

# On Socialism and Sex: An Introduction

PREFATORY NOTE: *While researching a book on African-Americans and the anti-Stalinist left in the archives last summer, I stumbled across a striking and long-forgotten document, "[Socialism and Sex](#)," in a 1952 discussion bulletin, The Young Socialist. In one page, its author H. L. Small – almost surely a pseudonym – provided an elegant, concise exposition on behalf of destigmatizing consensual sexuality between same-sex lovers. Excited by this discovery and persuaded that the document deserved rescue from obscurity, I arranged for it to be printed in The Journal of the History of Sexuality. That the editors of New Politics are now publishing it in these pages, too, ensures its accessibility to a wider political audience. I am very grateful to all concerned.*<sup>1</sup>

H. L. SMALL'S DOCUMENT "[Socialism and Sex](#)" was written at a moment when few in the United States imagined, let alone expressed, so bold a philosophy of sexual liberation or so explicit a political program in favor of decriminalizing sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex. Therefore, it provides fresh evidence supplementing recent understandings that a "homophile" or homosexual rights consciousness was tentatively emerging within a severely repressive context. The important developments of the 1950s catalogued by scholars include the Mattachine Society (formed 1951), *ONE* magazine (first issued 1953), the Daughters of Bilitis (launched 1955), and literary manifestations such as Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" (1956) and Ann Bannon's bestselling novel *Odd Girl Out* (1957).<sup>2</sup> "Socialism and Sex" illustrates that like-minded views found expression in yet another subterranean niche: among socialist youth.

Although many American lives in the 1950s did not fit the

domestic stereotypes fostered by such radio and television series as "Father Knows Best," conservative postwar gender ideology and anti-communist hysteria had severely constrictive consequences for anyone attracted to others of the same sex.<sup>3</sup> During and before the Second World War, a flourishing gay subculture existed, but starting in the 1930s and escalating in the late 1940s and 1950s, morals crusades, conformist pressure, and restrictive governmental interventions, including the anti-gay aspects of Cold War repression, combined to impose fear, shame, and invisibility on gay life.<sup>4</sup> Quincy Troupe, a writer and friend of James Baldwin, recalls that in the 1950s, "You weren't just in the closet, you were in the basement. Under the basement."<sup>5</sup> Martin Duberman observes that in the 1950s "the vast majority of gay people were locked away in painful isolation and fear, doing everything possible not to declare themselves."<sup>6</sup> Given this context of loneliness and terror, the present document is of great significance – a statement rare and daring for its time.

At the same time, the document confirms that conceptualizations of same-sex longing as a social issue in need of political solutions existed well before the 1969 Stonewall rebellion signaled the arrival of a vastly larger, bolder, and more visible gay civil rights movement.<sup>7</sup> The most famous of these forerunners is the Mattachine Society, formed by Harry Hay and a handful of other veterans and sympathizers of the Communist Party.<sup>8</sup> "[Socialism and Sex](#)," written one year after Mattachine was created, appeared within a very different radical milieu: the democratic socialist movement. Because of the great variance between the respective political traditions that produced these efforts on behalf of the rights of homosexuals, "Socialism and Sex" represents a parallel and simultaneous impulse to political action that contrasts in salient ways with the Mattachine approach.

"Socialism and Sex" appeared as a single typewritten page in *Young Socialist*, the mimeographed bulletin of the Young Socialists, the youth group of the Socialist Party headed by Norman Thomas. Until shortly before, the Young Socialists had been known as the Young People's Socialist League, and its members as YPSLs (with this acronym affectionately pronounced "Yipsels"). The Socialists – whose youth wing was more militant than their adult party – were defined by a commitment to social reform, but also by an opposition to the dogmatism and authoritarianism they perceived in the American Communist Party and Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin.

The essay's rhetorical strategy was to claim that a libertarian rejection of strictures against same-sex encounters would help win new adherents to the socialist cause. This may have seemed implausible, causing readers' eyes to roll at the time. Given the blanket of ignorance and stigma that overlay the issue in the 1950s, public advocacy of eliminating legal sanctions against homosexuality would have been far more likely to unnerve or alienate potential recruits (even gay ones) than win them over. On the other hand, this claim carried within it the astute insight that those suffering oppression in a specific manner often come to political awareness or socialist consciousness through that identity – in other words, that so-called "single issues" often lead to broader perceptions and connections, prompting more sustained and ambitious commitments.

The document is written in an allusive language that is nonetheless assertive and crystalline in the clarity of its meaning. This quality speaks to the lack of a common vocabulary at the time to describe variance in sexual orientation. Nevertheless, "Socialism and Sex" drew effectively upon several traditions to make its case. Its expression of civil libertarian sensibilities in a Jeffersonian idiom was redolent of contemporaneous left-liberal resistance to McCarthyism's attack on subversive "un-

Americans." Here, however, the individual right to pursue happiness was applied to the fulfillment of sexual desire without fear of arrest or blackmail. Reference to the sexual openness of Scandinavian countries drew upon a more general trans-Atlantic social-democratic admiration commonplace among YPSLs. The warning that suppression of "libidinal expression" or its "practice under fear" will thwart "a whole, productive individual" suggests the Kinsey report and Wilhelm Reich as possible influences.<sup>9</sup> Conscious placement of the word "deviant" in quotation marks called into question not only the castigation of a particular sexual preference as abnormal simply because it is a minority one, but also hinted of resistance against the host of psychological and popular prejudices then prevalent against "inverts" as depraved, irresponsible, pathological, or unnatural. "Socialism and Sex" postulated that unhealthy guilt and shame were the result not of sex or sexual orientation but of puritanical and discriminatory injunctions against same-sex relations. The way for those attracted to others of the same sex to become "whole" and "productive" was not to suppress their desires but for the society to cease branding them in pejorative terms. In this way, "Socialism and Sex" pointed the way toward notions of psychology and health that would not become normative until the 1970s.

All of this contrasts with Harry Hay's political and intellectual framework, as reflected in the Mattachine Society. Hay first enrolled in Communist Party classes in 1933 in emulation of his lover, the actor Will Geer, who after the lifting of the Hollywood blacklist would play Grandpa Walton in the 1970s television series. Standard accounts of Hay's attraction to the Communist movement emphasize his fleeting involvement in the 1934 San Francisco general strike. At that very moment, ironically, the Soviet Union, which Communists upheld as the highest hope for humanity, was proceeding to outlaw homosexuality by prescribing five years of hard labor

for men guilty of voluntary sexual relations with other men.<sup>10</sup> At the height of the Popular Front, in 1937, Hay joined the American Communist Party despite its prohibition of homosexuality among its members. By the 1940s, he was a teacher of numerous Party classes, both internal and public. The immersion in ideology and theory that this required of him explains why he drew upon Joseph Stalin's writings on nationalities and self-determination as well as anthropological understandings of culture (stemming from his interest in indigenous peoples and world folk music) to arrive at a historical materialist theory of "homophiles" as akin to "Negro, Mexican, and Jewish peoples."<sup>11</sup> Hay's perception of gays as an oppressed minority culture was developed in tandem with his organizing of "bachelors" to support Henry Wallace's Progressive Party campaign in 1948, culminating in the creation of the Mattachine Society, the first enduring American organization of gays for self-understanding and social transformation. The Mattachine was not entirely original, because at least one precursor existed: Henry Gerber had begun the very short-lived Society for Human Rights in Chicago in 1924, an attempt that an early lover of Hay's had told him about. However, that earlier effort was almost entirely lost to memory in the general culture by the 1950s, and the Mattachine Society was an unquestionable breakthrough: the first sustained gay rights advocacy group in American history.

SINCE THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY AT FIRST existed in a veil of secrecy, it was probably unknown to the writer of "Socialism and Sex." This newly found document therefore represents a synchronous impulse. It ratifies the findings of scholars on the Mattachine Society who have identified the political left as an important wellspring for modern gay civil rights consciousness, but speaks at the same time to a need for more in-depth scholarship on other left-wing contributors to that consciousness. "Socialism and Sex" does not reflect or

anticipate the instinct of self-organization that would shape the Mattachine Society and so much subsequent gay political activism. Its author does not refer directly to homosexuals or coin a term, like Hay's "androgynous" and "homophile," that would avoid stigmas attached to the word "homosexual" and yet describe those attracted primarily to others of the same sex. That "Socialism and Sex" did not contribute to the creation of an independent organization goes a good way toward explaining why it was lost to memory. It is not that "Socialism and Sex" was guilty of what would later be termed an "assimilationist" or "accommodationist" reticence, for its animating spirit is emancipation. The contrast is rather between the structure and cultures of two very different sectors of the left.

Hay was compelled to leave the Communist Party, advocating his own expulsion, in order to pursue his quest for homophile rights. The leadership valued Hay's contributions, but accepted his judgment that severance of attachment was necessary. The Communist Party forbade membership to homosexuals on the grounds that homosexuality was symptomatic of bourgeois decadence, a perversion, a byproduct of capitalism and fascism. It also viewed homosexuality, like drug use, as a security risk that made individuals susceptible to blackmail that would undermine the organization or exposure that would discredit it. Needless to say, this policy did not prevent gays from becoming party members, or party members from coming to the realization that they were gay. It did, however, perpetuate inner identity conflicts and encourage subterfuge by subjecting gay party members to the very same pressures inflicted upon them by conventional society. Hay, for example, felt compelled to marry Anita Platky in 1938 in order to demonstrate his reformed nature when he sought to join the Communist Party in that same year. Although he had many same-sex affairs and stands throughout his marriage, abandonment of the mask came only when he left the Party and formed the Mattachine Society. The logic behind the CP's policy was blinkered. Homosexuality becomes a heightened

security risk when there is a policy that denies gays and lesbians membership, thereby requiring them to remain closeted. Openness annuls blackmail by removing its opportunity. As the California Communist leader who informed Harry Hay he was being dropped from membership observes, "It was a stupid policy nonetheless. After all, we had a number of Communists in Los Angeles who became informers because they worked for the post office and their jobs were at risk, but no one ever proposed that all government employees be dropped from our membership."<sup>12</sup>

Although he left the Communist Party, Hay brought many residues of his Stalinism with him.<sup>13</sup> The Party's habits of organization, combined with the circumstances of McCarthyism and anti-gay repression (which demanded at least some modicum of discretion), led Hay to conceive of Mattachine as a hierarchical organization led by an inner circle while maintaining the secrecy of the underground. By 1953, a majority of newer members, hundreds of whom had joined after Mattachine successfully defended a member in Los Angeles from police entrapment, came to feel manipulated and sought an "open, democratic organization." Hay opposed them, holding that such a transformation would sacrifice "all the idealism that we held while we were a private organization."<sup>14</sup> This membership rebellion, reflective of widespread distrust of the initial conspiratorial and top-down structure, coincided with threatened inquiry by Congressional investigative committees, prompting Hay and other radical founding members to withdraw from Mattachine in 1953. As its new and more conservative leaders sought respectability, the Mattachine Society subsequently lost many members and pursued a timid, self-effacing course. Although other groups and individuals would make fits and starts – including within the Mattachine Society itself – a combination of openness and democracy with militancy and uncompromising gay politics would not be forged consistently or completely until after Stonewall.

A rather different organizational style and set of political traditions existed among the YPSLs. The Young Socialists made no official prohibition against same-sex desire and had no official ideology against it. No one was ever expelled from the Socialist Party or its youth group for "deviancy" or "bohemianism." As one of the leading youth members in New York City, Bogdan Denitch, puts it, "We did discuss things sexual and were open to gay members."<sup>15</sup> "Socialism and Sex" lacked any suggestion of a caucus or separate organization, or even of a notion of distinctive cultural identities built upon variance in sexual orientation. That was consistent with the standard social-democratic manner of thinking about oppressed groups, which had both strengths and weaknesses. To challenge racism, for example, socialists of this persuasion tended to protest discrimination and encourage inclusiveness, rather than a policy of separate action by African-Americans. This tradition, when applied to the question of "the sexual individualist," was double-edged. It inhibited and discouraged the type of independent self-organization that Mattachine pioneered and which would prove decisive for later gay and lesbian political development. On the other hand, the socialist valuation of tolerance, democracy, and inclusion meant H. L. Small could write freely, without fear of suppression within the left, such as the expulsions gay Communists experienced. Given the censorious climate in the wider society toward homosexuality and socialism, there were abundant reasons to fear sanction from outside the organization, of course. This most likely explains why the author adopted a pseudonym. Use of a party name, even if a thin veil for identity, was not unusual in radical periodicals in the 1940s and 1950s as a means to prevent employer reprisals in the age of Sen. Joseph McCarthy. It was one thing to be a socialist or homosexual, or even to be known as such to acquaintances. It was another level of commitment to put one's name on documents that might lead to persecution in the press, the workplace, or court of law.



That *The Young Socialist* would publish such an article at all without disclaimer or controversy is testament to the scope of its internal freedom. H. L. Small may even have had reason to believe that the precepts of "Socialism and Sex" might actually be adopted as official group policy. YPSL members in the 1950s were attracted to libertarian socialism – evincing, for example, a strong interest in Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-German revolutionary socialist who supported the Russian Revolution but was critical of the early Soviet state for its ominous consolidation of power.<sup>16</sup>

None of this is to say that the YPSL was free from homophobia or that a culture of complete openness prevailed on sexual matters within the organization, since nowhere in the United States was that true at the time. The atmosphere that prevailed within the group was a peculiar admixture of freedom and caution, acceptance and denial, silence and honesty. David McReynolds, a YPSL in Los Angeles who came to terms with his attraction to men in 1949, says, "Generally, in those days, it just wasn't discussed. . . . It wasn't tolerance but rather 'look the other way.' The Socialist Party always had a strong streak of 'libertarianism' on such matters. What we would have done if the member was a flaming queen I don't know. But so long as it was not pushed in our faces we didn't care. Nor was it discussed – so far as I know – in our groups on the West Coast."<sup>17</sup> Vern Davidson, who became a socialist as a freshman at UCLA in 1948 and who would later serve prison time for his resistance to compulsory military service during the Korean War, says that he had two serious male lovers when he was a YPSL and numerous same-sex encounters within Socialist Party circles, including many with men who were not homosexuals. Nevertheless, he recalls a conversation in which he took McReynolds aside to say, "David, you know, it would be a lot better if you just wouldn't be so gay, openly." He explains, "It was an issue, if we made a scene of it, but so was drinking. Drinking took you away from the cause. We had a real

drunk party at the party headquarters in L.A., and boy did we catch hell for it. . . . Our position had nothing to do with being against homosexuality, but that it distracted from our main job which was to sell to a public the concept of socialism."<sup>18</sup> According to Ralph Shaffer, who attended many public meetings of the Socialist Party in southern California in the 1950s and on a few occasions paid membership dues, "'gayness' was not a topic of discussion." Nevertheless, he notes, it "was common knowledge – even for someone as naive as I was – that several male socialists were gay and it was accepted. . . . I don't recall that any of the CP/PP people were known as gays. Nor was the gayness of the SP men openly displayed. It was discreet."<sup>19</sup>

When Vern Davidson moved to New York after he was elected YPSL national chairman in 1951, he participated in policy discussions of the very issues raised in the document "Socialism and Sex," conversations that very nearly resulted in a new plank in the Socialist Party platform:

*Before the 1952 party convention, when I was still in New York, I was instructed by the YPSLs to attempt to put a homosexual rights plank before the platform committee. . . . That was my instructions. And I do know at the convention, I went into the convention, and I was a member of the platform committee, and said, "The YPSL would like the party to consider a" – we didn't use "gay rights" in that day, but a gay rights platform. We didn't have any history to work from. There weren't any of those things. You've got to remember how much things have changed. I was met with a lot of embarrassed-looking old codgers staring at me in a little horror, but not getting angry; it just shocked them that we had to talk about this nasty thing. But good old Norman Thomas, and he's a sweet guy, said, "Well, Vern, if the YPSL thinks that's something that we should consider, I certainly think that we should consider it, and I have nothing against it, but I wish you could draw up something and come back with*

*it." So I've always felt that I was the cause of all of this, because I tried and tried and tried, and I just couldn't write anything that seemed to fit into the platform. So I let it slide by. I had no guidance. We didn't talk about "discrimination because of sexual preference" in those days. That phrase would never have come to me. And everything was going fast, we were fighting over the war and everything, and it didn't get done. And I take responsibility. But I believe to this day, had I been able to do my job Thomas would have joined me, and we could have had it back then, in '52.<sup>20</sup>*

DESPITE THE MARGINALITY OF SOCIALISM in the 1950s, such a plank, had the Socialist Party adopted it, would have been nothing less than a historic breakthrough in American political life. This episode goes unreported in existing accounts of the Socialist Party or the American left, suggesting that there would be value in further research into the Socialist Party's sexual politics. Is there, for example, a connection between this early history and the Socialist Party USA's role almost thirty years later as the first party in United States history to nominate an openly gay man, David McReynolds, for President of the United States, in 1980?

Much further research is warranted on same-sex desire and the anti-Stalinist left, both its social-democratic and revolutionary socialist variants. Anti-Stalinist radicals known or believed to have had lovers of the same sex include the Harlem Renaissance poet and novelist Claude McKay; Trotskyist poet John Brooks Wheelwright; poet and film critic Parker Tyler, who wrote for the Trotskyist *New Internationalist* as early as 1938 and was in the Workers Party and Independent Socialist League subsequently; Bayard Rustin, pacifist advisor to Martin Luther King; and Tom Kahn, a Yipsel in the late 1950s and a lover of Rustin who helped organize the March on Washington in 1963 before becoming a high-ranking official in the AFL-CIO. Dwight Macdonald's iconoclastic periodical

*Politics* published Robert Duncan's pathbreaking "The Homosexual in Society" in 1944, and in his phase as a semi-Trotskyist "libertarian socialist" the novelist Norman Mailer wrote a sympathetic piece for *ONE* entitled "The Homosexual Villain" in 1954. To be sure, the anti-Stalinist left was also capable of censorious approaches to homosexuality. The largest Trotskyist party in the United States, for example, the Socialist Workers Party, expelled its known gay members until 1970.<sup>21</sup>

The actual identity of the author of the article "Socialism and Sex," H. L. Small, remains obscure.<sup>22</sup> Most likely the writer was male, since a majority of YPSLs were male, and since movement veterans remember no apparent lesbian members.<sup>23</sup> This obscurity of identity makes it impossible to trace the forebears who influenced the writer of "Socialism and Sex." Nevertheless, the document may be situated within a heritage of left-wing support for sexual freedom espoused by such earlier figures as Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter, Alexandra Kollontai, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Emma Goldman, Magnus Hirschfeld, and André Gide. This tradition combined acceptance (and often celebration) of same-sex love with social and political radicalism. Although it was beleaguered at midcentury by the consolidation of Stalinism and further obscured by Cold War repression and homophobia, this historical current had the democratic, libertarian proclivities often attributed to the new left of the 1960s – a decade when a freewheeling form of radicalism would indeed come to be espoused more widely, even if it was not "new" in the sense of being unprecedented.<sup>24</sup>

In several other senses, "Socialism and Sex" prefigured the 1960s. It urged socialists to understand the genesis of political commitment and their ultimate goals in a capacious sense, transcending narrowly economic terms. It treated sexuality as a political issue, comprehending the

interrelationship between personal and public in a manner strikingly similar to the subsequent feminist position that "the personal is political." While the scant intellectual resources available to a young person exploring such questions in the early 1950s lent the article a modest temperament, the document contains in embryonic form the admixture of socialism and gay liberation that would find more militant, revolutionary expression in the post-Stonewall explosion of such groups as the Gay Liberation Front. For all of these reasons, "Socialism and Sex" is a document of great significance in the larger sexual history of the political left. However brief, it stands as an arresting forerunner of modern gay civil rights consciousness.

## Footnotes

1. In addition to the *New Politics* editorial board, I wish to thank Doug Ireland for urging *New Politics* to reprint "Socialism and Sex," Gail Malmgreen for her idea of a symposium to follow, Joanne Landy and Tom Harrison for their hard editorial work in organizing the entire package, and Mathew Keufler at *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* for his earlier editorial work. "Socialism and Sex" was first published in *Young Socialist*, whole no. 5 (winter 1952): 21. I came across it in *Independent Socialist Mimeographia*, vol. 22 (Berkeley, CA: Independent Socialist Press, 1971): 227. This collection, a set of 28 bound volumes containing photocopies of discussion bulletins and other mimeographed ephemera of the socialist movement of the 1940s and 1950s, was amassed by Hal Draper and is owned by only four libraries: the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California, Davis; Southern Illinois University; and the University of Michigan. Ernest Haberkern, director of the Center for Socialist History, which owns the rights

to the *Independent Socialist Mimeographia*, courteously granted rights to this republication. With more extensive footnotes and in somewhat altered form, this introduction and document were first published as Christopher Phelps, "A Neglected Document on Socialism and Sex," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 2007): 1-13; the University of Texas Press has kindly granted permission for this reissue.

2. Vern L. Bullough, ed., *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002); Eric Marcus, *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 1997); John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998); Barry Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); and Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
3. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983); Jeffrey Escoffier, "The Political Economy of the Closet: Notes Toward an Economic History of Gay and Lesbian Life Before Stonewall," in *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Gay and Lesbian Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997): 123-134; and Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
4. On the thriving earlier subculture, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1994); and Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of*

*Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Plume, 1990). On the Cold War and the construction of the closet, see David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001); Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: University of North Carolina, 1997); Andrea Friedman, "The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The Lavender Scare, Gossip, and Cold War Politics," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (December 2005): 1105-1129; and John D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," in *Making Trouble*, 57-73.

5. Quoted in Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson, 1990), xiv.
6. Martin Duberman, *Cures: A Gay Man's Odyssey* (New York: Plume, 1991), 3.
7. The two best treatments of Stonewall evoke both the subterranean quality of much of gay life before 1969 and the nascent rights consciousness developing well before the eruption, particularly by the early 1960s, when the black freedom movement provided an inspiration and model. David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004); Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993).
8. On Hay, see Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976): 105-109, 406-420; John D'Emilio, "Dreams Deferred: The Birth and Betrayal of America's First Gay Liberation Movement" (1978-1979), reprinted in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 17-56; and especially Timmons, *The Trouble with*

Harry Hay, *op cit.*

9. Reich's most salient work, *The Sexual Revolution*, was translated into English in 1945; interest in him was great in postwar bohemian circles because he seemed to justify "derepression" while combining political with sexual revolution, so he is a possible inspiration despite his antipathy toward homosexuality. The Kinsey report, whose findings included much higher levels of same-sex sexual experience than previously known, evoked excitement among homosexuals. Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution* (New York: Orgone Institute Press, 1945); Alfred Kinsey, et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948). Another possible influence, though more difficult to obtain, was Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America* (New York: Greenberg, 1951).
10. The new law, Article 121 of the Soviet Penal Code, was announced on December 17, 1933, and put into effect on March 7, 1934. Mass arrests ensued, with artists, musicians, and stage personnel disproportionately affected. See David Thorstad and John Lauritsen, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (New York: Times Change, 1974); and Simon Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution," in *Hidden from History*, ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989): 347-364.
11. "Mattachine Society Mission and Purposes" (1951), in Harry Hay, *Radically Gay*, ed. Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon, 1996): 131.
12. Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 130. Allan Bérubé's research on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union promises to shed new light on a context in which an open gay subculture did exist within a Communist-led labor union. Other studies of gay lives in and around the



Communist Party include Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Eric A. Gordon, *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989); Janet Lee, *Comrades and Partners: The Shared Lives of Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); and Bettina Aptheker, *Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006).

13. Despite his late-life involvement in the Radical Faeries, a countercultural project, Hay continued to deny that the Communist Party had been homophobic, and he held considerable illusions about Communist states. For example, Hay once made his biographer leave his residence when he asked a question about the Communist Party's homophobia, and he criticized defecting Cuban gays as "running-dog homosexuals" rather than speak out against Fidel Castro's repressive policies toward gays. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, xiv, 186.
14. Katz, *Gay American History*, 417.
15. Bogdan Denitch, e-mail message to author, August 19, 2006.
16. The point is not that Rosa Luxemburg would necessarily have supported gay and lesbian liberation, but rather that the YPSLs were more attracted to revolutionary socialism than some accounts of the Socialist Party as "social democracy" imagine, and that in their discussions of 1952 the YPSLs presumed that freedom, democracy, and socialism were indissoluble, making fertile ground for the advocacy of sexual liberation. *Young Socialist* carried advertisements for editions of Luxemburg's writings sold by the Young Socialists. One of its factions, spearheaded by Bogdan Denitch (and subsequently joined by Michael Harrington), called itself the Luxemburg Tendency.
17. David McReynolds, e-mail message to author, August 27, 2006.

18. Vern Davidson, tape-recorded telephone interview by author, August 29, 2006.
19. "PP" here refers to the Progressive Party, vehicle for the left-wing New Dealer Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign, which became badly isolated and preponderantly composed of Communists and fellow travelers. The Socialist Party ran Norman Thomas for President in 1948. Quotation: Ralph Shaffer, e-mail message to author, August 29, 2006.
20. Davidson interview.
21. While many of these figures and episodes are obscure, others have been chronicled well. Bayard Rustin's experiences, for example, are brilliantly reconstructed in John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). For the specific articles cited above, see Robert Duncan, "The Homosexual in Society," *Politics* 1, no. 7 (August 1944): 209-211; Norman Mailer, "The Homosexual Villain" (1954), reprinted in *Advertisements for Myself* (1959; New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1970): 203-211. The debate within the SWP over how to relate to the gay liberation movement is reprised in David Thorstad, ed., *Gay Liberation and Socialism: Documents from the Discussions on Gay Liberation inside the Socialist Workers Party (1970-1973)* (New York: David Thorstad, 1976), and Steve Forgione and Kurt T. Hill, eds., *No Apologies: The Unauthorized Publications of Internal Discussion Documents of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) Concerning Lesbian/Gay Male Liberation. Part 2, 1975-79* (New York: Lesbian/Gay Rights Monitoring Group, 1980).
22. In addition to the correspondence with Denitch and McReynolds and interviews with Davidson and Shaffer cited above, personal recollections were tape-recorded in telephone interviews with R. W. Tucker on August 31, 2006 and Maggie Phair on September 2, 2006. None of these veterans of the 1950s young socialist left claimed

authorship of "Socialism and Sex" or remembered its existence. Nor were they able to recall H. L. Small or anyone who used that name as a pseudonym. Those consulted, many of them major national leaders, arched across several geographical regions of the organization, as well as both sides of an emerging internal faction fight that would end very soon after the publication of "Socialism and Sex." Much of the membership broke away in 1952 to collaborate with the Socialist Youth League (SYL), the affiliate of the Independent Socialist League (ISL) led by Max Shachtman, and eventually to fuse with the SYL to form the Young Socialist League (YSL) in 1954. Part of the youth remained behind with the Socialist Party, reverting in name to the Young People's Socialist League. In 1958, the YSL would reunite with the YPSL after the ISL dissolved and its members joined the Socialist Party (at that time called the SP-SDF because of its 1956 reunification with the Social-Democratic Federation, which had split off from the party in 1936). H. L. Small's position in relation to the faction fight is not clear; on the one hand, the document opens by putting down "democratic-liberal" sentiment, which would suggest a left-wing outlook, but on the other it upholds certain states in Western Europe as "socialist or semi-socialist," which would suggest a moderate social-democratic viewpoint.

23. Harry Siitonen, e-mail message to author, September 29, 2006, and David McReynolds, e-mail message to author, September 29, 2006.
24. For useful background on the libidinal left, see Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds., *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1995).