

Neither the *Short History*, nor *The Reemergence* can seriously be accused of producing this problem. In pushing the limits of the current state of the debate, they merely help to highlight it. For it is precisely in asking these “big questions” that it becomes more apparent where more thorough re-theorization through collective debate becomes necessary. What determines the tipping point at which a society in which capital plays a subordinate role turns into a capitalist society? Does capitalist domination of particular societies mean that every non-economic logic functioning in these societies will tend to disappear? If capitalism has a central dynamic that is indeed expansive and universalizing, how does this shape its interaction with non-capitalist sectors and societies? How do we even define these non-capitalist societies, at a time when the concept of capitalism is rapidly making its return, but its traditional counterparts from the Marxist staple (feudalism, primitive communism, let alone “the Asiatic mode of production”) are still relegated to the margins of historiography and debates in the social sciences? Marx, capitalism’s most astute theorist and its greatest critic, ended the Preface to his 1859 *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* by quoting Dante’s *Divine Comedy*: “At the entrance to science, as at the entrance to hell, the demand must be made: *Qui si convien lasciare ogni sospetto, Ogni viltà convien che qui sia morta*” [“Here must all distrust be left behind; All cowardice must here be dead”]. The two books reviewed here deserve praise for forcing us one step closer to the gates.

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ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, MICHELLE. *Les luttes et les rêves. Une histoire populaire de la France de 1685 à nos jours*. La Découverte, Paris 2016. 995 pp. € 28.00. (E-book: € 16.99).

In 1873, the heroine of the Paris Commune Louise Michel (1830–1905) was deported to the French colony of New Caledonia. There, she met the leaders of the 1870–1871 revolt against French rule in Algeria, who had been exiled to New Caledonia as well. Michel became a teacher of the indigenous Kanak people and, some years later (1878), she supported a rebellion by the Kanaks. This is just one example of the entangled histories presented in this monumental study by Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, not only of metropolitan France, but also of its colonies. She begins her story in 1685, a “terrible year”, well-known because of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which, until then, had protected Protestants, and much less well-known, however, because of the *Code Noir*, which regulated the slave regime in the French colonies.

The book was originally conceived as a French counterpart to Howard Zinn’s bestseller *A People’s History of the United States* (1980), but in my view Zancarini manages to improve the concept of “people’s history” in several ways. Firstly, by offering a more precise conceptual approach to what constitutes “the people”; secondly, by systematically including the people from “overseas” French territories; and, thirdly, by a special focus on women. Women figure on almost every page of the book – unsurprisingly perhaps for an author who

had earlier published a book on the history of women in France and is a cofounder of a French journal on women's history.¹ Zancarini stresses the important and independent role of women in social movements, and highlights individual spokeswomen and struggles for women's rights.

To define "the people", she refers to the Gramscian idea of "subaltern classes", to the "subaltern studies" initiated by Indian historians, and to the "history from below" as practised by E.P. Thompson.² Gramsci opposed the "subaltern classes" to "dominant groups" in politics and civil society,³ and in Indian "subaltern studies" the "people" and "subaltern classes" were used synonymously, to be differentiated from "all those described as the elite".⁴ As a class analysis this is not very precise; therefore, Gramsci deemed it necessary to study "the objective formation of the subaltern social groups, by the developments and transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in pre-existing social groups [...]".⁵ This is not, however, how Zancarini proceeds. A class analysis, as required by Gramsci, is absent. For Zancarini, "the subaltern" and, consequently, "the people" are defined by their capacity to resist social and political domination. It allows her to include very different social groups and categories of people in her stories and to concentrate on oppositional social and political movements of various kinds, starting with the Protestants after 1685, who are obviously not a "class".

Political resistance is present from the start in chapters titled "Les subalterns face à l'autorité royale (1685–1789)" and "Le peuple politique entre révolutions et restaurations (1789–1830)". The book is organized around the great political upheavals in French history, but the story is told from a social perspective and mixed with histories of slaves and colonized peoples, workers, and peasants, with a wealth of illustrative testimonies by those involved. Throughout the book, some 200 pages are devoted to social movements and developments in "overseas" France in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century slavery, slave rebellions, and *marronage* in the French Antillean islands, Guyana, and Martinique figure in these pages, as do the bloody conquest of Algeria in the 1830s and 1840s, the revolts of indigenous people there and in other French African and Asian colonies in the nineteenth century, and the struggle for national liberation in the twentieth century. "Overseas" histories are interwoven with those of "the people" in metropolitan France, and this works very well: now we can see that the defining moments in the history of the French (metropolitan) "subaltern classes" we are familiar with – the French Revolution, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Paris Commune, the Popular Front, and the Liberation, May 1968 – were all accompanied by rebellions and movements in France's colonies.

1. Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, *Histoire des femmes en France, XIXe – XXe siècles* (Rennes, 2005); *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*.

2. Zancarini-Fournel, *Les luttes et les rêves*, p. 11; Anne Jollet, "Décentrer le regard. L'histoire populaire des luttes et des résistances. Entretien avec Michelle Zancarini-Fournel à propos de son livre, *Les luttes et les rêves* [...]", *Cahiers d'Histoire. Revue d'histoire critique*, 134 (2017), pp. 155–173.

3. Antonio Gramsci, "Notes on Italian History. History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria", in *idem, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Edited and Translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith* (London, 1971), pp. 52–55.

4. Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India: A Note on the Terms 'Elite', 'People', 'Subaltern' Etc. as Used Above", in *idem* and Gayatri Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1988), p. 44.

5. Gramsci, "Notes on Italian History", p. 52.

Using a variety of sources and detailed information at both an individual and a collective level, Zancarini succeeds in writing a history of the agency of the “subaltern classes” in the broadest sense “from below”. Her approach is predetermined, however, by the example set by Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, and by a political interpretation of Gramsci’s concept of “subaltern classes”, summarized in the binary opposition of “dominance” and “resistance”.⁶ Zancarini is well aware that “one does not strike all the time, demonstrate all the time, or revolt all the time”. She asserts that she tried to show the continuity of the daily life of the people, but also admits that she is not certain “if she succeeded in doing so in every chapter”.⁷ Indeed, a “people’s history” that would address daily life in social relations at work, earning a living, family life, social and geographical mobility, and the life course would have resulted in a more complete, but also a completely different book.

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HERMANN, CHRISTOPH. *Capitalism and the Political Economy of Work Time*. [Routledge frontiers of political economy, vol. 190.] Routledge, Abingdon 2014. 236 pp. Ill. £85.00.

Since the 1970s, periodic crises have marked the development of mature capitalist economies. This time frame has been concurrent with increasing working hours for many, and unemployment for others. At the same time, we stand on a precipice, as capitalism seems to be propelling us into an environmental crisis of devastating proportions. Into this mix, Christoph Hermann throws the subject of work time, asking: “Why did work hours decrease up to the 1970s, but thereafter stagnated in most countries and even increased in some cases?” (p. 1). Although working hours might seem to be a sideshow in understanding contemporary socio-politico-economic systems, for progressive economists, historians, and social scientists more generally, this is a prescient question that warrants serious investigation.

Hermann’s welcome contribution to this debate is divided into four parts, exploring: (i) work time theories; (ii) production and reproduction; (iii) struggle and conflict; (iv) conclusions. The first part of the book contains three chapters outlining theoretical approaches to work time. These include neoclassical, Weberian, institutionalist, and feminist theories. The second part of the book considers how the relationship between time use and work has developed historically, considering production processes, service work, and (unpaid) housework. The third part examines how work time has been a focal point in the power struggle between workers and employers, exploring this in different historical phases. In this part, Chapter eight bears a close comparison to Marx’s analysis of conflict over the working day, and this content is further developed in Chapter nine, with focus on work time reduction and flexibilization (in particular considering the thirty-five-hour week in Germany and France,

6. See also Jollet, “Décentrer le regard”, p. 158.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 160.