

Book Reviews

Aaron Major. 2014. *Architects of Austerity: International Finance and the Politics of Growth*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 264 pages, ISBN 978-0804788342 Cloth (\$60.00).

Architects of Austerity is a well-researched, clearly written, and convincingly argued book on the political history of international finance regulation of the post-WWII period. I don't think I exaggerate when I say that, with this book, Aaron Major establishes himself as a leading voice among analysts who, over the past decade or so, have done some serious rethinking of the common wisdom surrounding our understanding of this crucial period.

This common wisdom looks something like this: the end of the Second World War coincides with the emergence of a new international regime broadly governed by a logic of "embedded liberalism." Unlike the gold standard regime and its focus on monetary stability at the expense of all else, under embedded liberalism new economic priorities become dominant, and among those priorities the primacy of growth and full employment over the need for stability takes pride of place. But for reasons having to do with the weak political will of the forces underlying this regime, the tension created by the Cold War and the rise and decline of US hegemony, and the contradictions of the regime itself, embedded liberalism falls apart under the weight of stagflation and international volatility, to be replaced surprisingly by a resurgent liberal doctrine. While neo-liberalism is not free of problems and contradictions, it acquires an uncontested, hegemonic status that to this day sets strict limits on the financial and fiscal autonomy of national governments. Neoliberalism underpins the current politics of austerity.

In what ways is this common wisdom incorrect? Scholars from a variety of fields and approaches have taken issue with its lack of nuance: neoliberalism is surely dominant, but its rise has been uneven to say the least, and understanding the sources of this unevenness yields insight into the political processes that underlie it. Put differently, understanding neoliberalism as a reaction to the economic failure of embedded liberalism hides the institutional foundations of neoliberalism, and the identity and shape of the political constellations that have facilitated its diffusion. But ignoring those institutional foundations means implicitly accepting that neoliberal success is a function of its effectiveness as an economic solution. The search for institutional differences in the intensity, timing, and configuration of neoliberalism, in turn, has unearthed unexpected evidence about the political coalitions where important ideas that neoliberalism later appropriates come from (see in this respect Monica Prasad's book *The Politics of Free Markets*).

Major's book joins this conversation by pointing not to national differences, but to institutional continuity at the international level in order to explain neoliberalism's resurgence. In fact, Major's argument is that classical liberalism never went away; rather, it constituted the ideological terrain of international financial institutions throughout the period of embedded liberalism, and exercised important constraints on national governments even at the height of Keynesianism. *Architects of Austerity* engages in sustained historical research in order to substantiate this argument. The story begins in the 1950s, when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) takes a strong position on the perennial question of the trade-off between stability and growth by reasserting the classical liberal orthodoxy in favor of stability. Consistent with this economic orientation, the OECD begins a drawn-out political and ideological battle aimed at preserving the stability of the international balance of payments while delegitimizing the demand for flexibility originating with national policies targeting domestic

economic growth. In a series of detailed chapters on the ramifications of this institutional position, Major goes on to show how the OECD (in particular the Economic Policy Committee, later joined by the Bank of International Settlements) was able to impact the economic policies of Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s by forcing them to submit to the requirements of international monetary stability.

The selection of these three cases is quite strategic: all three countries attempted to embark on a path to sustained economic growth, but, in spite of dramatic differences in terms of domestic politics and international leverage, none of them succeeded because of mounting international pressure on the national currency. Of course, pressure on the currency is precisely what international monetary institutions had been designed to alleviate. When balance of payment problems arose, as a consequence of states pursuing domestic growth objectives, it was the task of international financial institutions to step in, in line with Keynesian theory. But this is the core of Major's argument: international financial institutions were unwilling to fulfill this role, for they privileged long-term financial stability above all else, and followed classical liberal rather than Keynesian principles. Whose interests were these institutions serving by refusing to lessen national short-term adjustment problems, Major asks? He identifies international finance as the major player, though a player that works in the background, so to speak, jockeying for monetary stability so as to set the stage for the free flow of international capital. To simplify a much richer argument, the front stage of international finance are the finance ministers of various national governments (the German, the Dutch and the French appear to be the most active)—through their control over the international institutions of monetary governance, they discipline the national governments that have the nerve to challenge classical liberal orthodoxy.

Major's final contribution to the analysis of neoliberalism is a claim to the effect that the rise of neoliberalism should be understood as a shift in political power away from the government agencies tasked with interacting with society, and towards the government agencies (like Finance Ministries and Central Banks) closely aligned with international finance. While this is not a novel claim, it nicely concludes Major's political history of financial governance in that it illustrates just how far the consequences of classical liberal orthodoxy being kept alive in the sphere of international financial institutions reach into the present.

Like any good book, *Architects of Austerity* raises some questions as well as generating calls for further clarification. Let me begin with the latter. For one, I would have liked to see more systematic evidence of the connection between political actors in the OECD and international finance. Biographical data on key players would help shed further light on the very institutions that Major points to as crucial carriers of classical liberalism. Otherwise, it is easy to lose track of the politics going on within those institutions. Similarly, I would have liked to see more detailed discussion of the evolution of central banks during this period. Is there cross-national variation in terms of how closely linked to international finance central banks are? Do all central banks give in so easily to the demands of international capital?

On a more theoretical level, while I understand that the genre in which this book is written is that of political economy and economic history, I would have liked to see a discussion of the broader implications of this work. Specifically, how does the book speak to debates within economic or political sociology? To be sure, the first part of the book does an excellent job situating the argument in political economy debates about the relationship between domestic and international forces, but the book does not quite return to those debates at the end. Thus, for instance, Major often writes as if interests were fixed and politics were just a matter of some interests prevailing over others, but a more institutionally sensitive perspective would be

attentive to the ways interests change over time as a function of the political contexts in which they develop. Finally, does the analysis have implications for the study of neoliberalism in the particular period under examination, or can it yield insight into capitalism in general? I think sociology has the potential to offer such general accounts, and books such as *Architects of Austerity* will be invaluable building blocks to that end.

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William I. Robinson. 2014. *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 252 pages, ISBN 978-1107691117 Paper (\$29.99).

In a preface to his highly celebrated book, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, Poulantzas stated that his aim in studying the capitalist class is to provide better conceptual tools for working class organizations in their struggle with the capitalist system. In a similar fashion, William Robinson, a long time scholar of capitalist class, openly embraces Poulantzas' effort not only to understand the changing nature of global capitalism over the last four decades, but also to change it. Robinson is one of the most prominent advocates of a rising approach within the literature on state-capitalist class relations: the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC) perspective. *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity* extends his more than 15 years of theoretical and empirical work. In fact, the book can be read as a good introduction to Robinson's theory of contemporary capitalism. For those familiar with his framework and eager to follow up with the recent debates within the TCC perspective, the book nicely reviews and engages with those authors who are critical of his approach. However, Robinson states that the book's main focus is to identify the main causes and responses to the 2008 global financial crisis, utilizing his global capitalism theory. It therefore provides invaluable updated information on the ravaging effects of the recent 2008 global crisis class, making the text appealing for any student of Marxism interested in global inequality and capitalist class dominance.

Robinson spends half of the book introducing his global capitalism theory before discussing his more recent work on the 2008 global crisis and its aftermath. He organizes this first part as a debate with other Marxist schools of thought, especially world system analysis. He argues that the capitalist class does not organize itself nationally as in the pre 1970s period, but rather transnationally. In a similar vein, the nation state does not function for the benefit of its national bourgeoisie. It is structured for the transnational capitalist class. Moreover, today's transnational state (TNS) is a network of global institutions such as the IMF, WB, WTO, UN, and G20, as well as nation states.

The key to the formation of TCC and TNS, Robinson argues, is a qualitative change in productive relations after 1970s. Historically commodity production was organized by capitalists within the confines of national states. However, globalization fractured the production process so that different capitalists in different regions of the world collaborate for the production of a commodity. More and more commodity production is dominated by these transnational relations, making the transnational capitalist class the dominant capitalist fraction in the metropolitan and dependent regions of the world. It is this qualitative change in the nature of commodity

production which radically changes the character of both the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state. Therefore, Robinson rejects those analyses coming mostly from the world system approach, which see globalization as a quantitative change due to the increasing scale and scope of global commercial networks.

In the latter part of the book, Robinson analyzes the 2008 global crisis. He reiterates the theories of underconsumption and globalized financialization as the root of the crisis. In this regard, his analysis differs little from extant Marxist scholarship on the subject. However, where he does depart from the current literature is in his analysis of the response given to the crisis. He argues that the enormous bail-outs provided by the U.S. government in the 2007-8 period were not only for the benefit of U.S. financial institutions, but also for the security of the transnational (finance) capitalist class. Moreover, he sees the huge military campaigns of the U.S. army in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Obama-era drone wars as part of the conflation of the interests of global finance capital with those of the “military-security-industrial-construction-engineering-petroleum complex” (148). Militarized accumulation and the reassertion of the power of finance capital have been the two responses given to the global financial crisis. Robinson rightly states that this has created massive human insecurity, to which the TNS has responded with more intensified policing.

Robinson claims that neo-imperialist theories that trace their intellectual trajectory to the classical analyses of imperialism developed by Lenin and Luxemburg have little explanatory capacity to make sense of developments since the 1970s. At the core of these analyses is the argument that capitalism is based on a dynamic of uneven accumulation, and that this unevenness is defined through the core-periphery relation; core nation states compete with each other to dominate peripheral regions within the structure of interstate relations. Robinson maintains that uneven development of capitalism has lost its territorial significance; today it expresses itself via the formation of a TCC and a global working class without much reference to regional differences. Worldwide, the conditions of the global working class have become more similar across former core and peripheral regions, as the post-World War II national welfare states have almost vanished.

In my view, Robinson’s interpretation of the neo-imperialism debate has some serious flaws, particularly in terms of understanding the legacy of dependency theory and world systems analysis regarding the character of the uneven development of capitalism. According to Robinson, neo-imperialist theories following the classical texts on imperialism by Lenin, Bukharin and Hilferding argue that national states compete within the inter-state system for the benefit of their national bourgeoisie. Contrary to Robinson’s characterization of the dependency school, prominent dependistas such as Cardoso and Enzo, as well as Poulantzas, stated already in the 1970s that the dependency relation is not imposed from the outside, but rather is instituted through an alliance between the comprador bourgeoisie of the dependent countries and the bourgeoisie of the core countries. It was this alliance that enabled the exploitation of the colonies for the benefit of both the metropolitan and dependent country bourgeoisies. A contemporary contributor to the new imperialism debate, David Harvey (2005), also pointed to this alliance in the formation and the consolidation of neoliberal policies around the world. Rather than pointing to the endless conflict within the interstate system, contemporary theories of new imperialism point to the existence of hegemonic or counter-hegemonic alliances that regulate the conflicts in global accumulation of capital. World systems analysis is especially rich in its focus on the rise and fall of hegemonic cycles. The upshot is that Robinson misrepresents the novelty of his own argument within the imperialism debate.

A more novel part of Robinson's theory of imperialism is his assertion of the territorial independence of the uneven development of contemporary capitalism. However, he also acknowledges that "there remain significant regional differences in relation to global accumulation and particular histories and configurations of social forces that shape distinct experiences under globalization. Moreover these social forces operate through national and regional institutions" (114). Therefore, while he writes that "the fundamental social contradiction in global society is between subordinate and dominant classes" (114), on the very same page he accepts the persistence of the North-South divide (similar to Arrighi's 2001 article published as a critique of Robinson's early work on the TCC). This acknowledgment of the persistence of the North-South divide stands as a tension within his theory of global capitalism that emphasizes the territorial independence of the unevenness of capitalism. These issues, in turn, have implications for Robinson's thesis regarding the global working class. Even a quick look at the social development indices in areas such as housing, health care, education, and food security reveals persistent differences between historically peripheral and core regions of the world. In this regard, I find his conceptualization of the global working class a more effective plea for transnational/international class solidarity than a solid argument about the character of working class existence in the context of contemporary global capitalism.

Another problematic point is Robinson's treatment of clashes within the transnational capitalist class. Although Robinson mentions at various points that such clashes exist, he does not provide any empirical or theoretical discussion of why they arise and how they affect the functioning of global capitalism. He rather emphasizes the high degree of cooperation within the TCC and argues that U.S. military power works for the protection of its interests against those few countries and military groups that try to check its power. Not surprisingly, Robinson views the increasing global alliance of BRICS countries as a manifestation of its quest to reconfigure the power within the TCC rather than a challenge of the global geopolitical power of the U.S. As he does not delve into the cleavages that exist within the TCC, the reader cannot understand the military and economic tensions that are now occurring—for example, those between Russia and the U.S.-EU over Syria and Ukraine, and between China and the U.S.-Japan over the East China Sea and North Korea.

In the concluding chapter Robinson proposes a broad strategy of global social movements in order to check the power of the TCC. I find this bold attempt particularly valuable, given the fact that many commentators on the left avoid risking an answer to the question "what is to be done?" Robinson is pessimistic about the usefulness of massive social upheavals without a political body organizing the expression of this opposition. He is mostly critical of "horizontal" approaches geared towards the creation of certain social spaces that are independent from global capitalism. For Robinson, without dealing with the power of the transnational state, there is no way to challenge the power of the TCC. He also criticizes vanguardist tendencies of the "old left" and proposes a strategy of social movement unionism that organizes across the living and working space of the global working class. Although Robinson does not address how to challenge the enormous coercive power of the capitalist class, I still find his attempt to grapple with these issues impressive. Overall, and despite my reservations with elements of his account, I regard Robinson's book a must read for anyone seeking to understand the contemporary manifestations of global capitalism.

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David Redmon. 2015. *Beads, Bodies, and Trash: Public Sex, Global Labor, and the Disposability of Mardi Gras*. New York: Routledge. 256 pages, ISBN 978-0415525404 Paper (\$35.95).

David Redmon, in this book, extends the journey begun in his previous documentary *Mardi Gras: Made in China*, following the plastic Mardi Gras beads from the factory in South China where they are produced, to the site of consumption on New Orleans' Bourbon Street, to the landfills where the beads end up, to the environmental organizations seeking to replace them with more sustainable Mardi Gras paraphernalia. Redmon underscores that the common theme undergirding this journey, and the central argument of the book, is that "the senses shape, form, and govern the commodity chain of Mardi Gras beads" (7). To support his argument, Redmon demonstrates the ways in which the bodily experiences of touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell "organize and give shape to social relations," (7) and at the same time, "intertwine with the political economy to produce a commodity chain" (8). Redmon contends that his argument furthers the existing literature on sensuality through illustrating that "a commodity chain is a corporeal association of assembled senses that fuses with the economy as a seemingly reified sensual object that, in turn, governs and reproduces what has recently been labeled a sensual sphere" (8).

Redmon's book aims to combine an objective account of the ways in which the "senses shape the political economy of the objects" and a subjective account of the ways in which people interact with the beads as sensuous objects. In so doing, Redmon theorizes sensualities of human tastes, smells, sights, and touch as a social force that drives the demand for the production of the beads and facilitates their circulation across national borders. In Redmon's words, sensualities "influence the political economy, materiality, and the global division of labor" (9).

This book comprises six chapters. The first chapter lays out the central argument, approaches, and theoretical advances of the book. The second chapter delves into the production site in China where teenage girls constitute the labor force to manufacture the beads. Redmon demonstrates the ways in which workers live in "the relations of sensuality—especially of discipline, placement of the body inside the factory, repetition of movements, embodied governance, and the materiality of experiential aesthetics." Redmon points out that human touch,

perceptions, smells and sounds organize and shape workers' social relations of order and discipline in the factory. He argues that "sensual degradation, sensual discipline, and sensual social control are central ways of organizing workers' movements and ways of creating dullness" (47).

The third chapter examines the use of beads during celebrations of the carnival on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Redmon illustrates the ways in which human senses generate effervescence through the ritual of bead exchange and create what he calls "a sensual community" during the Mardi Gras. Redmon contends that such sensory experiences shape "social relations of exchange, scripted disorder, and interaction rituals" (85).

The fourth chapter follows the beads to the dump sites where, as Redmon states, the VerdiGras organization feels "displeasurable sensations" from the beads (133). The organization believes that environmental protection warrants the eradication of the plastic beads and their replacement with a sustainable version. To the VerdiGras organization, the beads represent "sensual objects of avoidance" (133), as the beads are perceived as a threat to both bodies and the environment.

The last two chapters are devoted to an audiovisual approach to capture sensory phenomena. Redmon first explores the sociology of sensual relations along commodity chains. He then discusses the meaning and the process of a sensory sphere, and theorizes the gift exchange as a means of social control. In the end he presents a theoretical and practical example of using audiovisual methods as a vehicle for sociologists to produce video ethnography.

Ultimately, this book, as Redmon states, "tells a story of globalization and inequality through merging materialist and sensory frameworks." Redmon is an extremely talented and brilliant film producer, and his films have been widely adopted and celebrated in sociology and anthropology classrooms where students and scholars are made to see with their own eyes and feel with their own bodies the insidious inequality and injustice inherent in global capitalism. Consistent with this mission, Redmon's book offers a wonderful and innovative introduction to, and theorization of, video ethnography for students and scholars whose passion lies in visual sociology and visual anthropology.

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Wilma A. Dunaway, ed. 2014. *Gendered Commodity Chains: Seeing Women's Work and Households in Global Production*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 285 pages, 978-0804789080 Paper (\$29.95).

Over the last two decades, scholars have produced a voluminous literature on global commodity chains, value chains and production networks. As readers of this journal are no doubt aware, the thrust of the world-systems formulation of commodity chains – to highlight the extraction and transfer of surplus from periphery to core – has since taken a backseat to firm-centric analyses of competition and, increasingly, 'win-win' cooperation. The present volume highlights just how much has been lost in this transformation. In her thorough introduction, drawing on nearly three

decades of scholarship, the volume's editor, Wilma Dunaway, foregrounds the centrality of households and social reproduction in the world-systems tradition. This focus remains as important today as it was in the late 1970s when Hopkins and Wallerstein theorized the household as a site of surplus generation and extraction in the world-system. The semi-proletarian households that they and Marxist feminist scholars such as Maria Mies, Lourdes Benería and Claudia von Werlhof observed have since become mainstays of contemporary capitalism, especially in the wake of neoliberal restructuring of the 1980s and ongoing austerity today, a case made convincingly for the global North by Dave Broad in the volume. The present collection is thus a timely contribution to a growing body of critical commodity chain and production network studies. This literature places commodity production and exchange within the constellation of social relations that are reproducing uneven geographies of development along existing and new contours. In what follows, we undertake a thematic discussion of the implicit dialogue in the volume between feminist and orthodox world-systems approaches. We conclude by suggesting points for a second dialogue with critical geography.

The challenge of critical commodity chain studies is adeptly addressed by two of the strongest contributions, authored by Jane Collins and Priti Ramamurthy. Both authors offer the reader a conceptualization of the feminist commodity chain as a mode of analysis that grounds studies in local processes at once constitutive of, and constituted by, global connections. The complexity of these processes can be daunting, especially when viewed with an eye to their global dimension. As Ramamurthy has long argued, feminist approaches must eschew a unilinear understanding of commodity chains as composed solely of investments that flow from global North to South and commodities that move in the other direction (44). Indeed, analysts should embrace the "star of lines," as Collins suggests, that traverses the commodity from social reproduction in its varied dimensions, to the refashioning of gender ideologies, to the conflicts and complicities between workers, communities and management (37). Such an analysis, to quote Collins, has "the potential to bring externalities to the center, to create new measures of value, and to critically engage global processes generating inequality" (ibid.). The challenge for a feminist analysis is to open up the ways in which difference becomes value to capital, and, following Ramamurthy, the ways that difference confounds capital's logics.

Understanding the commodity chain as a mode of analysis stands at odds with several chapters written from a more orthodox world-systems perspective. Dunaway's and Clelland's contributions, which provide a conceptual backdrop for other chapters, remain committed to the project of the commodity chain as a mechanism of surplus extraction from the households of producers and workers at the "bottom" of the chain. This perspective offers important insights because it focuses commodity chain analysis on the household as *the* central locus where hidden value is created through un- or under-paid (often female) household labor, and situates this process within capitalism's broad tendency to rely upon the invisible and devalued labor of semi-proletarian households for accumulation. Indeed, terms such as "housewifization" (Dunaway) and "dark value" (Clelland) aptly highlight how un- and under-paid natural and human resources that are framed as externalities remain unaccounted for in global production, and provide a hidden subsidy to commodity chains. For Clelland, echoing structuralist and *dependentista* formulations, the extraction of this dark value from semi-proletarian households in the periphery and its transfer to the core through cheapening prices re-frames the phenomena under discussion more aptly as "dark-value-extraction chains" (72). Clearly, this speaks to feminist concerns about the role played by households and social differences (*inter alia* gender) in capital accumulation, and the existence of a vast realm of labor and economic exchange mechanisms outside both the

market form and the capitalist firm. Yet, while world-systems theorists conceive these other, alternative economies as a hidden substratum tapped by capital for surplus extraction and accumulation, feminist scholars challenge such functionalist interpretations. Indeed, scholars such as Ramamurthy argue for the appreciation of households and labor marked by difference from a nuanced perspective. The very possibility for surplus value to be extracted across diverse contexts and over time suggests the need to consider alternative systems of valuation and provisioning as defined by far more than their conformity to formal capitalist relations of production.

A second dimension where WST commodity chain studies could benefit from a more thorough engagement with the feminist analysis as outlined in Part 1 is the appreciation of the “constitutive link between production and consumption” (47), both in the sense of the production and consumption of a commodity along a chain, and the production and consumption of commodities at all nodes of a commodity chain. The chapter by Kathleen Pickering Sherman and Andrea Akers achieves precisely this balance. In their discussion of the marketing of indigenous poverty and culture among Lakota people in South Dakota, the authors focus on the household as both a site of production and consumption within commodity webs. The circulation and exchange of these commodities can occur simultaneously through formal and informal markets as well as non-market mechanisms, including subsistence production and inter-household sharing, gifting, barter, and public welfare payments. Nicola Yeats’ chapter summarizing her extensive work on global care chains also gestures to the importance of the modes of proximate and long-distance care and consumption practices of households in the global South that rely upon members working as nurses and caregivers in the global North.

Finally, we would like to conclude by suggesting the potential for constructive dialogue between volumes such as this one and work on commodity chains/production networks in conversation with critical geography (e.g., Bair and Werner 2011; Bair et al. 2013). Let us take Saniye Dedeoglu’s stimulating chapter on Turkish garment production in Istanbul and Turkey’s southeast region as an example. Noting that the two areas of production rely on different kinds of gendered labor – entire households and immigrants in Istanbul and “factory daughters” in the southeast – Dedeoglu’s work is suggestive of the growing importance of sub-national regional competition and uneven development to global production. Particular regional contexts and labor markets – in Turkey, or as we have seen in Mexico and Central America – offer sources for additional surplus and, in turn, are remaking global patterns of inequality. Gendered strategies of households are forged in relation to uneven regional development and commodity chain restructuring, as we can see, for example, with step-wise migration that links intra- and international mobility. The spatial dimension and territoriality of global commodity chains remains a fruitful and largely unexplored area for feminist and world-systems scholars alike to explore the links between social and spatial inequalities that are both the condition for and outcome of global capitalist production.

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Gavin Fridell. 2013. *Alternative Trade: Legacies for the Future*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing. 169 pages, 978-1552665879 Paper (\$24.95).

In the 1990s, neoliberalism flourished. The pursuit of free trade was manifest in the founding of the World Trade Organization; ardent promotion of the Washington Consensus development policies; and promises that a tide of unfettered globalization could rise all boats. Events at the turn of the 21st Century, however, revealed widespread contention and doubt that such an agenda would deliver deeper benefits to a broader global population than the policies that preceded them. The 1999 protests at the WTO ministerial in Seattle highlighted civil society's concern that labor unions, the environment, and economically marginalized groups would bear the brunt of the adjustment costs in the short run, and may not become better off in the long run. Likewise, the 2000 UN Millennium Development Goals and the 2001 WTO Doha Declaration of commitment to development underscored the concern that trade liberalization alone may not improve social wellbeing across the globe.

Two decades later, a burgeoning literature evaluates the successes and failures of the neoliberal project. Yet, surprisingly few authors compare these 'free trade' outcomes to those generated by 'interventionist' or 'protectionist' policies that preceded them. Gavin Fridell makes an invaluable contribution to this conversation. *Alternative Trade: Legacies for the Future* addresses the question: *How do the social outcomes generated by the 1990s neoliberal turn compare to the outcomes generated by the trade interventions that preceded it?* Fridell draws on three case studies—the International Coffee Agreement, the Canadian Wheat Board, and the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement—to argue that such "alternative" trade interventions were more socially efficient than the free trade agenda that succeeded them. The book is an excellent resource for students and scholars of international trade and development.

The introduction and opening chapter argue that the package of theories, historical narratives, and policies that constitute the widely embraced 'free trade' regime are more fantasy than reality. Contrary to theoretical models, the market cannot be separated from the state. And despite their label, free trade politics are *not* about freely trading but instead about creating new rules and institutions for the governance of trade. Finally, irrespective of the theoretically based narrative that competition generates prosperity, many of the world's dominant economies were built with the aid of protectionist policies. The free trade agenda is not, then, a move away from

government intervention. In fact, ‘the entire capitalist economy consists of rules and regulations...imposed and regulated by the state’ (4). In the neoliberal era, what is new is that those rules and regulations more clearly promote private profits for corporations and the interests of the Global North. The way forward, Fridell argues, is to return to policies that benefit the world’s masses, which largely remain marginalized and vulnerable.

Much of the book focuses on contrasting the intentions and impacts of “free trade” interventions with those of “alternative trade” models. Alternative trade is the use of state power to manage markets for broader social, economic, and developmental ends (4). Several such initiatives, such as price stabilization schemes and international commodity agreements, were developed following WWII, but their legacies expired in recent decades, with the rise of neoliberal thinking. Fridell acknowledges that these alternative schemes, like neoliberalism, promoted capitalist social relations and were often founded on unequal North-South relationships, limiting the ability of participants to challenge historical power inequalities. Yet, they remain distinct from the “free trade fantasy” in that they consciously aimed to improve social wellbeing.

Each of three chapter-long case studies illustrates how pro-poor state interventions in trade can deliver widespread benefits to commodities producers. The first example is the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), which limited exports from coffee-producing countries. From 1962 to 1989, the ICA succeeded in raising and stabilizing the world price for coffee. It collapsed when U.S. priorities shifted away from Cold War-motivated support for developing countries. The second example is the Canadian Wheat Board, which emerged in the 1930s and 1940s to protect Plains farmers from price volatility and to lend support for collective action. Deemed the largest, longest-standing and most successful state trading enterprise, the Wheat Board increased and stabilized world prices by acting as a single desk seller for wheat. In the early 2000s the United States protested Canada’s intervention in the wheat market, and in 2003 the WTO investigated it for non-discriminatory treatment. By 2008 the Wheat Board was the only single desk wheat exporter in the world, and in 2012 it lost favor in Parliament and was dissolved. Fridell’s final illustration of alternative trade is the EU-Caribbean banana agreement, a multilateral quota system that reserved a portion of European Union banana imports for growers in former colonies. The preferential agreement allowed banana producers in the Windward Islands and Jamaica to gain higher income than their Latin American counterparts, while maintaining sustainable and culturally resonant cultivation practices. In 2009 U.S. banana importers and Latin American growers pressured the EU to lower import duties on Latin American bananas, subjecting Caribbean farmers to crippling competition.

In each case Fridell highlights the devastating collective action problems facing commodities producers, illustrates how state trade policies relieved such problems, and describes how the “free trade fantasy”—a change of tide in ideas about the role of states in markets—led to the collapse of alternative trade regimes. While the market is needed to direct economies, the state must limit capitalism’s anti-social outcomes. Today, “the greatest torchbearer for alternative trade” is ALBA (146), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America. ALBA was launched by Venezuela and Cuba in 2004 and aims to facilitate socially-oriented regional trade that results in wealth redistribution and increases in wellbeing of the citizens of its (now eleven) member states. Alternative trade regimes may have fallen out of favor, but they are not necessarily gone for good.

Alternative Trade does several things well. First, its defense of pro-poor interventions is an important and welcome contribution to the literature on economic justice in international

trade. By comparing the outcomes of alternative trade and free trade interventions, Fridell makes a strong argument for a return to pro-poor trade policies. He also clarifies that fair trade certification and other non-state initiatives are unable to match the breadth or reach of alternative trade policies. In coffee, for example, the ICA impacted *all* coffee farmers, whereas fair trade certifications currently reach only around three percent.

Second, *Alternative Trade* connects its argument and cases to broader literatures in international political economy. Fridell describes the tenets of neoclassical economics, neoliberalism, and Keynesianism, connecting his story to the canon of influential economists, such as Ricardo, Friedman, Sachs, Stiglitz, and Keynes. He also describes how alternative trade can be approached through global value chain analysis (Bair, Gereffi, Reynolds), using an agro-food perspective (Bello), or through the lens of critical agrarian political economy (Bernstein). This makes the book an excellent point of *entrée* to several key conversations in the field.

Last but certainly not least, *Alternative Trade* is beautifully written. Every chapter is pithy and engaging, each page is a valuable contribution worth reading. Even in the penultimate paragraph of the book, Fridell delivers new historical examples and fresh analysis, leaving the reader both satisfied and curious to learn more. The tone strikes an appealing middle ground between activist outrage and objective analysis. Fridell frequently reminds readers of the “long and tortuous legacies of colonialism and slavery” in Latin America (36) and how indigenous groups were “violently” stripped of their land in Canada (67). Yet, the overall voice is less activist and more analytical.

Alongside the original contributions and engaging writing were a few distracting shortcomings. Some claims could have been developed more thoroughly, using specific figures and additional calculations to bolster a point. In the introduction, for example, Fridell argues that claims about free trade improving wellbeing are wrong. He shows how changes in the definition of “poverty” and the size of the world population have facilitated the incorrect conclusion that poverty has been dramatically slashed through free trade. While this is a move in the right direction, a discussion of how well the 2008 poverty line adjustment reflects inflation and increased costs of living, or a note about how to consider figures differently in light of a rapidly growing population, would have made the point more compelling. Some case study figures lacked citation. It was disappointing that Fridell glossed over the logic of an interesting counterfactual—that coffee prices would have been half as high had the International Coffee Agreement ceased to exist—as such a claim deserves more justification. Finally, the case study chapters would have benefitted from subheadings or a brief introduction to the principal events. As it currently reads, the details of coffee prices in a single year appear almost as important as the founding of the International Coffee Agreement. Readers lacking background knowledge will struggle to see the main events through the less pivotal details. But these limitations were superficial and do not suggest inadequate research or compromised scholarship.

Fridell wants readers to know that trade policies *can explicitly aim to create* a “more cooperative, socially just world order” (9) and that when they *do* take on this mission they *can* deliver widespread, meaningful benefits to the world’s most vulnerable populations, in particular producers of internationally traded commodities. For scholars and students interested in the relationship between economic justice and international trade, *Alternative Trade: Legacies of the Future* is a well-researched, beautifully written, and original, must-read book.

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Christian Fuchs. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York and London: Routledge. 403 pages, ISBN 978-0415716161 Paper (\$43.95).

During my seminars in the sociology department at Binghamton University, one of three graduate programs in the United States specializing in world-systems analysis, it was not unusual to hear criticisms of Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and the wider idea of “cognitive capitalism.” They were dismissed as “Eurocentric” and chastised for ignoring older debates. They were seen as recapitulating the dominant ideology, dismissed as “a marxified version of Tom Friedman.” Case closed. Move on to more rigorous scholarship.

Unfortunately, the Marxist scholarship on the high technology sectors of contemporary capitalism makes a relatively short reading list: George Caffentzis’ (2013) efforts to expand Marx’s theory of machines (139-203) and his related critique of cognitive capitalism (66-81, 95-126); Nick Dyer-Witthford’s (1999) attempt to take autonomist Marxism in a different direction than Hardt and Negri; critical political economy of media and communications (McChesney 2008; Mosco 2009); and, the socialist feminism of Ursula Huws (2014) and studies of the workplace culture of the so-called “creative class” (Ross 2009; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005). While these works each make important contributions, none of them put forward a systemic theorization of contemporary capitalism that is as broad as that offered by Hardt, Negri, and the larger cognitive capitalism school.

Christian Fuchs steps into this void with *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. In this ambitious text, Fuchs seeks to affirm Marxist tradition, demonstrate the continuing relevancy of the labor theory of value, and renew the struggle for communism. Despite some problems, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* is compelling reading for anyone interested in contemporary capitalism.

The book is organized in three sections. The first positions the book in existing literature, providing both theoretical background and a critique of theories of information society. Fuchs presents a non-dogmatic Marxism that incorporates elements of Frankfurt School, autonomist Marxism, the feminism of Maria Mies, Claudia Von Werlhof, and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen. While he does not dismiss either theories of information society or cultural studies, he provides a trenchant critique of both bodies of literature, exposing their implicit celebration of neoliberalism and their often-superficial engagement with Marx. Instead, Fuchs calls for “an institutional revolution that buries prejudices against Karl Marx...[W]e are living in a world with multidimensional global inequalities. Interpreting and changing this world requires us to think about class, crisis, critique and capitalism” (73).

As part of this effort to demonstrate the utility of Marxism to the study of contemporary media, Fuchs puts forward his signature theoretical contribution, what he calls “internet prosumer commodification.” Here, he returns to the idea of the “audience commodity,” which Dallas Smythe (1977) first advanced to expand the study of mass media beyond the ideology critique and apprehend the role of media in processes of capital accumulation. Traditional mass media formats, radio and television, produce and sell air time for advertisements. The unpaid labor of media consumption, objectified as the “audience commodity,” is their primary product.

Fuchs expands the concept to apprehend the nature of contemporary unpaid consumption work on the Internet. He appropriates the notion of the “prosumer,” first coined to celebrate the blurring of consumption and production as a form of economic and political self-determination. For Fuchs, prosumption connotes “the outscoring [of] work to users and consumers, who work without payment...The exchange value of the social media prosumer commodity is the money value that the operators obtain from their clients. Its use value is the multitude of personal data and usage behavior...” (99, 103). The shared use of the accumulation strategy by all Internet firms signals the near-complete real subsumption of social relations by capital. “Social media and the mobile Internet make the audience commodity ubiquitous and the factory not limited to your living and your workplace—the factory is also in all in-between spaces...the entire planet today is a capitalist factory” (111).

Fuchs details this “planetary factory” in the second section of the book, a series of case studies that trace “the international division of digital labour,” detailing the global value chain that makes “internet prosumer commodification” possible. He begins with the mining of the minerals that are essential to the production of information and communications technologies (ICTs). Here, he focuses on the Democratic Republic of Congo and the various forms of unpaid labor—outright slavery, *corvée* labor, and peonage slavery—that characterize this link in the value chain. He moves next to industrial production of ICTs in China’s sprawling factory complexes, discusses Indian software engineers, and then pivots to Silicon Valley, where he details both the hyper-exploitation of largely undocumented workers in the ICT manufacturing industry and “a highly paid and highly stressed labour aristocracy that enjoys relative surplus wages at the expense of transforming its life time into work time for Google” (232).

The final two cases focus more on the circulation of commodities: (1) the call centers which organize the transactions and (2) use of social media. Fuchs defines the former as a “Taylorized and housewifized” form of labor. As Taylorized work, it is deskilled and subject to aggressive surveillance. As housewifized work, it takes on the precarious conditions that characterize housework. It is unprotected, always available, and socially devalued. The final case study reviews and further elaborates the earlier section that theoretically defined “internet prosumer commodification.” Here, Fuchs makes the distinction between digital labor and digital work, as the analysis blurs into the discussion in the final section of the book concerning the nature of contemporary working class struggle.

As a whole, the international division of digital labor represents “the history and articulation of forms of exploitation” (296). Fuchs argues against the staged history shared by Orthodox Marxists and liberals. Instead, he describes an articulating network of distinct modes of production: “The emergence of a new mode of production does not necessarily abolish, but rather sublates (*aufheben*) older modes of production” (164). As a result, “a variety of modes of production and organizations of the productive...are articulated, including slavery in mineral extraction, military forms of Taylorist industrialism in hardware assemblage, an informational organization of the productive forces of capitalism that articulates a highly paid knowledge labour aristocracy, precarious service workers, imperialistically exploited knowledge workers” (295-296). While this framework avoids restricting capitalism to wage labor, it also leads Fuchs to stop short of commenting on the systemic totality of historical capitalism. Fuchs sees slavery in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Google’s labor aristocracy as somehow articulating with each other, but, absent any historical attention to processes of uneven development or core-periphery differentiation, he never asks why.

The lack of historical depth becomes problematic in the final section of the book, where Fuchs reviews the various claims made about ICT and social movements in the context of Occupy Wall Street (OWS). In contrast to “societal holism that ignores media and technology, technological reductionism that ignores society and dualism that ignores causality,” Fuchs advances a dialectical view of social media. He concludes that “social media in a contradictory society...are likely to have contradictory character: they do not necessarily and automatically support/amplify or dampen/limit rebellions but rather pose contradictory potential that stand in contradiction to influences by the state, ideology and capitalism” (331, 333). In short, he offers measured advice that “one should avoid both overstressing and underestimating the role of media technologies in contemporary social movements” (341).

For such an ambitious book, this conclusion is unsatisfying. After advocating return of Marxism, a renewal of the revolutionary spirit, and detailing “the international division of digital labour,” Fuchs’ concluding question is limited to the role of social media in OWS. While Fuchs acknowledges the similarities OWS shares with other contemporary movements and justifies his case selection on the basis of his language skills, his concluding case study does not begin to address the rich questions his text raises. For example, his reflection on OWS does not address the main political problem introduced in the opening sections of the text: the way the commodity form obscures the connections between global workers laboring in different moments of the international division of digital labor.

The asymmetry between the soaring ambitious of the first two sections and the inadequate conclusion speaks to a larger problem. Fuchs puts too many ingredients in the pot. Much is left uncooked. While the broad scope of the study is admirable, the overall effect is limited by poor execution. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* suffers from inelegant prose and poor editing that suggests hurried writing. Paragraphs run on for pages despite clear shifts in emphasis. Identical blocks reappear throughout the book. Abrupt and unclear transitions limit the overall coherence of the argument. These types of mistakes will limit the appeal of the work and provide an easy out for unsympathetic readers.

More importantly, they impede the flow of the book with unnecessary clutter. Better editing and a tightened argument would have created more space to explore some of the wider ramifications that his study raises. His treatment of ecological issues is particularly wanting. In the concluding section, he acknowledges this shortcoming (295-296). This discussion, however, mentions only e-waste—the disposals of ICTs—and ignores a litany of other issues, such as the limited supply of rare minerals used to make ICTs, pollution caused by their production, and the energy and water used to operate them. Throughout the text, Fuchs asserts that the productivity gains of capitalist development have conquered scarcity and made global communism a material possibility. The world-ecological contradictions of contemporary capitalism—and the dream of digital communism, for that matter—remain unexplored.

Digital Labour and Karl Marx is an important book. It takes on important questions: What is the organization and the class composition of digital labor? Are the current struggles of digital workers revolutionary? Fuchs offers the closest approximation of the axial division of labor as it relates to the high technology sectors of contemporary capitalism. This contribution alone makes the *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* an important work, despite its flaws.

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Boaventura de Sousa Santos. 2014. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers. 292 pages, 978-1612055459 Paper (\$32.95).

Many critical theorists have tried to deal with the formidable task of establishing the parameters for a critical theory of the present time that would take into account the historical and analytical limits of marxism. Nevertheless, in the wide terrain of a global academic left, very few scholars have accepted the challenge of proposing the epistemological basis for a global, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal critical theory for the current moment. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in his *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* faces exactly this great task.

In this challenging and inspiring book, Sousa Santos brings together many of the issues that he tackled in his scholarly work, dating back to the late 1980s. Sousa Santos – probably the most important sociologist in the Portuguese speaking world – is a uniquely productive critical thinker, having dealt with issues such as the epistemology of modern sciences, social movements of the Global South, multiculturalism, the production of law in the practices of slum dwellers, and anti-hegemonic forms of knowledge production, among many others. Somehow, all these topics come together in *Epistemologies of the South*. In this book, Sousa Santos presents a long critique of hegemonic western epistemology – including the limits of critical projects that emanated from the western experience and perspective, such as marxism – and provides a few parameters, both analytical and conceptual, for an anti-hegemonic ecology of knowledges that would avoid one of the key consequences of the domination of western epistemology: the extermination of alternative forms of knowing and living.

The book develops three critical insights: there is no global justice without global cognitive justice; the understanding of the world exceeds the western, hegemonic understanding

of the world; and the emancipatory transformation of the world may follow narratives that are not contemplated by the western, critical tradition. It is easy to notice that Sousa Santos aims to provide a synthesis of different post-marxist critical discourses, particularly Postcolonial Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Feminist Theory. But he also wants to establish analytical ground-rules for a diversity of yet un-thought of critical perspectives, as long as they challenge a broadly defined dominant western epistemology – which encompasses neoliberal economics, conventional conceptions of modern science, and a traditional marxism that remains blind to forms of domination other than that defined by class struggle. These are great and critical questions, which are by themselves a sign of the importance of this intellectual project. Nevertheless, Sousa Santos is only partially successful in providing helpful and clear answers; this is partly due to the lack of connection between the empirical cases that inspire the work and the concepts proposed, but also to the unnecessary, confusing, and unproductive conceptual inflations that characterize the book.

From the very beginning of the book, Sousa Santos has to deal with a central contradiction: the work intends to speak from the practices of anti-systemic movements from the global South; these practices would provide the experiential and political basis for a diversity of knowledges that would challenge western¹ epistemic and political projects. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that due to its language and structure, the primary audience of the book is critical scholars trained in the western tradition. This is thematized – far from reaching a final solution – in the two manifestos that open the book: one for “good living”, the other “for Intellectual-Activists.” I would like to argue that the book has limitations on both fronts alluded to in the manifestos, despite its critical importance for expanding the horizon of our contemporary critical discourses.

First, regarding the connection with the experiences of the global South, it is important to note that Sousa Santos was one of the most important intellectual voices associated with the World Social Forum (see p. 42). For any scholar or activist familiar with the critical discourses that circulated in the Forum, many of Sousa Santos’ themes will sound familiar, particularly his insistence on the dialogue between different forms of knowledge, his search for a non-sectorial critical language, and a serious concern for methods to bridge antagonisms between clashing perspectives and procedures. This is certainly a positive aspect of the book, but it also raises at least two problems. First, the alternative epistemologies that define the political imagination of the book are treated at a very high level of abstraction. There is a shocking lack of attention to the pragmatics of knowledge production and their associated political struggles in the history of real communities and social movements. Sousa Santos is, of course, familiar with many of these stories, and some of his edited works published in Portuguese address these issues. But it is unclear how the plethora of concepts proposed by Sousa Santos in this book connects with those dynamics.

In this sense, the book seems to propose a particular type of standpoint theory – actually, a method for the composition of a diversity of critical standpoints. But each one of those perspectives and voices is slightly swept under the rug of Sousa Santos’ conceptual profusion. Also, it is unclear how the book speaks to the key phenomenon in global contestation in the last five years: the emergence of a global wave of protest and the diversity of movements, politics, philosophies, and pragmatics associated with them. In this sense, the book reads as at least a decade old. Finally, it seems to suffer from an extreme tendency to divide the world between

¹ Or “northern” – the author moves back and forth between the two adjectives, as well as between “southern” and “non-western.”

good (the South, the non-West) and evil (the North within the North, the hegemonic Western epistemology), as well as from a hurry in proposing bridges between antagonistic Southern forms of knowledge and politics, without a more careful analysis of real practices of negotiation.

Regarding the Intellectual-Activist dimension of the book, most readers will notice that Sousa Santos has a very peculiar writing and analytical style. The main trace of such a style is the constant need to coin new concepts, some of which, such as his analytical pair “sociology of emergences” and “sociology of absences,” are of great value. But many of the concepts seem more like unnecessary reaffirmations of the originality and the importance of the project than solutions to intellectual problems (such as the romantic concept of a “baroque ethos” in chapter 1, or the oppressed as the “wagerer” in chapter 3). Others sound like easy metaphorical replacements for truly hard problems (such as the concept of “sfumato” as the basis for a baroque subjectivity). Overall, the book would gain a lot from a clearer dialogue with other contemporary works that have addressed similar questions, particularly because it would probably lead to a more clearly defined quest for conceptual invention.

But the book has clear contributions to a critical theory of the present times, and I would like to argue that most of them are present in the last two chapters. In those chapters, Sousa Santos delineates the parameters for an ecology of knowledges against the risk of epistemicide imposed by dominant western epistemology (or the “monoculture of scientific knowledge,” in Sousa Santos’ expansive vocabulary). This is a pragmatic theory of the possibility of the horizontal coexistence of non-dominant forms of knowledge and life, in which knowledge is evaluated according to its capacity for critical intervention in the world. Sousa Santos acknowledges that the creation of such a world requires mechanisms of translation between different cultural practices and vocabularies – an issue he deals with in chapter 8. This is also the part of the book in which Sousa Santos’ formulations gain some empirical treatment, as in his brief analysis of the clash of “scientific” and “traditional” forms of irrigation in Indonesia. These two chapters prove Sousa Santos treads the center of critical theory today, especially given the breadth of his concerns and his personal and political history of effective interchange with Southern social movements.

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Jeb Sprague. 2012. *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 400 pages, ISBN 978-1583673003 Paper (\$21.55).

Haiti continues to command attention among international policy makers and scholars. In the latter category is Jeb Sprague, whose book, *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti*, examines (paramilitary) violence in Haiti from the Duvalier era (1957-1986) to 2004, with cursory coverage of events thereafter. The main argument of the book is that paramilitarism is the means by which Haiti’s dominant classes have sought to crush the Haitian masses in their struggle for democracy and social justice, which is global in scope but elicits different responses from local elites. As a tactic, paramilitarism—variously defined as the creation and/or toleration of irregular armed groups by state authorities—contrasts sharply with polyarchy, which is

contrived to contain democracy within firm institutional limits that protect established privileges while giving the popular classes a (illusory?) say in governing. Sprague does not deny that violence has been used by all the contending groups in Haiti's fractious politics, but he argues that "...it was the popular classes—and those organizing in their interests—who *have been and continue* to be the primary targets of political violence" (14).

The primary focus of the book is, once again, the period between 1990 and 2004, during which the *Lavalas* (Haitian Kreyòl for flood) movement led by Jean-Bertrand Aristide alternated between moments of triumph and defeat by paramilitary forces and their sponsors, but, according to Sprague, the groundwork for the use of paramilitary violence as a political instrument was laid in the 1960s under François (Papa Doc) Duvalier. Thus, Sprague identifies four phases (or what he calls waves) of paramilitary violence in the recent history of Haiti: 1960s-1986, 1986-1990, 1991-1994, and late 2000-2004. In each of these phases, Haiti's dominant classes, which include large landholders (*grandons*), big business owners and state elites, use a combination of state terror and paramilitary violence to keep the masses in check. They were aided by foreign forces, which, at various times, included the United States, the Dominican Republic, France, even Canada. Sprague examines in exhaustive detail the 2004 ouster of Aristide from power. Using the Freedom of Information Act, Sprague was able to gain access to U.S. government documents that brought him tantalizingly close to uncovering the role of international actors in Haiti's latest political dénouement. Sprague sheds much light on what many Haitian specialists suspected—namely, that the so-called rebels, including Guy Phillipe, Jodel Chamblain, Ravix Rémissanthe and consorts, who helped to topple Aristide in 2004 were, in essence, mercenaries bought and paid for by Haiti's bourgeoisie and narco-traffickers, with Dominican and U.S. officials turning a blind eye to their activities, if not supporting them outright.

One important revelation of *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti* is the alleged infiltration of the Haitian National Police by nefarious elements from the defunct Haitian army. U.S. officials encouraged their integration in the name of stability and reconciliation, but, according to Sprague, they turned out to be real fifth columns, who thwarted attempts by the *Lavalas* government to defend itself against its enemies. This would explain the ease with which "rebels" were able to occupy the national palace in Port-au-Prince on December 7, 2001, and just as easily sneak their way out of the capital to sanctuaries in the Central Plateau and the Dominican Republic. Sprague's investigative and conjectural skills are admirably displayed in his analysis of Dany Toussaint and Youri Latortue, two figures emblematic of Haiti's Byzantine politics. Although Sprague never quite accuses Toussaint of the murder of Haiti's most famous journalist (Jean Léopold Dominique), his narrative strongly points in this direction.

Haiti is often painted as the "ugly duckling" of Latin America and the Caribbean, that is to say, outside of the mainstream of regional politics. A real strength of *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti* is its framing of Haitian events in a comparative perspective. Sprague demonstrates keen insight when he draws a parallel between paramilitary activity in Haiti and the *contra* campaign in Nicaragua in the 1980s. In both cases the U.S. ran roughshod over democracy by supporting violent paramilitary forces—some possibly with narco-trafficking connections, in clear contravention of U.S. law and long-term American security interests. A more recent example of the U.S. sacrificing democratic principles on the altar of Realpolitik was the 2009 coup against the democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya in Honduras. Sprague is relentless in his determination to dispel the notion of Haitian particularism through what is essentially a comparative method, even while paying close attention to the details of the case. In so doing, Sprague nicely interweaves the global and the local. Furthermore, one cannot

but be impressed with the risks that Sprague must have been willing to take while collecting data for his book, as some of the personalities who are the objects of his inquiry undoubtedly have blood on their hands. Overall, *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti* makes a valuable contribution to Haitian scholarship and global studies.

Still, there is much to be critiqued in *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti*. For a book in which paramilitarism is left, front and center, there is little serious discussion of the concept in the text. Instead, Sprague devotes two and a half pages to paramilitarism in the appendix. It would have been far better to have a substantive exposé of paramilitarism as an analytical construct in chapter 1. Sprague fails to draw an important distinction between paramilitarism, which suggests the presence of a *main cachée* (hidden hand) behind military activity aimed at achieving political objectives, and banditry, which is much less well-organized and amorphous in its aims. A strong argument can be made that banditry, rather than paramilitarism, has been a much greater problem in Haiti, and that, in fact, it is the propensity of Haitian society to descend into banditry or disorder that is fodder for paramilitarism. In sum, Sprague may be rightly accused of misconstruing the proverbial tree for the forest. As these lines are being written, a new “paramilitary” group is causing headache to the rightist government of Michel Martelly and the United Nations in the town of Petit-Goâve and the surrounding hills.

Banditry in the Haitian context stems from socio-economic exclusion, which creates a large pool of potential recruits for a variety of causes, some obviously political, others, perhaps most, not. Banditry is also a product of the existential precariousness of even “elite” Haitians, who, for a fistful of *gourdes* (the Haitian currency) or an exit visa, can be pressed into the most sordid of activities. At the height of his popularity between 1991 and 1994, the well-known paramilitary leader Emmanuel (Toto) Constant was a CIA informant, whose monthly emolument was a paltry 300 U.S. dollars, in exchange for which Mr. Constant probably tortured and killed scores of his countrymen. Banditry and its concomitants (paramilitarism and urban gangs) is also a classic sign of state failure, as it entails the erosion of monopolistic control over the means of violence. Evidence of state failure are legion in *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti*, as when Sprague, speaking of “rebel” activity in 2002, concedes that “The FLRN campaign was carried out primarily by a few hundred paramilitaries against a resource-starved state reliant on a tiny police force, a segment of which was disloyal and corrupt” (168). If this is not a definition of a failed state, one is at a loss as to what is. Yet, almost nonchalantly and in spite of his obvious familiarity with the literature, which he quotes on page 46 but omits in the notes section, Sprague pulls back and veers in a different (i.e., conspiratorial) direction. Sprague may be unaware of this, but there is not in the Haitian language (Kreyòl) an expression of contrition equivalent to *I am sorry* in English. Haitian culture, not least political culture, lacks readily available mechanisms of conflict resolution. Thus conflicts, no matter how banal at their core, tend to escalate, until peace is imposed either by a strongman or an occupying force. To put it bluntly, Sprague makes too selective an analytical use of institutions, which he confines to class. Similarly, Sprague has a binary and biased view of a Haiti divided between good actors (*Lavalas*) and bad actors (everyone else). He fails to appreciate the role of macro-level institutions—broadly construed to include formal structures, such as the state, and the informal rules and norms embedded in culture—in the Haitian miasma, which the *Lavalas* interregnum aggravated rather than dissipated. (Without substantiation, Sprague estimates the number of people killed by *Lavalas* supporters to be precisely between thirty and forty from 2001 to 2004.)

Paramilitarism is an effect of the debility of Haitian institutions, not a cause of Haiti's misfortune. The failure of democracy in Haiti has structural roots as well, and is not merely the product of elite malfeasance or agency. In the end, an institutional and more ideologically neutral perspective would have served *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti* well.

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Jocelyn Viterna. 2013. *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*. New York: Oxford University Press. 288 pages, ISBN 978-0199843657 Paper (\$24.95).

Women often feature in the literature on war as either empowered warriors or war's ultimate victims. In this rich and powerful book, Jocelyn Viterna considers guerrilla warfare in El Salvador through women's experiences and contributions and explodes this dichotomy. Her nuanced approach is ideal for research on leftist guerrilla conflicts—quests for liberation that combine exhilaration and empowerment with brutal, heartrending violence. She captures the breadth of experience so effectively in part because the complicated and cross-cutting insights are arrived at through close attention to women's own narrations of life in wartime. Along the way, we gain insight into the daily functioning of a guerrilla army.

Viterna rejects approaches to activism that treat the rank-and-file as a uniform category. Among other problems, such approaches obscure the obvious point that macro-level factors affect only some people, but fail to mobilize others (often the majority); also, for women, some are profoundly empowered by the experience whereas others revert to traditional gender norms postwar. She thus cracks open the homogenous category of woman guerrilla and looks carefully within, finding important and very telling differences. These insights are enhanced by her inclusion of interviews with unmobilized women and mobilized men.

Viterna is generous in the use of absorbing personal narratives to illustrate her findings on the micro-processes of insurrection. Based upon two years in the field, during which she collected over 230 formal interviews along with ethnographic analysis and archival research, this rare book cuts across many literatures in its insights and will be of interest to researchers of social movements, politics, war and insurrection as well as gender and Latin America.

Why do women become guerrillas? What experiences do women have in the guerrilla? And how do these impact women's postwar lives? Working through the paths to mobilization for women who served as camp followers, cooks, medics, radio specialists, and combatants, we learn much along the way, including women's various motivations for participation, their accomplishments, and their tragedies. We also gain new insights into the relation between their roles, experiences, and identities during war and their trajectories in the post-war period.

One key finding is the importance of women's participation to guerrilla success. As she puts it, "Women were... the backbone of the FMLN [Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front], especially in the second half of the war" (145). She relates this to gendered stratification and higher survival rates in the guerrilla, both of which Viterna links to education. Early in the war, the *campesino* (peasant) population from which the FMLN drew most of its recruits was largely illiterate. Women were primarily assigned as cooks and sometimes as combatants. Over the course of the war, women came to be viewed as a relatively scarce resource for commanders,

and a particularly valuable one as they were significantly more likely than men to be literate. Compared to men, many more young women had spent time in a refugee camp, where they had access to education. This skill set was particularly valuable to the FMLN in the second half of the war, as its forces were split into hundreds of smaller and more mobile units. Each squadron needed its own radio operator and medic—both job assignments that required training and literacy, and thus jobs that women were better able to fill. Women also had higher survival rates, and were for therefore a more stable presence in this quickly changing context, contributing in turn to military efficiency in terms of institutional memory and job specific experience.

But someone still had to make the tortillas. Given women's valued contributions in the more skilled assignments, how to ensure that women would still be willing to occupy low-status tasks? Here, Viterna turns to the notion of ability-based assignments, which she finds was broadly accepted in the guerrilla. That is, men and women alike were assigned work based on ability, which meant an internalization of the blame for a job assignment that one did not prefer. This discourse merged into more essentialist notions, as Viterna reports that it was widely believed that women were "made for" the kitchen and men were unable to learn tortilla-making. Notably, while their experiences in the guerrilla encouraged many women to view themselves as capable of many of the things men could do, the guerrilla experience did not encourage women to question the overall gendered division of labor in guerrilla camps and beyond. Those instances in which women did contribute significantly to battle did not reliably prompt them to question gender roles more generally: "In short, the FMLN was remarkably successful at narrating women's new roles in ways that left the broader gender order unchallenged" (150).

Identity-based analysis runs throughout Viterna's study. Among other key findings, Viterna makes an intriguing link between identity, mobilization, and rape. She argues that men and women alike often joined the guerrilla in order to protect identities particularly salient to them. A common thread informing young women's mobilization in the FMLN is that this would protect their sexual purity, which was intricately linked to their identity as good young women (53-4). Rape was a prevalent theme throughout Viterna's interviews (112). The FMLN represented itself as respecting women's bodies, providing an arena of safety in contrast to young women's other options: staying home and facing rape by the Armed Forces or fleeing to a refugee camp and risking (what was perceived to be) certain rape by Honduran forces. She notes: "Understanding that the purpose of participation—even radical participation like guerrilla warfare—may be to *protect* rather than to *challenge* traditional identities will help scholars limit which kinds of identity changes they expect to find through activism" (201).

The 1992 Peace Accords ended twelve years of displacement and conflict, and the guerrilla demobilized, turning in their weapons and receiving resources to start a new life. A startling example of the radical shift this entailed are the numerous anecdotes that Viterna gathered regarding demobilized guerrillas' struggle with money—many were so young when they went into refugees camps and then the guerrilla that they had never seen or used money. One can imagine, in this context, the great challenges involved in acclimating to a market system and learning how to earn a living.

Given such challenges, what happened to these women activists in the postwar period? Viterna finds the record mixed. Some women successfully capitalized on their experiences and capabilities honed in war to remain social activists, challenging gender expectations and transforming their own lives and the lives of others. But many other women did not remain politically engaged and readily settled into traditional gender roles. Remaining with a micro-

level of analysis allows Viterna to shed light on how social movements stratify participants and the consequences of that stratification (173).

Women found ways to move from mobilization in war to activism in peace, and Viterna finds two paths to postwar leadership (185). “Politicized Repopulators” are women guerrilla who demobilized to refugee camps in the early to mid-1980s and then became leaders in the postwar repopulation process. These women typically had been activists pre-war and then moved to guerrilla camps, retaining ties and their status as trustworthy activists in the demobilization process. This background positioned them as effective liaisons between leaders in the FMLN and civil society (189). “Well-Connected Demobilizers” were women transitioning from high-status guerrilla positions who had been stationed close to FMLN command centers. Their proximity to FLMN leaders is crucial, Viterna finds. Being well-connected with the leadership translated into postwar leadership positions.

In contrast, Viterna found that the ex-guerrilla women who were politically inactive in the postwar era had been either in low-prestige guerrilla positions or had been combatants (193). Viterna encapsulates the counter-intuitive nature of her findings through the cases of Rebeca and Roxana. Rebeca actively chose guerrilla life and became a combatant. To stay in the guerrilla, she gave up her two month old baby to be raised elsewhere. Roxana reluctantly mobilized into the guerrilla for lack of alternatives—it was a means of survival in the face of the brutally repressive armed forces in the countryside. In the guerrilla, she took on the feminized job of nurse, and once she gave birth, Roxana transferred to a guerrilla position where she could see her child regularly. Previous scholarship might lead us to expect that Rebeca would be the more likely of the two to emerge from the war as a feminist activist. Yet the opposite was the case, with Roxana becoming the prominent feminist activist and Rebeca accepting highly traditional gender roles in the home.

Viterna readily achieves her two goals in writing this book. First, she brings to life the lived experiences of Salvadoran women in the civil conflict of the 1980s. Second, she convincingly demonstrates the importance of micro-level mobilization processes. Social movements and guerrilla armies alike depend upon their ability to attract and retain members, and understanding this gendered process is key to understanding movement success.

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