

especially in the exchange of goods and services among individuals and groups. As we know from accounts of barter in primitive societies, such collaboration, too, can evolve perfectly tacitly and without friendship between the parties. Unlike the Prisoner's Dilemma, the value of the goods exchanged is positive rather than merely the avoidance of mutual harm. And much conflict will remain endemic in human affairs. Yet it is a great hope and satisfaction to realize that people can learn to collaborate even in a situation initially as unpropitious as the Prisoner's Dilemma, provided it is reiterated within certain parameters. Indeed persons and groups not only *can* learn to cooperate in this situation but sometimes actually *have* learned.

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Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class, by Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

... it isn't geography that matters, it is class. People were looked down upon for their 'Chicaga,' 'Joursey,' 'New Yawk,' or even 'Bastion' accents: like Lisa Doolittle, they represented the wrong class." Academically-talented and highly-motivated, the nevertheless sit silently through graduate seminars asking themselves, "When will they find out that I am a fraud?" Put on the spot, forced to speak, some self-consciously scour all traces of Bastion or Buffulow from their idiom. Others develop idiolects that meticulously censor risky words and phrases. For newcomers to the empire of ink soon learn that citing Vee-blen rather than Vey-blin or Weber instead of Veyber are *outrages par paroles* that carry penalties of excommunication. Some use their self-imposed, but socially-structured, silence to learn the middle-class manners and mores that may permit them to "pass" for people who have "prepped." Others cultivate bitterness and plot retribution. A few translate their humiliation into compassion, and try to build dialogic bridges that will allow their younger sisters and brothers to break out of their culturally-scripted subservience with fewer debilitating psychic wounds.

The specific responses vary, but each of the twenty-four autobiographical essays included in this volume affirm the editors' thesis: "to grow up working class, then to take on the full trappings of the life of the college professor, *internalizes the conflicts in the hierarchy of the class system within the individual, upwardly mobile person.*" To Ryan and Sackrey's thesis, I would add a corollary: to cultivate these conflicts in bright, literate, and extraordinarily articulate people is to *create a potentially dangerous, even revolutionary, strata that must be effectively coopted, cuckolded, damaged, distracted, or disabled if the prevailing system of power-knowledge is to survive.*

Advanced capitalism meets this challenge by creating a new class of knowledge workers, the professional and managerial class, that acts as a buffer between the contending interests of owners and workers. The mission of this intermediate class is to "reproduce" capitalist culture and capitalist class relationships. Consequently, the new class stands in an antagonistic relationship to the working class. As a result, the working class kid who makes it in the academic world not only

finds him/herself a "stranger in paradise" but also a stranger in his or her parent's home – a stranger who may be "participating in the oppression of the folks back home."

There are no buffers to cushion the psyches of these intellectual migrants. As a result, Ryan and Sackrey contend, they are frequently plagued by a "sense of being nowhere at home." In response, they may engage in imposture, currying favor with the old boys; suffer migraines, ulcers, hypertension, and the unrelenting fear of being "found out" and humiliated; harbor diffused anger, experience chronic unfocused anxiety, or hit the bottle. In short they always sleep with one eye open.

The autobiographical documents inventory the damage: sometimes ironically, often angrily. The four analytic essays prepared by the editors place this damage in historical context. To the accompaniment of the flight of Minerva's Owl, Ryan and Sackrey write the final pages in an extraordinary chapter in the history of American higher education: the period of relative equalitarianism extending from the immediate post-war period to the mid-1970s. Demographics (the baby-boom), policy (the G.I. Bill), prosperity (the growth of the American Empire), and international politics (The Cold War, Sputnik, The Arms Race) caught the gateskeepers of the old order away from their posts. Genteel careers, independent incomes, and the golden corridors of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton could not accommodate the new demographics or the new priorities. The fresh red brick of the rapidly expanding state university systems symbolized the claims of the new order: utility, techno-scientific expertise, big bucks, and the promises of social mobility. For most people, the promises turned out to be false promises: "a grand lie that expands the occasional rags-to-riches story into a tall tale."

However the grand lie was no tall tale to the young people from working-class backgrounds who were recruited into academic careers during this period of unprecedented growth in the knowledge industry. These "extra hands" did not find the door of opportunity open, but they certainly found it ajar. So much so that Ladd and Lipset estimate that as many as 25 percent of American academics are now from working-class backgrounds – "strangers" who made it into "paradise" before the downward demographic and economic spirals of the seventies slammed the gates shut once more.

According to defenders of the old order, red-brick expansionism did not just displace gothic towers, it defaced the integrity of higher education in America. In Jacques Barzun's view, public monies radically changed the "quality and tone" of the higher learning in America: so much so that "The *purpose* and *manner* of higher education was left behind!" John Passmore maintains that pressures toward democratization in higher education led to "the appointment of second-rate individuals to university posts, persons attracted by the charms of a profitable and, as they lived it, not too arduous career, but contributing little or nothing to academic life, preferring, instead, either complete stagnation or the delights of political agitation."

Members of the new order see things differently. Those who have travelled great distances from bookless homes to carpeted libraries, polished desks, smart talk,

and teas with deans, tend to resent colleagues who started and remained near the top of the class structure: colleagues who feel “entitled” to their tenure on Mount Olympus. Relations between the two groups are at best strained. Sometimes they are papered over with a veneer of civility. More often, hostility is openly displayed. The one theme that resonates through most of the autobiographical essays by academics from working-class backgrounds is contempt for members of the old order: “My colleagues lack character, integrity, intelligence, morality, decency. They are careerists. . . .faculty members here are wimps and weaklings, too afraid and too apathetic to fight for justice, freedom, and humanity. Academics thrive on the sure, or almost sure, knowledge that the addressee won’t take a poke at them. . . . My exchanges with colleagues lack that formal, minuet-like quality which I often observe in their debate. I tend to get mad. I have often thought that this probably has something to do with all those times I saw my father “take it” and not act mad because he needed the trade, and because he was vaguely intimidated. Do these people really get paid for this? For writing worthless articles during their summer off in Greece, or not writing anything but spouting about the decline of standards, the poor quality of students, the sloppy research done by junior colleagues? . . . It is hard for me to hide the contempt I feel for these activities. As a result, I feel detached from most of my colleagues. . . .

In their closing essay, Sackrey and Ryan join the chorus: “one of *our* problems with the academy has been the difficulty with taking very seriously the ongoing silliness that comprises the ‘serious’ scholarship of many of our colleagues.” They ask themselves, “How sour, indeed, have our feelings been toward those grand conceptions that accomplish the dual task of omitting people *and* justifying and/or ignoring the inequalities of marked capitalism at the same time.”

Quite sour indeed! And that is both the merit and defect of this work. Any academic who grew up in a home where the telephone book was the only book will find it impossible to put this volume down. Sackrey and Ryan have tapped a motherload. The testaments they have gathered do not just provide shocks of recognition. They are not just raw data. They are powerful collaborations that render the hidden injuries of class visible, compelling, and indelible by translating “private troubles” into public (systemic) concerns – troubles like Guilt: “Being an academic has always involved a large amount of guilt for me, and I think it does more for most people with my background. Somehow I wasn’t ‘working’ for a living. Working was on a schedule: 8-5, or in my experience, 7:30 to 6, six days a week. Adjusting to an academic schedule means you don’t really work. But more important, in my experience, working has always meant a large dose of heavy physical labor.”

Self-doubt: “After twenty years I am still nervous before every class, wondering deep down if I really have anything to say, or am I just bullshitting them.”

Loneliness: “Being a working class academic is sometimes very lonely. It’s difficult to relate to most colleagues, but it is also difficult to relate to working class folk, who tend not to trust you since you got to be a ‘Doctor’.”

Feeling out-of-place: “. . . ‘talking academesse’ for me is a bit like a translation

process from native to foreign tongue. It takes time and hard work. Further, I never enjoyed standing 'up there,' all eyes upon me. But being cautious and careful with my expression and articulation stands out for me as symptomatic of my sense of vulnerability as an interloper."

In short, these testaments are exemplary exercises of sociological imagination, which meet C. Wright Mills charge to responsible critical scholarship (cf. *The Sociological Imagination*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). For Ryan and Sackrey's volume not only offers academics from working-class backgrounds release from the private prisons of self-doubt and self-loathing, it raises the consciousness of all academics to the crucial positioning of knowledge workers and the knowledge industry in the class structure of late capitalism. It reminds us that, "universities are an integral part of the same class system that denies a fair shake to most of the population: they are a theater where people play out the culture's scripted roles as they struggle for recognition, reward, profit, a preferred place in the smaller or broader pecking order of the profession." Moreover, because they act as credentialing agencies for corporate capitalism – certifying, accrediting, and tracking students – universities and their personnel are directly implicated in the reproduction of social injustice in America.

In *The Higher Learning in America* (1918), Veblen documented that, from the beginning, the principle of the marketplace has secured the foundation of which the academic culture was erected in America. The evidence gathered by Ryan and Sackrey indicates that policy makers and administrators are using the current crisis in higher education – "The Great Contraction" – to clear away the final vestiges of the culture of critical humanism and make institutions of higher learning fully responsive to the imperatives of corporate capitalism.

Ryan and Sackrey do not open the doors of the private prisons of their respondents only to release them into the prison yard of collective class guilt. To the contrary, their intent is emancipatory. They believe that it is still possible for academics to lead responsible, moral, and decent lives. They don't offer any recipes for liberation. But they do provide a text and a set of conceptual tools that can engage academics in liberating dialogues. This is no small achievement!

But unfortunately it is an achievement that is secured on very shaky methodological grounds. Ryan and Sackrey know this. They make no claims that their respondents are in any sense a representative sample of academics from working-class backgrounds. Their sample was located through acquaintance networks. The twenty-four essays included in the book were selected from a total of sixty-five written or taped responses collected over a two-year period. Most of the respondents are social scientists who finished their graduate work before 1975, only two are female, none is black. The sample, like the acquaintanceship networks that secured it, is skewed in the left-liberal direction. Ryan and Sackrey's respondents come across collectively as the social conscience of academe. They are bitter and disgruntled but see themselves as committed to a higher morality in a grasping age. There are few Uncle Toms here, yet we all know academics from working-class backgrounds who are as grateful to be where they are as they are proud of their sturdy boot-straps. Ryan and Sackrey's casual approach to sampling is not their only methodological problem. In my judgment, the letter

they use to solicit essays is an invitation to a serpent hunt. Inclusion of exemplary essays with the letter of solicitation further exacerbates the modeling effect, probably to the point of contamination.

The results of this failure of intellectual crafting is to render generalizations based on Ryan and Sackrey's evidence suspect. Their data cannot provide us with even the most rudimentary demographic profile of the "typical" academic from the working class. More significantly, we have no reliable way of determining whether the damages Ryan and Sackrey assay – the chronic anxiety, migraines, ulcers, hypertension, etc. – are injuries of class or systemic deformations of the academic work process. Maybe members of the old order also sleep with one eye opened? Perhaps administrators and bricklayers do too?

We need to know more about this crucial segment of the crucial class of advanced capitalism. *Strangers in Paradise* is an exploratory study. It does not provide an *accurate* reading of the demographics or politics of academics from working-class backgrounds. But, in the judgment of this intellectual migrant, it does nevertheless provide a *true* (resonant) portrayal of the hidden injuries of class mobility in America. Moreover, although it does not directly address the topic, *Strangers* provides compelling support for the argument that attributes the upheavals in higher education during the late sixties and early seventies to class conflict rather than generational conflict.

Kenneth Burke maintains that every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing. Ryan and Sackrey's way of seeing releases long suppressed resentments and prepares the way for a return of the repressed. Their way of not seeing prevents us from knowing whether the repressed are heroes or malingerers.

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