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## Review of: The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics, by Myron J. Aronoff.

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become more involved in electoral politics and developed close ties with the Democratic Party. In Canada, where there has been more trust of government historically, the National Action Committee (NAC) has moved from a cautious, multiparty engagement with electoral politics to less involvement and a more radical, antiparty stance. In these two organizations, more of the Canadian than U.S. feminists concluded that “power is not electoral” and advocate activism outside the electoral system.

Young’s thesis is that both ideology and women’s collective experiences in each country are needed to explain the different trajectories. The U.S. movement—seen through the prism of NOW at least—has been dominated by liberal feminists who are more trusting of parties and electoral politics. The Canadian movement—seen through the prism of NAC—has been more influenced by radical and socialist feminism, which moved it away from partisan involvement. (NAC also went from being largely funded by the federal government to minimal state funding, which permits greater radicalism.)

Young demonstrates the importance of moving beyond ideology to explore women’s collective experiences with the political opportunity structure. She concludes that the U.S. congressional system, with its weak political parties and more independent legislators, provides stronger incentives for feminist participation than does Canada’s closed parliamentary system, whose exclusionary and strongly disciplined parties provide less opportunity for infiltration. The passage in 1982 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which included a sex equality clause and explicitly sanctioned affirmative action, opened up the attractive alternative of legal remedies. The movement’s success in gaining these clauses as well as government funding for organizations seeking to influence the courts, made quite clear the value of having women who favor feminist goals in party and elected positions—and on the bench. (At one key point, there were three women judges with women-centered perspectives on the Supreme Court.)

Young’s systematic comparison of structural and ideological differences shows the strengths of a feminist political science approach. Her research demonstrates, for example, that although the Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP) responded more positively to feminist policy demands than the Democratic Party, a nongoverning party’s inability to deliver in a parliamentary system was a negative experience

for Canadian feminists. Another was that Progressive, Conservative, and later Liberal governments co-opted prominent women but did not adopt NAC’s feminist policy agenda. By contrast, the electoral gender gap in the United States made Democrats more open to adopting NOW’s policy as well as to co-opting women. Young notes, however, that in both countries parties were more open to participation by nonfeminist women, who represented “women” symbolically, than they were to feminist goals. This validates Young’s thesis that transformation of the male dominance of electoral politics is possible, but it will not be achieved simply by women choosing to participate in parties and electoral politics.

There are few weaknesses in this excellent book. One is Young’s tendency to focus on majority culture (white, anglophone) feminists, with little attention to other women-centered political movements. I would have valued more discussion of the views and experiences of U.S. black and Hispanic women, who are marginalized in society compared to white feminists. We know from gender gap analysis that these large minorities behave differently in important ways from majority whites, who can afford the luxury of “stand-alone feminism” focused exclusively on gender issues. More attention to Franco-Quebec feminists would have strengthened the Canadian analysis, especially since NAC failed almost from the beginning to incorporate those groups, who were drawn by the nationalist debate to focus on the Quebec state. Moreover, after 1995, NAC was led by a coalition of “women of color,” lesbians, and women with disabilities; as NAC increasingly represented marginalized women, it was increasingly marginalized, losing especially support from elected and partisan women and women in the media.

Both cases suggest that the relative power or lack thereof of women’s organizations shapes their views and experiences with parties and electoral politics. Feminist political science, therefore, needs to move beyond “women” as its central category of analysis to consider how women who are different because of their minority “race,” language, or nationality experience opportunities to participate differently. This means recognizing that women are not uniformly powerless, as some feminist ideology suggests. These are minor quibbles, however, about an excellent book that should be read by every political scientist interested in United States, Canadian, and comparative politics, as well as by every feminist activist grappling with questions about politics.

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## International Relations

**The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics.** By Myron J. Aronoff. New York: St. Martin’s, 1999. 316p. \$49.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

John Nelson, *University of Iowa*

Literary forms of inquiry into politics range far beyond the journal article and the scholarly monograph. Myron Aronoff’s monograph serves us well by respecting the novel of international intrigue as an insightful form for analyzing the politics of diplomacy, bureaucracy, covert action, and international regimes. Aronoff targets the latter-day dean of spy novelists, David Cornwell, who writes under the name of John le Carré.

These days, spy novels have trouble gaining serious attention even from literary critics. Their popular form often

prompts disdain, even though the likes of Graham Greene and le Carré are conceded high marks for their literary structures and styles. The latest obstacle is the end of the Cold War. This has led some reviewers to the strange supposition that espionage and other modes of intrigue have ended—or at least stopped being useful as devices for addressing dynamics of international relations. On the way to lambasting le Carré’s *Our Game*, no less a figure than John Updike states that “the end of the Cold War should have put an end to Cold War thrillers” (*New Yorker*, March 20, 1995, pp. 102–3). Aronoff knows better.

My own interest is in le Carré’s attempt to make sense of the international politics taking shape in the wake of the Cold War. His novels of the 1990s provide one telling analysis after another of modes emerging for states, nations, militaries, economies, communications, ecologies, and migrations throughout the planet. Aronoff’s concern is more with le

Carré's "ambiguous moralism." This is Aronoff's name for the problematics of political action in our times by individuals who know too much for some pure idealism to seem plausible, but who care too much for sitting on the sidelines to feel responsible.

Le Carré has enjoyed one of the more sustained and successful careers of political analysis in novel form, and Aronoff traces this search for "skeptical balance" throughout his writing. As Aronoff argues, le Carré's most famous creation, George Smiley, epitomizes this posture, which makes him one of the more complicated characters to recur in the imaginative annals of postwar action. The first seven chapters keep coming back to Smiley, testing his attempts to strike a balance between the moral and political imperatives that confront western democracies—and especially modern individuals—with one dilemma in action after another. The eighth chapter compares fictional intrigues to "the Real World of Espionage," and the ninth chapter casts brief glances toward the novels of the 1990s. The book concludes with exceptionally helpful notes, a fine index, and a roster of dramatis personae for the le Carré spy novels that can stand any fan in good stead.

This is a work of liberal humanism. Aronoff's terms of art are a clear indication: balance, ambiguity, means and ends, individuals and institutions, dilemmas, skepticism. Certainly, this fits le Carré as the prime heir to Graham Greene. In their skein of liberal tradition, the practical details matter. Accordingly, Aronoff devotes particularly effective chapters to le Carré's portraits of bureaucratic politics, domestic as well as foreign, and to his cumulative account of espionage as both a culture and a craft. This binocular focus brings out the political depth of le Carré's settings. These stay informed almost up to the minute, and they manage an intelligence about international relations that makes his novels a good education even for professional students of statecraft and soulcraft.

Aronoff concentrates mostly on the soulcraft. He is fascinated by characters such as Smiley. He wants to know how they balance idealism and realism, how they combine sentiment and skepticism, how they manage loyalty and betrayal. The issue for Aronoff becomes whether such a morally ambivalent and politically ambiguous figure as Smiley can be appreciated as a hero—or even a human. The final chapter poses these questions directly, and it answers them emphatically in the affirmative. Aronoff's book plays this familiar game of humanism in terms at once insightful and persuasive. As they say on the cover of popular potboilers, it is a good and enjoyable read.

In a way, however, the game stays a little too familiar. It is no surprise to anyone at this point that the spy can be a human and a hero. But is the novelist and literary theorist Samuel Delany right to suggest in his *Nevèryon* tales that the hero in Western civilization must always be a spy? Is le Carré himself right to imply in his novels of the 1990s that a spy is simply a politician by another name and set of means? Might those same novels supplement individual actors with structuralist and poststructuralist sensibilities about regimes of transnational relations? It can be fun and instructive to read the best of liberal humanists for their leanings also toward postmodern politics, and this seems especially appropriate for a novelist who pays such sophisticated attention to the kinds of political institutions we have been constructing for the twenty-first century. Perhaps there is need or at least opportunity for a sequel from Aronoff. That would be a pleasure to anticipate.

**Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy of the World Coffee Trade.** By Robert H. Bates. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. 221p. \$59.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

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For three decades political scientists have attempted to show that markets reflect the political institutions and politics within which they function. Also, many scholars have traced states' foreign economic policies to their domestic politics. *Open-Economy Politics* pushes both these projects forward with an extended case study of the world coffee market. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Robert Bates takes us chronologically through key shifts in policies of the chief coffee trading countries—Brazil, Colombia, and the United States—especially the formation, operation, and collapse of the International Coffee Organization from 1962 through 1982.

The central argument appears on page 7: "What is required for the study of international political economy is a domestic theory of politics. Indeed, I will demonstrate that the foreign economic policies of the great powers that created the International Coffee Organization [ICO] represent the product of domestic political struggles, . . . a political process that is structured by institutions."

The book's most important theoretical contribution arises from what Bates means by institutional effects. He does not mean that centralized governments will tend toward one policy, and federal states with divided powers will tend toward another (p. 163). Rather, he emphasizes the incentives different institutions create for producers and politicians living in open economies, as well as the resulting behavior of these individuals toward one other. For example, although Brazil had become the dominant world coffee exporter by the 1880s, it did not use its market power to maintain the price until 1906 (chap. 2). The lag is a puzzle for the economic theory of cartels and for political hegemony theory. Earlier efforts by producers in São Paulo state to get their government to intervene in the market failed because of Brazil's federal structure, according to Bates. São Paulo needed support from other states. Brazil began to act like the unitary actor assumed by systemic theories only when coffee politicians hit upon a side payment (currency depreciation) that attracted sufficient support in other states.

Colombia entered the world market after 1906 with a deliberate strategy of taking a free ride on the price floor Brazil was enforcing by itself (chap. 3). During the depression Colombia spurned Brazilian appeals to accept some of the burden. These choices also resulted from a fascinating political story. The Colombian government wanted to cooperate with Brazil, but Colombian coffee growers defeated their own government's efforts in three different policy domains. They could do so for two reasons, Bates claims. First, politicians formed a producers' association that overcame their own collective action problems. Second, in Colombia during this period there was serious competition between two political parties, and the coffee growers played one off against the other.

Building on what is already known about the ICO's formation, Bates (chap. 4) adds the insight that, after World War II, both Brazil and Colombia had more centralized political institutions than before. Politicians in both countries were better able to exploit their coffee industries for the sake of national development. But after efforts to form a cartel failed again in the late 1950s, exporters turned to the United States to help enforce a price floor. To earlier accounts of U.S. support, chapter 5 adds that Congress delayed the commit-