

Erynn Masi de Casanova, *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity*, ILR Press: Ithaca, NY, 2015. ISBN 9781501700491, \$19.95 paperback. pp. 272.

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The cover to the 50th anniversary paperback edition of C. Wright Mills' classic *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (2001) features a close-up of a dress shirt and tie. What a fashion disaster! Contrast collared shirts should be strictly avoided (unless you are an unlikeable business executive; see Gordon Gekko in the film *Wall Street* (1987) or Bill Lumbergh in *Office Space* (1999)). To make matters worse, the white collar is paired with an unsightly celadon green. The straight collar itself is far too narrow. The tie is no better, from its dull pattern to a round dimple which should instead have the shape of a teardrop.

Fortunately, the ideas inside have not gone out of style. Like David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), *White Collar* was a sober reflection on American social character at mid-century. Guided by the author's sociological imagination, *White Collar* tracked historical transformations in the wage economy to plumb the depths of the inter-subjective experiences of American workers. As Mills wrote, the successful 'old middle classes', comprised mainly of small entrepreneurs who dotted America's farms, were kicked off their perch by industrialization and bureaucratization. Mills' muse, then, was the modern salaried 'white-collar man', who the sociologist famously described as a 'pitiful' creature at the mercy of the iron cage of corporate life. Drawing generously on Weber, Mills argued that for the old middle class, riches were not necessarily ends in themselves but were intended for the doing of good works. By contrast, the modern white-collar man is an 'instrument of success' who found riches to be virtuous in themselves. Thus was the paradox of the American middle-class worker, who traded relative monotony – being a cog in the wheel – for relative privilege. The predicament of white-collar workers was symptomatic of a larger malaise: deepening disenchantment, a weakening of radical labor, and a general conformity of social life.

The cover to Erynn Masi de Casanova's splendid new book, *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity*, features 10 folded dress shirts in various colors; celadon, thankfully, is nowhere to be found. They have a fashionable Italian spread collar. There are no ties, but the omission hardly matters since today's dominant business casual dress code does not require one. Despite the different colors, the shirts look to be all the same. They are stacked so that the front plackets and buttons line up nearly perfectly. There is some individuality, but they are mostly uniform. *Buttoned Up* takes up this very issue by examining men's bodies, dress, and appearance in white-collar work. For her book, Casanova interviewed 71 men in three cities – Cincinnati, San Francisco, and New York – who worked in white-collar jobs. A majority of the interview respondents were White, heterosexual, US born, and had at least a college degree. The men worked in a variety of sectors and occupied various levels of authority. The men shared with Casanova their thoughts on professional dress (workplace dress codes, where they shopped, and where they learned about fashion), their interactions with others at work, and their relationships with men and women.

In a line of analysis which forecasted later work on emotional labor, Mills wrote that the white-collar world possessed a 'personality market' where the intimate traits of workers become commodities themselves. In an attempt to make sense of the anxieties beneath the American social character, *White Collar* also makes frequent reference to the psychology and mentalities of workers. Casanova's study, however, is chiefly concerned with the embodiment of white-collar work, a topic which received little attention in *White Collar* and other classic treatments of white-collar work, such as William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1955). While Casanova does not rely heavily on the term herself,

Buttoned Up makes important contributions to what scholarship on gender, embodiment, and occupations instead calls ‘aesthetic labor’: the practice of recruiting, hiring, and managing the physical appearance of bodies to meet corporate purposes. Here, Casanova challenges the narrative that blue-collar workers use their bodies while white-collar workers use their brains. While worrying about one’s appearance is traditionally considered to be unmanly, the men in *Buttoned Up* had no choice but to think carefully about their appearance. In the past, fashion was marketed more to women, who could be counted on to dress their sons and husbands. As men today live on their own for longer after college, they have learned to dress themselves. Other men described how they were on top of fashion trends because they did not want to be left behind. For example, George wanted to avoid getting ‘too old too fast’. The trick for all men was to look well-dressed but never too ‘manicured’.

Some themes resonated throughout Casanova’s interview sample. For instance, the men generally felt that in the face of an unstable economy, being able to control what one wears takes on added meaning. Economic crises jolt companies into taking their work more seriously, and the dress code was one way to accomplish that. As Tony, a VP at a Fortune 500 company, said, the Great Recession forced workplaces to trade casual dress for more formal dress. Dress expectations also affected men in different ways. Overweight men, for example, struggled to conform to the modern requirement for slim clothing. (Anti-fat comments were also common.) Ed had participated in an office-sponsored weight-loss contest and shared that planning what he wears to work was a ‘complex’ task.

Buttoned Up extends knowledge of aesthetic labor by showing that the seemingly superficial performance of physical appearance is felt deeply. Here, Casanova adopts a more phenomenological approach to embodiment, attuned to its affective dimensions as well as to how bodies internalize social structures and are therefore prepared for certain futures. (Indeed, the concept of embodiment originated in phenomenology.) The emotions and socialization behind aesthetic labor were captured best in two chapters on men’s family relationships and on their experiences wearing uniforms growing up. As Casanova writes, the

work-family-dress intersection is imbued with the values that one generation tries to impart to the next but also with the materiality of the bodies of loved ones. People talked movingly about their fathers’ aging bodies and morphing styles of self-presentation over time.

When their own fathers socialized them into appreciating respectable forms of self-presentation, the men in Casanova’s study developed an ‘occupational habitus’ that trained them to dress the part of a working professional. Casanova also writes that white-collar dress is itself a kind of uniform. Like the boarding school or military uniforms some of the men had worn, a white-collar uniform carried status and bolstered solidarity.

Mills’ *White Collar* shares with Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* a concern with the strong conformist tendencies of modern capitalism. Hinting at a theme that Casanova develops further in *Buttoned Up*, Riesman described how an ‘other directed’ character fuels people’s deep concern with being liked and accepted by one’s peers. While Mills and Riesman are important touchstones for *Buttoned Up*, a central insight from Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* finds new life in Casanova’s study. Like Mills and Riesman, Tocqueville was interested in the American social character. He reconciled a paradox at the heart of this social character – a desire to protect the freedom of the individual as well as a desire to conform to the majority – by arguing that *self-interest* motivated individuals to conform. Casanova’s main thesis resonates with Tocqueville’s observations: today’s white-collar workers participate in a *strategic embrace of conformity* that protects privilege in an increasingly unstable economy. One such strategy was to embrace a more ‘metrosexual’ look. The adoption of more feminine fashion styles makes it appear that men are

both fashion forward and gender progressive, but this, in fact, does little to dismantle hegemonic masculinity. Rather, this strategy promotes the hybridization of masculinities, or enactments of gender, typically by heterosexual White men, which incorporate features of femininity and subordinated masculinities. *Buttoned Up* joins other excellent recent work on hybrid masculinities in men's grooming, including Kristen Barber's *Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men's Grooming Industry* (2016).

Inspired by Hans Fallada's 1932 book of the same name, Mills lamented the anxieties of the 'little man' in the post-World War II world. Turning her eyes to today's middle-class men, Casanova is less sympathetic. After all, while these men may see themselves as 'little men' in an impersonal corporate world, they retain significant privileges over others, namely, women and more marginalized men. Casanova closes *Buttoned Up* by speculating on the potential costs to conformity, including a lack of diversity (race, gender, and sexual orientation) and pressure not to speak out against unethical behaviors. With its entertaining vignettes, lively and accessible prose, and sharp analysis which links men's self-presentation to enduring issues of conformity and individualism in the workplace, this qualitative study is truly *made to measure* for scholars and students of masculinity, embodiment, and occupations.

Stefano B Longo, Rebecca Clausen and Brett Clark, *The Tragedy of the Commodity: Oceans, Fisheries, and Aquaculture*, Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ, 2015; 274 pp. ISBN 9780813565774, \$31.95 paperback.

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In the *Tragedy of the Commodity: Oceans, Fisheries, and Aquaculture*, Stefano B. Longo, Rebecca Clausen, and Brett Clark challenge Garret Hardin's (1968) well known 'Tragedy of the Commons' thesis and supply an alternative explanation and suit of solutions for ecological crises. Chapter 1 is a critique of Hardin's (1968) thesis for oversimplifying human nature and ignoring social context, particularly the underlying logic of capitalism. The authors draw attention to natural resource policy prescriptions derived from the logic of commons tragedies that seek to achieve sustainability while maintaining or increasing profit accumulation through increased production efficiency. Technological responses to ecological crises follow the logic of economic efficiency to maintain and ultimately increase capital accumulation through commodification of the environment. The commodification of the natural world displaces labor, concentrates wealth, and increases resource use, which compounds and expands the breadth and depth of ecological crises, resulting in further iterations of the technological-crises cycle. Hence, according to the authors, the commodity not the commons produces tragedies.

In chapter 2, Longo et al. provide a detailed overview of the tragedy of the commodity framework. The authors draw from human ecology and Marxist social metabolic approaches to explain the dialectic between socially structured processes and the materialist conditions of the natural world in the production of marine fisheries crises (p. 8). Whereas human ecology focuses on the reciprocal relationships between population, organizations, environment, and technology (p. 21), the social metabolic perspective draws attention to the rifts between human systems and the natural world created by capitalism (p. 26). Ecological crises are endemic to capitalism as nature is continually transformed and destroyed in the commodification process in the pursuit of capital accumulation (p. 32). Drawing from Karl Polanyi (1957), the authors explain how metabolic rifts are formed by the commodification of phenomena that were not inherently created for trade on the market (fictitious commodities), which drives disembedding processes by separating and