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# Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, and Tim Strangleman, eds., Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies (New York: Routledge, 2021)

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that this slave war reverberated across the broader British Atlantic empire, where it “reshaped public life and lodged deeply in collective memory.” (209) This chapter will be of particular interest to scholars of the wider British Atlantic empire, early America, and colonization, as it sheds light on how the reverberation of slave revolt shaped conversations about race, empire, and abolition in the early modern world.

This study covers much ground, albeit with its limited discussion of gender. In chapter four, Brown notes that enslaved women represented 40% of the first known captured rebels in the initial parish uprising in April 1760. (151) Brown also gives two compelling accounts of one woman named Cubah, whom the Coromantee in Kingston raised to the status of queen, and another named Mary, whom colonial officials sentenced to transportation to British Honduras. However, given Brown’s methodological focus on tracing the individual “itineraries and odysseys” of the Revolt’s many participants and agents, one would expect a more thorough engagement with those enslaved women who indeed played an important role in the making of the slave war throughout the analysis. Nevertheless, Brown’s bringing these gendered aspects of the Revolt to our attention indeed points to *Tacky’s Revolt’s* success in generating interest and opening new avenues of research into the subject.

Comprehensively, *Tacky’s Revolt* is innovative and insightful, introducing readers to new ways of thinking about slave revolts and the Atlantic history of slavery. While slavery scholars have conventionally examined slave revolts as “local studies,” Brown pushes us to understand slave revolts as a genre of warfare whose implications and consequences charted across and simultaneously drew its roots from the currents of a broader pan-Atlantic

world. His cartographic methodology successfully poses exciting and thought-provoking questions that certainly expand how we understand slave revolt as a slave war. We see this in chapter three, where he foregrounds the 1760–61 Coromantee Slave War in a more extended genealogy of Coromantee politics and resistance across the Atlantic. Indeed, notable Coromantee slave revolts occurred in New York, Antigua, St. Johns, and Jamaica throughout the 18th century. However, the main takeaway or highlight of this study is the recasting of slave revolt as slave war in a broader interconnected web of linkages that draws on the Atlantic entanglements of Africa, Europe, and the Americas. This well-researched study has far-reaching implications for scholars of slavery, empire, and resistance and will prove to be of great value to a wide range of scholars.

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**Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, and Tim Strangleman, eds., *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2021)**

THE *ROUTLEDGE International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* is a colossal tome. Its 544 pages comprise 43 chapters from 42 different contributors and are organized along with six broad themes, touching on questions of method and principles of research, class, education, work, community, working-class cultures, representations of the working class, activism, and collective action. In their introduction, the editors position the volume as both an up-to-date account of the present state of the field and a vision of working-class studies moving forward. In doing so, they are careful to characterize the field as a ‘big umbrella’

kind of enterprise, one that is interdisciplinary in its membership and approach to questions of theory and method and intersectional in its understanding of just who the working-class is and how to define them. At the most basic level, they suggest, the field coheres around a shared commitment to “explor[e] ... the lived experience of class” and create “a space and legitimacy for those of working-class origin to reflect on their experience and practice as educators.” (5) In multiple and creative ways, this volume definitely delivers on that commitment, exposing the classed nature of everyday life and its impact on individuals and communities at home, school, work, in the community, and at university.

The collection kicks off with a number of mediations about the method and just how to ‘do’ working-class studies. While admitting there is no consensus about method amongst its practitioners, Sheri Lee Linkon opens the discussion by noting the signature contribution of what she calls ‘scholarly personal narrative’ to the creation of the field and its commitment to interdisciplinarity, underlining how it draws on storey-telling traditions from English and literature departments and auto-ethnography from anthropology. While potentially imprecise and even contradictory at times, Linkon argues that memory is a kind of ongoing working-class experience, one that can be used to “challenge dominant power structures” and “claim agency,” resist “class amnesia,” and “illustrate agency.” (27–8) For her, and the field of working-class studies more broadly, this approach is crucial to treating working-class people as subjects rather than merely objects of academic study, as it puts their stories and interpretations of their experiences at the forefront of the research. Such concerns bleed into the next section on class and education, an area of particular empirical strength for the field. In six

different contributions, scholars highlight the myriad ways that education is not the magic bullet of class mobility that it is often claimed to be. Allison Hurst notes in her introduction to the section that the field has produced an enormous body of research demonstrating just how classed education as a social process is and how social control, not class mobility, is really the point of western mass education systems (81–2). Still, as Lisa Kirby observes in her contribution, a critical pedagogy informed by working-class studies can make a difference in the classroom, helping students cope with these classed institutions as well as fine-tune their class analysis of the world around them (128). The chapters in this section offer a host of practical insights and concrete suggestions about how to make class visible in the classroom. From school, the collection then logically shifts to a section devoted to work. Here again, we can see a distinctive approach from scholars operating in this working-class studies milieu. While academics from labour studies might focus more on workplace organization and resistance, contributors here tend to study the emotional and traumatic impact of work (and its loss) on individuals and communities. For instance, in a chapter on precarity and deindustrialization, Kathryn Marie Dudley argues that such processes do not merely involve changes in work but often the destruction of whole ways of life, indeed, leading at times to the traumatic realization by workers that certain forms of “collective life, as we have known it, can no longer be lived.” (202)

The themes in the second half of the book – working-class culture, representations of class, and activism/collective action – also overlap and help inform each other. The selections on working-class culture make a strong case that class cultures exist and have an impact, in both positive and negative ways. Here,

three chapters really stand out. In “There is a Genuine Working-Class Culture,” Jack Metzgar argues that despite being formed under conditions of domination, working-class cultures are distinct, complex, and replete with positive attributes (233). Indeed, he notes that much of the research along these lines challenges the negative and reductionist representations of the working-class that appear in both popular culture and other academic work. In “Class, Culture, and Inequality,” Jesse Streib outlines the many ways that class cultures have an impact – on speech and dress codes, parenting styles, approaches to work and leisure, tastes, and worldviews, etc. (243). These insights help us to understand both how it is possible for anti-working-class right-wing politicians to make cynical use of ‘culture war’ politics and what might be done to effectively challenge them. Another standout piece in this section is Betsy Leondar-Wright’s “Activist Class Cultures,” which really should be required reading for anyone hoping to engage in working-class organizing, particularly those from the middle class. She argues that “progressive social movements are riddled with class bias and weakened by it,” partly due to significant and largely unacknowledged differences in the approach to leadership and participation rooted in differing class cultures (271). The following section focuses on representations (and erasures) of the working-class in culture, whether mass media, niche, or high art. Here again, the authors highlight the many distortions of working-class life as they appear in artistic representations, noting key intersections with race and gender, or simply the absence of the working class altogether. The final section turns to work-class activism and collective action, exploring a number of concrete case studies. This more ‘how to’ focused set of chapters is extremely helpful in taking the insights of the volume as a whole and

turning them to the essential ‘what is to be done’ question that all socially committed scholars worry about. A slight departure in this section is Michael Zweig’s excellent summation of “The Mutual Determination of Class and Race in the United States,” where he surveys how racial division and white supremacy have been consistently drawn upon to divide working-class people since colonial times up to the present.

Reflecting on the volume as a whole, a number of consistencies emerge. One is the pervasive influence of Pierre Bourdieu and his critical take on social capital. It is perhaps not surprising that researchers keen to unearth working-class experience as a lived reality would find his insights about class privilege and power compelling, particularly his attention to how they are not merely limited to money and the obvious markings of status but permeate and define all aspects of experience in a capitalist society, including taste, education, parenting, etc. Bourdieu’s work is dense and often hard to navigate, but the authors here do a commendable job of using his insights in a clear and comprehensible way. The dominance of Bourdieu also reflects the dominance of fields of study that rely on him, suggesting limits to the field’s present levels of interdisciplinarity. For instance, contributors from English, literature, and sociology departments dominate this collection, together penning 25 of the 43 chapters. By contrast, few contributions address political economy, specifically work with a critical understanding of capitalism, or spend much time engaging fields that are clearly adjacent to working-class studies, like critical political economy, labour history/studies, or left journals with a record of straddling the activist/academic divide, like *New Left Review*, the *Socialist Register*, or *Monthly Review*. This oversight is commented on in Joseph Entin’s detailed

and theoretically ambitious contribution to the methods section, "Reconceiving Class in Contemporary Working-Class Studies," where he encourages the field to engage with a critical theory about capitalism and Marxism in particular. Entin suggests that the absence of any serious engagement with political economy in working-class studies, specifically from the Marxist tradition, reflects a uniquely American set of academic and political circumstances. Entin's explanation appears plausible as the field of working-class studies as represented in this handbook is, despite the use of 'international' in its title, a very American undertaking. Indeed, 34 of the 42 contributors are based in American institutions, with the international dimension provided by four scholars from the UK and one each from four other western countries.

A more serious omission in the collection is the lack of any attention to working-class politics conventionally understood, i.e., in terms of a political party and electoral participation. This is a surprising oversight in a volume on working-class studies given the dominant position of political parties claiming some allegiance to the working-class in most western countries throughout the 20th century. As historians of the political left like Geoff Eley have recounted, working-class labour and socialist parties were key to both reflecting and giving shape to working-class political identity and demands. While some might again point to American exceptionalism, noting the historic weakness of national

labour or socialist party in that country, the US has seen significant labour and socialist politics at the state and local level in places like Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin. Even mainstream political scientists have noted the dramatic decline of working-class representation across western countries and the near-complete exclusion of working-class people from American state legislatures and Congress (on the latter, see work by Nick Carnes). Those interested in working-class studies need to attend to the state and state-focused political action, given their myriad, concrete impacts on working-class lives. The Entin and Zweig chapters do go some way towards putting this on the agenda.

Overall, *The International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* is an inspiring collection. Scholars interested in exploring exciting and creative ways to study the working class will find much here to learn from and develop further. If there are gaps and omissions, then the editors are clear that the point of the handbook is to open up a discussion about them, that the volume is meant as an "invitation to consider how to do and further the study of the working class," (7) and that they hope to "learn from and argue with" their audience to "act as a spur to engage more fully with growing precarity and new and emerging class formations." (507) To see such careful and sustained attention to working-class life and experience is both laudable and of absolute necessity in this political moment, and long overdue.

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