Comparative studies of social policy usually portray the French welfare state as lagging behind most of its counterparts in Western Europe during the first decades of the twentieth century. The sheer complexity of the French system, moreover, with its baroque mixture of separate private, government and quasi-public funds, made it exceptional as well. Yet tardiness and complexity by no means prevented the French from expanding social insurance at an especially rapid clip in the decades following the Second World War. By 1980 France spent more on social security as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product than any country in Europe except Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. Today the French are among Europe’s most stalwart defenders of publicly funded pensions and health insurance. Given its unimpressive beginnings, how did the French welfare state become such a heavyweight?

Paul Dutton provides much of the answer in his excellent new study of French social policymaking from the First World War to the crystallization of the social security system shortly after 1945. He argues that two decisive innovations in the 1920s and early 1930s laid the foundation for today’s system. First, mutual aid societies, rather than a single government-run fund became the primary vehicle for the expansion of social insurance in the interwar years, especially after the passage of the social insurance law of 1930, which required all industrial workers to be members of some kind of insurance fund. Second, big employers, most notably in the Paris metalworking sector, developed family allowances for employees with many children, a device designed to defuse labor militancy and deflate pressures for across-the-board wage hikes. This initiative paved the way to the family allowance law of 1932, which mandated similar schemes throughout French industry, warming the hearts of pro-natalists who were terrified by the specter of demographic decline. Subsequent expansion of the welfare state in the 1930s and 1940s built upon these key decisions by preserving mutualism and enlarging a family allowance system that came increasingly under state control.

Dutton concludes his study with an account of Pierre Laroque’s only partially successful effort after the Liberation to make the system more uniform, unified and equitable. As de Gaulle’s social policy czar, Laroque discovered how firmly established the interwar foundations of the system had become. Although Laroque’s social security ordinance of 1945 brought most industrial workers under the protection of a state-supervised social security fund known as the general regime, workers in several key sectors (mining, railroads, the utilities), along with farmers and most middle-class occupations, preserved the right to stick to...
their own separate mutualist funds. Family allowances, moreover, remained sepa-
ratated from social security and their oversight remained subject to the influence
of pro-natalists and Christian Democrats. Oddly enough, the arcane structure
that still remained a feature of system after the 1940s probably made it more fea-
sible politically to expand the system incrementally in the decades that followed,
since social insurance and family allowances were regarded as achievements for
the middle class at least as much as they were for industrial workers. As Dutton
suggests, if the French have clung so fiercely to the welfare state in recent times,
they have done so not just because of they benefited from it financially but also
because they felt invested in its structure and in the solidaristic values long as-
associated with mutualism and family allowances.

What makes Dutton's book such an important breakthrough is the preci-
sion with which he has explored the interest group politics that went into the pol-
icy making process he describes. He also does a terrific job analyzing how these
policies manifested basic assumptions about gender and class. Although he does
little to compare French welfare state building to that of other countries, he tack-
les the more essential task of tracing foreign influences on the French, namely
the inspiration Laroque’s team drew from Britain’s Beveridge report in 1942,
and the huge impact of the Bismarckian system of social insurance that had al-
dready been implanted in the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine when the
French reacquired them in 1918. Alsatians and Lorrainers, mostly happy to be
French again, were nonetheless loath to sacrifice their German insurance sys-
tem, and this stark political reality put enormous pressure on French leaders in
the 1920s to delivery something comparable to the nation as a whole.

Dutton’s investigation of interest group lobbying is especially impressive
for the way he examines conflicts within the ranks of major groups. The National
Federation of Mutual Aid Societies, for example, had long resisted leftwing
pressures to bring social insurance under government oversight. But Federation
leaders split in the 1920s, as Dutton explains, between die-hard anti-statists and
realists who recognized that some kind of major expansion of social insurance
was inevitable. Realists then lobbied successfully in parliament to give mutual
aid societies a preponderant place in the system that came to be embodied in the
law of 1930. Likewise, Dutton shows how deeply divided labor and the Left re-
mained throughout the 1920s on questions of social insurance. Catholic unions
were keen to work within the framework of family allowances and mutualism,
whereas Socialists in the reformist CGT were more cautious, and Communists
regarded social insurance as a trick to bolster capitalism. A Left so divided was
poorly equipped to mount an effective campaign for a unified, egalitarian sys-
tem of social security.

Ironically, labor leaders tended to share common views about one issue, the
place of women in French society, that played into the hands of conservatives
seeking to shape the family allowance system. Feminists after First World War,
especially women in the Communist movement, argued vigorously for equal
wages for equal work, but many rank-and-file men and local union leaders sup-
ported a return to traditional domestic arrangements. To make matters worse,
a number of important feminists were bourgeois moderates with close ties to the very industrialists who were advocating employer-controlled family allowance plans. With working-class ranks divided between men and women, as well as between workers with large families and childless laborers, and with feminists divided by class and ideology, it was difficult to forge a crusade against a family allowance scheme that served to reinforce these very cleavages. As Dutton shows, the architects of the laws of 1930 and 1932 took full advantage of these divisions to create a social insurance and family allowance system that created disincentives for mothers to join the workforce.

Most accounts of the French welfare state pay relatively little attention to the period of the Popular Front (1936–1938). Yet, in an ingeniously argued chapter on the late 1930s, Dutton conveys just how critical it proved to be. Léon Blum’s government instigated compulsory arbitration, which in turn made family allowances subject to the rulings of arbitrators. In addition, Blum’s agricultural minister, Georges Monnet, obligated the farm sector to take up family allowances. Together these two measures brought chaos: Arbiters altered the allowance schedules to the benefit of workers with just one or two children, hence greatly expanding the system, and farmers rose in revolt against their new obligations. In one of the most interesting parts of the book, Dutton compares three regions (in the northeast, the Paris basin, and the west) to demonstrate that farmer compliance with the family allowance system varied by farm size. Only on large farms, where the distinction between employers and laborers was clear, did the industrial model of the family allowance system make much sense. In Dutton’s view, Blum’s government inadvertently pursued a policy of “creative destruction” in family policy, a debacle that eventually paved the way to the Family Code of 1939. The Code, conservative though it was in many of its provisions, made the family allowance system more orderly and national in scope and more subject to state, rather than employer, control.

Dutton’s concluding chapter offers a lean account of the enlargement and reorganization of social insurance and family allowances during the Vichy regime and the immediate postwar years. His purpose is to convey how firmly implanted the policy framework of the interwar years remained, and in this he succeeds. But in its brevity his analysis of the post-1940 period lacks the detailed forays into interest group politics that make his story of the 1920s and 30s so satisfying to read. Dutton has nonetheless written what is likely to remain for some time to come the premier account of welfare state building in France between the wars and essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the complexity and popularity of the system that emerged after 1945.

Herrick Chapman
New York University

Travellers zooming up or down the Rhône Valley in the TGV Méditerranée, when passing through the area on a reasonably clear day, will undoubtedly notice an impressive mountain range suddenly rising from the low-level terrain of the Rhône Valley east of Valence. When this reviewer crossed on foot what is now known as *Le Vercors* in a week-long gruelling hike in 1984, the ubiquity of historical markers denoting the precise locations where resistance fighters had been shot and killed impressed itself upon the two trekkers holding German passports already during the very first day. In France, the Vercors has become a *lieu de mémoire* and incorporates a great variety of aspects and interpretations of the French resistance experience in an almost exemplary manner.

Curiously enough, despite a plethora of publications on the Vercors, until the publication of Gilles Vergnon’s meticulously researched and carefully constructed volume, no academic study of this topic had seen the light of day. *Le Vercors* not only admirably fills that gap on the moment of resistance itself, but literally half the book’s pages are devoted to the various images and myths constructed vis-à-vis the Vercors in the postliberation period, all the way up to the present. Thus, the reader benefits not only from a careful reconstruction and analysis of the resistance in the Vercors, but they likewise gain a thorough insight into the workings of France’s memory industry and the various strands within the latter vying for attention from the French public and/or the memory elites. Vergnon’s study is, to the best of my knowledge, the best piece of historical writing on a specific case of French resistance activism combining historical footwork and a critical analysis of subsequent interpretations of the actual events.

Introductory chapters depict the socio-political prehistory of the Vercors, at the same time that they draw a vivid picture of the geography of this contested terrain. Here Vergnon, early on, begins to unravel the post-1944 myth of the Vercors as an impregnable fortress accessible to few. He also admirably demonstrates the very many politico-administrative rivalries between the inhabitants of different portions of this supposedly unified terrain. Last but not least, he highlights the fact that the Vercors as a geographic unit is, for the most part, a postliberation construction, which papered over the preexisting independent identities of various geographic portions of what later on became known as, simply, the Vercors.

Still, if Vergnon is refreshingly ruthless in exposing the multiple ways in which the experiences of the *maquis* in the Vercors has given rise to various interpretations, the author never succumbs to the postmodern temptation to dissolve all that is real into wilful or unwitting products of the human mind. The resistance in the area now known as the Vercors was very real, as was the brutal repression by the German army shortly before liberation ultimately arrived.

The book is therefore in part also a story—and a story well told. Vergnon recounts, for instance, how pre-war networks of sociability were often decisive
for recruitment into the local \textit{maquis}. He also has a keen eye for the language of symbols. The French Boy Scout tradition, for example, left a major imprint on the symbolism of the \textit{maquis}: “shorts, neckerchiefs, arrows, patrols, outdoor cooking, peeling potatoes, bonfires” (69). Likewise, the peculiar syncretism of the \textit{maquis} could be witnessed frequently across the Vercors as, for instance, at a Christmas celebration in 1943 when, one participant later remembered, “communists read from Marxist texts, and Christians read from the Gospel. There emerged between us a certain kind of communion (82).”

But perhaps the most interesting section of Vergnon’s discussion of the actual \textit{maquis} experience itself is his reconstruction of daily life and practices in the liberated zone created in the Vercors for, roughly, six exhilarating weeks after June 9, 1944. Indeed, it was in the Vercors that the French resistance constructed during those weeks the closest equivalent (if ultimately on a lesser scale) to what became almost a regular feature of Second World War resistance movements in portions of Northern Italy, but even more so in Greece and Yugoslavia: an island of freedom, a mountain mini-republic, here in the Vercors complete with its own newspaper, border guards and a functioning civilian and military administration, all the while surrounded by Vichy and German military might in the valleys below, the latter a superior force to which the \textit{maquis} eventually succumbed.

It would go too far to reconstruct the various reasons for the emergence of the Vercors Republic, or to explicate the factors behind its ultimate bloody demise. Suffice it to say that, already in the dying days of this island of freedom, accusations of betrayal (by the Allies, by the French government in exile, etc.) began to be openly aired. Vergnon deals authoritatively with the various claims, and the reader may be referred to the pages of this handsome volume for what appear to this reviewer definitive answers. But it is in part precisely the unusual and ultimately tragic trajectory of the \textit{maquis du Vercors} that has resulted in its eventual selection as a prime target for post-war mythmaking and the culture of official commemorations.

Already between 1944 and 1947, the Vercors obtained “a national notoriety” (149) in this respect. All the various tropes of the mainstream commemoration industry could already then be observed in nuce. Civilian casualties were left mostly unaddressed. The destruction of up to 97 percent of all homes and 96 percent of livestock by Nazi terror in some communities was downplayed; but the supposedly exemplary character and determination of valiant resistance fighters whose sacrifice contributed to the Allied recognition of the French government-in-exile was underscored instead. Severe internal rifts were papered over, such as the bitter telegram sent by the civilian head of the Vercors Republic, Eugène Chavant, to the French Army Headquarter in Algiers in the final days of the mountain republic, where Chavant categorically stated: “Those in London and Algiers have understood absolutely nothing about the situation we find ourselves in, and we consider them to be criminals and cowards. I repeat: criminals and cowards” (14).

Until the autumn of 1947, an unspoken consensus governed all commemo-
rative activity. Individuals at the center of controversies, such as Eugène Chavant, kept quiet. From late 1947 onwards, a massive rift emerged in the wake of cold war dissensions between Gaullist and communist visions of the Vercors, with the Communist Party going so far as to stage counter-commemorations. But the communists, never strangers to celebrations of French grandeur, did not manage to attract any noticeable non-party support, and the crudely instrumentalist nature of their sudden discovery of alternative interpretations of the Vercors experience did not help matters. For the most part, even in the 1950s, “the Vercors continuously serves to illustrate national unity in all its dimensions” (135).

For some decades, then, only a few die-hard non-conformist observers managed to publish critical views but, until the 1960s, they remained lone voices in a sea of patriotic ardour. Only when the events of May 1968 shook up the torpor of French society did alternative interpretations of the Vercors experience gain central attention, exemplified by Gilbert Joseph’s 1972 publication of Combattant du Vercors. Yet, in more recent years, a new development has shifted the focus of the official memory industry. Increasingly so, not only the social revolutionary aspect of the experience of the island of freedom, but even the national liberation dimension of the Vercors is relegated to the footnotes of history. In accordance with the new demands of the contemporary age, even patriotism is giving way to invocations of “the duty to be vigilant,” general and abstract warnings about “barbarism” and “intolerance,” and the solemn invocation of universal “human rights” (190).

Still, there exist some noteworthy continuities over time. Thus, for instance, even in the best of days, official memory of the Vercors favoured important sites of the military history of the Vercors at the expense of (even key) locations of the civilian administration of the “mountain republic.” Thus, Saint-Martin-en-Vercors, the administrative center of the zone libérée, was curiously “forgotten” in commemorative activities right from the start. Today, Saint-Martin, the political “capital” of the Vercors Republic, has still no noteworthy monument indicating its chief role at the time. Indeed, Saint-Martin-en-Vercors is not even listed as a site historique on official inventories of lieux de mémoires in the embattled Vercors.

Gilles Vergnon’s study deserves wide distribution and recognition as a keynote contribution to the study of Second World War resistance forces and their warped echoes in subsequent decades, not only in France. Methodologically, his book will hopefully inspire similar work of this kind, for other countries as well. A translation into English would be most appropriate.

Gerd-Rainer Horn
University of Warwick
Many historians usually interpret the Spanish Civil War as a confrontation of great collective movements. Looking back into the trenches of the Iberian Peninsula, they see the organized forces of nationalism, communism, anarcho-syndicalism, and socialism clashing along battle lines as much ideological as military. In these standard accounts, such movements, whatever their sharp political differences, commanded popular support based on an ethos of heroism, sacrifice and devotion to a larger cause.

In Republic of Egos, Michael Seidman scuttles this conventional framework of collective heroism and organized militancy. He doesn’t dispute the presence of militancy and commitment, only that these factors don’t make up the whole picture. Instead Seidman makes a persuasive argument that what he labels popular individualisms (the plural is intentional) straddling ideological divides played as much a role, sometimes decisively so, in the Spanish conflict as the actions of parties, unions and other mass organizations. Rather than behaving as ideal militants sacrificing for a greater good, many wage-workers, conscripts, and peasants acted rather as individualists, subsuming the political to the personal.

In the introduction, “Bringing Back the Individual,” Seidman shows why studying these various expressions of individualism makes a difference for scholars grappling with the complexity of social history. By inserting the individual in the record only as part of a larger whole made up of class, gender or political identities, historians assume such collective identities decide actions, thus setting up a commonality more imagined than real. Lost in this view, Seidman says, is recognition of the ways in which individuals only sometimes and imperfectly adhere to the expectations implied by collective labels and roles. Without such acknowledgment, historians risk ignoring actions differing from the expected behavior, thus narrowing the scope of inquiry. Rather than the social clarifying subjectivity, Seidman argues the reverse: the social can’t be understood without crediting the individual and unique.

As evidence for his argument, Seidman then introduces three archetypes of popular individualisms at work in Spain during the 1930s: the acquisitive, entrepreneurial and subversive. The first category, acquisitive individualism, describes those workers, soldiers and peasants striving to increase their personal consumption of goods at the expense of sacrifice for the larger war effort. Entrepreneurial individualism, the second, accounts for the actions of proletarians exploiting overtime and opportunities for speculation to circumvent plummeting currency rates. Finally, Seidman groups under subversive individualism, the third and in many ways the most interesting category, acts like work evasion, violation of production quotas, and insubordination towards army superiors and factory supervisors. He recognizes too that these labels are not mutually exclusive categories and sometimes overlap. But for workers and peasants employing
popular individualist tactics, the personal stakes in a period of civil war and state collapse were often severe: many were shot, jailed or suffered loss of jobs and income.

The backdrop of Civil War Spain offered both limits and possibilities restricting or strengthening the space for expressions of popular individualism to flourish. The rebellion of Franco’s Nationalists soon fragmented the country, leaving many regions separated from the central government in Madrid. Although the Republican government tried to uphold national authority and rally the masses towards its defense, the Republican side was plagued from the beginning by a chronic shortage of basic supplies, a lack of experienced military leadership and friction within the ruling coalition. With Spain already at the outbreak of the Civil War almost a century behind the rest of Europe, the constant struggle for food and basic needs steadily eroded collective support for the war effort as the war dragged on.

In light of this struggle for basic needs, Seidman argues that collective forms often evolved in response to experienced scarcity rather than out of a commitment to abstract solidarity. And as he notes, “Just as the individual or personal realm took precedent over party or class, the local dominated the national” (54). Both the agrarian collectives and factory committees, for instance, often expressed group egoism. Despite their professed revolutionary objectives, committees and collectives defined themselves against outsiders and expropriated the collective product for the immediate group’s needs.

Even the mass influx of workers into the anarchist or socialist unions can be seen as another example of calculating behavior: workers knew that a union card brought extra food and access to jobs. In response to the demands of waging war, the organizations of the revolutionary left tried, often in vain, to impose discipline, sacrifice and increased productivity on increasingly apathetic masses. One of the more interesting threads running through Republic of Egos in fact is the series of complaints vetted by militants against the unheroic behavior of the masses.

The situation in factory and field was repeated on the military front. Rank-and-file soldiers ignored ideological divisions and defied officer’s orders by socializing with their counterparts on the opposite side. Recruits injured themselves to avoid fighting. Others deserted or switched sides. “Quiet Fronts,” where soldiers on both sides only put up desultory resistance to the enemy and established informal truces were much more the norm than daring combat.

The emphasis the revolutionary left placed on idealized productivist images of the worker also marginalized working class women, whose concerns with the household and immediate family provision sat poorly with the virtues of collective revolutionary sacrifice. Forced to use whatever means at hand to feed their families, women patronized the black market, thus reinforcing the suspicion of male comrades that women were unreliable allies in the revolutionary effort. With some honorable exceptions, the revolutionary left generally consigned women to performing traditional behind the lines support work for men.

Throughout the Civil War, material deprivation only heightened the tenden-
cies for individual or small group survival at the expense of larger political loyalties. In one of the more interesting twists in Republic of Egos, Seidman, who mentions anarcho-individualist Max Stirner approvingly, consistently uses materialism to criticize the idealism of Marxist and anarchist inspired collective bodies, a reversal of Marx’s well-known criticisms of Stirner in The German Ideology.

This book’s thesis will obviously create controversy. Perhaps expecting objections, Seidman backs his arguments with a wealth of documentation obtained from local party committee minutes, officers’ reports, soldiers’ diaries and other previously unmined sources. Some would say that as a result, he has buried the broader historical picture under an avalanche of small details. But as unsettling as some of its conclusions may be to those shaped by the very different image of Spain given in Ken Loach’s film, Land and Freedom, Republic of Egos is a useful counterweight to one-sided views of Spanish Civil War history written from the perspectives of organizations. It breaks new ground for analyzing labor history, the contradictions in workers’ consciousness and the frequent divide between workers and their official organizations. Seidman’s constructs of popular individualism, for instance, also can be fruitfully extended to Russia in 1917, Germany 1918 and other revolutionary and near-revolutionary situations.

Whether you agree with its underlying arguments or not, this alone makes Republic of Egos one of the more striking and thought-provoking labor and military history books to come out in recent years.

Curtis Price
Editor, Street Voice Magazine, Baltimore

Himani Bannerji, Sharzad Mojab, and Judith Whitehead, Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. 244 pp. $60.00 cloth; 24.95 paper.

The authors succinctly note that contemporary studies of nationalism tend towards oversimplification. This oversimplification is manifested in a tacit and serious misrepresentation. The misrepresentation is a bifurcation of the colonial experience into the primary or self and the other. Such a manifestation is best represented by Said (1978) in terms of “orientalism.” Such a binary configuration of the colonial experience is an oversimplification for two reasons. First, it fails to acknowledge the interdimensional diversity of the colonized. To ignore interdimensional diversity is to fail to account for the role that gender and class play in the construct of the colonized. Second, binary configurations tend to misrepresent path dependence or the historical unfolding of particular nationalisms. In this sense, nationalism acquires an assumption of natural progression in terms of rights and welfare. The authors challenge the assumption that gender rights are acquired consummately in conjunction with nationalism. Instead, the authors make the argument that nationalism often acquires a regressive effect in terms of gender-class rights and welfare. As an example, Sharzad Mojab notes
that Kurdish nationalism has had a conflictive relationship with the progression of women’s welfare in addition to rights. Contemporary Kurdish nationalism has tended towards the regression of women’s welfare. The root causes of a resort to regression are noted by Mojab to lie in the failure to effectively transform the preexisting precapitalist gender and class structure.

The historical dialect used in this work is especially useful in illustrating the relationship of political economy to gender and class within the context of nationalism. The various chapters provide diverse examples of how this relationship works out in this context. The overriding phenomenon is one where nationalism is held in conjunction with notions of propriety. In such cases, women as a class are assigned a proper role in accord with the growth of the national ideal. This role is primarily noted as bourgeois or elite in terms of origin. The role of women, contrary to commonly held assumptions, is noted as historically one of subordination, chastity, and other feminine virtues. Such views of ideal femininity are found to be important in the promotion of nationalist legitimization. However, the actually historical subservience of women as a class in conjunction with nationalism is not without some complexity. For example, Hearne in her historical account of Irish nationalism notes the actual proliferation of women’s suffrage associations. The Irish women’s suffrage struggle is rightly portrayed as complex. This complexity is noted by Hearne in two aspects. For one, the supporters of women’s suffrage were not limited to those advocating complete independence from the 1800 Treaty of Union with Great Britain. Instead, women’s suffrage found support in a multiplicity of groups, including some who supported the continuation of union with Great Britain, as well as Catholic and Protestant religious groups.

Yet, despite the numerous associations supporting women’s suffrage, the religious and cultural structures of the Irish did not allow for its rapid inclusion. Instead, Hearne notes that the Irish male leadership actively opposed the further inclusion of women in the political arena. The Irish leadership, in line with the phenomenon well illustrated by this work, held a patriarchal view of the proper role of women consummate with the ideal Irish nation.

There are other interesting facets to the authors’ counterargument that nationalism is not always synonymous with the progression of gender-class welfare and rights. Kailo, in her chapter on Finnish nationalism, notes the role of myth aberration in support of the notions of the ideal Finnish nation. The myth aberration is accomplished through the bourgeoisie compilation of the Finnish historical epic Kalevala. Thus, the primary ethnic primary minority, the Sámi who inhabit what is today Northern Finland, are relegated to childlike role in the Kalevala. The regulation of the Sami to a childlike status is noted by Kailo to exist in the desire to emulate western nationalism. Kailo notes that the Finns were relegated to little brother by the dominant Russians and Norwegians. Thus, in the rise of Finnish nationalism, it became necessary to subjugate a politically weak minority such as the Sami to such a role. This process is best summed up by Branch (1985, xi), as allowing for the necessary construction of a “politics of difference.”
The dominant and most memorable representation of both women and the Sami/Lapps in the epic are linked to images of victimhood or selfishness, greed, and arrogance. Although the southern men of Kalevala are the rapists and murderers, it is the women and the Sámi/Lapps, as I will show, who carry the projections of evildoing (Kailo 184).

Judith Whitehead’s chapter on the perception of devadasi (temple dancers) tradition in South India during the Madras presidency (1860 - 1947) illustrates the transformation of organic cultural value structures in line with an ideal of nationalism. In this account, Whitehead traces the evolution of the perception of devadasi from organic, viewed as a state of acceptance, to eventual banishment. In a manner similar to the Kurdish case, but couched in the terms of modernity via health, the construction of an ideal Indian nationalism mandates the necessity of the ideal Indian woman. Such an ideal woman is cast in light of the virtues of chastity and sacrifice to family. The devadasi are one barrier along the path to an ideal nationalism. The story is complex because of the diversity of groups involved; yet, the story is convergent because the goal is the same. Protestant missionary groups, Brahman elites, and an emerging economic middle class all eventually agree about the need to eliminate the cultural ritual of devadasis.

By 1920, most reformers accepted the unconscious distinctions between chaste and unchaste women that were now, in turn, linked to medicalized conceptions of normality and deviance. Even Mahatma Ghandi idealized the chaste Sita as the role model for both male and female nationalists, and expelled the Barisol prostitutes from participation in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (166). The effect was a continuance of patriarchal norms of propriety despite the development of new economic middle class and the convergence of colonial English and capitalist values.

This work is important because it departs from the bifurcated analysis commonly employed in the study of nationalism. In addition, it challenges the assumption of progressiveness of women’s welfare in conjunction with nationalism. Nationalism is often portrayed in a simplistic bifurcation between the self and the other; the underlying consequence of such a frame of thought is the perception of convergence among those who would constitute the nation-state. Yet, in reality, nation-states are rarely homogenous. Gender-class structures are the focus in this work and the authors do a good job of showing just how complex gender-class structures can be. Also important are the definitional contrasts between different forms of nationalism; the authors note the path dependence of forms of anticolonial movements in relation to the type of existent governmental structure. For example, revivalist anticolonial movements often result in the construction of authoritarian governments, which actually work to limit the progress of women’s rights and welfare. The case studies in this work do a fine job of illustrating the veracity of these findings.

J. David Granger
Georgetown University

*Re/Presenting Class* is a timely and evocative collection of essays devoted to exploring the contribution postmodern Marxist class theory can make to the contemporary study of political economy. This multifaceted exploration marks a refreshing departure from the conventional focus of the political economic tradition on classical Marxist analysis of the capitalist system as a total system or mode of production. On this conventional approach, class functions merely as an instrument of the dominant mode of capital accumulation. By contrast, the essays in Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff’s collection employ various forms of class analysis as an independent means to illuminate contemporary and historical political economies. Here class is understood not simply as an instrumentality of capitalist accumulation, but as a set of independent “processes of producing, appropriating and distributing surplus labor” (17, 169). In essence, the essays attempt, in various ways, to extricate class analysis from general “theory of the capitalist totality,” (1) and to examine what kinds of insight it can offer as an independent framework in its own right. In general, the project repays the investment just as the book rewards reading.

The essays, however, suggest rather than realize the potential of contemporary postmodern Marxist class analysis. While all are interesting and provocative (if sometimes unevenly so), they are also highly eclectic. They cover a strikingly diverse range of subjects from the economics of contemporary liberal arts colleges to the main rival models of postindependence Indian economic development, from the analysis of pre-Columbian social dynamics to the contemporary Western experience of nature, from the organization of sharecropping in the postbellum Mississippi Delta to the causes of the 1979 Iranian Revolution to the internal financial dynamics of the contemporary commercial enterprise.

Moreover, while the essays do share “certain characteristic predilections/orientations,” (20) they also deploy very different approaches to class analysis. While some concentrate, for example, on the familiar capital-labor nexus, albeit often in unconventional contexts (such as administration and faculty at liberal arts colleges), others attempt to decenter such conflicts and focus on more unconventional class relations, such as those between the executives of major commercial enterprises (such as Australia’s Broken Hill Proprietary Limited) and communities affected by their activities (such as those living downstream from Broken Hill Propriety’s Ok Tedi copper and gold mines).

The result is that while the essays generally succeed in their announced intention of “destabilizing” the dominant discourses around class with “antiessentialist” insights, they can hardly be said to offer a substantial alternative to them. What they do offer is what the editors characterize as “a field of openness and experimentation” (18) that reveals some of the limitations of the dominant approaches as currently practiced. In pursuing this project of opening and experimenting, however, postmodern Marxist class analysis remains in a sense para-
sicitic on the very dominant discourses it seeks to challenge, that is, the essays add critical insights where they are typically masked or overlooked on the conventional, neoliberal and Marxist approaches which predominate in the literature of political economy, and thus add dimensions missing on these approaches, without offering a clear and cohesive alternative framework of their own. In essence then the postmodern Marxist approach remains reliant on other dominant discourses on which it can do its work of opening and experimenting. The collection then does not seriously undertake the work of developing a cohesive postmodernist Marxism based on analysis of class, but limits itself mainly to clearing the ground of some prominent essentialist distortions by showing what they miss in a wide variety of realms, typically, subtle forms of exploitation.

Indeed, the project of drawing attention to hitherto unperceived (or neglected) forms of exploitation constitutes the most important “common predilection/orientation” of the essays. From commercial firms’ exploitation of the environment and public subsidization to states’ exploitation of the discourses of development to advance their own parochial agendas, all of the essays reveal subtle but insidious forms of exploitation. In some cases, the author is content to simply draw our attention to these forms of exploitation, while others explicitly advance normative arguments in favor of what Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff term “nonexploitative class relations,” (9) or what Adriana Vlachou calls “green capitalism” (125). In other words, while some postmodern Marxist class analysis exhibits something of the value-free, descriptive orientation of modern quantitative human studies, others follow Marx’s famous complaint that ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.’ Even in the latter case, however, the distance traveled from Marx’s own work is well captured in the very expression “nonexploitative class relations” (or “green capitalism”). Marx of course held that class relations (like capitalism) were inherently exploitative, and the hope of eliminating such exploitation without eliminating class (or capitalism) was yet another seductive but dangerous bourgeois fantasy.

Indeed, more conventional Marxists are bound to have difficulty with the whole underlying notion of “Reading Marx for Class” alone (23). They will likely object, and not without reason, to the whole project of distinguishing a Marx the class theorist from a Marx the deterministic economist, (24) and in particular with the attempt to emphasize the former at the cost of the latter. There is only one Marx, they will say, and this kind of selective reading does violence to the essential unity and coherence of his work.

However, while there is much to be said for such objections from the perspective of the best or most adequate reading of Marx, the ultimate criteria according to which such a collection must be judged is not whether it is fair (or fairest) to Marx, but what it adds to understanding of political economy. On those latter criteria, there can be little doubt that Re/Presenting Class constitutes an important contribution, worthy of careful study and progressive elaboration. If it falls short of yet offering a cohesive new approach to political economy, it may nonetheless be opening up the way towards one. In the meantime, the ne-
glect of insidious forms of exploitation it reveals in the predominant approaches to political economy is more than sufficient to recommend it to our attention. *Re/Presenting Class* then is certainly a good book, and if the promise of class analysis it reveals is effectively pursued, it may turn out to be a particularly important one as well.

Avery Plaw
*Concordia University*

**Fernando Teixeira da Silva. *Operários sem patrões: Os trabalhadores da cidade de Santos no entreguerras.*** Campinas: Editora Uncamp, 2003. 475 pp. $34.00 cloth.

This book portrays the labor movement in the Brazilian port city of Santos in the period between the two World Wars. Author Fernando Teixeira da Silva reconstructs a period of rapid urbanization, economic instability, and worker ferment in a city known for the combative nature of organized labor. The author focuses on the two types of work that predominated in interwar Santos: civil construction and, above all, dock work. Through his finely grained local history approach, Silva describes both the clashes of interests between labor and management and the reformulation of each class from within.

The first part of this book examines the cultural and social ecology of labor in interwar Santos, and the second reconstructs the trajectory of the workers movement. The connections that Silva establishes between Santos’s particular working-class culture and the city’s labor movement form the crux of his analytical project.

The first two chapters focus on civil construction workers and the gradual erosion of their power vis-à-vis management after the end of the First World War. Construction workers played an especially important part in the labor movement in Santos in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Considered “craftsmen” (“artistas”) and reputed as exceptionally dignified among workers, civil construction workers’ high level of skill lent them considerable collective power. A new militancy arose in response to the diminished standard of living during the First World War. Silva reveals the minute steps in the escalation of the conflict between labor and management, as civil construction labor leaders gained a reputation as exceptionally combative and were targeted by their employers, with the complicity of the state (121). Once a privileged faction among workers, laborers in civil construction came to play a “central role within the working class” as both construction and technology advanced at an accelerating pace during the First World War. Yet the overall story he recounts is one of deskilling and loss of bargaining power. In the poignant example Silva provides, they went from proudly wearing closed shoes and a tie and exhibiting particular pride in both their work and their relative strength vis-à-vis management, to, in 1935, having the highest rate of illiteracy among all workers in Santos (122).
Chapters Three and Four concentrate on workers at the Santos docks and their largely successful fight for control of the labor force in the interwar period, resulting in the enduring achievement of the closed shop. Because of dockworkers’ presumed isolation from the rest of society and their supposed lack of hierarchy, many have concluded that their work environment is inherently conducive to labor militancy. Silva uses archival evidence from Santos and a broad, comparative survey of secondary literature to call into question stereotypical explanations of dockworkers’ political behavior. He takes issue with the idea that work at the docks took place within a closed community that predetermined workers’ ideological and cultural predilections. On the contrary, dockworkers were an integral part of the cultural and social fabric of the city, he argues. He uses a variety of sources such as criminal records to reconstruct the culture of “bravery” (valentia) “and the pride of being “workers without bosses”” (from which he derives the title of this monograph), which according to Silva comprise a set of values shared among dockworkers (149). Having already conquered the closed shop in the 1920s, in the following decade the dockworkers’ union in Santos achieved something extraordinary: the right to contract labor directly. They thereby gained control of the labor market, thus effectively approximating their dream of working “without bosses.”

Part Two discusses the rise and decline of “direct action syndicalism,” from which Santos earned the nickname “Brazilian Barcelona.” In chapters Five and Six, Silva examines the surge of strike activity in 1919–1920 and the rivalries between different ideological factions within the labor movement. Among the strategic and ideological positions were supporters of reformist syndicalism, who defended the use of worker agitation within the limits of the law. The series of strikes on the docks immediately following the First World War brought to the surface divergences in strategy and approach within labor; some opted for direct action and others for the “necessity for intermediaries in the conflict” (259). Through a detailed reconstruction of events, the author questions the conventional wisdom about the decline of anarchism, direct-action syndicalism, and other shifts in the interwar labor movement.

Chapters Seven and Eight examine the effects of repression and show the law as a battlefield on which labor, management, and the state fought about the meaning of the social question. This aggregate of issues concerning social inequality and justice—and public order—rose to the surface of public discourse in early-twentieth-century Brazil. Silva describes the judicial expulsion of foreigners, xenophobia, and extralegal police violence, which he then applies to understanding the brutal repression during the strike wave in Santos in 1919–1920. The author directly confronts the deeply problematic nature of the police documents and trial records he uses here, while squeezing valuable information out of these cases.

Chapters Nine and Ten investigate the familiar theme of the incorporation of labor into the corporatist state, primarily under President Getúlio Vargas. Communists consistently opposed the co-optation of the workers’ movement by the corporatist state. By the Second World War, “the communists had estab-
lished their uncontested leadership among the workers of Santos, giving rise to the city's characterization as the “Brazilian Moscow” or “red city” (394). Silva reconstructs the history of communism in the 1920s and 30s in order to counter the commonly held misconception that communists “flattened the terrain” of working-class organizing in the late 1920s, paving the way for the state co-optation project that would come with Vargas (39).

Silva’s goals in writing this book are, in part, empirical; he seeks knowledge of the little-studied union movement in interwar Santos. Hidden beneath this gap-filling mission is an approach to labor history that constitutes a subtle re-fashioning of the way we understand the Brazilian worker experience. This book transects the traditional chronological divide of 1930 at the end of the First Republic (1889–1930), a decision that allows Silva to study pre-1930 union organizing and culture in order to understand the corporatist state under President Getúlio Vargas and the Liberal Alliance. The author thus distinguishes his work from the normative tradition in labor history scholarship that differentiates starkly between autonomy (pre-1930) and dependency (post-1930), with the implicit value judgments that distinction implies (40).

Among the other unique contributions of this book is his treatment of workers together with management. The author gives the reader an unusual opportunity to observe industrialist Roberto Simonsen’s thought put into action, as Silva examines not only the writings but also the personal business interests of this scientific management theorist. The author describes the urban politics of concession contracts, favors, and patronage in the context of the construction boom of the period before and during the First World War. To his credit, Silva sees Simonsen as more than simply a Brazilian incarnation of U.S. engineer Frederick Taylor. In the early 1920s, Simonsen reorganized labor in his civil construction firm according to a scientific model, which bore the influence of Taylorism. Yet Simonsen also was deeply affected by local class politics, the emerging social question in Brazil, and his own interests (notably, in his concession to construct working class housing). Silva’s combination of labor history from below with the history of management demonstrates that “scientific management” only functioned thanks to the local knowledge of the companies, for example in establishing a registry for employees, with the assistance of the city’s police chief, who was also the company’s lawyer (95).

The author’s selection of Santos as a case study makes sense on several different levels. In terms of its growth and population density in the early twentieth century, Santos was comparable with larger cities, even Rio de Janeiro. Yet it was also extraordinary in many ways, especially in its renown as a militant city. The author does not overturn this image of Santos as a bastion of radical labor activity as much as he seeks to understand its historical complexity. Santos’s famous radical spirit is more interesting to the author as a question of group identity to be explained historically, rather than an historical explanation for the class conflicts that arose in the city in the period he studies.

The author seeks to develop both the book’s specificity and its general applicability though an explicitly cultural argument. He emphasizes that dock-
workers did not inhabit a closed community but one intricately connected to the city, and influenced by ideas flowing in from the outside. Yet his already expansive view of working-class experience could have been further enlarged to understand culture as formed not only on the work site but also at home, in the street, as consumers of public goods (such as housing), and in moments of leisure. An examination of working-class culture more broadly defined would have strengthened the author’s claim that the Santos labor movement’s struggle for control signified something broader than the right to make key decisions about and oversee the organization and execution of work; these workers sought control over their own lives and livelihoods (30). His incredibly detailed reconstruction of the trajectory of the labor movement might have left little space for this broadened cultural discussion; it does leave the field wide open for future research that accounts for these workers’ lives outside of work, and the lives of those in the working classes who remained outside the aegis of the union movement. Silva’s methodological and empirical contributions will certainly facilitate such future studies.

While the struggle for control provided a constant source of pride and solidarity, having achieved the status of workers without bosses did not necessarily signify liberation from oppression for Santos’s organized labor. What did change was the new authority that some workers gained to command others. Silva makes this transformation clear in his reconstruction of the final events in the life of former foreman Antoninho Navalhada, introduced earlier in the book. Navalhada’s “sad end” comprises the denouement of the author’s narrative. Having fallen to the status of a simple worker, he was murdered in 1959 at the hands of a fellow longshoreman, whom he had tried to kill due to a dispute over who had the right to order whom to work. This episode took place in the context of a new work regime, which the dockworkers’ union had implemented in order to curtail favoritism. Navalhada’s unfortunate destiny makes manifest two of this book’s central points: the importance of control as a value for which workers were willing to fight; and the historical process through which we can observe the changes in the conditions under which workers tried to negotiate this control.

The concept of workers without bosses bore different meanings for different actors. For employers, it signaled a world turned upside down and a worst-case scenario. For many workers, it represented a dream of autonomy and liberation from tyranny. Dockworkers managed to diminish the control bosses exerted over their everyday lives but could not completely escape the tyranny of quotidian violence that often rose to the surface as part of the social conflict born out of decades of extreme repression.

Amy Chazkel
CUNY Queens College

The presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), one of the leading figures of Latin American populism of the first half of the twentieth century, has long been surrounded by myth and politicized interpretations. To a certain extent this is understandable: under Cárdenas’s leadership major and spectacular reforms were carried out that had their roots in claims originally formulated during and in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917). Moreover, these reforms have had a lasting impact on Mexico’s political and socioeconomic development. In state-sanctioned *historia oficial* the figure of “grandfather” Cárdenas long reached mythical proportions: he carried out huge projects of land reform and thus finally responded to the demands of poor peasants and Indians, stood up against international capital by nationalizing the oil industry, rebuffed the conservative factions of the national bourgeoisie and laid the foundations for the corporatist state and party, that was to rule Mexico for the remaining part of the century, and thus gave institutional voice to the country’s working classes. This image has also been influential in scholarly writings, particularly in those that studied *cardenismo* as a national phenomenon. Recent years, however, have seen important changes. Nationalist populism is drastically reevaluated in the dominant discourse of neoliberal modernity, and scholars have started to break down the phenomenon, thereby trying to overcome politicized interpretations.

Ben Fallaw’s book about the Cárdenas years in the southeastern state of Yucatán is an indispensable contribution to this debate. It takes issue with competing interpretations and is remarkably successful in constructing a balanced and sophisticated view of *cardenismo*. This book takes nothing for granted: frequently used conceptual or methodological shortcuts or oppositions, e.g. about the shifting relations between federal state institutions and regional power groups in the 1930s or the structuralist vs. agency-oriented approaches to social change, are deconstructed by meticulous historical research. By limiting himself to a relatively short period of time (six years) and on the basis of extensive archival work, Fallaw is in a position to analyze the complex interplay between hacendados, peasants, urban labor, the military, bureaucrats and politicians, and institutions operating at different levels. Fallaw’s regional focus is particularly interesting since Yucatán was the place of one of the worst exploitative systems in pre-Revolutionary Mexico, that of the henequen plantations. On the eve of the revolution some hundred thousand Maya workers labored on these plantations in debt peonage. Moreover, the Yucatecan elite had always retained a strong grip on regional affairs. The reform of this social and economic system by breaking up the large plantations as well as the political and institutional incorporation of the peninsula into federal power structures constituted huge challenges for the president. It was, as Fallaw writes, “the best place to realize what Cárdenas believed was the promise of the Mexican Revolution (3).” After a tortuous start, Cárdenas went to Yucatán and intervened in the summer of 1937, “bringing the full brunt of federal power to bear on the state (81).” In what
was one of the most impressive reform initiatives of his entire presidency, he or-
dered the execution of all pending land grants in the henequen zone and the cre-
atation of a huge amount of henequen ejidos (collective land grants farmed by
peasant villages).

However, as the title of this book immediately reveals, the reforms even-
tually failed and Fallaw's book is an attempt to explain why. Although the au-
thor provides the reader with numerous angles on this issue, there are three
themes that run through the book that can account for much of the unsuccess-
ful outcome of the reform processes. First there is the complex story of building
a popular base for the regime among Yucatán’s peasants and workers. The cardenista project never really took hold here. On the countryside existed a pro-
found division between village peasants, who were entitled to obtain ejido-land,
and the peons, the rural workers who lived on the haciendas and who were ex-
cluded from creating their own ejidos. Instead, the Cárdenas regime encouraged
them to form rural unions. However, the rapid increase in the number of henequen ejidos destabilized the social and economic situation in the region,
which affected the peons most seriously. The landless peons became under the
influence of regional anarcho-syndicalist organizations, that capitalized on the
resentment against the emerging agrarian bureaucracy, and eventually under
that of the hacienda-owners who saw in the peon’s discontent an opportunity to
exploit the contradictions the the cardenista reform project and stall agrarian re-
form. Thus while the ejidos stood under the control of federal institutions, es-
pecially the Agrarian Bank, the peons were controlled by regional interest
groups. This division was never overcome. Moreover, Cárdenas never succeed-
ed in building a firm alliance with urban labor, let alone one between urban and
rural labor. Why? Fallaw points to the historical fragmentation of the working
class itself, the strong tradition of anarchism in the region that rejected federal
state intervention, but also to the fact that Cárdenas's political and financial pri-
ority lay with agrarian reform, which hindered him to dedicate the attention, re-
sources and political will needed to bring urban labor into the cardenista camp.
Eventually, workers became enmeshed with elite controlled political factions.

The fact that hacendados were able to exploit the contradictions within the cardenista alliance and mobilize peons and urban workers for their own politi-
cal ends points to a second key theme in Fallaw’s book, the weakness of class-
based politics to overcome personalistic political culture and practices. Fallaw
uses the concepts of camarilla (informally linked elites) and caciquismo (boss
rule) to analyze the limits of the establishment of horizontal alliances. Fallaw re-
peatedly shows how political calculation and selfishness, camarilla loyalties and
clientelistic ties undermine class interests and ideological coherence. This logic
also explains alliances with peculiar bedfellows, such as hacendados, radical la-
bor organizations and anarcho-syndicalist peon organizations. The rules of per-
sonalistic political culture also explain particular decisions by the president him-
self and his cronies in Mexico City and Yucatán.

The third factor that accounts for the complex history of the failure of re-
form in Yucatán is related to the intense rivalry between regional power groups
and the central state. After all, any attempt at reform by the Cárdenas regime was framed by its foes as an intervention in regional affairs. In one of the most interesting parts of the book Fallaw analyzes how the intense struggles about the control over the newly founded ejidos eventually ended in 1938 with what he calls the “rereregionalization of politics” (129), when the dominant Yucatecan camarilla managed to throw the federal government out of the henequen zone. Fallaw’s conclusion about the weakness of the cardenista state to impose its will on the provinces and to incorporate the masses in federally controlled corporatist institutions is a crucial ingredient in rethinking accepted views of cardenismo.

Cárdenas Compromised is thus a major contribution to our understanding of this crucial period in modern Mexican history. It is a book that demonstrates, once again, the capacity of fine-tuned regional and local research to engage broad issues such as state formation, working class politics, political culture and state-led reform. It deserves widespread reading by historians and political scientists.

Wil G. Pansters
Utrecht University


Forster’s work in The Time of Freedom is a worthy contribution to scholarship on collective behavior in Latin America. The work appears largely intended to provide a narrative account of peasant organizing in a specific locale; however, the work implicitly incorporates a more comprehensive theory about bottom-up collective action. The account of bottom-up collective action given by the author is really one of contentious politics involving the simultaneous dynamics of four key groups: rural indigenous, rural ladinos, large landowners, and politicians. The movement is contentious for two reasons. First, the social movement arises from a previous period of relative stability, although under a dictatorship, and it incurs a significant change in elite political ideology. Second, the time frame spans about ten years, from the fall of Ubico in 1944 to the fall of Arbenz in 1954. The author leads the reader through the three stages of initial formation, mass action, and demobilization. The author’s account of the 1944 Guatemalan Revolution challenges the traditional interpretation of hierarchical initiation. Historical accounts of the 1944 Revolution portray it as urban in its locale and middle-class in its support. Ignoring the rural indigenous and ladinos leaves a chasm in the understanding of contemporary Guatemalan history and politics. This is of particular importance in understanding the movement towards violence that followed from the failure to institutionalize the hard-earned gains of the collective movement.
The area of study is the department of San Marcos in Guatemala, which borders the department of Chiapas, Mexico. In addition, the accounts of ladino banana workers in the area southwest of San Marcos are woven in. The San Marcos area as presented in the 1944–1954 time period is characteristically racially hierarchical. White owners, many of non-Guatemalan descent, control the plantations while ladinos serve as overseers. At the bottom are the indigenous peoples who serve as laborers on the fincas. San Marcos, in terms of agricultural production, is coffee country. Thus, the lives and labor of the indigenous peoples living in this area revolve around coffee production. The landowners’ procurement of such things as housing and personal plots is also illustrative of the relationship between worker and owner in the San Marcos area of Guatemala.

The struggle of the banana workers in the Ticquisate area is also an integral part of the collective action that took place between 1944 and 1954. In the 1930s the United Fruit Company (UFC) established banana plantations in the township of Ticquisate. Bananas ranked as the second largest export earner in Guatemala’s agro-export economy. The banana workers established a strong, grassroots labor movement that was able to engage in successful mobilization. Over the ten year period, the workers repeatedly struck in request of a living wage. The author presents the ideals of the banana workers’ labor movement rather modestly distinguishing it from the rote scholarship on this movement which has traditionally portrayed the labor movement as desirous of revamping the entire agro-export system. This is important because the movement’s goal is shown not as the imposition of leftist ideology but instead is shown as the goal of securing welfare and dignity.

The reason underlying the rapid initiation of the collective movement is found to lie in the fifteen years of repression under the Ubico dictatorship in which labor organization was not tolerated. The sudden fall of Ubico in 1944 catalyzed the desires of both rural indigenous and rural ladino workers to acquire their economic rights as quickly as possible. However, the acquisition of economic rights would not have been possible without the aid of an underlying organizational base. Explicating how campesino workers could organize, given their poor material resources, is the primary contribution of this study. The author emphasizes the power of a shared collective consciousness built on the injustices suffered via class and race in general. Problems of class and race are fundamental throughout Latin America, but are said to have been particularly disturbing in Guatemala during the prohibition of organizational outlets under the Ubico regime. However, the author glances over the actual opening factor, which was the 1945 constitution. The new constitution allowed for such rights as the eight-hour workday, seventh day wage, and paid vacations. Without an institutional base, such as a constitution outlining such rights, organization would have been much more difficult.

The contentious politics aspect of this collective movement is best illustrated in the initial reluctance of the Arevalo regime to fully concur with the new rights to labor organization, all the while proclaiming the necessity of such change. The author notes the ideological or spiritual beliefs of Arevalo as his
reason for not lending full support to the movement right away. However, the answer may be better sought in noting the bargaining characteristic of contentious politics. The strength of existing socioeconomic relationships in Guatemala at the time may not have permitted rapid political change. Thus, this may account for why the more profound change takes place in 1948 three years after Arevalo became president. The continued growth of the collective movement in line with institutional change over a period of time may have convinced Arevalo of the possibility of actual change. The election of Arbenz in 1950 is strong evidence of the sufficiency of institutional change, hence the continued mobilization of campesinos. However, an important factor, one that is not well illustrated, is the demobilization phase of the collective movement. The factor that contributes to the eventually demobilization of the movement is a mobilization of political reaction on the right, which in the Guatemalan case includes the United States. The expropriation of United Fruit lands began in March 1953 when 209,842 acres of uncultivated land were taken by the government, which offered a compensation of $627,572 in bonds. One month later the US Department of State complained to Arbenz demanding a $15,854,849 compensation for one of the two sized lands. While the Guatemalan government valued $2.99 per acre, the American government valued $75.00 per acre. The Guatemalan government refused to pay that amount and continued with the project expropriating more United Fruit’s lands in October 1953 and February 1954 offering the company $500,000 for them. Arbenz attitude began to create diplomatic problems between his country and the United States, which saw his initiatives as too leftwing.

The landowners and the military, with the acquiescence of President Eisenhower, also began to countermobilize. In 1954, Colonel Castillo Armas organized an insurgent army in Nicaragua and returned to Guatemala. Shortly thereafter Arbenz resigned to seek asylum in Mexico. The pertinent point here is the rapid demobilization of the campesino movement in light of the institutional changes gained over the ten years of collective action. This point is important because when explicated it could possibly explain the rise of militant insurgency in Guatemala.

The understanding of peasant mobilization is often difficult to undercover because of the assumptions underlying the necessity of resources. Resources are necessary for mobilization, but they alone are not sufficient. An organizational structure is needed and this organizational structure must come from underlying institutions. The institution in this case is the 1945 constitution, which lays out the economic rights of the workers. The assignment of economic rights to workers provides a foundation from which organizational structure develops. This is recommended reading for those wishing to better understand both contemporary Guatemalan politics and history as well as peasant collective action.

J. David Granger

Georgetown University
The title of this book, cutely folksy, may help to attract some readers who would be intimidated or put off by something more accurate (captured in the subtitle), but it obscures the achievement of this splendid contribution by Priscilla Murolo and A.B. Chitty.

For that matter, even the history of labor subtitle doesn’t fully convey what the author’s are offering in their 332-page narrative. This is not simply a history of labor (forms of labor, the labor-process), though it’s in there. Nor is it a history simply of the US labor movement, though that too is in there. It cannot even be described as a social history of those who labor, though that also assuredly is in there. It synthesizes all of these with an interpretation of the larger political, economic, and social history of the United States.

The books scope is suggested by the chapter titles: labor in Colonial America; the American Revolution; Slavery and Freedom in the New Republic; Civil War and Reconstruction; Labor versus Monopoly in the Gilded Age; Labor and Empire; America, Inc.; Labor on the March; Hot war, Cold War; the Sixties; Hard Times; Brave New World.

The fact that this coherent and absorbing volume is so easy to read can obscure, for the unwary reader, the fact that it is an incredible work of scholarly synthesis. An alert academic can see in its pages the bringing together and integration of a variety of recent contributions from the various fields that exist in the discipline. What might stand out as scholarly insights with appropriate footnotes simply blend here into a seamless narrative that carries the reader along the path of accumulating understanding.

Of course, the understanding generated reflects the author’s own radical convictions. When they tells us that “the poet Walt Whitman saw in the increase of capitalist wealth “a sort of anti-democratic disease and monstrosity,” it is clear that they fully agree with Whitman. They assert that “the history of American labor is one of constant struggle, against enslavement, impoverishment, and repression, for democratic rights, economic security, and dignity.”

Nor are they inclined to sing a nostalgic hymn to glorious lost causes in our cold, cruel world. “The struggle has accomplished much,” they insist. “From the hours and conditions of labor to the regulation of occupational safety and health, to social welfare like minimum living standards for old and young or equal opportunity, even to the democratic franchise itself, many aspects of everyday life show the results of working people organized to advance their common interests.” These truths, so commonly obscured in the top-down, elitist way history is often taught and American realities are conveyed in the mass media, naturally flow from what the authors present to us in From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend.

At the same time, Murolo and Chitty seem inclined to agree with Eugene
V. Debs that socialism embodies “the idea of liberty and self-government, in which this nation was born.” They share information about a variety of socialists, anarchists and communists, among whom they include Trotskyists, who were opposed to Stalinist policies in the Soviet Union, and their sympathies are clearly with the historic left. Such convictions result in this final paragraph:

“If no victory has ever been final, neither has any defeat. The hope for a better life and the impulse to resist injustice always revive. Labor’s cardinal role in this historic and democratic drama comes from the fact that labor is the engine of the system. Labor really does create all wealth. All kinds of people can organize to maintain their rights and advance their interests; only working people can also organize to abolish the system altogether. When the final conflict comes—as come it will—working people will have to be ready; the world will hang in the balance.”

With the collapse of Communism, the well-funded triumphalism among partisans of the market economy, the horror of September 11, and the multifaceted horrors of the so-called war on terrorism, such rhetoric may seem a bit much for those who have heard (and perhaps uttered) such stuff before. It may certainly seem heady stuff for college undergraduates and working-class activists who come to this at the conclusion of the book. On the other hand, this is the spirit that permeates the book, and seems consistent with much of the material presented. Whether the past will flow into the future in the way the authors indicate remains to be seen. But the authors’ radical optimism poses an intriguing and refreshing challenge for the terrible times in which we live.

Over the past few decades there has been a proliferation of one-volume from-the-bottom-up histories of US the laboring majority of the United States: Jeremy Brecher’s Strike!, Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States, Robert Takaki’s A Different Mirror, Jacqueline Jones’s A Social History of the Laboring Classes From Colonial Times to the Present, and Paul Le Blanc’s A Short History of the U.S. Working Class (a personal favorite of this reviewer). It may be helpful to note how this one compares.

The writing is more popular, more straightforward, more accessible than the scholarly prose of Jacqueline Jones or than the eloquent intricacies of Ronald Takaki and yet there is an incorporation of the rich cultural and multicultural concerns that animate the work of Jones and Takaki. I have made substantial use, in classes I teach, of Takaki’s magnificent multicultural history of the United States, and many of my students have come to share my love for that volume, but whereas his study fragments the historical experience into different chapters on Native Americans, the Irish, African Americans, Chinese immigrants, Eastern European Jews, etc., the Murolo-Chitty volume weaves together the many aspects of the multicultural stories into a unified, flowing narrative.

Jeremy Brecher’s classic work focuses on class-struggle explosions. These punctuate the Murolo-Chitty account, but they are blended into broader contexts that give one a sense of “the whole story.” Zinn’s incomparable People’s History is spiced with a polemical thrust that is less explicit, more subtly inte-
grated in this book. The American Revolution and Civil War, for example, come off more positively, less as upper-class manipulations (though such manipulations are pointed out). Le Blanc’s succinct and readable narrative is one-third the length of that offered by Murolo and Chitty. But an immense amount of information is consequently packed onto each page of Le Blanc’s book and in positive contrast, Murolo and Chitty are able to take more time in laying out the various points, including additional information and specific examples. This facilitates the reader comprehending more fully the story of the US working class.

Hardly the last word on the story of the US working class, *From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend* provides valuable knowledge, rich insights, and challenging interpretations not only for those just learning about US and labor history, but also for experienced hands who can benefit from, and be stimulated by, a fresh and sometimes audacious retelling of the story.

While the Le Blanc volume is graced by some wonderful line drawings by labor muralist Mike Alewitz, the illustrations by Joe Sacco consist of marvelously drawn comic strip narratives whose delicious humor is enhanced by a recurring villain, drawn to resemble the artist, who gets all the best lines (almost). These help to highlight key points that the authors make about the Boston Massacre, slave labor and free labor, Mother Jones and the Ludlow Massacre, industrial era workers, the Flint Sit-Down Strike, migrant labor’s heroine Jesse Lopez de la Cruz, postindustrial era workers, and the “blessings” of globalization.

Paul Le Blanc

*La Roche College*

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Pem Davidson Buck’s book is intended to offer readers a view from under the sink (1). Initially rejecting a career for which her middle-class upbringing had prepared her, Buck moved from Pennsylvania to central Kentucky, where she and her husband became back-to-the-landers, growing and canning food and raising goats and calves, sometimes supplementing the family income by working as part-time day laborers on tobacco farms, as hod-carriers, and as plumbers. But it’s not so easy to leave a middle-class liberal upbringing behind, especially down on the farm living below the poverty level. Working as a helper in the small plumbing and heating business she operated with her husband, Buck spent time lying on her back on the floors of the wealthy fixing leaks; from that perspective under the sink she looked up and saw fine furniture and other manifestations of wealth she could not afford. One thing led to another: seeing the world as if for the first time, “it appeared oppressive” (2). People, working people, that is, work extremely hard, and what do they get for their efforts? Boney fingers.
Viewing the world from under the sink and perceiving a life of involuntary poverty (2) stretching out before her, it was time for Buck to reclaim her white middle-class privilege and take up that birthright (1) by returning to graduate school in anthropology. Armed with academic theories about inequality, she began again to see things through new eyes as she studied the “creation of poverty for individuals and regions” (3). Our society “pits us against them, the big guys against the little guys.” Corporate capitalism, which was supposed to be “nice”, (3) only wanted profits and pursued them at all costs. Out went her liberal illusions about a beneficent economic order. Buck became a politically committed academic for whom scholarship would illuminate inequitable social relations and would constitute a blunt weapon in the broader struggle for justice.

“I am angry”, she writes, “at what I think the exercise of power has done to most people in the United States: angry at the way race, gender, and ethnicity have been used to divide and rule us, angry at the horrors that groups of people with slightly more power have inflicted on those with less power, and doubly angry at the horrors of elites have inflicted on us” (4). Her book, not surprisingly, has an “overt agenda” (4): to help “circumvent” the harsh future “that may be coming.” No “objective” social science (4) here! Passion in scholarship is neither inherently good nor bad; it can enliven and animate or it can run toward the clichéd and grate on the nerves. Worked to the Bone is, unfortunately, more the latter than the former: it is, in its way, history as morality tale, a tendentious and often misleading rendering of the American past—with Kentucky sometimes as its example built on selective secondary sources and dubious political theories that reads more like a rough political pamphlet than a piece of scholarship.

The ostensible focus of the study is a contrast between the pseudonymous North County and South County, although these receive less attention than her broader indictments of inequality and power in American history. The book’s conceptual metaphor is that of a drainage system, an insight derived from her plumbing days: The history of central Kentucky, as well as that of the United States, Buck suggests, can be best understood as the operation of a system of drainage that organizes the “flow of value produced by work the flow of sweat out of the hands of workers and through the hands of successive layers of elites.” Sweat “is made to trickle up” (12) by the efforts of elites and the system they control. With such a focus, the book quickly covers considerable chronological ground, tracing the development of exploitative drainage systems from the era of white settlement of Kentucky in the colonial period to the present. Like the excavation of any plumbing job, the picture painted in these pages is not a pretty one.

The Kentucky and the United States she portrays are one of almost unrelenting suffering, exploitation, poverty, pain, and hardship. Neither social mobility, even the intergenerational kind, nor rising standards of living play much of a role in her story. Instead, whites exploited Native Americans, colonial elites exploited poor whites, and slaveholders exploited African Americans. Elites engaged in a calculated divide-and-conquer strategy over non-elites and male pa-
triarchs ruled over women; voting, she contends, has been a largely meaningless exercise except in that it fostered lower-class white consent; citizenship “in and of itself in the antebellum United States provided little” (60) save the right of a worker to “sell himself piecemeal,” vote, or riot (60).

To explain poorer whites’ acquiescence to domination by elites, Buck habitually and mechanically invokes whiteness. The elite’s solution to an unruly white population in the 1760s was to create the “first of what would be many versions of an evolving white privilege” (23). To break the assumed solidarity among the interracial and downtrodden masses, Buck believes, elites taught “Whites the value of whiteness” (24) and encouraged them to identify with the big slaveholding planters (26). Relying upon an overused notion first posited by Du Bois and promiscuously adopted by many leftist academics, she argues that the “psychological wage” substituted the right to claim racial superiority for the cash wages withheld from poorer Whites by the capitalist class. (87)

Poorer whites may have been hoodwinked by rapacious elites, “but not all bought into this system” (33) and many kept reverting to unruly behavior, requiring those elites to reconfigure whiteness, and the drainage system, on a periodic basis to keep the wool pulled over their eyes. Whiteness was the “smoke-screen behind which the elite reorganized the drainage system as necessary to maintain their own control” (33). Indeed, she insists, whiteness “has been a continuously evolving smokescreen, adjusted and readjusted to the changing needs of elites as the drainage system has been reorganized, disguising from many of the oppressed the nature of their oppression” (225).

Buck’s study shares many of the problems of the larger whiteness genre. Antebellum Irish immigrants, she asserts while invoking Noel Ignatiev’s problematic study How the Irish Became White, were themselves “unaccustomed to being white” (47) and were treated as “not quite white,” (47) as apparently were later southern and European immigrants David Roediger and James Barrett’s In Between People. Unlike some whiteness scholars who treat so-called working-class whiteness as something of a choice made largely by white workers themselves (David Roediger and Bruce Nelson immediately come to mind), Buck grafts an old-fashioned— one might call it crude—Marxism onto whiteness, treating whiteness as something resembling a false consciousness produced and imposed by a self-aware ruling class out to divide and rule.

Beyond the heavy-handed theoretical framework are equally dubious historical interpretations and facts. Here Buck’s history takes considerable liberty with established scholarly understandings, and what kernels of truth there are in her narrative are often distorted or exaggerated. She believes, for example, that slave rebels Gabriel and Denmark Vesey, had their revolts “been successful”, could have “overthrown local government and ended slavery” (52). In her view, the Civil War was fought “between capitalists over the control of black and white labor, North and South, and over the distribution of the fruits of that labor,” ending only when those who provided that labor stopped it by saying “no,” deserting, rioting, or killing (64). The war was, to a large extent, “a fight between Northern and Southern elites over control of the drainage system,” over which
set of elites would benefit the most from Southern sweat, (90) an argument not heard credibly in many, many decades. She wrongly posits that the federal government “seriously considered confiscating land from the conquered Confederate elite for redistribution to former slaves” (66) and that freed slaves resisted in the immediate post-Reconstruction era by withdrawing their labor and “joining the flood of freed slaves going North” (70). The Freedman’s Bureau, she again mistakenly contends, had a mandate to “redistribute land” (89).

In Buck’s treatment, the rise of Jim Crow becomes wholly functional: elites imposed it to solve the problem of the unruly masses in revolt (i.e. the Populist party), creating a caste system and divided the working class (it wasn’t divided before?). Elites worked to “perfect Jim Crow” to “guarantee that bony-fingered people would never again mount as powerful a threat as had been posed by the [Farmers’] Alliance” (117). What’s more, in establishing Jim Crow, she argues, the elite were also reneging on their contract with Blacks (what contract?) “who as freedmen had also been promised the vote instead of land” (98). By 1909, Louisville was not, as Buck would have it, the second largest city in the South (123). It’s a bit of an exaggeration to claim that questions about capitalism itself became widespread during the 1920s (127) and downright silly to refer to the “fascism of the 1920s in America” (225). Buck implies that union conflict with elites in the early twentieth century won “more concessions for their members” true but uses Henry Ford’s five-dollar day as an example, despite the fact that Ford was hardly responding to a powerful union movement at the time (136). The newly reincarnated Ku Klux Klan of the 1910s and 1920s is reduced, in Buck’s hands, to “a tool of national American elites who used the nativist response to their own ends, choosing to institute fascist processes to enhance their own power in their quest for international control” (139). Indeed, according to Buck, national elites struck a bargain with the Klan, enacting severe immigration restrictions in the early 1920s in exchange for its support (146). And so on.

Fast forward to the recent past, where the New World Order of the first President Bush heralded “yet another reorganization of the United States drainage system to include far more people who are not living in the United States” (201). Buck’s discussion of contemporary developments in Kentucky’s economy, and especially the physical and psychological impact of the new low-wage service economy on Kentucky’s working people, is the most valuable—but too brief—part of the book. Even here, though, her political exaggerations mar her portraits. It’s hard to take seriously her conclusion that “fascist processes” are “raising their heads in the United States today” (226). Apparently, American elites have decided to “move toward fascist policies” to lower wages yet further, risking revolt or serious questions about their right to rule (216). Elites have devoted considerable resources to “making sure people don’t realize that change is possible, that the misery they are experiencing is not part of nature” (216). I confess that after watching late-night “fair and balanced” cable news on Fox that that notion might occasionally pop into my head. But in the morning, things look a bit different.

Buck offers her Worked to the Bone as an example of the “alternative his-
ories and anthropologies” (226) she believes necessary to “avert fascism and nativism, to keep from being bought off by a new psychological wage, to keep from being derailed by whiteness” (226). Armed with her book and like-minded studies, “we” (226) can “derail the present strategies” of the elite. The time, she suggests, may be close at hand. Like many overly hopeful leftists, she believes her working class is finally coming to see the light: the “sugar-coated contract” is definitely falling apart as far as these central Kentucky white people are concerned (204) and the possibility of an “inclusivist revolt remains real”, as poorer people are apparently coming to see the conspiracy “on the part of the big guys” out to “get the little guys” (217). Perhaps, she hopes, the “voices of black radicals, communists, Wobblies, and socialists might again be heard” (219). “If they keep this [welfare reform] up”, one of her white Kentucky respondents tells her, “there’s going to be a revolution” (203). Uh huh.

Passion that drives an historical narrative and analysis, in some instances, contributes to a genuinely moving, provocative, and inspiring history. At other times, it lamentably transforms history into propaganda. The kind of passionate history that flattens the nuances and richness of the past, denies inconvenient facts, and reduces complex phenomena to straightforward lessons serves its politically sympathetic audiences poorly. Whether in or out of the academy (and many readers of Monthly Review Press books are not academics), the Left, such as it is, should not settle for an analysis, either historical or anthropological, that subordinates its subject to its slogans and mechanistic frameworks, however ardently the author subscribes to them.

Eric Arnesen

*University of Illinois at Chicago*