

CHAPTER 6

“WE CAN REMEMBER IT FOR YOU WHOLESALE”

LESSONS OF THE BROADCAST BLACKLIST

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What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality. And just as bourgeois ideology is defined by the abandonment of the name 'bourgeois,' myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made. (Barthes 1989, 142)

IN PHILIP K. DICK'S STORY, "WE CAN REMEMBER IT FOR YOU WHOLESALE," Douglas Quail purchases implanted or "extra-factual" memories in order to inexpensively fulfill his dream of visiting Mars. But the implantation reveals that that Quail's memory has already been tampered with—he actually is a government assassin—and further attempts to implant memories reveal older suppressed memories. The metaphor of Quail's extra-factual, manipulated memories offers a starting-point for understanding why U.S. culture recalls the 1950s through a certain set of images and ideas. In particular, U.S. culture "remembers" the 1950s as the fountainhead of family and family values largely because our memories of family and the gender roles that underwrite this construction were in fact remembered for us "wholesale," through a process of industrial production that has repressed even the memory of any challenges to what would soon become the ideological status quo.



The following essay considers the ways in which the broadcast blacklist affected how media studies scholars think about and study the 1950s, as well how we understand the role of gender and family in 1950s popular culture. At the start of the 1950s—at the very moment in which television was emerging, in the words of blacklisted writer Shirley Graham DuBois, as “the newest, the most powerful, the most direct means of communication devised by Man . . . [whose] potentialities for Good or for Evil are boundless”—a massive ideological crackdown occurred in broadcasting (Graham 1964, 1). By focusing on how the blacklist made struggles over gender, race, and class unspeakable in the new medium, this essay seeks to restore the memory of these struggles and their participants to accounts of the 1950s, to underscore the strategic manipulation of culture and memory by conservative forces, and to remind us just how crucial historical research is for media studies.

GENDER, HISTORY, AND PRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, literature on Cold War television has focused on consumption and women-as-consumers of television produced for them by men. This focus has made sense in terms of our own intellectual history—for those interested in gender and women in particular, women were at least visible in front of the camera and, based on the assumption that women were excluded from production, the focus on consumption allowed media studies scholars to consider women as active agents in relation to media, rather than as passive spectators of content produced and structured by a male gaze. But as historian Michele Hilmes (1997) convincingly argues, women were working in the broadcast industry prior to the 1950s. The focus on women-as-consumers has had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing the gendering of producers as male and consumers as female and reproducing the belief that women were simply not present at the birth of either radio or television. While key scholarly works on 1950s television—Lynn Spigel’s *Make Room for TV* (1992), George Lipsitz’s *Time Passages* (2001), Nina Leibman’s *Living Room Lectures* (1995), and Ella Taylor’s *Prime Time Families* (1991)—all importantly offered ideological analyses of 1950s television and its content, none of these considered the material production of these images: namely, the producers and writers who created television content and the conditions in which they were working at such a formative moment in the history

of television. Of course, in order to document resistance to 1950s gender ideologies on the part of cultural producers we must also understand the impact of what Raymond Williams (2001) described as the selective tradition in order to seek traces of content that never made it onto the air. Focusing only on what was actually broadcast does not allow us glimpses into alternatives to the gendered narratives that ultimately became hegemonic. Fundamentally, understanding the history of what was made and broadcast on television also means researching what it was not possible to make.

Although the blacklist played a determining role in what made it onto the air, as well as what would make it onto the air in years to come, the impact of the Red Scare on the content of 1950s television has yet to be reckoned with. Scholarship on the broadcast blacklist remains thin, although a large body of literature in film history and studies addresses the blacklist in the motion picture industry. But no research focuses specifically on the impact of the blacklist on women working in film or television industries or the progressive feminist ideas many of them were struggling to communicate to a larger audience. How do we account for these gaps in scholarship? After all, media and cultural studies include many articles and full-length books on 1950s television. Was the blacklist in broadcasting really such a comparatively uninteresting or unimportant event in television history, with little impact on the industry itself? Following from these questions, are there historical and political reasons for the ignorance of the broadcast blacklist in popular culture that are homologous to the silence in scholarly literature? Why do memories of the 1950s—whether popular or scholarly—so seldom include mention of the blacklist?

THE MAKING OF THE MAKING OF THE FAMILY

Fifties television programming contained a specifically androcentric fantasy of family life. In it, women uncomplainingly did the work of raising children, managing households, and volunteering in their communities, gratefully exchanging stressful work in the waged economy for the promise of serenity in the domestic sphere. Those who populated this landscape were as white as the snow that often distorted television signals. Judged solely on the basis of television images, it seemed that the ideological shift that occurred in the years following the war was a bloodless coup in which those working in the broadcast



industry and consumers alike—all of them apparently white people invested in whiteness—were swept off their feet by the seductive promises of postwar consumer culture.

The world that appeared in 1950s family sitcoms was a world in which father knew best; in which no one suspected that Margaret Anderson's obsessive cleaning might be a symptom of a problem that had no name, as Betty Friedan (1964) was to put it less than a decade later; or that June Cleaver's bland happiness may have come from a pill bottle. As Joanne Meyerowitz points out in her reassessment of postwar mass culture, "the conservative promotion of domesticity" (1994, 230) was neither blindly accepted nor unopposed. Women did not always joyously give up jobs that had afforded them a measure of autonomy. Rather than decreasing, women's workforce participation steadily increased throughout the 1950s, albeit in low paying and often part time positions. Black women and men did not quietly and passively return to lives limited by segregation and racial discrimination, as the civil rights movement was demonstrating.

The images that dominated television content in the 1950s ineluctably shaped beliefs and memories of family and gender in the U.S., their formulaic nature and cohesiveness erasing the struggles that were occurring off camera. Fearful of even referencing the blacklist, writers avoided hinting at its existence. Even fifteen years later, when the blacklist came up during publicity interviews with blacklisted actor Jean Muir, networks "bleeped" out references to the sponsors, networks, and ad agencies who had had a hand in her firing (Gould 1965, 29; 1966, 55). This silence is notable in an industry that has avidly mythologized its own history in a series of now iconic moments: the Army-McCarthy hearings, in which the new medium of television played the role of heroic defender of civil liberties (overlooking, of course, CBS' firing of Ed Murrow just a few years later, not to mention its assiduous enforcement of the loyalty oath among its rank and file); the quiz show scandal of 1956, enshrined as a triumph of self-regulation; coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention; the inflated role that television was said to have played in ending the Vietnam War. That television has proved reluctant to narrate this one story about its own history is therefore significant, particularly insofar as this story hints at the powerful suppression of dissident views on family and gender.



Fig. 1: Jean Muir (Courtesy of Stephens College)

At the time, and for creative and often politically progressive people working in media industries, television held out new hopes and dreams about the creative and cultural potential of broadcasting. Although there was no debate over whether the new medium was going to be commercial, a cohort of writers like Ruth Gordon, Garson Kanin, Gore Vidal, and Arthur Miller all believed that television could provide an important venue for political and creative expression. But progressives underestimated just how far the U.S. government, media executives, advertisers, and politicians were willing to go to ensure that "controversial" content (particularly material that could be construed as politically progressive on issues of race, gender, class, or immigration) would not appear. The family that came to appear in entertainment programming was thus very much the end result of a systematic purge of dissenting voices and viewpoints from media industries; the memory of that family very much the product of an active process of



Fig. 2: Hazel Scott at Piano (permission of Library of Congress)

memory implantation and manipulation. To remember the Red Scare and purges in the television industry thus is to understand the images produced in the 1950s as the effect not necessarily of consensus within the industry or in U.S. culture writ large, but as the result of abject cowardice, concessions to rightwing fears and paranoia, and the quashing of debate ironically attributed to communism itself. That the blacklist in the television industry occurred during a formative moment in television history, in which the routines and practices that would come to govern the industry for decades to come were beginning to coalesce, meant that television content from that moment on would bear the imprimatur of anti-communism and the racism and sexism that were a part of it.

THE BIBLE OF THE BLACKLIST

On June 22, 1950, *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* was published by the anti-communist journal

CounterAttack. The introduction's author was Vincent Hartnett, a former naval intelligence officer and later an employee for the Philips H. Lord Agency, where he supervised the writing of the radio series *Gangbusters*. Vincent Hartnett also served as an informant for the FBI (Jean Muir FBI Files 1953).¹ *Red Channels* began with testimony J. Edgar Hoover had presented to a U.S. Congressional Committee in 1947, that "The (Communist) Party has departed from depending upon the printed word as its medium of propaganda and has taken to the air. Its members and sympathizers have not only infiltrated the airways but they are now persistently seeking radio channels" (*Red Channels* 1950, 1). Although the publication of the slender volume was eclipsed by the start of the Korean War just three days later, over the course of the summer, anti-communist forces began to mobilize using *Red Channels* to pressure advertisers and sponsors to fire the "controversial" cultural workers listed in its pages. David Jacobson of Young & Rubicam told the FBI that General Foods "had stated they would put nobody on their sponsored program who had been listed in 'Red Channels'" (Nichols 1950). In August, CBS suddenly fired Jean Muir, who had been cast as the mother in the television sitcom *The Aldrich Family*, just hours before taping of the first episode was to begin. In September, NBC very quietly cancelled *The Hazel Scott Show*. Its star had appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee just a week earlier. The firing of these two women—one white, one African American—ushered in the era of the broadcast blacklist.

Red Channels included the names of 144 women and men working in broadcasting, as well as the names of people the authors feared might move into broadcasting. Of the 144 names listed, a surprising 40 were women working in broadcasting, as producers, writers, actors, and dancers. The individuals identified in *Red Channels* were listed alongside various political affiliations that: a) showed "how the Communists have been able to carry out their plan of infiltration" of broadcasting; b) indicated "the extent to which" individuals had been "inveigled" or duped into lending their names "to organizations espousing Communist causes"; and c) that were intended "to discourage actors and artists from naïvely lending their names to Communist organizations or causes in the future" (*Red Channels*, 9).

¹ Both Jean Muir and Hazel Scott's FBI files are available on my blog: cstable.wordpress.com.



Red Channels had an effect disproportionate to its size or the veracity of its research. The firing of Muir, a longtime supporter of Civil Rights and the NAACP, close friend of NAACP president Walter White, and wife of the American Federation of Radio and Television Actors' head counsel, Henry Jaffe, sent a clear message to progressives in the broadcast industry, many of whom had watched in dismay as the Red Scare hit Hollywood a few years earlier. Shortly after the show's taping was cancelled, General Foods Corporation, the program's sponsor, announced that they had fired Jean Muir because she was "a controversial personality' whose presence on the video show might adversely affect the sale of the advertiser's product" (Gould 1950a, 1). According to NBC and General Foods, the protests of outraged anti-communist consumers had forced them to make this difficult decision, even though they had received a scant twenty phone calls and two telegrams in protest—hardly a mandate, considering the thousands of letters some programs received from consumers (Everitt 2007, 150). When NBC moved to replace Muir, General Foods' position had become more absolute: they had cancelled Muir's contract because they were certain her presence "would provoke unfavorable criticism and even antagonism among sizable groups of consumers" (Everitt, 60).

The firing of Hazel Scott received considerably less attention in the mainstream press than did the firing of Jean Muir, although the African American press was swift to point out that both women had been politically active in the Civil Rights movement. A talented, Juilliard-educated musician and performer, like Jean Muir, Scott was married to a prominent New Yorker: Scott had married Adam Clayton Powell in 1945. Like Muir, Scott had used her stardom to advocate for Civil Rights. Throughout her career, Scott refused to play in segregated venues. In the late 1940s, while touring the Northwest, a diner in Pasco, Washington refused to serve Scott. When she complained to the local police, Scott was told that she could either leave town or be arrested for disturbing the peace. Instead, Scott filed a lawsuit against the diner owners, ultimately winning a settlement of \$250,000, which she promptly donated to the NAACP (Chilton 2008, 139-140). Scott's role as host of her own variety show also challenged the color line in television: it was the first television show to star an African American (Nat King Cole's equally short-lived variety show would not premier until 1956) and a woman.

That the Muir and Scott cases involved politically active career women who had close ties to the NAACP, as well as husbands who were prominent liberal politicians (Jaffe was dealing with the impact of the blacklist in television and Powell was seeking re-election to the U.S. House of Representatives) was hardly coincidental. For as the ideology of the nuclear family took hold, women working in the broadcast industry found themselves vulnerable on two fronts. First, women were expected to be engaging in appropriate procreative activities in the domestic sphere rather than competing with men for employment. Professional women who had been combining careers and families in the 1940s became sitting ducks in the 1950s. Second, and as the rightwing vituperation aimed at Eleanor Roosevelt illustrated, not only should women not forsake their domestic duties to their families, to interfere in political matters (save only the most racist, rightwing, pro-natalist politics) was as surely a sign of communism as disobedience to male authority was a sign of witchcraft in the seventeenth century.²

Once labeled a communist, moreover, these women had few resources for defending themselves. As scholar Marie Jahoda (1956) made clear in her landmark study of the blacklist in the entertainment industry, to even refer to the blacklist in public was to make one's self politically vulnerable, which made even sympathizers reluctant to express solidarity or support. The blacklist combined with legal action on the part of those dismissed to create a culture of silence and denial. John Frankenheimer, a director at NBC in the 1950s, later recounted: "Well, it was awful and what happened at CBS was that you would get a list of actors and you'd say Simon, Penn, Mulligan, Frankenheimer and you'd call into an extension and you didn't even know who was at the other end of it. And the next day somebody would call you back and say Mulligan fine, Penn fine, Frankenheimer no. And you never had, you never knew why or how and then you'd try to get to the bottom of it and you couldn't. It was a very, very serious horrible phase of our lives and our business. And people forget about that when they talk about the Golden Age of television" ("The Dynamics of Live Television" 1994). To defend one's self publicly—to name the namers—was to risk further smears and accusations, particularly for those who

² Redhunters like Elizabeth Dilling and J. Edgar Hoover shared a dislike for Eleanor Roosevelt that bordered on the obsessive. See Gleason (1997) and Jeansonne (1996) on Elizabeth Dilling and Theoharis and Cox (1998) on Hoover.



Fig. 3: Gertrude Berg (George Karger/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images) did hold progressive beliefs, who had worked for social change, and who found themselves in the midst of a culture war intent on demonizing a wide range of progressive opinions.

Jean Muir is a case in point. Accusations that Muir was a communist were based on a transcription error made by an FBI agent who worked for the infamous New York Anti-Red Squad. At the advice of her counsel (husband Henry Jaffe), Muir sought to explain her connections with the progressive organizations with which she had been associated for two decades, first to the FBI's New York Field Office and then several years later to the FBI in Washington, D.C. Mistakenly believing that the Communist Party was the problem, Muir criticized her naïvete in relation to a variety of ostensibly Communist-related causes. Not realizing that in the eyes of the FBI, Civil Rights activism

was largely identical with membership in the Communist Party, Muir staunchly defended her role in Civil Rights activism and her unconditional support for the Roosevelt administration and the late president. According to an FBI report of her interview with the D.C. headquarters, “The subject proudly admitted membership in this organization stating she belonged to the New York Section of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare” (Jean Muir FBI Files 1953, 4). Shortly after this meeting, the FBI discovered that their informant had NOT identified Muir as being a member of the Communist Party and they closed their file on her. Although they corrected internal documents concerning Muir, the damage to her career was irreparable.

The first two blacklist cases involved performers, but many of the women whose names appeared in *Red Channels* or whose professional lives were affected by the broadcast blacklist were writers whose perspectives diverged significantly from the status quo on family values emerging during the early 1950s. Jean Muir was an outspoken critic of the racist and sexist roles available to people of color and women, but as an actor she had little control over them. Women producers and writers, in contrast, like Gertrude Berg, Shirley Graham, and Joan LaCour Scott could exert some influence over the content of television programming. Gertrude Berg, for example, wrote, produced, directed, and starred in the long-running hit *The Goldbergs*. Throughout its two-decade run, *The Goldbergs* wore its New Deal, pro-immigrant sentiments on its sleeve, offering warm representations of Jewish life and culture during a viciously anti-Semitic era.

Thousands of Jewish listeners, Jewish organizations, and non-Jews wrote fan letters in appreciation and support of Berg's efforts during the 1930s and 1940s. A rabbi Berg had consulted about a wedding ceremony concluded his fan letter by saying, “I am glad to help any little way that I can, because I think that you are doing more for ‘better understanding’ and ‘good will’ of an international and interracial character than all the organized movements” (De Sola Pool 1932). A listener from Arkansas shared this sentiment, posing the following rhetorical question in a letter to Berg: “I wonder Mrs. Berg if you realize what you are doing to carry on the Jewishness we are used to—there is so much of our traditions, so many of our folk expressions—so much of the real things that makes us Jews—of which so many of our race is ashamed? From the bottom of my heart I thank you and sincerely I feel your fifteen minutes each night is a Kadish and memorial to my



darling mother—may you and your little group continue!” (Dreyfus 1934, 2-3). Jewish organizations, like the National Council of Jewish Women and the Anti-Defamation League, added their own testimonials in fan letters. In the opinion of one representative of the Cleveland Board of Education, “this series from your facile pen has done more to *set us Jews right* with the ‘Goyim’ than all the sermons ever preached by the Rabbis” (Benesch 1931).³

Berg’s audience support gave her some protection from the blacklist, as did her cultivation of a star persona based on traditional maternal ideology. Nevertheless, blacklists dropped hints and innuendoes about Berg’s ostensible red affinities in interviews with the press. Vincent Hartnett, who wrote the introduction to *Red Channels*, singled out *The Goldbergs* as evidence that the broadcasting industry was “indirectly but effectively” helping to “subsidize Stalinism in this country” (1950, 161). “It is believed,” Hartnett slyly added, “Miss Gertrude Berg, the ‘Mollie Goldberg’ who also writes and produces the series, had disavowed her past Communist-front affiliations” (1950, 167).⁴

Gertrude Berg thus became a secondary target of the blacklist. Jewish actor Philip Loeb, who played the role of Molly’s husband Jake, became the vehicle for a frontal assault on *The Goldbergs*. According to Hartnett, Loeb’s “affiliations over the years hardly denote sympathy for our American capitalist system, let alone complete loyalty to our form of government” (1950, 168). The assault that followed his listing in *Red Channels* was vicious and protracted: “So low were the blows that an elderly actor, a brass-collar Republican who had voted for Coolidge, Hoover, Landon and Wilkie, defended the accused in *Equity Magazine*: ‘The charges against you, Mr. Loeb,’ he wrote, ‘seem to be four in number. 1. That you are a Jew. 2. That you are a Communist. 3. That you are a troublemaker, a rabble-rouser. 4. That you are personally ambitious. I will have no truck with these charges’” (Kanfer 1973, 4).

When Berg refused to fire him, additional pressures were brought to bear. In 1951, sponsor General Foods dropped *The Goldbergs*, publicly asserting that “It was the *least lucrative* of all General Foods’ evening TV properties,” but neglecting to mention that the drop in

3 Berg also managed to do this during the 1930s, when there was a virtual blackout on information about the worsening situation of European Jews. See Weinstein 2007 for a provocative discussion of this.

4 In response to this author’s Freedom of Information Act request, the FBI denied maintaining a file on Berg.

revenue resulted from a sponsor boycott, rather than lower ratings (“General Foods to Drop the Goldbergs” 1951). Elsewhere, General Foods stated that their reason for cancelling the show involved a “trend on the part of food sponsors to drop expensive TV shows because of the new price cutback,” although *The Goldbergs* could hardly have been more expensive than programs like *Arthur Godfrey & His Friends* and the *Frank Sinatra Show*, both of which featured established male stars (*Herald American* 1951). In a moment of uncharacteristic honesty, one advertising executive wrote to Berg in 1952, confirming that “the only disappointment which either we or the client [at that point Ekco Products Company, a manufacturer of bakeware] have had in connection with the show has been in regard to clearances” (“Earle Ludgin and Company Advertising” 1952).

Shortly after General Foods terminated its sponsorship of *The Goldbergs*, CBS dropped the series in 1951. NBC agreed to pick up *The Goldbergs* in 1952, but sponsors made it clear that they would not touch the program as long as Loeb was involved. Loeb subsequently “left” the program in 1952. In response to continued network pressures, and in a last ditch effort to save the show and the livelihoods of those who depended on it, Berg made concessions about the content of the program. Having resisted the move to the suburbs for years, at long last, the family made the move from 1030 East Tremont Avenue to a suburb named “Haverville.” But removed from its original milieu—the tenement in the Bronx—the series lost heart and meaning. Her moral and cultural authority diminished, Molly Goldberg seemed lost in the suburban environment. Episodes like one in which she went to a “fat farm” rang hollow and ended badly (the final shot in this episode showed Molly alone in the kitchen, furtively shoveling spaghetti into her mouth directly from a pot). Episodes recycled from radio scripts also appeared strained, with Molly’s frugality and immigrant ethos at odds with incitements to the new consumerism.

Even these changes were insufficient to remove the taint of the blacklist, for *The Goldbergs* continued to experience “sponsor troubles” (a euphemism for problems related to the blacklist). NBC moved *The Goldbergs* around the prime time schedule before it was picked up by the financially troubled DuMont network, where it died a quiet death in October 1954. Gertrude Berg continued to work in theater, winning a Tony Award for best actress for her role in *A Majority of One* in 1959. She attempted yet another comeback on television in the series



Fig. 4: Shirley Graham (Permission of Schlesinger Library)

Mrs. G. Goes to College, which ran for a single season on CBS in 1961-1962. Berg died suddenly of heart failure in 1966, at the age of 67. The ending to Philip Loeb's career was swifter and more tragic. In 1955, out of work, homeless (he had been living with blacklisted actor Zero Mostel's family), and depressed about his inability to provide medical care for his schizophrenic son, Philip Loeb took an overdose of sleeping pills and died in a hotel room in New York City.

The example of *The Goldbergs* contradicts network, sponsor, and advertiser attempts to blame the blacklist on consumer protests, instead underscoring the fact that the series had never been popular among those who owned and controlled production. Over its lifetime, the series was cancelled three times in total, constant reminders that as a woman and a Jew, Berg's position in the broadcast industry was tenuous at best. Networks resented Berg's successful financial negotiations on her own part as well as that of her cast and crew. The networks disapproved of the show's politics—its antiquated pro-immigrant beliefs, its commitment to social welfare, and its large, powerful female star. Just a few weeks before the publication of *Red Channels*, the entire cast of *The Goldbergs* honored a walkout on the part of the technician's union—their refusal to perform left CBS having to deal with the problem of dead air time. Berg routinely hired performers and writers who were either blacklisted or would go on to be blacklisted: actor

Burl Ives, who played himself; African American actor Fredi Washington; and she had announced her desire to once again break the color line by writing in a part for actor Eartha Kitt. The blacklist thus gave the network and sponsors an alibi for abandoning a cast and program they had never particularly liked. By blaming the audience for their decision, they disavowed their part in cancelling a popular and much-loved show—the decision had not been theirs but the result of their sensitivity to the audience's demands.

In addition to eliminating influential women like Berg from the television industry, the blacklist also served to prevent other progressive cultural workers from making the move from other media industries into television. From the standpoint of her professional activity, for example, Shirley Graham was an unlikely target of the broadcast blacklist. Graham had made some limited forays into radio, researching audiences with NBC, for example, while she attended graduate school at Yale in the 1930s. In addition, her opera *Tom-Tom: An Epic of Music and the Negro* and play *Track Thirteen* had been broadcast on NBC. CBS had broadcast two of her teleplays (on George Washington Carver and Phillis Wheatley). But Graham's commercial successes had largely been in the area of adolescent fiction and her blacklisting in the pages of *Red Channels* caught her completely by surprise. Of her blacklisting, she wrote in disingenuous and cynical mimicry of the language demanded by HUAC: "I am not now and never have been employed in the radio and television fields."

Graham's FBI records make it clear that Graham's novels were a source of concern for the FBI and its anti-communist allies. Frequent references to Graham's novels about Paul Robeson and Frederick Douglass appear in FBI reports throughout the 1950s, as in the following excerpt from a 70 page FBI "synopsis," that reported that Graham, "is best known for her biographies of famous Negroes, written for young people. She is co-author of the book, 'Dr George Washington Carver: Scientist' (1944), written for teen-age readers. Her second biography for young people, 'Paul Robeson, Citizen of the World,' was published in 1946. Scheduled for early 1947 publication, was her next book, 'There Was Once a Slave.'" (Shirley Graham FBI Files FBI Memorandum 1956). One FBI summary of Graham's activities cited a letter received by J. Edgar Hoover from a confidential informant, who complained that "*Paul Robeson, Citizen of the World*, by Shirley



Graham" was a book not "fit for formative young minds" (Shirley Graham DuBois FBI Files Report 1961).

Graham's successes in popularizing progressive ideas and her access to what one FBI special agent in charge referred to as "the subversive press" also gravely concerned the FBI. A report from the FBI's New York City Red Squad urged caution in approaching Graham herself, because "the subject is an Editor of a Communist Publication and she is a lecturer and writer of Communist propaganda having access to publication in both Domestic and Foreign Communist publications" (Shirley Graham DuBois FBI Files 1961). Not only were Graham's ideas dangerous, that is, she also had access to national and international distribution networks that could not be easily controlled by the FBI.

Although Graham had been the subject of various diatribes in the pages of *CounterAttack*, dating back to a 1949 article that objected to CBS's broadcast of *The Story of Phillis Wheatley*, the publication of *Red Channels* renewed anti-communist attention to her work. Fearless and outspoken, Graham was one of the few blacklisted to openly discuss the effects of *Red Channels* on her life and livelihood. Fresh from husband W.E.B. Du Bois' indictment under the Foreign Agent's Registration Act and trial (which was finally dismissed by a federal judge for lack of evidence), Graham's responses to inquiries about the blacklist from Joseph Goldstein, editor of the *Yale Law Journal*, and Elmer Rice, Chairman of the Committee on Blacklisting established by the Authors League of America, paint a picture of widespread, organized political repression. Graham described the multiple venues through which the blacklist operated: "As an author it is extremely difficult to put one's finger on such things as 'denial of employment' and the like. Books can be attacked through distribution channels, publicity, handling in stores. My income has steadily decreased" (Graham 1952, 2). She told Goldstein that inclusion of her name in *Red Channels* resulted in demands "that my books be withdrawn from the schools and libraries" of Scarsdale, New York (Graham 1952, 1). Calls to ban Graham's books from public libraries also followed from upstate New York, home of American Business Consultants, as well as Wheeling, West Virginia, where Joseph McCarthy had made his infamous speech about Communist infiltration of the U.S. government just six months before. In addition, publicity appearances for *Your Most*

Humble Servant (Graham's award-winning book about Benjamin Baneker) were inexplicably cancelled, never to be rescheduled.

Although *Red Channels* purported to focus on the communist takeover of the airwaves, as the blacklisting of Graham illustrates, its effects rippled across media industries. Although Graham's novel about white journalist and abolitionist Anne Newport Royall received enthusiastic reviews from readers, five major publishing houses rejected it. As Graham put it in her letter to Goldstein, "No publisher has criticized the manuscript as a piece of writing. This we could understand and accept. Novels are always worked on after being accepted by some publisher. But these refusals have each time been vague and in certain cases obviously reluctant" (Goldstein, 2). The novel was never published.

Harassed by the FBI and the INS, Graham and DuBois left the U.S. for Ghana in 1961. Other blacklisted writers and producers saw the writing on the wall earlier, leaving the U.S. for work in Europe and Mexico in the early 1950s. In the UK, the ATV's *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, which first appeared on British televisions in 1955, was produced by a small production company named Sapphire Films. Sapphire Films was founded by writer Hannah Weinstein, an American who had worked professionally for a Hearst newspaper and politically for communist pressure groups in the U.S., like the Progressive Citizens of America, which criticized the House Un-American Activities Committee, and called for its abolition. Weinstein founded Sapphire Films in London in 1951. Over the next decade, she hired a cohort of American writers who could no longer find work in the U.S. because of the blacklists in the film and television industries. Hollywood Ten members Ring Lardner and Adrian Scott, as well as Scott's wife Joan LaCour Scott, wrote scripts for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, as well as a later production of *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot*, finding much-needed employment during the leanest years of the blacklist. Scripts for both these programs reflected the concerns and political beliefs of these progressive writers, who believed in Civil Rights, gender equality, and economic justice.

The Adventures of Robin Hood could not have been made in 1950s America—its themes of solidarity and economic justice too obviously at odds with the individualism and consumerism promoted by television; its references to the Cold War suppression of dissent too open. In an episode written by Scott and LaCour Scott entitled "The Cathedral," Robin criticizes the Sheriff of Nottingham's monopoly



ownership of property only to be accused of "being a tool of an international conspiracy, anti-church and anti-Christ" (Scott and La Cour Scott 1957, 4). Indeed, progressive beliefs and themes as a whole were eradicated from American television entertainment program in the early 1950s by the anti-communist crusaders who promoted the blacklist.

One can, of course, find traces of progressive ideas in the programming to which blacklisted writers contributed, often under pseudonyms. As writer and producer Adrian Scott put it, "when things were bad for me I did not, as most did, look for the best programs on the air—which everybody hoped to write for. I looked for the worst. My theory was that the worst program, or programs, were the ones who needed scripts the most" (Adrian Scott, 1966: 2). In practice, this squeezing in "the back door," as Scott put it, meant writing scripts for programs like *Lassie*, which became Scott and his wife Joan's most reliable source of income.

Relegated to the margins of television production, writers like the Scotts smuggled progressive content into the scripts of the children's programs they wrote for in the U.S. *Lassie* (1954-1973) resonates with the cadences of this generation's political vocabulary and concerns. *Lassie* often featured animals that, like those cultural workers who had been blacklisted, had been falsely accused of vile acts and had to be redeemed by the resourceful collie. Originally, *Lassie* featured a widowed, single mother, who later adopted a second child, and lived with her elderly father on a farm rather than in the consumer-oriented suburbs that were the backdrop for virtually all family sitcoms and dramas of the 1950s. Over the years, *Lassie's* familial relations included a series of young boys, forestry workers, and finally the inmates of a home for "troubled" children—hardly the ingredients for the making of a nuclear family. One hears echoes of a forgotten generation's language when Timmy accuses Lassie of being "a reactionary" because of her dogmatic attachment to tradition; when a forest ranger comments on eagles' egalitarian "division of labor" in caring for their young (Court, 1972); or when a priest adopts an orphaned boy whose parents had worked with him in South America "to improve crop yield among peasants" (Court, n.d.). But confined as they were to children's programming or exiled from cultural memory altogether, these viewpoints did not appear in the mainstream of 1950s entertainment programming.

Images and ideas like those created by blacklisted talent would not be part of the culture from which later writers would grow new programming. Perhaps most importantly, that progressive ideas had ever been debated, held legitimate, and fought for by women and men of intellect and principle was erased from television's memory of the past. The blacklist chilled the speech of all television writers, issuing a clear warning about the kinds of content and representations the new medium would tolerate. As Berg put it in a 1956 interview: "You see, darling, don't bring up anything that will bother people. That's very important. Unions, politics, fund-raising, Zionism, socialism, intergroup relations. I don't stress them. And after all, aren't all such things secondary to daily family living?" (qtd in Zurawik 2003, 45).

In the end, understanding the images produced in the 1950s solely on the basis of those that made it to prime time has contributed to reifying a particular memory of this era, based on the suppression of intense class, gender, and racial discrimination. The images upon which we base our memories of the 1950s were made by forces that had every intention of erasing these struggles from sight and memory. The family that is remembered, that is, has erased the fact that *it once was made*. It took a culture war of unprecedented proportions—a war that brought together forces of industry, white supremacy, and government—to still the voices of protest and opposition to Cold War politics of gender, race, and class. By this war's end, images of interracial solidarity, working women, and even the presence of people of color in television programming became evidence of heresy.

What writer David Zurawik observed of Berg can be usefully applied to the historical suppression of the blacklist as a whole: "the founders of the networks were uncomfortable with that history and their role in it and so she sort of became a story they didn't want to tell because it brought up the narrative of the blacklist. And so she sort of fell by the wayside" ("From the Goldbergs to 2005" 2005). Rightly uncomfortable about what the narrative of the blacklist revealed about the ideological beliefs and practices of the broadcast industry in the 1950s, invested in the promotion of conservative beliefs about the family and gender as cultural universals, memories of the blacklist were consigned to the margins of cultural production, to comedic representations in film like *The Front*, and to the embittered and painful memories of a silenced generation of progressives who had fought and lost the culture war over television.



WELCOME TO THE PHANTASMAGORIA

Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him. ("The Good Wife's Guide" 1955)

Although Raymond Williams' (1978) phrase "structure of feeling" has been appropriated most frequently by theorists interested in affect, I have always found the term more useful in terms of thinking about the importance of historical research in media and cultural studies. Williams was clear in saying that those studying historical periods could never "know" a given generation's structure of feeling in any immediate sense. The partiality of our ability to capture and understand the past, however, does not mean that we cannot and should not approach it through the material culture that remains. Shirley Graham's anguished letters to friends and colleagues about the banning of her books give us some sense of the impact of the blacklist on her creative life. Similarly, a yellowed and creased piece of paper in Vera Caspary's papers, one that listed her response to the questions asked her by California's anti-Red Tenney Committee; one that had been nervously folded and re-folded, speaks volumes about the anxiety and fear blacklisted writers experienced. And the scripts and abstracts and unpublished novels carefully and tenderly placed in archives by these women and men tell us much about the aspirations they had for the new medium and their hope that it would be expansive enough to include stories about women who did not conform to the 1950s domestic ideal, about women and men of color who made history, about environmental activism and anti-consumerist values.

Watching the products of the 1950s television industry gives us no sense of these struggles over television content or the alternatives that were in the air at the dawn of the era of television. A focus on consumption alone serves the interests of a bourgeois mythology that would rather have us believe that these alternatives were never a part of broadcast history than acknowledge the strenuous efforts that were undertaken to force them out of the industry. Analyses of 1950s television that focus on the ideological, or what some might describe as rhetorical, dimensions of media texts cannot account for the repressive, punitive measures taken to purge broadcasting of progressive ideas. The case of the blacklist also challenges the focus on women and

consumption in media studies, suggesting that much research remains to be done on women's roles in broadcast production. Perhaps the most important lesson of the broadcast blacklist lies in its challenge not only to how we remember the 1950s, but how we remember the history of the industry and its complex myth-making abilities as well. Historical research serves as an absolutely crucial corrective to media's efforts to erase and elide how control of the means of production affects the content of what we consume. Grounding analyses not by reference to vague and often abstract generalizations, attention to concrete examples of how control is exercised, maintained, and institutionalized in media industries can help us understand, to take just one example, the shallowness of the television industry's efforts to blame audiences for its shortcomings, errors, and censorship of content.

In a series of interviews she gave in the early 1950s, Shirley Graham noted that she began writing adolescent fiction because of her awareness that African Americans "were misunderstood, and were not known, and were outside of history." As her research progressed, she told her interviewer, she "became aware that this was not as narrow a problem as I had thought. It is not only the Negro, it is not only the Indian, who is dropped out of history—it is also the dissenter, the person who didn't go along with the majority!" (Graham 1954, 4-5). Presenting narratives about African Americans, Native Americans, and dissenters, Graham wanted to restore the role they had played "in the making of American history" (Graham 1950).

For Graham and a generation of progressive cultural workers, presenting histories that U.S. culture refused to represent across a range of media was an act of political faith intended to educate and inspire. Although new media are once again transforming our ability to do historical research (digitizing, for example, historically black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender*), control over the means of production and access to materials like these is reproducing selective traditions. Working against those strong and easy currents—restoring political struggles to our own accounts of media history, understanding the powerful structuring structures of media industries, researching content that could not be made within these strictures or that remains difficult to access and marginalized—remain acts of political faith.



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