

workers tend to resist and organize themselves, even when the nature of the tasks they perform “apparently create the ‘perfect’ conditions to undermine collective mobilization”. The levels and places of labour resistance are diverse, and the more precarious the conditions of work and employment tend to be, the more they tend to appear outside and sometimes against union structures. As a result, the contributors take the self-organized workers as the fundamental actors of each chapter, who adopt a series of different more or less formal and more or less broad organic structures.

Self-organized workers form a small part of a broader, diverse, contradictory, and global working class. In their aim to adopt the point of view of and align themselves with the working class, contributors have a strong affinity with their study objects, through notable militant commitment and research techniques such as interviews and ethnographies, giving researchers a deep inside knowledge of the cases studied. Each chapter shows interesting ways in which a researcher can be useful for the processes of workers’ self-organization, identifying the barriers that workers must face to develop solidarity at work, pointing to existing and possible ways of resistance in and beyond the workplace, and assessing the performance and results of workers’ organizations, which can be broader than only the political and economic improvements. The invitation implied in this book is to build a public sociology through strong relationships with, in this case, those who self-organize for and in work.⁴

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MATTOS, MARCELO BADARÓ. *Laborers and Enslaved Workers. Experiences in Common in the Making of Rio de Janeiro’s Working Class, 1850–1920*. Transl. by Renata Meirelles and Frederico Machado de Barros. [International Studies in Social History, 29.] Berghahn Books, New York [etc.] 2017. 186 pp. Ill. \$110.00; £78.00.

Very little Brazilian labour history has been published in English, and most of what has is in the form of articles. This in itself would suffice to greet the publication of Marcelo Badaró Mattos’s book as a most welcome contribution. Yet, there are many other reasons to appreciate this publication, such as the fact that the author avoids traditional political chronology to prospect aspects of continuity between the first labour periodicals and organizations of the mid-nineteenth century and later trade unions, which gained force in the first years of the following century. Furthermore, the book considers relationships between free workers and enslaved workers (Brazil having been the last nation of the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888), and especially how the free and unfree shared common experiences.

4. Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology”, *American Sociological Review*, 70:1 (2005), pp. 4–28.

Usually in Brazilian scholarship, labour history and the history of slavery have formed separate fields, with very limited exchange between them. Almost three decades ago, an article by Silvia Hunold Lara first raised the alarm, pointing to the separation between the two traditions, in which most labour history dealt with the post-abolition period, implicitly denying slaves the condition of workers.¹ Another of Lara's warnings was that black workers were invisible in labour history studies, which tended to emphasize white immigrants. Since then, some progress has been made, and nobody doubts any longer, for example, that slaves should be considered workers, although unfree. Yet, there is little research that has been able to establish the kind of entangled history between free and enslaved workers that can be found in Mattos's book, where both common experience and black workers' agency in Rio de Janeiro are placed in the foreground.

This book is organized in four thematic chapters, in which the author frequently goes back and forth between the chronological limits he proposed, while also sometimes breaching these limits, especially when referring to past situations. The first chapter "Work, Urban Life, and the Experience of Exploitation" allows readers to gain some familiarity with Rio de Janeiro's turn-of-the-century geography, housing and health conditions, labour market, the very diverse working relations, and workers' legal status.

The following chapter, "Forms of Organization", deals with the extremely heterogeneous forms of workers' organizations, which varied through time, ranging from lay brotherhoods, abolitionist associations, and mutual aid societies while slavery and the monarchy prevailed, to labour unions, political parties, but also carnival societies, following abolition and the proclamation of the republic. Yet, the author is careful to point out that the rise of new forms of organization did not necessarily imply the extinction of previous forms.

Chapter three, "Resistance and Struggle", deals mainly with part of the vast repertoire of forms of resistance and struggle: strikes, abolitionism, urban revolts, and so forth. Certain movements are given special attention, such as the 1858 typographers' strike, mentioned earlier in the book, usually considered one of the first of its kind in Brazilian history and certainly one of the most emblematic ones for its demands and duration. In the discussion of abolitionism, Mattos is concerned to demonstrate working-class contributions to a movement traditionally conceived as being middle class. The 1904 revolt against mandatory vaccination is examined in this chapter, not only as part of a larger series of riots and revolts, but also as a movement capable of uniting organized labour and other sectors of the urban proletariat, mostly composed of former slaves and their descendants in the port neighbourhoods. In opposition to these various forms of struggle, the chapter closes with the repressive response on the part of government authorities and employers.

The book's fourth and final chapter, on "Consciousness", brings together the paths taken by Rio de Janeiro's workers in the process of class formation and the different ways in which class expressed itself. Here, more than in the other chapters, which invariably open with references to E.P. Thompson, a theoretical approach is followed by empirical examples of the consolidation of a working-class discourse.

One of the book's main concerns is to enhance aspects that united unfree and free workers, especially forms of solidarity to help slaves acquire their freedom, through manumission or by escaping from their masters. In this sense, the manuscript memoirs left by baker João de Mattos (no known kinship with the author), who took part in several organizations aimed at

1. Silvia Hunold Lara, "Escravidão, cidadania e história do trabalho no Brasil", *Projeto História*, 16 (1998), pp. 25–38.

securing the freedom of slaves, are frequently mentioned, and constitute the major example to endorse the author's argument. This does not mean he does not recognize the existence of prejudice against blacks and, sometimes, open racism, even among the working class, since these issues appear in Chapter four. Nevertheless, well-known and documented cases of labour associations that forbade membership by former slaves or openly established colour barriers are left aside.

A few questions remain, and despite Mattos's comprehensive research and sensitive insights, no satisfying answer is offered. One of the main issues the author approaches is working-class consciousness, based mainly on the perspective taken by E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), and, as mentioned, the last chapter of the book is dedicated to the subject. Yet, despite the very convincing evidence provided throughout the book to demonstrate that slaves and free workers shared common experiences mostly in work, but also on other grounds, such as organizations and forms of struggle, the crucial question of whether or not free and unfree workers saw themselves as part of the same class is never raised. After all, despite the limits to their freedom and the ruthlessness of the exploitation they underwent, they remained clearly distinct in their condition, i.e. unequal. As far as free workers' empathy and solidarity towards slaves could go, the former would still, at least in legal terms, be free, while the latter remained captive. If, for free workers, the abolition of slavery was a cause they could eventually embrace, for enslaved workers the struggle for freedom prevailed over all other struggles.

Another aspect of the author's approach, also related to working-class consciousness, that deserves comment is the use of the label "collaborationists" to describe a fairly wide range of attitudes and situations, from Owenist-oriented papers that preached understanding between employers and employees to trade unions that fought exclusively for short-term gains, or workers' parties that proposed the institution of labour courts with the participation of employers. By using this kind of labelling, Mattos implicitly adopts the supposition that working-class consciousness should necessarily aim at the overthrow of capitalism, hence that there are true and false consciousnesses. This seems quite far from E.P. Thompson, whose interpretation of class the author claims to follow. According to the former, a class exists when it defines itself as such.² In other words, classes exist when they see themselves in these terms, expressing consciousness, whether we like the kind of consciousness they express or not.

These few reservations do not tarnish the many merits of Mattos's book and its important contribution to making Brazilian labour history better known to English-speaking readers.

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2. Especially E.P. Thompson, "Alcune osservazioni su classe e 'falsa coscienza'", *Quaderni Storici*, 36 (1977), pp. 900-908. A translation into Portuguese of this text can be found in E.P. Thompson, *As peculiaridades dos ingleses e outros artigos*, edited by Antonio Luigi Negro and Sergio Silva (Campinas, 2001), pp. 269-281.