in the Trade Union movement and the broader education system.

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**Ottokar Luban**, ‘Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas on the process of realising a socialist society’

In the late German Empire there were only very general ideas on the path to the seize of power by a Social Democratic Party and the steps to the realization of a socialist society. Developing a concept of a socialist society was blamed by Marx, Engels and Kautsky as utopian. Only Bebel made an exception describing some characteristics of a socialist society in his book “Die Frau und der Sozialismus” (The Woman and Socialism) written in 1879. In Rosa Luxemburg’s works we find a concept of fundamental basic democracy. Luxemburg knew that a revolutionary development will not happen by command but it needs many different political and social factors which will lead to the outbreak of revolution. The role of a socialist party is to prepare and to encourage the proletarians making suggestions for the way to the revolution giving them socialists issues. The leaders should not command the proletarian masses but go into an exchange of opinions with them using the workers’ creativity. This basic democratic concept which she developed mainly in her mass strike brochure (1906) was supposed not only for the path to revolution but for the revolution itself as she significantly describes in her manuscript “On the Russian Revolution” (September 1918) and in the Spartacus Program (December 1918). This will be reported in detail in my conference paper including some own thoughts on the lessons from Luxemburg’s works for the present.

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**Marzia Maccaferri**, Marxism Today and Italian Communism. A case-study for Marxism and civil society

Between 1977 and 1991, the crisis of the Labour party, and the entire hyperbole of Thatcherism *Marxism Today*

certainly represented the most influential political journal in the British public debate. In the context of the

British intellectual and political history, *MT* hold a remarkable role as the cultural arena for the introduction

of the Euro-communism argument and for its constant attention to other European Left and Marxist critical

debate, among other pivotal analytical categories taken from the European context as hegemony and new

Gramscian studies. An important moment of this opening was the debate on the ‘Red Bologna’ and the other

‘Emilian administrations’, the PCI experience and the Italian Communist culture and civic attitude in general,

which was understood as a political model as well as a civic model to be ‘imported’ for the Labour’s experience

of Ken Livingstone at the Greater London Council. One of the ‘very rare chances’ that a party well-known for

its own isolationism sought inspiration in an ‘overseas’ model. Ken Livingstone’s administration attempted to

adapt the PCI form of decentralised governance for London, albeit the boroughs of London had far greater

power in the UK context and could choose to support or ignore the GLC depending on their local political

complexion

This paper intends to follow the main steps taken by *MT* in questioning and debating the experience of the

Italian Communist party. It will consider, on the one hand, the debate regarding Eurocommunism and its links

with the British Left; on the other, it will focus primarily on the discourse of ‘Red Bologna’ and the British

understanding of the political system of Italy as presented in the journals and in the CPGB.

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**Mike Makin-Waite**, ‘Democracy / alliances / class / strategy: six communist formulae’

This paper contrasts and compares different political outlooks which defined and shaped twentieth-century communism at key points in its history.

Using the analogy of ‘formulae’, in which varied elements are combined in particular ways, the main positions considered are:

* The ‘revolutionary communism’ of 1917 and the early Communist International, when ‘liberal democracy’ was judged irrelevant and ‘everything was “reformist” which did not lead to the creation of dual power and achieving the possibilities of a frontal clash with the state’ [Poulantzas]
* Popular Frontism, from the mid-1930s: the movement’s re-founding in response to fascism saw ‘democracy’ recovered as a useful tool to help promote and deliver the communist programme
* Eurocommunism, which made democracy integral to its programme: rejection of democratic norms and values would lead to compromise and defeat. Socialism would consist precisely in the fullest possible extension and application of democratic methods and values

Some roots of these contrasting positions are traced back to traditions within the Second International: Kautsky’s ‘orthodox’ social-democracy; Bernstein’s ‘revisionism’; Luxemburg’s contrasting of ‘reform’ and ‘revolution’. Further back in time - the aporia of Marx and Engels on democracy and politics.

The paper acknowledges the risk of being over-schematic: nevertheless, the value of attempting taxonomy of different forms of communism is asserted. So is the usefulness of revisiting the movement’s history to help address current challenges: issues of strategy; relationships between social movements and political organisation; and the joys and difficulties of alliance-building.

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**Mark McNally**, ‘Gramsci, the Party and Realist Democratic Strategy’

This paper explores the role of the Party in Gramsci’s political thought developed in the 1920s and 1930s as a realist democratic strategy of social transformation centred on civil society. It demonstrates how this realist approach to democratic strategy emerged from critical reflection on his own practice during the factory council period (1919-20) and the wider flaws in Marxist political praxis, while drawing and building on intellectual themes in the United Front Strategy of the Comintern (1921-26) and its critique of reformist socialism and extreme communism.

It shows how, contrary to some accounts of Gramsci’s pre-prison activities, Gramsci’s experience of leading and shaping United Front politics in Italy in the 1920s – which we are now much better informed of due to new research - was a vital staging-post for the realist democratic strategy inscribed in his theory of hegemony in the *Prison Notebooks*. Thus it argues, that at the core of Gramsci’s democratic strategy is an unyielding realist instrumentalism that the only means to achieve socialism is through the forging of *organic* relations between the party and masses in the intermediary realm of civil society that eschews economistic, spontaneist, sectarian and elitist approaches to the masses that were typical to varying degrees of both communist and social democratic politics of the period.

The paper concludes by arguing that while the demands of Gramsci’s democratic strategy are still relatively high in terms of party resources, organization and mass participation, they represent a continuing challenge to the Left today.

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**Mila Milani**, ‘The Italian Communist Party and the failure of a "transnational" party cultural journal’

Since the aftermath of WWII the Communist intellectuals had been in search of a ‘*settimanale di cultura*’ (cultural weekly), which could be strategically put side by side to the ‘official’ publications of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in order to strengthen its position within the cultural and literary spheres and to reach a wider spectrum of intellectuals.   
This paper aims to investigate how the party cultural weekly, *Il Contemporaneo* (1954-1961), edited by the literary critic Carlo Salinari, operated to satisfy the cultural needs and transnational orientations of Italian intellectuals in a cultural climate where the Italian Communist Party had to find its own identity both in relation to its proximity to the Soviet Union (and the conflicts following the Hungarian crisis in 1956) and in the promotion of a ‘national-popular’ culture. However, subtle was the line between hidden support and too overtly ideological positions. The paper will assess this tension by analysing the cultural discourses that *Il Contemporaneo* developed in relation to foreign literature and in its transnational connections and exchanges with foreign intellectuals. The paper will examine these contributions, along with the narratives interwoven by the editorial notes and the echoes and refractions of their interconnected dialogue with the other party journals. This will help to map and historicize the intra and interconnections of the journal with the Communist party, its objectives and changes of directions, and ultimately the reasons of its failure in terms of attracting a readership beyond the PCI members.

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**Kevin Morgan, ‘**Communism and civil society: the negation of the negation?’

For the historian of the communist movement, the relationship between communism and civil society represents a paradox. For the communists who followed in the shadow of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the final goal remained that of a society of human flourishing whose free development was conditional on the withering of the state. As the means of achieving this goal, and of resisting the oppressions of the present order of society, communists also stood for a culture of militant civic activism and public engagement in the here-and-now. In this way, they staked their claim to those older traditions of collective action on which both future emancipation and the immediate affirmation on an ideal of civil society depended. The paradox, however, was that communism as a vision of emancipation had become solidified in communism as a form of state. Beginning in Russia in 1917, communists not only exercised power, but did so through regimes which were plausibly depicted as a sort of anti-civil society that suppressed all forms of association that did not recognise the overriding authority of the party-state. Communism internationally thus simultaneously defied the state and yet idealised a form of unlimited state power under which civil society seemed to have withered. It is in this colloquial rather than any technical sense that we can paraphrase the Marxist dialectic in describing this relationship as both the negation of the state by movements of militant collective action, and the negation of the negation by the communist state itself.

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**John Narayan**, ‘Huey Newton’s wars of position: survival pending revolution’

Huey P. Newton remains one the Left’s intellectual enigmas. Although often lauded for being the co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party and its armed resistance against US state racism, Newton is relatively unacknowledged as an intellectual and theoretician. This paper seeks to challenge this neglect of Newton’s thought through shedding light on his Black Marxism, which evolved from a project of Black self-defence into a project of revolutionary inter-communalism. This will centre on how Newton’s neo-Marxist critique of what he called ‘reactionary inter-communalism’ foresaw the rise and effects of contemporary neo-liberal globalisation. Moreover, the paper will contend that Newton’s thoughts on anti-imperialist resistance as ‘survival pending revolution’ can be taken as a rearticulating of Gramsci’s idea of the war of position for the context of an emergent neo-liberal social order. What emerges from Newton’s take on the war of position is a need to save the ‘people’ from a socio-economic system that seeks to materially, ideologically and culturally eviscerate their revolutionary potential. The paper will contend that Newton’s views on how to achieve survival pending revolution appear as prescient as ever in a context of reinvigorated right-wing populism both in the US and Europe.

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**M. A. Nolan**, ‘An egalitarian gaze: worker photography in inter-war Britain’

During the inter war period a tradition grew of photographing working people; for the first time in history they had widely available access to images of themselves. For the most part this tradition has been ignored. Those historians, invariably of the Left, who have looked at it have been dismissive, either because it fails to match the radically new forms of contemporary continental photography or because it was felt that here was just another site of knowledge formation that was dominated by the cultural hegemony of the ruling elite- far from being a positive force working to recognize and ameliorate the concerns of working people it carried messages that encouraged passivity and acceptance. This is a view that has arisen from looking only at the most visible ‘highlights’ of this tradition- Picture Post, Bert Hardy, Mass Observation, Edith Tudor Hart, etc. But when these ‘highlights’ are placed into the much broader, and less accessible, tradition of photographing working people that can be seen in the archives of, for example, the Communist Party, of the Daily Herald, of individuals such as Alf Tulip, Jack Hulme, Margaret Monck and Helen Muspratt a much different picture emerges. An honorific tradition of portraiture is uncovered, one which is oblivious to the normal concerns about status and material possessions, and which is much more concerned with celebrating the energy, vitality, resilience, humour of working people and their communities. This was a tradition that opened up a social discourse that massively expanded the concept of the ‘deserving poor’ to include almost everyone and is characterised by a visible social rhetoric that had egalitarianism at its very heart. A rhetoric that arose from photographers treating their fellow humans as their equals and from working people thrilling to see their lives celebrated in this way for the first time in history.

Michael Nolan ([nolans\_5@hotmail.com](mailto:nolans_5@hotmail.com)) is a retired secondary school headteacher, currently working in on a PhD at Huddersfield University. This research has uncovered a vibrant, honorific tradition of portraying working people focused on celebrating the energy, vitality, resilience and humour of working class communities; a tradition characterised by visible social rhetoric that had egalitarianism at its heart.

**Jörg Nowak**, ‘Louis Althusser’s critique of the Communist Party and the question of the post-revolutionary state’

This contribution explores some of the aspects of the debate led by Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar on the strategy of the French Communist Party (PCF) in the second half of the 1970s. They saw the ,euro-communist’ turn of the party as a strategy that opened up to socialdemocratic influence without addressing the crucial question of mass participation in the party and the organisational questions connected to it. Their criticism of the PCF was at the same time a criticism of the statist strategy in the socialist countries at that time which they saw as a fusion of the socialist state with the working class party. Althusser radicalised his stance when he demanded that a revolutionary party should stay outside of the state, both before and after a socialist revolution. In this contribution, the references made by Balibar and Althusser to works of Marx and Engels are compared with the political positions developed in the original texts. This contribution underlines that Althusser and Balibar were hinting at three central unresolved issues that are missed out by contemporary contributions on the debate about political strategy by Badiou and Zizek that take refuge in imaginary Blanquist solutions of a dictatorship of a minority. These three unresolved issues are: the relation of workers’ political organisations with the state after a socialist revolution, the relation of workers’ political organisations with the oppressed masses, and the question of single or multi class rule (rule of the working class, or rule of a coalition of the working class together with peasants and the petty bourgeoisie).

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**Christina Petterson**, ‘Bourgeois society and the Christian self’

In his discussion with Bruno Bauer in The Jewish Question, Marx argues that Bauer’s notion of emancipation is, despite its intended universality, extremely narrow because it operates within the parameters of the modern state, and does not endeavour to liberate humans from the divided and alienating existence of the modern bourgeois state.

When George Lukács describes the antithesis between the fullness of life of human beings and the onesided and deformed human beings in bourgeois society in *Der junge Hegel*, he mentions Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister as an excellent example of a work which deals with this particular issue, in that religion is presented as one (inadequate) way of attempting to overcome the alienation of the individual. Following on from both these propositions, this paper presents a historical case study, namely the Moravian Brethren in 18th c Germany, who for decades wrestled with the contradiction between individual and community in practice and in theory. What I want to do in this paper is show how members in this movement from early on attempted to resolve the contradiction of individual and community, and how, this embodiment of the contraction results in alienation. Thus, Christianity should be seen as part of the original problem, rather than as a possible solution, or as is more often the case, as irrelevant to either.

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**Herbert Pimlott**, “‘New Model Party’? The Communist Party’s ‘Hegemonic Apparatus’ as ‘the Scaffolding’ for ‘Oppositional Culture’ in the UK, 1976-1983”

If, according to V.I. Lenin, the newspaper is ‘the scaffolding’ around which to build the party, then perhaps the party should be seen as ‘the scaffolding’ around which to build an ‘oppositional culture’ (R. Williams) within civil society. Some sections of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) put just such a strategy into practice, even if it was not consciously recognised as such, during the 1970s and early 1980s. Several CPGB groups, agencies and periodicals (aka A. Gramsci’s ‘hegemonic apparatus’) helped to establish an ‘infrastructure of dissent’ (A. Sears) that brought party members and non-members together in various bodies, venues and events. For example, there was the Communist University of London, 1969-81; the expansion of periodicals during the 1970s (similar to the brief, post-1945 flowering of CPGB periodicals) that attempted to address either a broad left audience beyond the CPGB (e.g. *Comment*, *Marxism Today*) or specialist audiences of party and non-party intellectuals (e.g. *Red Letters*, *Socialist Europe*); the crossover between the CPGB’s focus on popular culture and cultural studies; *Marxism Today*’s 1979 relaunch in a new format, national distribution, conferences and discussion groups. Some party branches even opened up meetings to the public to discuss proposals for the new party platform prior to the 1977 Congress. This paper, therefore, will argue that, based upon the CPGB’s experience, the extension of Lenin’s metaphor offers a model for rethinking the Marxist party or ‘modern prince’ (Gramsci) as ‘the scaffolding’ around which to build a 21st century counter-hegemonic bloc within civil society.

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**Johan Pries**, ‘People’s houses and people’s parks as cultural and political space in the early Swedish labour movement’

The huge success of Swedish social democracy in the interwar years is often understood in terms of a tactical move towards the right. The stoking of anti-Soviet nationalism, an electoral alliance with farmer populists, and the abandonment of an orthodox Marxist line on socialization of capital by instead rearticulating liberal social policy are all taken as signs of this rightward motion. Marxist counter-arguments tend to focus on the intense labour militancy and a rise in union membership to highlight the role of class politics in this surge. While there has been interesting historical work on culture and civil society about this period, this debate has almost exclusively centred on the relationship between unruly and respectable everyday cultures of class.

 I want to consider the little discussed history of two spatially interesting forms of civil society institutions in the decades leading up to the 1930s social democratic breakthrough: The People’s Houses and The People’s Parks. None of these institutions are unique to Sweden, but they appear to have been *much* more widespread in Sweden than anywhere else. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the scope and function of these institutions and discuss them as one possible factor in the social democratic road to power. In particular it seem that these sites rearticulated everyday geographies of urban culture in politically radical terms. The Peoples Houses and Parks could in this regard be considered powerful tools at a local scale, politically and culturally supporting the social democratic hegemonic claims on the national state.

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**Jonathan Roscoe, ‘**Communism at the crossroads. The crisis at the Left Book Club in the wake of the Soviet-Nazi pact’.

From its inception by publisher Victor Gollancz, journalist and politician John Strachey, and academic Harold Laski in May 1936, the Left Book Club had been a beacon of left-wing thought. Despite being hamstrung by accusations of Communist sympathy and personal allegations of opportunism at Gollancz from the very beginning, the LBC was unique in providing an outlet for left-wing thought and expression, whilst at the same time guaranteeing a readership of over 40,000 for each publication, something other groups on the left could only dream about. Many of the books were inevitably propagandist and of their time, but Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier* and Koestler’s *Spanish Testament* (both 1937) have continued to resonate long after their publication. However, the Soviet-Nazi (or Molotov-Ribbontrop) pact of August 1939 brought about a crisis that the LBC was never to recover from despite publishing until 1948. It caused a schism at the heart of the Club that divided Gollancz from Strachey and Laski, LBC sympathisers at the Club, such as Sheila Lynd and Betty Reid, and perhaps most fatally, Harry Pollitt and Emile Burns of the CPGB. The CPGB had lost a sympathetic communication outlet that the *Left Review* could not fill and it left the members of the numerous LBC groups rudderless and without direction. My aim is to show firstly, that this schism was inevitable from the outset of the Club, and secondly to assess why the situation occurred and the aftermath of the crisis for both the LBC and CPGB.

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**Tauno Saarela**, ‘Finnish Communism and ideological institutions in the 1920s’

The communist movement had a tendency to overlook the significance of the ideological institutions in the maintenance of political power. That was also evident in Finnish communism which, due to the Civil War in 1918 and the conspicuous role of the coercive apparatus in the Finnish society after that, paid much more attention to demands concerning the coercive apparatus than those relating ideological institutions. The movement, however, waged ideological struggle against the ideological institutions in Finland, although not outlining any clear strategies for suppressing the bourgeoisie by ideological means. In my paper I shall study the relation of Finnish communism towards religion, church and school and also assess the significance of ideological institutions in the programmes and practices of the movement in the 1920s.

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**Glyn Salton-Cox, ‘**Uncivil Society: Engels, Margaret Harkness, and the Lumpenproletariat’

Engels’s 1888 letter to Margaret Harkness urging the methods of Balzacian realism is a foundational document – much anthologized, influential for a major line of literary theory, yet often pilloried for its aesthetic conservatism. However, there has been little attention paid to the letter’s process of subject formation. Having recommended Balzac’s “men of the future” as models for revolutionary writing, Engels continues: “I must own, in your defense, that nowhere in the civilized world are the working-class people less actively resistant, more passively submitting to fate, more *hébétés* [bewildered] than in the East End of London.”

Reading this letter alongside passages from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (1853)and Harkness’s little-known novel *A City Girl* (1887), my paper will explore the problem of the lumpenproletariat from the perspective of the current crisis of the Westphalian subject. Harkness’s novel of the feminized and implicitly racialized London poor constitutes an abject remainder of proletarian subjectivity, a disorderly rabble opposed to Marx’s and Engels’s politically-committed proletariat. I argue that this structure can help elucidate contemporary transatlantic crises of civil society and electoral democracy, characterized in both the US and the UK by populist, authoritarian nativisms opposed to yet complicit with a slick international technocracy. Who, in other words, could be the committed revolutionary subjects of the future while industrial action continues to be abrogated as “outdated,” and a supposedly uniformly racist, apparently entirely white, fetishized image of the proletariat is mobilized against a racialized immigrant “underclass”?

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**Rory Scothorne, ‘Left out of Britain?: democracy, autonomy and nationalism on the Scottish radical left, 1968-1979’**

This paper explores strategic debates within the Scottish radical left between the global upheavals of 1968 and the Scottish devolution referendum in 1979. It draws on doctoral research into archived pamphlets and periodicals from Communist, Trotskyist and other Marxist voices, published interventions such as *The Break-up of Britain* and *The Red Paper on Scotland*, and literary-minded periodicals like *Calgacus* and the *New Edinburgh Review* with which Tom Nairn and Hamish Henderson were closely involved. This period saw the rise of the SNP amidst growing industrial militancy and global political and economic turbulence, presenting a particular constellation of challenges to established radical positions on democracy, autonomy and the ‘national question’. Increased ideological heterodoxy and the discovery of Gramsci led to a particular interest in Scotland’s civil society, culture and intellectuals. Emergent movements for personal autonomy, particularly for women’s and LGBT+ liberation and the broader ‘new left’, challenged existing organisational hierarchies in the rest of the UK, but the blurring of class and national identity in Scotland allowed issues of social conflict and diversity to be externalised onto perceived tensions between Scottish civil society and the British state. Through Eurocommunist and postcolonialist influence, ideas of ‘radical democracy’ and ‘neo-nationalism’ presented possible alternatives and challenges to the institutions of the British state and a unitary British working class. While Scotland’s ‘stateless’ civil society provided fertile ground for Gramscian ideas, relative isolation from the centre of British political conflict drew these ideas away from their revolutionary origins and towards a more defensive, nationalistic approach.

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**Bárbara Sepúlveda Hales**, ‘Who benefits from the gender pay gap?: A Marxist feminist analysis’

Under capitalism all workers are exploited, but not to the same extent. Although women workers, as every other worker, produce value that the capitalist appropriates (surplus value), in the capitalist relations of production, women workers do not receive the same wage as men, even when they do the same work for the same amount of time.

So where does that money go? Why is the gender pay gap still an issue? Who benefits from the women worker’s structural lower income?

Even though women face economic inequality in very different ways -for instance, poor migrant women are commonly the most pauperized workers, with the lowest wages and most of the times in deplorable working conditions- the gender pay gap is a fact even for wealthier women with high educational levels.

The question about wage has many implications and it cannot be seen as mere economic reductionism, because wage and its absence are an expression of the power relations between the capital and the working class, as well as those inside the working class. And for women, these questions are not only epistemically problematic, but also politically relevant. As Spivak suggests, women have become a “true surplus army of labor” and the new focus of super-exploitation which patriarchal social relations have contributed to create and preserve.

In a Marxist perspective, it is possible to argue that capitalism has managed to preserve a mechanism for underpay women’s labour, because it increases the amount of surplus that can be obtained by their work. So this benefits directly the capitalist profit.

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**Vicente Ségure**, ‘Unions in the war of position: an analysis of the decomposition of Chilean unions’

The classic Marxist conception of unions as “schools of war” for revolution cannot explain the role they take on in contemporary capitalist societies.

The proliferation of new social movements with dissimilar political objectives and the atomization and depoliticization of workers´ organizations, has led to a loss of their hegemony as key political actors. The main scenario this conflict takes place in is the pursuit of constant production and reproduction of capital by the capitalist class. In accepting this phenomenon as natural, “civil society” emerges as a battlefield.

What is the role of Unions as part of the “civil society”?

In this war of position, the revolutionary potential of unions has been a controversial theme in critical literature. Union´s bureaucratization and accommodation in western capitalist societies lead to many Marxist – i.e late Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci, Lukacs, Luxemburg- to rethink this subject.

In this paper, I analyse the different approaches taken by Lenin, Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg. Each of them referred to the relation of unions with the revolutionary party (Lenin), the factory and the workers’ council (Gramsci), and the “mass” (Luxemburg).

Using these three examples I aim to comprehend the process of decomposition of unions as radical actors and the place of contemporary trade unions in Chilean civil society.

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**Nizan Shaked**, ‘Form and finance: contradictory mediations in the non-profit museum system’

A known narrative of Left melancholia is that avant-garde art movements are eventually co-opted by cultural institutions and the cultural industry. The work of Marxist art historians and critics thus far has mostly identified such failures in the nuance of art’s styles or forms, placing the onus on artists. This paper looks for the cause elsewhere. Inherent to the museum structure is the atomization of practices, which diffuses the political efficacy of radical ideas and collectivist works. I consider the case of the American museum, which is predominantly structured through various private/public foundation partnerships within the nonprofit legal-fiduciary system. As a non-governmental entity, the foundation structure was developed by and for robber barons in the 19th century. It has since transformed through bills and policy changes, such that by the 21st century we see a system where the category of the public is used to serve an agenda of the patron class. This paper will take the reopening of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and its adoption of the Fisher collection (assembled by the late owner of the Gap) to show the connection between financial and aesthetic mediations by tracing how donations are procured, funds administered, a building designed and built, and commitments towards the curatorial and educational programs made. In the transition between the financial and administrative aspects of the museum and its aesthetics, the term “public” is used under varying disciplinary and professional logics. I will show how these differences in definition are manipulated, making the museum part of the machine that moves money upwards, and how this places ideological restrictions on culture.

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**John Smith**, ‘Marxism vs Euro-Marxism’

Euro-Marxism, an influential trend in Western Marxism since it emerged in opposition to theories of dependency and imperialism in the pre-neoliberal era, denies the prevalence of super-exploitation (i.e. higher than in Europe, North America and Japan) in China and other low-wage countries since, it is argued, higher productivity in imperialist countries means workers there are no less exploited; and it is hostile to notions and theories of labour aristocracy. It has ignored or downplayed the most significant transformation of the neoliberal era – the global shift of production, driven by lower wages and higher rates of exploitation. Its legacy is the absence of a theory of the current stage of capitalism’s imperialist development and of the crisis now engulfing it.

This paper tests the principal arguments used to deny the reality of higher rates of exploitation in low-wage countries against new facts thrown up by capitalism’s recent development and it scrutinises the consistency of these arguments with Marx’s theory of value, reckoning them to be invalid on both counts. The global shift of production of workers’ consumer goods to low-wage countries signifies that productivity and relative wages of low-wage workers increasingly determine the value of these goods; the shift of entire sectors of production and the general absence of direct North-South competition belies reduction of super-exploitation to a form of relative surplus value. As for consistency with Marx, the paper argues that denial of super-exploitation has resulted in the contamination of theory with bourgeois concepts of value-added and productivity.

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**Nick Stevenson,** The Responsibilities of the Intellectual and the Critical Legacies of George Orwell: Communism, the New Left and Anarchism

This paper seeks to explore the contribution of George Orwell to discussions on English socialism and the role of the public intellectual. Here I am especially concerned to recover Orwell’s own understanding of the role of intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s. In this respect, I discuss questions related to his understanding of different traditions of socialism, the role of literature and problems related to ideas of ideological commitment. Here I am keen to recover Orwell as a border crossing intellectual who while being located within a specific intellectual tradition has a number of implications for Left orientated critics. In this respect, I discuss Orwell’s intellectual legacy and how this was understood by members of the New Left (E.P.Thompson and Raymond Williams) and English Anarchism (Colin Ward and Nicolas Walter) in the 1960s and beyond. The focus of the debate over Orwell reveals a considerable amount of agreement and disagreement over questions of socialism, freedom and the idea of the intellectual that continues to resonate today.

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**Elinor Taylor**, ‘Jonathan Lethem’s *Dissident Gardens*: contemporary genre and communist historiography’

This paper discusses Jonathan Lethem’s 2013 novel *Dissident Gardens*, which traces the changing formations of radical American politics from Popular Front-era Communism to the Occupy movement of the last decade. The novel adopts a disjointed family saga structure that appears to allude to the mid-century progressive realism characteristic of the transnational movement Michael Denning calls the ‘Novelists’ International’; the allusion, however, is an intensely critical, even hostile one. The disastrous effects, personal and political, of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the cataclysm of 1956 on the Communist characters, while traced, are curiously overshadowed by a preoccupation with what is insistently presented as the *cultural* disaster of the Popular Front, when ‘every formerly sharp-eyed urbanist went chasing after some oil-rigging cowboy with charcoal and a sketch-pad, or shoved a reel recorder under the nose of some illiterate sharecropper clutching a one-string guitar’. While the novel presents the Popular Front as originating a repressive cultural pastoralism, always out of step with history, persistently re-emerging in images of ‘dungarees and dustbowl heroes’, it nonetheless holds to a certain pastoralism of its own, as suggested by its title. This paper explores the questions of historical and cultural representation raised by the novel alongside contemporary leftist historical discourse as it has emerged in the journals *Jacobin* and *n+1*.

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**Thomas Travers**, Historical Novel of Late Capitalism: *Libra* as War of Position

*Libra*, Don DeLillo’s novelistic dissection of the Kennedy assassination, has generally been treated as a metafictional reflection on the collapse of so-called grand narratives. Such has been the concentration on historical trauma, that few critics have passed comment on the other ‘dislocatory’ moment that haunts the novel: the actuality of the Cuban revolution. Taking Nicos Poulantzas’s argument that the instance of the political in capitalism is the social division of labour, this presentation will propose that *Libra’s* dual narratives can be rewritten in terms of the state and civil society. On the one hand, there is a ‘white code’ which designates the C.I.A conspirators who represent the intellectual labour of the state. On the other, Lee Oswald’s wayward geographical biography, which takes him across the peripheries of the world market, can be interpreted as a beleaguered ‘red’ revolutionary code. Reading *Libra* as a historical novel of late capitalism, it is possible to see Oswald as what Lukács referred to as a ‘mediocre hero’. Yet rather than function as a ‘maintaining individual’ who bridges the emergence of a new hegemonic class, Oswald is figured as a ‘de-maintaining’ individual. The slums and deteriorating housing projects recorded by Oswald’s cartography of the world system fail to produce an image of a radical collective. The paper will conclude by suggesting that this de-linking of anti-capitalist struggle is the novel’s formal articulation of the waning of the communist horizon in the US.

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**Alexander Tebble**, ‘Demanding Justice: a critique of Rawlsian readings of exploitation in Marx's *Capital*.’

Exploitation is a fundamental aspect of Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and its eradication appears integral to the socialist cause. It is evident that the working class are considered the exploited and this bears a relationship to the extraction of surplus-value; but it is not immediately clear why Marx regards this extraction as 'exploitation'. Dazzled by Rawls, the common interpretation in contemporary political theory appeals to justice. Marx, however, insists that exploitation exists in a world of free, fair and equal exchanges. This apparent discrepancy can be remedied by a closer inspection of Marx's later works. This paper argues that imposing justice on to Marx, which many half-hearted socialist measures also do, misrepresents the force of his critique of capitalism. Exploitation ought to be recognised through the social domination of capital over labour, for extracting surplus-value, within the capitalist social relation. This ought to concern us as the worker is perpetually dominated and reduced to an alien labour-time by their own hand, in order to produce an abstract wealth, contradictorily within an Eden of the innate rights of mankind. This is neither an appeal to a species essence nor a purely technical understanding. As a diagnosis of contemporary thought, this paper argues that a critique of individualism is necessary to perceive exploitation and place it within the capitalist social relation. To talk of exploitation and demand justice revises the struggle to a question of rights, when the real struggle against exploitation requires a wider social transformation that rejects capitalism's totality.

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**Marco Vanzulli**, ‘Labour, civil society, classes’

Civil society as outlined by Marx in his young works has been often accused of reducing to the mere conflict the more constructed picture of civil society one can find in Hegel’s *Philosophy of right*. And yet this reduction in its fundamental lines was maintained throughout the Marxian critique of political economy and enabled the characterization of the crucial moments of the conflict between capital and labour. In 50’s and 60’s Italian “operaismo” has drawn on the factory conflict, but reproposing in a different way the issue of the subjectivity that has to organize this conflict. Identifying this subjectivity was however a harder task than in Marx’s thought. The outcomes of this research are really unconvincing, they arrive at the refusal of theory of value itself on behalf of an hypostatization of fight. But what I want recall here are some thesis of the first “operaismo”, thesis of Raniero Panzieri, who thought that «the moment of production […] generalize itself and tends to invest all the moments of social life», «it tends to integrate always more the parts that in the first stages of capitalistic development appear divided, as indipendent spheres – factory, civil society, State – to make of them a unique sphere, without nevertheless the vanishing of the specific features of every sphere», while this phenomenon «is presented by ideologies as disappearance of working class, as tertiarization» (from *Working fights in capitalistic development)*. These insights are still very valuable and they can serve to base for an analysis of labour and civil society today.

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**John Varty**, ‘Post-Marxism, civil society and the critique of Marxism’

The rebirth of the concept of civil society dates from the 1980s, when dissidents in Eastern Europe began to use the term. Western leftists then took up the concept (e.g. Cohen and Arato (1992) and Keane (1988)).

Leftists championed the concept of civil society not only in an analytic and a strategic sense – that is, recognising the importance of civil society in understanding political processes and formulating political strategies – but also in a normative sense – they saw civil society as a sphere in need of defence and strengthening – both from capitalist encroachment and political stifling. They criticised the political shortcomings of a Marxist tradition that had failed to provide intellectual resources that might have countered the stifling of independent civil societies in the former Soviet Union and its satellite regimes.

This paper assesses the critique of Marxist political theory mobilised in the development of concept of civil society as a bulwark against state power and a means of defending citizen’s freedoms.

There are problems in turn with civil society theory. One, identified by Foucault is a political Manichaeism that always finds the state to be bad and civil society good (see Tester (1992), p. 146). Linked to this problem is a further tendency to neglect the 'dark side' of civil society though more recent work has provided a corrective to this neglect. Nevertheless and despite the fact that the concept of civil society has been utilised more analytically lately we should not forget the normative insight provided by the concept's rebirth.

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**Daniel Weinbren**, ‘The singing schmutter strikers: British Communists and cultural contestation during the Third Period.’

 A CPGB booklet, *Rego and Polikoff Strike Songs*, 1929, will be employed to illuminate the cultural strategy of the ‘left turn’ and struggles over modernity, jazz and secular Judaism. In this publication the CPGB sought to promote the new party line by connecting two strikes in 1928 and 1929, both of which were occurred in defiance of the executive of the Tailor and Garment Workers Union. In a booklet produced after it was clear that neither strike had resulted in wage increases or improved conditions, the songs provided accounts of the recent past. They indicate how the CPGB had sought to raise support, sympathy and morale and to place the Party at the heart of a commonality of experience. The intention might have been to build on traditions of working class adaptation of popular songs in order to provide a sense of identity and to reinforce CPGB values within activists facing adversity. However, the singers, many of them young Jewish women living in east London, also employed everyday language and parochial and mainstream cultural references.  The resulting bricolage of jazz, folk and hymn-inspired songs can classified as evidence of that which Fishman identified as the CPGB’s ‘revolutionary pragmatism’. They show how conformity to a Comintern vision of a revolution based on an international cadre of clean-living, secular marching men was disrupted by parochial, colloquial and unruly carnivalesque intrusions.

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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)