

History and the Working-Class Now: The Collective Impulse, Tumult and Democracy

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Abstract

Terry Irving was invited to address the Sydney Historical Research Network at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia, in March 2017, as part of a session on 'Histories of Class Now'. The other speakers were Hannah Forsyth and Elizabeth Humphrys. Each of them was asked to say something about their current research. This is a revised version of his address, followed by a note on sources

Editors' Note

This article is classified as commentary (not peer-reviewed)

Keywords

Class, working-class collectivity, democracy, identity politics

They're talking about class again, the liberal commentators in the commercial media, and not in the sense of the 'class envy' that defenders of neo-liberal austerity scream about when their privilege and power are challenged. No, it's class as rupture. They are talking about the manifested anger of working people affected by ten years of global economic crisis. They note the rising tide of militant resistance – strikes, occupations, riots - in China, India, Bangladesh and other cheap labour countries where capital was supposed to be safe from grasping unions; they are astonished to discover that the number one division in society in the US is not race but rich versus poor, that globalization has cleaved the country into two hostile classes, and that young people, the precariat of the future, prefer to rally behind Bernie Sanders rather than Hillary Clinton. In the UK, public intellectuals, in the wake of Brexit and rank-and-file Labour support for Jeremy Corbyn, are noticing again that most Brits, disgusted by ruling class greed, still regard themselves as working class; and turning to Australia, we are told that 'class is the new black', and that it is realigning parliamentary politics.

So class is part of the zeitgeist again, as it was in the 1970s when Raewyn Connell and I conceived a study of class structure in Australian history. By the time we published in 1980, that moment was over. That was when the twin 'turns' were foisted upon us all – the neo-liberal turn of Thatcher and Reagan that inflicted misery on the global working class, and the cultural turn of post-modernity that saw a generation of liberal scholars burbling on about the terrible injustice of failing to recognise minority identities, mostly among privileged people like themselves. Globally, the great mass of workers, 6.3 billion according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in

2013, including 3 billion who earned less than two dollars a day, was suffering actual material deprivation.¹

Meanwhile, the damage caused by identity politics was growing. Instead of exploitation in common, liberal thinkers looked for multiple oppressions. Instead of justice they privileged recognition. Instead of practising solidarity as activist intellectuals, informed by an understanding of the history of class struggle, they retired to academia and built abstract models of intersectionality. At the centre of this zeitgeist of ‘commercial scholarship’ as Werner Bonefeld calls it, there was the idea of difference.² It destroyed the language of class, pushing white workers into ‘an “identity” of white nationalism’, while leaving the rapaciousness of global corporations unchecked. It was the discourse that underpinned the strategy of corporate liberals, like Hillary Clinton – of putting together a coalition of separate identity groups - and it failed, but even had she won, the needs and desires of working people would have been ignored. In a series of essays in a recent issue of *Harper’s Magazine* under the heading ‘Trump – A Resister’s Guide,’ the young writers agree that the time has come to dump identity politics. So, today it seems this shameful phase in the history of capitalist social sciences and humanities is coming to an end.

What liberals fail to understand is that racism and sexism, for example, are, like class, destructive inequalities. They deserve to be analysed historically as products of the dynamics of capitalism, just as class is analysed. So when we talk about the identities of women and Aboriginal people we need to see them as expressions of the *practices* of women and Aboriginal people, reflecting as well as constituting the gender and racial dynamics of capitalism. Their identities should not be understood as bundles of detached ideas, with no material moorings. This is the mistake that liberal stratificationists make when they talk about studying the intersection of class, gender and race. In historical studies, this identitarianism results in a one-sided focus on the mental world of discourses and signs, ignoring the material world of exploitation and inequality, and the class perspective of eradicating them. So, as in contemporary politics, it plays right into the hands of the ruling class.

But we all make mistakes. When we wrote *Class Structure in Australian History*, Connell and I were trapped in our zeitgeist. As we wrote recently, our book was produced at a time when the organized working class was in a militant mood. ‘Strikes reached an all-time high in 1974, and between 1968 and 1974 the wages share of national income increased by almost 10%’ (Irving and Connell: 2016, p. 4). Although we recognized that the working class was ‘a highly complex structure’, when we wrote of ‘workers’ power’ we associated it with the kind of organized militancy that tried to prevent the export of pig-iron from Port Kembla to Fascist Japan in 1938.³ And we firmly fixed the flag of socialism to the remobilization of that working class in that kind

¹ Steven Kapsos and Evangelina Bourmpoula (2013), ‘Employment and Economic Class in the Developing World’, ILO Research Paper no. 6, p.1.

² George Souvlis, ‘Ordoliberalism and the Death of Liberal Democracy: An Interview with Werner Bonefeld’, viewed 3 June 2017, <http://salvage.zone/online-exclusive/ordoliberalism-and-the-death-of-liberal-democracy-an-interview-with-werner-bonefeld/>.

³ In December 1938, the Port Kembla branch of the Waterside Workers’ Federation banned the export of pig-iron to Japan, arguing that this strategic material that would assist Japan’s expansionism. See Rupert Lockwood (1987) *War on the Waterfront: Menzies, Japan and the Pig-Iron Dispute*.

of struggle, and assumed without question that the parliamentary state would continue to be a focus of political activity as the working class remobilized.

Today in Australia we are in a very different moment. Unions are smaller and corralled by the state, social-democratic corporatism has succumbed to neo-liberalism, revolutionary parties are as sectarian as ever, organized labour militancy is rare, and parliamentary democracy has been ‘hollowed out’. Consequently it is not surprising that the study of class is different, responding to different forms of struggle and a different kind of working class. Speaking descriptively, those differences are, briefly: (i) the working class has become global; (ii) work is precarious even in the core capitalist economies; (iii) the class struggle has broken out of its institutionalized straight-jacket and is now increasingly tumultuous and on the streets; and (iv) workers – especially those who are young, well-educated and precariously employed – are a key component of a radical democratic movement, refusing representation by the political class and flirting with horizontalism and other alternative models of politics.

As a result we’re rethinking our theoretical positions, we scholars of working-class history. In the presence of the awakening working class of the Global South it is not enough to embrace transnational histories, as if the nations on different sides of the ‘trans’ were commensurate. Imperial relationships were clearly never of that kind. And, it is impossible now to imagine labour progressing through ever-stronger organisation and deeper penetration of the state to socialism, let alone social democracy. The abject submission of organized labour in the capitalist heartlands to neo-liberalism has dealt the final blow to that faded – not to speak of unintelligent and deceptive - vision of postponed liberation.

Among the theoretical developments, there are three that I find compelling, and I can sum them up in three words: informal, porous and autonomous, each of these words describing an approach to the study of the global working class.

Informal labour is labour that is unregulated and precarious. It is now an increasing condition of labour markets under the sway of neo-liberalism in the countries of the North Atlantic tier, Japan and Australasia, but it has always been a feature of labour in the Global South. Jan Breman and Marcel van der Linden, in their 2014 article (see Note on Sources), argue that, as informal labour extends its reach, the ‘West’ is becoming like the “Rest” of the world. Trade unionism and collective bargaining, seen by earlier theorists and labour movement activists as the typical forms of working-class engagement with capital, and the acme of class formation for less mature working classes in the South, must now be recognized as atypical historical phenomena, confined to just a few countries for just a few decades. Can labour replace this ‘classical’ model? Breman and van der Linden see new forms of collective action emerging in response to the spread of informal labour.

Their work raises another question. In the West, prior to those few decades, is there a history of precarious labour relationships and informal collective behaviour in the working class? Should Western labour historians be looking for instances of workers striking without, or prior to, the involvement of a union, or striking in defiance of a union? Should we be looking for the go-slow, sabotage, organized pilfering, customary insolence etc. on the part of workers? And if so, should we conceptualize working-class collectivism in a different way, a way that releases it from the submerged teleology that dominated labour history in its formative period.

In Australia we have tended to date the origins of the working class to the unions formed after the gold rushes. My book, *The Southern Tree of Liberty* (2006), put a dint in this lazy view by restoring working people to the story of representative government in the years before 1856, their contribution made possible by decades of grass roots organization to obtain political rights and economic independence. I relied for part of the argument on articles by Michael Quinlan. Now his book, *The Origins of Worker Mobilization: Australia 1788-1850*, will appear in 2018 from Routledge in New York. Having seen the manuscript I can say that this is a truly path-breaking study of the collective impulse among workers, with important pointers for the global historiography of labour.

The novel aspect of his study is that it reveals the extent of informal (non-union), collective organisation among workers, both convict and free. Certainly there were a handful of organizations pursuing collective bargaining, but their members were more likely to experience worker power outside of those organizations. When I read the manuscript, Quinlan had discovered 1370 instances of worker mobilization; now he tells me that the number has risen to over 6000 (he is still entering recently discovered data), and he estimates there are another 2000 instances to document. This staggering figure is the result of Quinlan's three decades of digital computation of evidence of strikes, court actions, go-slows, demonstrations, mutual insurance schemes, petitions, mass abscondings, sabotage, political meetings, etc, gained through painstaking reading of convict conduct records, police gazettes, court bench-books and colonial newspapers. When historians now talk about this period, how can they not call it a period of class struggle? When they talk about the coming of self-government how can they ignore its meaning for workers who had been struggling to gain some self-government in their lives since 1788?⁴

Quinlan hopes his book will 'act as a counter point to cultural/identity analysis that seems to have forgotten class as the critical category of social determination in capitalism (and you don't need to ignore women, migrants or non-Europeans to do this)⁵. With that in mind we can answer questions about the meaning of workers' actions - such as supporting a new constitution for the colonies - by revealing their material situation as well as their discursive world. Workers wanted parliamentary self-government to mean tight control of their representatives. They wanted legislation for an eight-hour day, land reform, and restricted immigration. That was what the 'right' to self-government meant to them, not just something philosophical, or a practice, such as voting, empty of content.

Turning now to porosity: by this term I mean the fact that workers were not typically defined by a life-time spent in a particular kind of labour – say waged, or unfree, or domestic, or self-employed. Rather, workers have always participated in various kinds of commodified and un-commodified labour, for the boundaries within and between them were porous. There have been several theoretical paths to this insight. Andrea Komlosy has produced a global history of work since the time of Classical Greece and Rome.⁶ Although her book is not yet available in English, we can follow her argument from other sources, including her chapter in a book edited by Jurgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden, *Capitalism: The Re-emergence of a Historical Concept* (2016). She

⁴ There were three instances of collective resistance by convict workers that year.

⁵ M. Quinlan; personal correspondence with the author, 9 March 2017.

⁶ Komlosy, Andrea (2017) *Work – The Last 1000 Years*, Verso, London.

insists that working-class history shows a blurring of the distinction between free and unfree labour, and warns that labour history's blindness to non-waged work, assuming the primacy of the commodity form of labour, is leading us into intellectual and political dead ends. Consequently we need a more differentiated form of workers' history.

Another approach can be found in the work of Marcel van der Linden, of the International Institute for Social History. In his influential paper, 'Conceptualising the World Working Class' (2015), he constructs a typology of the forms of labour commodification and concludes that in capitalist society the boundaries between 'free' wage labourers and other workers are 'vague and gradual':

In the first place there are extensive and complicated grey areas full of transitional locations between 'free' wage labourers and slaves, the self-employed and the lumpenproletarians. Secondly, almost all subaltern workers belong to households that combine several modes of labour. Thirdly, individual subaltern workers can combine different modes of labour, both synchronically and diachronically. And finally, the distinction between different kinds of subaltern workers is not clear-cut. The implications are far-reaching. Apparently there is a large class of people within capitalism, whose labour power is commodified in various ways.

On the basis of this typological analysis, Van der Linden speaks of a class of subaltern workers rather than the working class. 'It is the historical dynamics of this multitude' that labour and social historians should try to understand. Those dynamics of course include how subaltern workers make themselves into a historical subject, a class, a process that typological analysis cannot, and does not aim to, grasp.

It is a process that autonomist Marxism places at the centre of its analysis. This is a strand of Marxist theory associated particularly with the theorist Antonio Negri who drew on his experiences as an anti-authoritarian Communist in the Italian *operaismo* movement of the 1960s and 70s.⁷

Verity Burgmann, the Australian historian and political scientist, has recently promoted this strand of Marxist theory to labour historians, in an article in *International Labor and Working Class History* (no. 83, Spring 2013), and to political scientists in her just published book, *Globalization and Labour in the Twenty-First Century* (2016). Autonomism is the latest in a long tradition of Marxist critiques of economic determinism, starting with Gramsci in the 1920s and including J-P Sartre and E.P. Thompson.⁸ Amongst recent historians, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker are often cited as contributing to this anti-determinism through their book, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000). Burgmann argues that although the earlier Marxist anti-determinism recognized the agency, subjectivity and class consciousness of the working class, it still worked with the 'classical' or 'second international' understanding that capital accumulation and exploitation shaped the existence of the working class. Workers might have agency but they would always be reactive.

⁷ See Note on Sources.

⁸ Verity Burgmann, 'The Multitude and the Many-Headed Hydra: Autonomist Marxist Theory and Labor History', *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 83, Spring 2013, p. 172.

But autonomist Marxism, in Burgmann's words, 'is more far-reaching'. Negri and his comrades placed 'labor at the very beginning of the labor-capital dialectic. Labor can exist independently of capital, but capital needs to command labor to ensure profit; therefore capitalist development does not occur due to internal momentum but in reaction to labor's tendency to unloose itself from capital.' History written from an autonomist perspective would place labour history within the internal history of the working class, a process of composition (as it becomes a class for itself), of decomposition (as the ruling class seeks to disrupt working-class solidarity), and re-composition (as the working class fights back by developing new forms of struggle).

These three paths all point in the same direction: towards a history that takes the working class, not the labour movement, as its subject. We need to move from labour history to working-class history. A history of informal mobilization widens the understanding of worker power, showing that it can be expressed collectively in many ways. Unlike labour history it would not produce studies that are institutional (if that means exclusive of the fleeting and peripheral) or social (if that means exclusive of social labour) or cultural (if that means exclusive of culture's material context). The focus of working-class history would be political, in order to bring those separate studies together. A history of subaltern labour that recognizes that commodification takes many forms would make working-class history global as well as open to current responses by workers to precarity and uncertainty. And last, a history that adopts an autonomous perspective on the working class and its relation to capitalism would banish the idea that society is 'an order' and that the working class is subordinate. Capitalist exploitation and domination produce disorder, a dynamic of social struggles that is open-ended and complex. Working-class history would approach capitalism as itself constructed historically through social struggles.

A working-class history of this kind is already discernible in the development of 'Working Class Studies' in the United States. This new field has emerged because of the manifest limitations of labour history and industrial relations. It asked: what about the 85% of workers in the US that were not in unions? What about working-class culture, obscured by the nonsense that the US is a middle class country? Integrating historical research into broader social analysis, it aims to study society through the lens of class, especially the working class, for as indicated by the title of one of the area's seminal books, Michael Zweig's *The Working-Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret* (2011), the US is a country with a working-class majority.

As Zweig insists, class is about power, not income, and using that insight the working-class majority might organize to achieve political influence and social strength. Working Class Studies is clearly partisan, conceiving, as the context for the future development of the field, a working-class social movement. There have been three centres of Working Class Studies (in New York, Ohio and Texas), a Working Class Studies Association, and an Association of Working Class Academics.⁹ Outside of this movement, but perhaps influenced by it, radical academics in the US are publishing

⁹ The Center for the Study of Working-Class Life at Stony Brook University is now known as the Center for the Study of Inequality and Social Justice (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/csisj/about/>). The Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown University is no longer active. The Texas Center for Working-Class Studies at Collin College can be found here: <http://iws.collin.edu/lkirby/>. The Working-Class Studies Association (WCSA) website can be found here: <https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/> (the Association of Working-Class Academics operates within the WCSA).

noteworthy books on the history of class, eg. Barbara Jensen, *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America* (2012) and Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash. The 400-Year Untold Story of Class in America* (2016).

The renewal of intellectual energy in class studies (and I'm including working-class history under that heading) can be seen in journal publishing over the last few years. I want to mention five. The Working Class Studies Association publishes *The Journal of Working Class Studies*, edited from the University of Technology Sydney by Sarah Attfield and Liz Giuffre. The blurb for its second issue, on 'Popular Revolt and the Global Working Class' makes two significant points. It defines the popular forces broadly as the 'working class, poor and other disenfranchised people',¹⁰ and it positions the journal as a response to the current crisis. This year, *Working USA* has rebadged itself as the *Journal of Labour and Society* in order to focus on 'labour as a force for economic and social justice.' The new journal *Radical Americas*¹¹ welcomes 'scholarship which takes a radical approach' and that which moves away from the emphases of the cultural turn. Slightly older, dating from 2012, is the journal *Workers of the World*, published by the International Association for the study of Strikes and Social Conflict. Finally, there is *Critical Historical Studies*, which proclaims itself as working 'in the tradition of historically-reflexive approaches to capitalism', based on 'a critical appropriation of Marx'. It is notable that none of these journals has a national focus, none of them align themselves with traditional labour history, each of them offers a way for scholars to feel part of current large-scale transformations and movements, [and all of them suggest a shift away from discourse analysis to political economy], or, to echo the title of the new book edited by Jurgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (2016), to the re-emergence of capitalism as a historical concept.

My current project, 'Fatal Lure: Politics, Democracy and Gordon Childe', sits within a wider project to rethink the history of democracy in Australia. It begins from the observation that, when power and resources are distributed unequally, it is those who have less power, and less of the world's goods, who have the greater interest in democracy – if by that term we mean popular self-rule. Accordingly, my project looks for expressions of that interest, constructing a history of democracy that focuses as much on the democracy-driven struggles of working people, and the radical intellectuals who supported them, as on the constitution-making and liberal individualism of those using politics to defend their power and wealth.

Distinguishing between democracy as utopian, fleeting and rebellious, and democracy as 'being ruled' through the alienating routines and institutions of electoral politics and representative government, such a history would discover the episodes of mass action aiming to hold representatives accountable, the moments when upsurges of popular protest turned representation into delegation, and the forms of bottom-up democracy that popular movements developed in the process. Such a history would seek to reveal the continuing struggle of ideas between radical democracy and liberal democracy, the reactionary and defensive tendencies of liberal democracy and the creative and liberating potential of radical democracy.

A decade ago I wrote a book, *The Southern Tree of Liberty* (2016), about the radical democratic movement that sought popular control of parliamentary 'representatives' in

¹⁰ <https://workingclassstudiesjournal.com/current-call-for-papers/>

¹¹ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/the-radical-americas-journal>

the period before 1856. My next book deals with Australia's second bite at radical democracy, in the 1910s, when workers, socialists, pacifists and feminists rebelled against both the failure of state organizations – parliaments, political parties and trade unions - to respond to their needs, and the top-down model of governance in those bodies.

Fatal Lure is built around the first life of Gordon Childe (1892-1957), a life of socialist politics and ambivalence about the state. For ten years, until his early thirties, as a pacifist and socialist he organized, lobbied, made speeches, provided advice to leaders, and wrote for the labour press. His political activism culminated in his becoming a political minder and researcher for the Labor Premier of New South Wales. At the end of his life, Childe described himself escaping 'the fatal lure of politics' by returning to the study of archaeology in the mid-1920s. But the phrase may also be used to describe the suspicion of parliamentary politics that he shared with radical political activists of the 1910s.

In the 1910s the radical desire for self-government touched diverse communities and movements, putting them on a collision course with the state. Thirty-four thousand families refused to allow their sons to take part in the compulsory military training scheme between 1912 and 1914. Radical feminists, scornful of the supposed benefits to women of accessing the state through suffrage, widened their attack on patriarchy to include employment and the patriarchal family. In the labour market a wave of strikes by militant workers saw defiance of both employers and union officials. An unexpected feature of this militancy was that it extended to workers not usually thought of at that time as 'working class' – clergymen, sportsmen, artists, journalists, newspaper boys, university students, caddies at golf clubs, waitresses, bookmakers, medical doctors, nurses, taxi-cab drivers, and many more 'atypical' workers.

Within the sphere of the state we encounter the better-known instances of revolt. Angry members of the Labor Party forced its officers to expel a Prime Minister, a Premier and many leading parliamentarians. Freedom-loving voters twice defied the Prime Minister to defeat referenda aiming to introduce conscription. In the interests of self-government, rebellious residents of Darwin, led by the Australian Workers Union, forced the departure of the unpopular administrator of the Northern Territory.

These struggles were fraught with violence. Let me summarize the evidence. During food riots in Melbourne radical women fought on and off with police and scabs for almost six weeks. Workers on strike routinely roughed up scabs, while unemployed workers fought with police in Brisbane, Melbourne and Townsville. In Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Kalgoorlie, Broken Hill, Townsville and Fremantle there were days, sometimes weeks, when militant workers controlled the streets. Sabotage was common, and workers in Sydney, Darwin, Melbourne and Townsville stole guns. Workers used firearms to defend themselves during demonstrations in Kalgoorlie, Townsville and Brisbane. Two men died, and hundreds were injured, some shot in the back by police. In 1918 a counter-revolution began when proto-fascist violence broke out. Organized by former AIF officers linked to the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, secret armies of ex-servicemen attacked left-wing gatherings, newspaper offices and halls for the next four years.¹²

¹² The matters dealt with in this paragraph will form Chapters 10 and 11 in my forthcoming *The Fatal Lure of Politics: A Life of Gordon Childe*.

In the midst of this turbulence radical thinkers were trying out alternative ideas about democracy. In a series of lectures for the Workers' Educational Association in 1918, Gordon Childe set out to derive a political philosophy for the labour movement by presenting a history of ideas that showed political thought moving away from the centrality of the state. Labour's political philosophy, he implied, should be anti-statist. In Brisbane a few weeks later, state school-teachers discussed their right as workers to control the education system and its syllabus. In intellectual circles, Guild Socialism's pluralism and diffused approach to sovereignty was well known. Militant unions, already influenced by syndicalism, were encouraged by Childe and other socialists to demand workers' control in their industries. There were conferences on industrial democracy in several states under the auspices of the WEA. In response, the Labor Governments in New South Wales and Queensland seriously considered the idea of appointing workers' representatives in management to head off more radical demands. But the appeal of industrial democracy was hard to diminish. As dissatisfaction with Labor's parliamentarism grew, it found expression in the formation of industrial labour parties, and these in turn led to the formation of a Communist party in 1921 that was not 'bolshevized' by Stalinism until the early 1930s.

Finally, to return to the invitation that led to this address, how is my project an expression of 'the history of class' now? In as much as democracy has always been an arena of class conflict my project is necessarily a history of class, with the qualification that it views this conflict through the eyes of working people and labour intellectuals. It has benefited by my discovery of Childe's resistance to determinist Marxism and my earlier exposure to Thompson's insistence that the working class makes itself. While concerned about Autonomist Marxism's contribution to the drift away from political economy, I am able to acknowledge its boost to the radical purpose of history writing: the interests of resistance, self-activity and restoring the commons. When I returned to the study of the 1840s I was struck by the strength of the impulse to collective action, including among workers not formally organized, and in a range of labouring situations. This interest continued into my study of the 1910s. In both periods I discovered a range of violent episodes glossed over by liberal historians. The collective impulse, tumult and democracy are what I write about, and I think they are pretty central to the history of class now.

Author Bio

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Note on Sources:

To write working class history we should know 'What we talk about when we talk about class', the title of Michael Schwalbe's article in *Counterpunch* (<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/12/07/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-class/>), and 'Why class matters', the title of an interview with Erik Olin Wright in *Jacobin*

(<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/socialism-marxism-democracy-inequality-erik-olin-wright/>).

We also need to be clear that thinking of class as a way of sorting people into categories will not help us to understand the working class as a product of capitalist dynamics. For this point see Raewyn Connell's seminal chapter, 'Approach to class analysis' in her *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture: Studies of conflict, power and hegemony in Australian life* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977).

The liberal media commentary since 2012 on the reemergence of class struggle is too boring to note, but these recent responses by radical writers are interesting:

- Sarah Smarsh, 'Dangerous idiots: how the liberal media elite failed working-class Americans' (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/oct/13/liberal-media-bias-working-class-americans>)
- Jeff Sparrow, 'Class and identity politics are not mutually exclusive. The left should use this to its benefit' (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/18/class-and-identity-politics-are-not-mutually-exclusive-the-left-should-use-this-to-its-benefit>)
- Peter Lewis, 'Looking through a Marxist lens (and why class is the new black)' (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/30/looking-through-a-marxist-lens-and-why-class-is-the-new-black>)
- Terry Eagleton, 'The New Politics of Class review – has the working class been left behind?' (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jan/19/the-new-politics-of-class-review-geoffrey-evans-james-tilley>).
- See also the contributions by Wesley Yang, Tim Barker and Katrina Forrester to 'Trump – A Resister's Guide', *Harper's Magazine*, February 2017.

Raewyn Connell and I have recently published 'Scholars and Radicals: Writing and Rethinking *Class Structure in Australian History*', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 40, no.1, 2016, 3-15. See also Terry Irving, 'The Lower Depths: Paternoster on *Class Structure in Australian History*', *Labour History*, no. 111, November 2016. The book in question was published by Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, in 1980 (second edition, 1992).

The global turn in labour history has produced a large literature, much of it stimulated by the work of scholars at the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam). See Jan Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labour History – A State of the Art*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2006; and Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World – Essays toward a Global Labour History*, Leiden, Brill, 2008. Van der Linden's paper, 'Conceptualising the World Working Class' is in Sara R. Farris (ed.) *His Returns of Marxism: Marxist Theory in a Time of Crisis*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2015, and his paper with Jan Breman, 'Informalising the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level', are in *Development and Change*, vol. 45, September 2014.

I also found useful the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Workers of the World* (vol 1, no. 3, 2013) written by Christian G. de Vito; 'New Perspectives on Global Labour History'; and the contributions to 'Scholarly Controversy: Defining Global Labor History' in *International Labor and Working Class History* (vol. 82, October 2012), sparked by Marcel van der Linden's essay in that issue, 'The Promises and Challenges of Global Labor History'.

The origins of Autonomist Marxism are examined in Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven – Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, Pluto, London, 2002. Of the extensive literature on autonomist Marxism and the books that brought it to a wider readership by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, there are two themes of relevance to this address: the stimulus to autonomist thinking given by the increasing appearance of ruptural moments and spaces – the revolt of a recomposing working class – connected to the changing character of labour and work in the contemporary global economy; and the promise of autonomist thinking for the study of the working class and its history. The first is addressed comprehensively by Verity Burgmann's book, *Globalization and Labour in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, London/New York, 2016; but see also the symposium on 'The Struggle for Survival, Self-Management and the Common Organizer' in *Antipode*, vol. 42, issue 4, September 2010, with important contributions by Paul Chatterton, John Holloway, Massimo de Angelis and Jai Sen. I am awaiting with interest the publication in 2017 of a special issue of the *Journal of Labor and Society*, devoted to 'Rethinking Working Class Self-Organization Beyond Unions, Parties, NGOs and the State'. It will be edited by Immanuel Ness and Robert Ovetz. The second theme is addressed by Verity Burgmann in 'The Multitude and the Many-Headed Hydra: Autonomist Marxist Theory and Labor History', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 83, Spring 2013, pp 179-190.

Michael Quinlan's book, *The Origins of Worker Mobilization: Australia 1788-1850*, will be published by Routledge, New York, in 2018. Other works mentioned in my address are: Andrea Komlosy, 'Work and Labour Relations' in Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Capitalism – The Re-emergence of a Historical Concept*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016 (note also an interview with her at the Toynbee Prize Foundation in 2015: <http://toynbeeprize.org/tag/andrea-komlosy/>). Her book has now been translated: see footnote 5. The introductory essays by Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden to their book are to be found on the Social History Portal: <http://www.socialhistoryportal.org/news/articles/308540>.

Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority - America's Best Kept Secret*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, second edition, 2011. Zweig has an important article in *Journal of Working Class Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, December 2016, 'Rethinking Class and Contemporary Working Class Studies'. The Working Class Studies Association Website is: <https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/>. I am posting draft chapters of my project, 'The Fatal Lure of Politics – A Life of Gordon Childe' on my website <http://www.savagedemocracy.net/fatal-lure-of-politics>. Interested in my approach to democracy? Read Sheldon S. Wolin, *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*, Princeton University Press, 2016.