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Molly Geidel. *Peace Corps Fantasies: How Development Shaped the Global Sixties.* Critical American Studies Series. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 320 pp. $30.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8166-9222-4.

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Molly Geidel's *Peace Corps Fantasies* argues that the 1960s Peace Corps structured and idealized development as a male-dominated, fraternal community that informed the Peace Corps' actions in Africa and Latin America. Simultaneously, it created a cultural empire that glorified the United States' model of capitalist and masculine society based on a modernization theory, which claimed that as societies developed both technologically and socially, they achieved fraternal status with larger, First World nations. This fraternity was especially desirable for the First World as a tool for containment and anti-communism intervention in developing Third World nations. Modernization theory promised a path to prosperity through capitalist economic development.[1] By studying various facets of the 1960s Peace Corps, Geidel breaks down the United States' implementation of modernization theory and its national and global results.

Geidel outlines four main purposes: to show the dichotomy within the Peace Corps between selfless global service and the tangible promotion of capitalism via development; to give a genealogy of the rise and fall of heroic development work in the United States during the 1960s; to illustrate the powerful promise that capitalist relations would engender homosocial intimacy with First World nations; and to tell the story of how the development discourse influenced social movements in the US. The structure and span of the book complicate these aims and create disjuncture. The conversation begins with the ideal hero, moves to the role of race and gender, through domestic movements and the impact of the Vietnam War, and ultimately ends with a case study of how the Peace Corps and modernization theory failed in Bolivia.

Structurally, Geidel separates these objectives into three sections, though not textually explicated. The first section comprises three chapters focused on how the Peace Corps embodied the racialized, gendered vision of modernity that linked economic integration with freedom (for the recipient nation), frontier masculinity (for the Peace Corps volunteer—PCV), and global brotherhood. In the first chapter, "Fantasies of Brotherhood: Modernization Theory and the Making of the Peace Corps," which combines discussion of modernization theory and masculinity, Geidel frequently uses graphic sexual language to equate development theory with rape culture, noting that underdeveloped nations were historically characterized as feminine, passive, and weak, and thus easily penetrated by stronger—inherently masculine—developed nations. The chapter's rhetorical

style is jarring, but successfully portrays the sometimes violent and aggressive nature of the development narrative.

Geidel further explains that the imagined ideal development worker typified the dominant male role. While the Peace Corps was not exclusively white or male, race and gender still played a significant role in the image portrayed to the United States and recipient nations, presenting an example of what leadership looked like, both physically (white, male) and through action (development projects). The result of this type of ideal leadership leads to a society that fits into Geidel's argument that modernization through the Peace Corps led to participation in capitalist relations and homosocial intimacy between the US and the recipient nation.

Chapter 2, "Integration and Its Limits: From Romantic Racism to Peace Corps Authenticity," builds on the first chapter, explaining the role of race among both the PCVs and the citizens in recipient nations. The chapter paints a contrast between the 1950s Beat culture and its obsession with the exotic racial other and the Peace Corps' intrigue with the racial other, which precipitated a kind of romantic racism that seduced volunteers into ineffective and worthless infatuation. Geidel cites Jack Kerouac's ***On the Road*** (1957) to explain this contrast and show that the Beat culture only consumed (sometimes violently) the culture of the other. The Peace Corps, on the other hand, was purportedly more involved in peaceful cultural exchange that served to further the modernization mission. They accomplished this by maintaining a minimum safe distance to withstand the allure of the exotic other. This contrast between the Beats' preoccupation with the other and the Peace Corps' ability to engage with it is a crucial element to Peace Corps culture.

"Breaking the Bonds: Decolonization, Domesticity, and the Peace Corps Girl" is the third chapter in the first section, and delves into the gendered roles of female PCVs. Women had markedly different and stereotypical roles within the Peace Corps. Still, the risk and adventure of living and working abroad made the Peace Corps a liberating and bold option for women in the 1960s. The Peace Corps girl was a thrill seeker and a rebel; her primary goal was not marriage and the domestic life of her mother, though she would eventually succumb to her place, belatedly. Geidel argues that the life and trajectory of the Peace Corps girl was a near-perfect allegory for the Third World nations: "after an exhilarating, yet frustrating, attempt at acting out, they will be tamed by organizations like the Peace Corps. Happily acknowledging the natural leadership of the U.S." (p. 88). Both the Peace Corps girl and the newly independent nations return to the civilized plan: masculine domination and leadership. Readers cannot ignore Geidel's use of the child-like term "girl" in reference to the female volunteers, alluding again to a supposed dominant and capable leadership. This end to the first section harkens back to the goal of building the narrative of the development worker, in this instance, the female development worker.

The unofficial second section of ***Peace Corps Fantasies*** dives into how the Peace Corps and modernization theory principles influenced social movements in the United States in the 1960s. Chapter 4, "Bringing the Peace Corps Home: Development in the Black Freedom Movement," equates the civil rights movement in the United States—specifically as it pertained to race—with the development narrative and modernization theory. Returned PCVs cited underdevelopment concepts such as diminished masculinity and lack of paternal influence among minority communities to explain the rights disparity. Geidel uses works by Wesley Hogan and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to address the cooperation of PCVs and civil rights workers. She points to returned PCVs working within organizations like SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) as models in the fight to gain rights and recognition for under-

developed minority communities. This chapter also begins the shift in the public opinion of the heroic development worker, as returned PCVs questioned the methods of the US development plan, and its potential distraction from domestic development and rights issues.

Chapter 5, "Ambiguous Liberation: the Vietnam War and the Committee of Returned Volunteers," elaborates on this shift in the domestic narrative toward heroic development work. Here, Geidel exposes the connections between the Peace Corps and the violence of modernization theory: US involvement in Vietnam—like its involvement in Third World nations—was initiated under the guise of modernization and development. As a government-funded organization that also relied on public volunteers, the Peace Corps had to skillfully maneuver around the Vietnam War. The official stance was that of neutrality toward the war itself, but support for the development narrative undergirded military action. But the Peace Corps was not immune to polarizing opinions. The Committee of Returned Volunteers (CRV) formed as a group of PCVs who had seen the negative, at times violent, side of modernization theory. The Vietnam War provided momentum for this group to gain traction and rebel against the Peace Corps policy of blanket support of US government development policies and action. The CRV publicly called for the end of the Peace Corps and accused the United States of using the organization as a new means of empire. The government responded with a brilliant marketing spin on the CRV's own message. The Peace Corps leadership took the committee's "end the Peace Corps" slogan and claimed that this was also the goal of the Peace Corps; once the world fully modernized and Third World nations developed, there would be no need for their continued work (p. 175). Geidel shows that this division within the government and Peace Corps accelerated the public skepticism of the heroic development worker.

But the opposition to, and criticism of, the Peace Corps was not limited to the domestic public. The final chapter of ***Peace Corps Fantasies***, a stand-alone section, is a case study of Peace Corps action in, and eventual expulsion from, Bolivia. "The Peace Corps, Population Control, and Cultural National Resistance in 1960s Bolivia" opens with a discussion of the film ***Blood of the Condor*** (1969) and uses its narrative to demonstrate the aggression inherent in the US development agenda in Bolivia during the Peace Corps stint in the Altiplano region. From the Bolivian perspective—and Geidel's as well—population control equaled population eradication, especially as it pertained to indigenous communities. This rhetorical manipulation is a key discussion in this chapter, serving as a real-world example of modernization theory and the imperialism it naturally represents. Geidel returns to her discussion of gender roles to reinforce the idea that modernization of society was contingent on male dominance, women's passivity, and women's dehumanization—via population control by forced or coerced sterilization. Thus, modernization theory and the Peace Corps' questionable attempt at population control led to their expulsion from Bolivia in the early 1970s.

Throughout ***Peace Corps Fantasies***, Geidel uses memoirs, speeches from US government officials, film, propaganda posters, media images, interviews, and works from contemporary scholars to craft a larger narrative about the impact and perception of the Peace Corps in the 1960s. However, the diverse aims and resulting disparate nature of the chapters defies an overarching theme, which can make it difficult to see how the chapters relate to each other or create a greater understanding. Her choice of sources complicates this disparity. For example, using Kerouac as a main source in the second chapter, one of the more prosaic chapters of the book, creates disjuncture. The result is a chapter that does not clearly fit into any of Geidel's four stated purposes.

Geidel seeks to establish a dichotomy between a political agenda and humanitarian development goals, which explains somewhat the back-and-forth narrative between aggressive tactics and peaceful cultural exchange throughout the book. On the other hand, scholarship on similar organizations, including David S. Busch's work on the Volunteers to America (where development workers from other nations came to the United States to work in impoverished communities), demonstrates vehement disapproval by many government officials to foreign workers. This scholarship reveals the distrust and fear—because of the aggression inherent in modernization theory—in recipient nations of outside development forces, ironic due to the nature of the Peace Corps and its promotion of cultural exchange, as long as US culture is the one that is spread.[2]

Peace Corps Fantasies is better understood as a tool for studying the various ways the Peace Corps influenced development both in the United States and abroad. Geidel uses Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman's *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (1998) to acknowledge the Peace Corps' public assertion of a unified mission, but she also challenges Hoffman's narrative with a genealogy of the rise and fall of the heroic development worker, turning Hoffman's more positive image on its head. Still, Geidel's response to Hoffman falls somewhat short when she reviews PCV participation in the civil rights movement.

Groups like SNCC and CORE operated successfully on their own before PCVs returned. Geidel misrepresents arguments from cited works, including Wesley Hogan's *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (2007), to cite Peace Corps influence on civil rights groups when in reality, it was the opposite. PCVs who became involved in the civil rights movement came into preexisting organizations, with their own leadership styles. Geidel fails to recognize one key distinction between the civil rights movement organizations and the Peace Corps modernization theory model: the difference between participatory democracy and forced modernization. SNCC, CORE, and other civil rights groups encouraged community members to actively engage democracy as a tool to build a society; the Peace Corps' modernization theory model hinged on an outside influence imposing its own ideas of development on a community, regardless of the community's desire. Additionally, the preexisting organizations leading the civil rights movement did not rely on the Peace Corps model of hierarchy and development from an exterior force. Instead, groups like SNCC and CORE worked within communities as equal members, rather than saviors.

Finally, Geidel misses an opportunity to discuss the role of Peace Corps rhetoric in the development decade, which might have further undergirded her argument that the Peace Corps influenced social movements in the United States. In his book *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* (2001), Kimber Charles Pearce discusses the Kennedy administration's Peace Corps rhetoric for development aid, citing how it manipulated language to gain support for 1960s modernization and development projects.

In conclusion, Geidel contributes to discussions on race and gender in the 1960s and brings a unique perspective on how the concept of masculinity and dominance shaped the development narrative. The intricacy with which she ties together the domestic and international Peace Corps' actions is admirable and makes this a useful text for scholars of modernization and development, the United States in the 1960s, and ethnic and gender studies.

Notes

[1]. See Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[2]. See David S. Busch, "The Politics of International Volunteerism: The Peace Corps and Volunteers to America in the 1960s," *Diplomatic His-*

tory, dhx063 (August25, 2017): https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx063.

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