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Book review: Ruth Milkman, immigrant labor and the new precariat

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gain capital and power. In line with this, one of the interviewed grass-roots campaigners from Newcastle observes: 'It very much seems like money is more important than people's lives round here' (p. 129). The book argues that without large independent working-class movements, the ruling classes are given free rein for such interventions. Therefore, Vickers identifies divisions, connections and commonalities among the working class as a foundation for increasing solidarity and resistance.

Vickers concludes that there are only two possible trajectories for Britain. On the one hand, Britain could remain capitalist, which would further increase the migrant–native divide and lead to increasing exploitation. On the other hand, Britain could radically break away from capitalism and create a system that can overcome the current crises and differentiations. In particular, Vickers demonstrates the importance of a revolutionary approach where regimes are organised based on people's needs, not on what is possible within capitalism. Currently, however, the capitalist crisis shows no signs of ending, and according to Vickers, we can expect new areas to open up for profitable exploitation that lead to ever sharper divisions.

While Vickers makes compelling contributions to the discipline, two potential areas for improvement can be identified. First, the book raises important questions about the future of national borders and welfare states, but practical solutions are not sufficiently explored. To address this, engagement with the literature on the Europeanisation of social rights could provide further insight as it deals with similar issues. Second, the book claims that any form of revived social democracy is not an option for the future because the capitalist crisis is far advanced, and the conditions that enabled past social-democratic systems are not met. It is not clear which conditions Vickers is referring to here. And perhaps this is the case for contemporary Britain. One could argue, however, that Britain cannot be compared to other (European) countries that do not have a liberal welfare system and are overall better positioned in terms of the rights of migrants and workers. Hence, we should be careful to generalise the results of this analysis.

Overall, Vickers offers a rigorous, detailed and highly engaging analysis of how Britain's border and migration regimes are organised through capitalism. It reveals the perspectives of (migrant) workers and unpacks the relationship between mobility and capitalism. The book is a valuable academic work for researchers, policymakers, and activists interested in exploring issues around global migration and social change.

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Ruth Milkman
Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat
Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020, £15.99 pbk, (ISBN: 9780745692029), 200 pp.

Reviewed by Ben Ledger-Jessop iD, *Sheffield Hallam University, UK*

With the stark increase of xenophobia, nationalism and populism in the Western world since the turn of the century, immigrants have been a primary scapegoat for a range of

issues, including labour market concerns. *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat* is a clear, well-argued and sourced summation of the interrelationships between job degradation and migrant labour. Milkman's thesis is that the influx of immigrants to the US from various places that began in the 1970s is a response to neoliberal deskilling and deregulation of labour to enable businesses to cut costs and that anger should be directed towards employers and right-wing politicians who facilitate the continued exploitation of labour. While the insight on immigration following deregulation is not new (see Consterdine, 2017 for a well-informed and sourced case study on Britain's approach to immigration under New Labour), neither is it wide enough in targeting those who are complicit. Instead, it rests the blame on Republicans and only a scant few Democrats rather than aiming it at the whole political class. Still, it is presented in a coherent, accessible fashion, making it a useful resource in an age where misinformation on immigration is spread at a fast pace.

The core argument running throughout the text, challenging the populist argument of immigrants being the primary cause of job and wage degradation, is well developed throughout and offers a wealth of evidence in support of degradation as the instigating factor rather than the conclusion. Further driving home this point, Milkman contrasts the post-1960s deindustrialisation and the resultant waves of migrants filling existing jobs but with pay and conditions seriously degraded, with a rich analysis of the first large-scale immigration period of the late 19th century in which the jobs taken up by migrants were similarly of poor quality but were new roles, such as the burgeoning large-scale farms and the transcontinental railway.

A key shortcoming is a lack of depth on how racialisation is used to further exploit migrant workers. Several times it is mentioned in both interviews with and summations of previous research on employers that immigrants, particularly Latinx migrants, are 'good workers'. It is a shame that, at this point, in a text that promotes the idea of uniting workers and turning their anger towards employers, Milkman fails to discuss the harm of the myth of the good worker migrant: the way in which it racialises and reduces immigrants to their labour power alone – dehumanising them.

In offering hope, Milkman does turn to labour movements and how these have managed to secure rights for migrant workers. The text does well in summarising the impact that unions have had on workers' rights and the role that immigrants have played in securing these, despite being excluded at times of economic uncertainty, becoming targets of blame rather than allies. Yet, again, Milkman obscures this under identity politics by suggesting that migrants have organised as a result of the 'worldview' from their countries of origin (p. 135); some Latin American countries – her focus – do have strong traditions of unions and left-wing ideology, but support for neoliberalism among sections of (for example) the Brazilian labour movement are enough to demonstrate the dangers of such sweeping cultural essentialism (above class politics). Further, in discussing movements, Milkman overstates the impact that immigrant rights movements can have, suggesting they are labour rights movements due to their roles in securing labour rights, such as rights to contracts. Such movements are of course valuable, but ceding precedence to these over a unified labour movement only serves to reinforce individualism and schisms. Evidence shows that when neoliberal governments are given the option to either increase one group's rights, or decrease another's, they will

opt for further deregulation (Rubery and Piasna, 2017). This myopia as regards class and political economy is the biggest issue with the text. There is no discussion of the precariat, nor what precarity looks like, and despite the title of the book, the grouping of these migrants as a class is only there in as much as the racialisation and the atomisation of neoliberal politics allows.

I would recommend this book for students of race and labour market studies as a good introductory survey to the use of migrants within the US labour market. It may be of use to academics and policy-makers for a quick summary on how certain policies have affected the labour market demography. Those looking for something that offers an alternative route forward, or new insights into the exploitation of immigrant labour, will not find it here.

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References

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Rubery J and Piasna A (2017) Labour market segmentation and deregulation of employment protection in the EU. In: Piasna A and Myant M (eds) *Myths of Employment Deregulation: How It Neither Creates Jobs Nor Reduces Labour Market Segmentation*. Brussels: ETUI, 43–60.

Banu Özkazanç-Pan
Transnational Migration and the New Subjects of Work: Transmigrants, Hybrids and Cosmopolitans
Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2019, £21.59 pbk, (ISBN: 9781529204599), 174 pp.

Reviewed by Bing Lu, *Warwick University, UK*

This book identifies three emerging groups of international migrants – transmigrants, hybrids and cosmopolitans – and examines how their international mobility is impacting on societal institutions to help us understand unfolding issues around changing work conditions. It is organised around a critique of diversity as the dominant approach to researching employees across national borders in the fields of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS). To challenge existing US-centric approaches, the author adopts mobility as an analytical lens to rethink multiculturalism and inequalities. Through analysing these groups of internationally mobile workers, the book calls for organisations to be rethought given that transmigration is contributing to new social conditions.

Setting out three concepts derived from transnational migration studies, the book starts with its aim of exploring how internationally mobile workers craft their personal and professional lives. The first is a multi-scalar global perspective, which situates the multi-sited nature of the social fields where people live and work, foregrounding power relations between newcomers and 'locals' in workplaces. The second concept, methodological nationalism, is an approach which generalises all migrant experiences through