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Stephen R. Duncan. *The Rebel Café: Sex, Race, and Politics in Cold War America's Nightclub Underground.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. 336 pp. $54.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4214-2633-4.

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The "rebel café" is an umbrella term for the jazz clubs, literary cafes, and coffee houses of New York's Greenwich Village and San Francisco's North Beach in the 1950s and 1960s where patrons sat in close quarters in smoky venues, often underground as was fitting, listening to progressive jazz that could become sublimely improvisational, discussing the thornier points of Marxism or experiencing the onrush of a poet's cascading images. This is a milieu that Stephen R. Duncan understands, as he demonstrates in an outstanding work of cultural history that is also one of cultural geography. Rarely has a book about a subculture revealed such an extraordinary sense of place. He animates the Village for those who only heard it described as a bohemian utopia. The San Remo, the Village Vanguard, and the White Horse Tavern leap from names on the page to places in the memory, causing readers who know the territory to pause and remember a scene that is no more. Duncan has walked its quirky and sometimes mean streets, which still must fascinate him. He even includes a picture of the Village Vanguard, which he had taken himself. He is also a reliable guide for those like myself who are more familiar with the Village than with North Beach, which he also renders with the accuracy of a cartographer. This is clearly a bicoastal microcosm united by a single bond: the need for community in a world awash in Cold War paranoia where those to whom mainstream life meant gray flannel suits, ranch houses in the suburbs, commuter trains, and bomb shelters could be with their own —marginalized subterraneans waiting to hear someone play a crazy grace note, turn a striking phrase, or sing a song that encapsulates an era. Anyone expecting the Great American Songbook as interpreted by Frank Sinatra or Ella Fitzgerald would not hear it at the rebel café. Instead, you could hear Nina Simone perform the bitter civil rights anthem, "Mississippi Goddam." Haut bourgeois the rebel café was not. In the period before the 1960s civil rights movement, if you went to a club in the Village or North Beach, you would get a lesson in race relations without a text or a syllabus. It was, literally, the real thing.

Like any countercultural institution, the rebel café was a left-wing creation in both senses of the word. Barney Josephson's Café Society, which Duncan believes was probably "bankrolled by the Communist Party" (p. 38), was radical enough to attract the attention of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1947, the same year the committee began its investigation into the alleged Communist subversion of the movie industry. HUAC's target was not Barney but his

brother Leon, an admitted Communist who was charged with contempt and sentenced to a year in prison. The publicity generated by Leon's imprisonment spelled the end of Café Society, an interracial gathering place where Billie Holiday popularized the wrenching "Strange Fruit." Max Gordon had better luck with the Village Vanguard, which today is primarily considered a jazz club, although at the beginning it was home to folk singers and poets. Godon was anti-capitalist and his politics were definitely left of center, but Duncan argues he did not suffer because of his politics.

The rebel café was not meant for Republicans in three-piece suits and leather briefcases. Some like the hungry i in North Beach attracted tourists and celebrities. Actress Marlene Dietrich, who enjoyed political satire, told Mort Sahl that the hungry i was "the only place she'd seen political cabaret outside Berlin" (p. 161). Readers might be puzzled by Duncan's juxtaposition of Sahl, Lenny Bruce, and Dick Gregory as political satirists. Duncan is correct in saying that Sahl and Bruce were trailblazers but ones whose trails bifurcated. Sahl did stand-up comedy when the phrase was not even in use, inspiring comedians like the multitalented Woody Allen to embark on a career as a short story writer, playwright, screenwriter, and screenwriter-director. Sahl was also much more disciplined than Bruce and was popular and safe enough to bring his show, ***Mort Sahl on Broadway***, to New York in 1987. Bruce, who seems to have invented the art of talking dirty, made it possible for comics to do away with taboos and speak the unspeakable. Gregory is the mean between the conversational and the scatalogical. Unlike Sahl and Bruce, "who failed to live up to their political potential" (p. 192), Gregory was a true activist, participating in the antiwar protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and even getting shot in the leg while trying to urge calm at the Watts uprising in 1965. Gregory was both a rebel café patriot and product.

As its name implies, the rebel café was more rebellious than revolutionary—"an outpost of possibility," as Duncan calls it (p. 116). As poetry, Allen Ginsburg's powerful "Howl" (1956) might have seemed revolutionary when he read it at 6 Gallery in North Beach, and in a way it was, but these days students read it in modern poetry courses where it is considered Whitmanesque. The habitués of the rebel café might talk revolution but would stop short of storming the barricades—with one exception. In 1969, homosexuality was still considered an aberration, and there were few places where gays, lesbians, and transvestites could congregate. Gay bars were often raided, and the night of June 28, 1969, the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village was the scene of such a raid. But the patrons did not go gently into the night: "The Villagers resisted—throwing bottles and rocks amid trash can fires and graffiti calling for 'Gay Power'" (p. 235). The Stonewall Inn may not have been a rebel café in the strictest sense, but it was certainly a club with two dance floors. The riot spawned a revolution. Now the site of the Stonewall Inn is a landmark.

Reaching the end of Duncan's remarkable book, I could not help but think of King Arthur's reflections in the final scene of the Broadway musical ***Camelot*** (1960): "For one brief shining hour" there was something known as Camelot. Such was Greenwich Village, as lovingly recreated by Duncan.

One minor error on page 90: "Pirate Jenny" is not from ***The Blue Angel*** (1930) but from Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's ***The Threepenny Opera*** (1928), although one can imagine Marlene Dietrich singing it in that iconic film.

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