

Journal of the Canadian Historical Association Revue de la Société historique du Canada



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Volume 21, numéro 2, 2010

The Biographical (Re)Turn

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1003087ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1003087ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (imprimé)

1712-6274 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Churchill, D. S. (2010). Paul Goodman and the Biography of Sexual Modernity. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 21(2), 47–60. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1003087ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le présent article représente une enquête préliminaire sur la relation entre les écrits autobiographiques de l'intellectuel américain radical Paul Goodman et ses théories voulant que la sexualité soit liée au projet de libération politique. De fait, les écrits personnels de Goodman se sont répercutés au cœur de la critique sociale et politique qu'il a pu faire de la société du milieu du XX^e siècle, ainsi que de ses recherches plus savantes sur la psychologie et la sociologie. Il faut donc voir l'œuvre de Goodman comme ayant alimenté la dialectique de la modernité sexuelle, qui faisait le pont entre les expériences gays (sexuelles et intimes) et les discours conceptuels, intellectuels et élitistes sur la sexualité.

Paul Goodman and the Biography of Sexual Modernity

DAVID S. CHURCHILL

Abstract

This article is a preliminary exploration of the relationship between the autobiographical writings of radical US intellectual Paul Goodman and his theorizing of sexuality's links to the project of political liberation. Goodman's life writing was integrated into his social and political critique of mid-twentieth century society, as well as his more scholarly pursuits of psychology and sociology. In this way, Goodman's work needs to be seen as generative of the dialectic of sexually modernity, which integrated intimate queer sexual experiences with conceptual, intellectual, and elite discourses on sexuality.

Résumé

Le présent article représente une enquête préliminaire sur la relation entre les écrits autobiographiques de l'intellectuel américain radical Paul Goodman et ses théories voulant que la sexualité soit liée au projet de libération politique. De fait, les écrits personnels de Goodman se sont répercutés au cœur de la critique sociale et politique qu'il a pu faire de la société du milieu du XX^e siècle, ainsi que de ses recherches plus savantes sur la psychologie et la sociologie. Il faut donc voir l'œuvre de Goodman comme ayant alimenté la dialectique de la modernité sexuelle, qui faisait le pont entre les expériences gays (sexuelles et intimes) et les discours conceptuels, intellectuels et élitistes sur la sexualité.

Biography has been a lodestone within the history of sexuality. As a historical genre, it continues to be a rich and rewarding site for historians to excavate the complexities of same-sex, queer, and gendered subjectivities. Biographies such as Sheila Rowbotham's treatment of Edward Carpenter, John D'Emilio's work on Bayard Rustin, Justin Spring's recent study of Samuel Steward, and Leslie Hall's book on Stella Browne — to name just a few — reveal the importance of life history and biography to queer history, and the ability of biography to complicate our understandings of the intimate and the political.¹ These histories provide vivid examples of the way that individuals have struggled to position their intimate lives in relation to their public activism and writing. Life histories can also remind us that sexual and gender diversity

is not simply a matter of the social but is often indeed a matter of the self. Cameron Duder's recent book, *Awfully Devoted Women*, utilizes biography that explores the intimacies of a few middle-class English Canadian women, demonstrating how gender and sexual subjectivities are protean and can be pre-formed, negotiated, and lived situationally and simultaneously over the course of an individual's life.²

In the spirit of these scholars, I have — somewhat tentatively — been thinking about the life and work of American polymath Paul Goodman. Goodman is best known today for his influence on the New Left and as a popular intellectual on American college campuses during the 1960s. This fame came relatively late for Goodman, following years of relative obscurity and modest success, not to mention failure, as an academic, writer, therapist, novelist, poet, and public intellectual. Born into a bohemian milieu in New York City in 1911, Goodman had a peripatetic career. After graduating from the City College of New York, he went to the University of Chicago to pursue a Ph.D. At Chicago, he worked with Richard McKeon, one of the leading philosophers in the United States and for many years the Dean of Humanities at the University. During his time in Chicago, Goodman befriended the young composer Ned Rorem with whom he would later collaborate as a lyricist.³ Despite his scholarly pursuits, Goodman's time in Chicago was shaped by his sexual behaviour. Goodman later recalled that he had been “fired at the University of Chicago during the early years of Robert Hutchins” for “my queer behavior or my claim to the right of it.” Ultimately, it was his mentor McKeon who, as the Dean of the Humanities, let Goodman go from his position as instructor at the university for having sex with students. Termination of employment for sexual conduct was something Goodman experienced again at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s.⁴

All these career disappointments came well before Goodman found fame and financial security in the early 1960s as the best selling author of *Growing Up Absurd*. Over the course of his life, he published novels, a collection of short stories, numerous volumes of poetry, plays, a work of criticism on Franz Kafka, a book on urban life and planning, two books of social criticism about education and youth, works on Gestalt therapy and many articles. During the 1940s and 1960s, Goodman spoke out against American entry into the military conflicts of World War II and the war in Vietnam, was a critic of censorship, and an advocate of alternative education, particularly the radical act of deschooling.

Though Goodman was married and had two children, much of his personal writing was about individuals who, at best, lurked on the periphery of the normative embrace of the 1950s family. His personal stories and narratives recounted people who were on the outside of what historian Elaine Tyler May memorably termed the sphere of “domestic containment.”⁵ In this, Goodman is a rare though not completely unique subject: a public figure, but one with a tenuous relationship to respectable society and public culture.

A consistent theme for Goodman was the complex political and personal importance of sexuality. He wrote frequently, often with breathtaking candor, about sexuality, demonstrating a rare openness to the subject in the face of the Cold War's pervasive heteronormativity. Historian Henry Abelove argues in his book *Deep Gossip* that Goodman, along with a handful of other writers and artists, deserve greater recognition for their contribution to the politics of gay liberation.⁶ Similarly, the social critic Jeffery Escoffier has pointed to Goodman's influence on the New Left, the counter-culture of the 1960s, and more specifically the gay and lesbian liberation movement of the early 1970s. For sexual liberationists in particular, it was Goodman's conceptualization of sexuality, deeply indebted to the radical psychology of Wilhelm Reich that offered, according to Escoffier, "an effective basis for sexual politics."⁷ Though Goodman's views on psychology shifted and developed over the course of his life, he remained convinced of the truth of Reich's correlation between, on the one hand, the repression and cultural inhibition of sexuality and, on the other hand, the political efficacy of authoritarianism.⁸ In particular, Goodman followed Reich's view that the subjugation of adolescent and child sexuality generated a complacent and pliant populace.

In this way, Goodman is among that relatively small group of people in the mid-twentieth century who publicly contributed to both of the dominant tendencies of the dialectic of sexual modernity.⁹ I understand sexual modernity to be a project that is a productive tension between the creative practices of historical actors — those individuals who engaged in sexual world-making — and the conceptual, discursive, and descriptive apprehension of those self-same historical actors.¹⁰ In other words, sexual modernity is both the lived experience of what Gayle Rubin terms the process of "sexual ethnogenesis" — the ways in which people form, build, and maintain sexual communities and identities — and the elite discourses of medicine, psychology, and the law that sought to apprehend, diagnose, and regulate queers within a scientific taxonomy.¹¹ Goodman, as a practitioner of radical psychology and one of the leaders of the Gestalt therapy movement, was without a doubt a producer of this elite discourse on sexuality and queer sexuality more particularly. Yet his contribution follows in the tradition of what Michel Foucault termed a "reverse discourse." As he famously wrote in *History of Sexuality: Volume One*, "homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand legitimacy or 'naturalness', to be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified."¹² As such, Goodman was part of the discursive intellectual and social engagement and push-back around sexuality during the postwar decades.

Of course it has not just been recent authors who have focused on Goodman's import to same-sex social movements. Indeed, political sociologist Dennis Altman's landmark 1971 book, *Homosexual Oppression and*

Liberation, made much of Goodman's influence on youth culture and his personal openness regarding homosexuality, ultimately arguing that Goodman, along with Allen Ginsberg, have "some claim to be regarded as founding fathers of gay liberation."¹³ Though recognizing Goodman's significance, Altman also critiqued him. Altman expressed reservations about the types of sexuality Goodman celebrated and recounted. In particular, Altman found the transient, contingent sexual encounters — the subject of so much of Goodman's work — to be limited and insufficient. He wrote, bitingly, "Promiscuity, even selective, hardly equals liberation."¹⁴ Yet, for Goodman there was a critical value in such activities. Part of it was in the deeper understanding of the city, of public space, and in the discovery of same-sex erotic terrain. Goodman wrote that he had "to learn that the ends of docks, the backs of trucks, back alleys, behind the stairs, abandoned bunkers on the beach and the washrooms of trains are all adequate samples of all the space there is" for sex between men.¹⁵ Such special discoveries, mapping, and ultimate celebrations made Goodman a radical outlier for the immediate postwar decades.

Such encounters were familiar terrain for Goodman, part of his practice of infinite possibility and world-making that could lead to something more or could in themselves be a way of being with others. In his poem "Long Lines," Goodman explored more fully his desire for pleasures that are not arrived at through instrumental practices, but rather through the spontaneous and infinite contingencies of life:

It is not the same to eat candy and to sit down to a dish
of candy and eat it.
It is not the same to get drunk and to buy a bottle
in order to get drunk.
I tried to make love in the alley but they wanted
to go to bed behind locked doors.
I have a bad reputation, they say I have no regard
for persons
But I have paid fierce attention to each one of
(hopefully) my simple friends.¹⁶

Here Goodman contrasts the furtive pleasures of alley sex and public urban erotics with the spectacle of bourgeois sexuality. In Goodman's view, sex behind locked doors signifies the private practices of Ward and June Cleaver, of people who live in perfect suburbs. Goodman wants a more immediate sexuality, one that celebrates the pleasures of the city, the risk of discovery, and the passions of the moment.

For many critics Goodman's open and exuberant celebration of sexuality was sign of self-indulgence, egoism, and a lack of seriousness. Writing a review

of Goodman's *Five Years* in the *New York Times*, historian Martin Duberman had little patience for Goodman's tales of erotic adventures, longing, and corporeal pleasures. Duberman wrote:

By insisting that we accompany him on his round of the docks, on his endless pursuits of erections and orgasms, he has forced his private life on public attention. There is immense grandiosity in this — it is assumed we *must* be interested in all that relates to him — and also finally, immense sadness — the kind we feel when an unloved child jumps through every hoop, employs every device of shock, to hold attention and to affirm its own existence.¹⁷

The great irony of Duberman's criticism, something he takes care to point out, is that these are the views of a closeted gay man, too afraid to publicly declare his sexuality. Some thirty years later, long after Duberman himself had come out of the closet, he would write his own memoir filled with all the details of "his endless pursuits of erections and orgasms."¹⁸

Goodman's openness about sexual topics, and his intellectual and erotic interest in young men, frequently struck a critical note with his detractors. In a review of a lecture he gave at Harvard in 1963, a student reporter observed that:

As a lecturer Goodman is magnetic; sitting on the floor in a circle of twenty ... college students he is nearly irresistible But sadly Goodman's contact is too quickly made, and partly for this reason illusory. That is why he needs so much of it. He can woo and win an audience of students so readily because he seems to be undergoing an unhappily extended adolescence. His need to expose himself so utterly to young people reflects a kind of adolescent exhibitionism....¹⁹

As with Duberman's earlier quote about an "unloved child," the student reporter's use of the psycho/sexual teleology of arrested development illustrates the way in which Goodman's social criticism and his sexual behavior were linked together and at times dismissed for not being the proper subjects for public discourse.

Even when his subject was education or delinquency, as in his book *Growing Up Absurd*, sexuality was never far from the surface. Historian John D'Emilio argues that Goodman's description of youth subculture in *Growing Up Absurd* resonates with popular 1950s attitudes toward homosexuals. In D'Emilio's reading of Goodman, the two groups had a close affinity in the conformist culture of the 1950s. Both groups were social outcasts, marginal subcultures that lived in "fear of the police." Moreover, their participation in, even celebration of, transgressive sexuality (be it same-sex or premarital sexuality) also placed them outside of the confines of respectable society. Ultimately disaffected (or what Goodman often terms Beat youth) and homosexuals

occupied a space outside of the nuclear family and as such posed a threat to that family.²⁰ Indeed, Goodman clearly saw a sympathy and connection between homosexuals and other marginalized groups. Goodman made a similar point to Civil Rights activist and Black Power leader Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), saying that homosexuals, because of their abject position in society, were “niggers.” Ture rejected the comparison pointing out that the social economic realities of the African American experience, as well as the ability of most gay men to pass as “normal,” was a privilege not open to Blacks.²¹ This exchange between two prominent figures of the 1960s deserves greater attention for what it suggests about race, identity, and representation in postwar America. Why, for example was Goodman so eager to make common historical cause with African Americans and Ture so insistent that such comparisons were misplaced?

This situation also brings up the issue of race and race politics, which dominated so much of the politics of the 1950s and 1960s. Goodman was a supporter of Civil Rights and wrote criticisms of the racist attitudes within the United States and of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, but the question of race was rarely a prime focus of his intellectual scrutiny.²² Though the Puerto Rican youth he wrote so caringly about in *Growing Up Absurd* were racialized subjects, Goodman approached them with a universalistic sensibility, one that was out of step with distinctive identity-based politics that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Sexual liberation was thus not the expansion of the rights of certain discriminated groups such as homosexuals, but a much larger and more profound process by which Pentagon Generals needed sexual liberation, as much as housewives, homosexuals, college students, and delinquents did.

Goodman's insistence on talking about sex — be it his desire to chat up an African American sailor he met on a train, or his ambiguous desire for a hustler he met in a Southern gay bar — are not confessions of a reformed sinner. Rather, these personal literary disclosures were part of an exercise that would become a hallmark of sexual liberation, that is of bearing witness to sexual acts, and an insistence on more explicit description of sexuality and sexual being. In doing so, Goodman and the sexual liberationists who followed in his wake challenged notions of respectability and, more particularly, liberal ideals of privacy. Writing near the end of his life in the essay “Politics of Being Queer,” Goodman made this point explicitly, “... it's good to break down squeamishness, which is an important factor in what is called racism, as well as in the cruelty to children and the sterile exiling of the sick and aged. And the illegal catch-as-catch-can nature of much homosexual life at present breaks down conventional attitudes.”²³ Here Goodman presumes that the marginality of same-sex sexuality, its abject place in society, provides an insight into modern life and ultimately to a political consciousness. This is what he termed a poli-

tics of being queer — a positionality he argues homosexuals shared with other groups such as African Americans and women. Here is the common predicament of social, economic and political subordination within American society.

Goodman's theories of sexuality and their connection to social change were of very long standing, and as I have already mentioned, were closely bound up with his interest in humanist psychology and psychoanalytic theory. In 1945, Goodman published an article, "The Political Meaning of Some Recent Revisions of Freud," in *Politics*, a journal edited by Goodman's friend and associate, the New York intellectual Dwight MacDonald. In the article, Goodman took aim at what he saw as a retrograde political tendency in psychology. He wrote, "What is alarming is not their deviation from the orthodox Freudian sociology and implied politics, in which a good deal is faulty, but the fact that most of these deviations lead step by step to a psychology of non-revolutionary social adjustment that is precisely the political ideal (by no means of the political action) of the New Deal, The Beveridge Plan, Stalinism, etc."²⁴ What bothered Goodman and what fueled his criticism was the notion advanced by writers, such as Eric Fromm and Karen Horney, that neurosis, anxiety, and other psychological ills are directly related to social contexts and patterns, rather than Freudian notions of "instinctual drives." He accused both Fromm and Horney of engaging in the typical criticism of Freud as being too "biologically minded" and focusing too narrowly on "pleasures and frustrations." According to Goodman, these "neo-Freudians" had abandoned, among other things, the importance of infantile sexuality, the libido, as well as "the apparatus of the Id and Ego." This move away from instinct and the centrality of sexuality for Goodman, lead Fromm and Horney to a conformist psychology, one which he argues "all revolutionary dynamics to bring about change vanished."²⁵ In contrast, Goodman pointed to Wilhelm Reich as a source of truly revolutionary psychology. Of Reich, Goodman wrote, "He demonstrates in case reports that persons restored to sexual health and animals spirits simply will not tolerate the mechanical and routine jobs they have been working at, but turn (at whatever general inconvenience) to work that is spontaneous and directly meaningful."²⁶

Goodman's enthusiasm for Reich's theories and their potential for revolutionary social change were met with a stinging rebuke by another progressive intellectual, the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills. Co-writing a response to Goodman with Patricia Salter, "The Barricade and the Bedroom," the two dismissed what they termed Goodman's "gonad theory of revolution," arguing that sexuality was a poor site from which to build a movement. To base a politics on sexual instinct was to turn away from history and sociology, and instead privilege individuality and biology.²⁷ Mills and Salter wrote, "If we accept Goodman's concept of the cultivation of biological release, freedom becomes identified with the fixed irrationalities of the leisured and private life."²⁸ Here

the two authors made a classic Left critique of sexuality, asserting that sexuality, or a politics of corporeal pleasures, were ultimately too individualist, too narrow, and too narcissistic to be the basis of genuine social change. Diverse critics of the 1960s and the counter-culture, such as Christopher Lasch, Todd Gitlin, and Richard Rorty, later marshalled versions of these arguments to attack identity politics and new social movements that had emerged internationally in the last three decades of the twentieth century.²⁹

Mills and Salter were particularly allergic to any theory of social change derived from a biological concept of action. "The problem of freedom cannot be adequately stated in terms of the unhampered expression of the individual's biological instincts. Freedom, as well as other values for which we should strive, must be viewed in terms of institutional structures and the opportunity for social planning." For Mills and Salter, sexuality was not only biologically over-determined, it was also an inherently unstable site rife with the possibility of manipulation, mystification, and false consciousness. "The machinery of amusement," they asserted, "seizes upon sex and exploits it as the central value of fun and glamour."³⁰ Here the possibility of titillation, the carnival's world of wonders, and the proliferation of cheap amusements with their random pick ups and physical intimacies, were distractions and tools of advanced capitalism to superficially satisfy and sedate the public.

Goodman was not ignorant or insensitive to these concerns. Writing a few months later, Goodman laid out more specifically what he termed his "revolutionary program." After asserting the need for work of personal value and worth, and the need to reject materialism, he returned, however, to the subject of sex:

We must allow, and encourage, the sexual satisfaction of the young, both adolescents and small children, in order to free them from anxious submissiveness to authority. It is probably impossible to prevent our own neurotic prejudices from influencing small children, but we can least make opportunity for the sexual gratification of adolescents. This is essential in order to prevent patterns of coercion and authority from reemerging no matter what political change has been.³¹

Here was a key component of Goodman's political project, one which would make him popular with radical and progressive educators and propel him, as political scientist Kevin Mattson has argued, into being a movement intellectual of the 1960s.³² Anticipating the theorizing of the student movement, Goodman looked at youth as a distinct social class, one suffering most acutely from the sort of alienating, restrictive, and repressive social conditions that would be the subject of so much 1950s sociology written by the likes of David Reisman, William Whyte, Herbert Marcuse, and C. Wright Mills. Indeed, the care and concern for youth would be the chief theme of much of Goodman's writing, particularly his 1960 book *Growing Up Absurd*.

During the 1950s Goodman argued that erections and orgasms had a social value in and of themselves, an argument liberal America, even after the publication of the Kinsey reports, was loath to acknowledge. Goodman's impatience with liberal notions of sex and what he saw as the devaluing of the erotic imagination becomes clear in his critique of censorship and tentative support of pornography. Writing in *Commentary*, Goodman argued, "In our culture an artist is expected to move the reader, he is supposed to move him to tears, to laughter, to indignation, to compassion, even to hatred: but he may not move him to have an erection."³³ For liberals the question of whether or not pornographic materials should be protected turned on whether, or not, these materials had a literary, cultural, or "net" social value "despite its sexual effect."³⁴ Thus, certain types of erotic texts or images, such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tom Jones*, and *Arabian Nights*, were able to become part of a respectable literary cannon. This for liberals, Goodman argued, became the key distinction between the truly pornographic and those materials of artistic value and worth. Yet it was the former — works all most exclusively about sex, made for sexual pleasure and stimulation, not buttressed by some other edifying device — that Goodman wanted to rescue, defend, and even celebrate. These explicitly sexual works, he argued, were "made just for fun, since sex is a jolly subject."³⁵ Moreover, sexual works were intrinsically artistic works because "Sexual action is a proper action of art." For Goodman, then, "the question is not whether pornography, but the grade of pornography."³⁶ Here we can see the outlines of a sexual liberationist vision of pornography, censorship, and obscenity, one that runs counter to the political and legal liberalism of the late 1950s and 1960s. Goodman not only rejected the worth and value content argument, he seems uninterested in a privacy argument advanced by the like of Hugh Hefner, that adult citizens should be able to read and see explicit, erotic depictions without the interference of the state.

Goodman took a different track, celebrating some pornography while condemning others. Here Goodman's intellectual debt to Reich comes into sharper relief. Like Reich, Goodman was more concerned with attempts to control sexual expressions and actions, rather than with those expressions and actions themselves. Moreover, the controlling and repressing of pornographic materials, in Goodman's view, generated far more dangerous consequences than the production of such material. Goodman explicitly linked the censoring and banning of pornographic material with demand for it. It was this repressive apparatus, he argued, that created a dangerous and aberrant want for pornography. He wrote, "When excellent human power is inhibited and condemned, it will reappear ugly and dangerous. The censorious attitude toward the magazines and pictures is part of the general censorious attitude that hampers ordinary sexuality and thereby heightens the need for satisfaction by means of the magazines and pictures."³⁷

Despite his criticism of the state's attempts to regulate sexual expressions, Goodman cleaved to what Gayle Rubin famously identifies as hierarchical notions of good and bad sex — notions that informed his view on supposedly good pornography versus what he termed “poor” pornography.³⁸ Here, again, Reichian concepts of healthy and liberated sexuality are key. In Goodman's view “poor pornography” — pornographic material that is “mere sexuality” or “lusts” or that is “devoid of any further contact, drama, or meaning” and is very frequently about “sado-masochism” — are part of the neurotic manifestations of the repressiveness and disfunctionality of American society. Poor or bad pornography, particularly sado-masochistic pornography, is “the darker effect of a more restrictive and guilty-making training.”³⁹ Casting it in a more explicit psychological frame, Goodman argued, “For the consumer, such fantasies have a dual advantage: they satisfy both the need for righteousness (sadistic super-ego) and the ‘weakness’ of giving in to pleasure; they embody an exciting conflict.”⁴⁰ Like many of his progressive intellectual contemporaries, Goodman shared a degree of antipathy to mass culture and the commercialized aspects of sex — things that he saw as corrupting. The possibility that sado-masochistic sexuality was more than just humiliation, exploitation, and the exercise of power of one individual over another was simply outside of Goodman's own notions of what “good sex” might be. Thus, his tolerance for abject sexuality was limited not only by the Reichian foundation of his sexual theory, but also by his phenomenological and immanent understanding of how sex worked. Good sex was to be found in the encounters between individuals, in their capacity to share, and in the utopian wish that in sex so much of the social and cultural asymmetries of life could be stripped away or for a brief moment sloughed off.

Goodman's concern and sexual desire for young men gave him pause for ethical reflection. Goodman desired to have one type of transaction (in Dewey's sense of the word) — that was a mutual, transformative encounter without a proscribed result or end. Yet the young men he encountered also expected an economic transaction, making such engagements at least partly determined by the instrumental desire for money. Goodman's own inclinations to rescue, enlighten, and educate young men touches on both the moral and political economies of formal and informal sex-trade. On a trip to Italy in the summer of 1957, Goodman reflected on his own ambiguous motivations in treating or giving money to young men. On the one hand, he wanted to see the money he gave used in a good and appropriate way. On the other hand, he recognized that having money empowered these young men and gave them rare agency. Goodman wrote:

You give 500 lire to a couple of unemployed Neapolitan lads, to eat, *not* for the movies. They enthusiastically make you trail along to the restaurant and

insist on buying you a bottle of beer with what used to be your money. When you demur they are indignant, as if to say, "When I don't have money, I can't treat. Now that I have money, you won't let me treat. When shall I treat?" Of course the bill comes to 600 lire and you reach resignedly in your pocket....⁴¹

Goodman sees the asymmetries inherent in these encounters and hoped for a way out, but was ultimately stymied by the economic reality, and perhaps even the over-determined operative fictions produced by his being a relatively prosperous tourist interacting in economically impoverished social context.

In another incident, Goodman recalled meeting two young Sicilian sailors. He described the flirtation between them, and ended up buying the two men beer and cigarettes as a sign of his interest and affection. He wrote, "I like them they are truly sweet. I solemnly explain to them that I will not make love and pay money; I prefer to give them spending money and just be friends." The two sailors respond incredulously, "For nothing! For nothing!," and assured Goodman that they were horny and happy to have sex with him because they are already his friends. The three take a walk together, and find a secluded and wooded part in one of Florence's public parks. The three begin to have sex, but at a crucial moment one of the sailors turns to Goodman and asks, "Give us money — just a little?" Angered by this, Goodman reminded them that they said they did not want money, and stomps out of the thicket. Rather than making his way out of the park and back into the city, Goodman decided to wait for the two sailors who remained behind in the bushes. When they finally emerged, after what Goodman "hopes" was a moment of sexual satisfaction, he gives them money and tells them, "I like you, but you must not make love for money."⁴²

Goodman was keenly aware of his hypocrisy, which was nonetheless based on his desire for sexuality to be more than instrumental exchange. What, Goodman wondered, was the connection between sex and money? He wrote:

They become sexually excited, proceed with you up to the point where they are about to come, and at this point they stop and ask for money. (1) Somewhat comically, it has the effect of saving their capital for a wise investment. (2) It is a device to ward off guilt: "I'm doing it for money not because I like it." (3) Or more positively, it is a device to regularize lust by integrating it with the demands of the ego and society: the money for the casual encounter is like a wedding ring. (4) All these are true in both America and Italy, yet in Italy today I am wrong. For the fact remains that this soldier gets 17 cents a day to spend, and what shall he do with his free evening in Venice with 17 cents It is this position of passive exposure and dependency, where he can make no decision of his own, that he regains some initiative and manliness.⁴³

In his desire to decouple sex from economic exchange, Goodman sought to make sexual encounters open to possibility and chance. A genuine sexual transaction, he believed, had infinite possibility, and had the potential to evolve and grow into almost a kind of relationship. An economic transaction in contrast was, for Goodman, too instrumental; an exchange that was limited and framed by the trading of sex for coin. Goodman's ethical considerations, care, and concern were, however, those of a client who was deeply ambiguous about the realities of sex work; all of which was underscored by his own ambivalence in paying for sex when he had in fact very little money.

In mining his own life for material through which to theorize intimacy, masculinity, and sexual practice, Goodman blurred the distinctions between objective and neutral scholarly observer and subject participant. He was, after all, present not only in the bushes but also in the ruminations regarding the dynamic of sexual commerce. He did this not as a traditional social scientist but rather as an auto-ethnographer of his own life and practice. Though Goodman was in many ways a Romantic social critic, he was not an anti-modernist. The reason that young people were *Growing Up Absurd* was not a result of "the spirit of modern society," but rather "it is that this spirit has not sufficiently realized itself."⁴⁴ Throughout Goodman's writing work, he articulated an alternative modernity fashioned by people in the moment, pursuing pleasures, creating their own worlds, and making their own societies. As an articulation of queer politics, Goodman's vision remains contested with its insistence that sexuality, particularly same-sex sexuality, was not some private vice but rather a matter for public reflection, and part of citizenship in modern societies. This sexuality is not in any way a respectable representation of identity seemingly devoid of embodied erotic practice. As writer Samuel Delaney noted in his tender lament for Times Square, "Contact and its human rewards are fundamental to cosmopolitan culture, to its art and its literature, to its politics and its economics; to its quality of life."⁴⁵ This is a sentiment that Goodman would have embraced. In celebrating the encounters to be had in the supposed "dark places" of the city, Goodman kept sexuality a public matter, a matter for the agora and not simply the bedroom.

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Endnotes:

- 1 Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008); John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003); Justin Spring, *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); Leslie A. Hall, *The Life and Times of Stella Browne* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. 2010). This is an absurdly short sample in what is a very long list of important books. See also Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Blanche Weissen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Vol. 1: 1884–1933* (New York: Penguin, 1993).
- 2 Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900–1965* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).
- 3 Ned Rorem, *Knowing When to Stop: A Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 110, 246–51.
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- 11 Gayle Rubin, “Sexual Traffic,” interview by Judith Butler, *differences* 6, nos. 2–3 (1994): 6.
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