

growth processes, and perhaps also implies that consumption is inherently a potentially morally hazardous terrain for African citizenship. As such, some may be disappointed with what the book contributes to critical thinking about consumption in post-apartheid culture specifically, and in the racialized postcolonial world in general (see *Money from Nothing* by Deborah James, and *Consumption, Media & Culture in South Africa*, edited by Mehita Iqani and Bridget Kenny, both also published in 2016, for potentially more nuanced perspectives; one of reviewers should declare an interest here as the editor of the *Consumption* volume).

Another weakness of the book is its attitude towards the status conferred on mass media coverage. Southall often refers to journalistic articles or opinion pieces published in mainstream media spaces as evidence for certain claims. But media texts are not reflections of reality but are carefully constructed representations of it, which need to be treated with more analytical scepticism than Southall sometimes affords them. The possibility that the very notion of the black middle class could be a construction of the media, in tandem with other powerful political and economic actors, does not seem to enter into the discussion.

Nevertheless, the book remains an important contribution to understanding class and race, especially in the South African context, with its racist history and colonial past. It will interest scholars working on South Africa, and also those who think critically about the construction of middle classes around the world.

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Luke Sinwell and Siphwe Mbatha, *The Spirit of Marikana: the rise of insurgent trade unionism in South Africa*. London: Pluto Press (hb £65 – 978 0 7453 3653 4; pb £19.99 – 978 0 7453 3648 0). 2016, 224 pp.

Mass strikes have been crucial turning points in South Africa's political and economic history. The mass strikes of black workers in Durban in January and February 1973 laid the foundation for the modern labour movement. Trade unions for black workers were established after these strikes in all the major metropolitan areas of South Africa. These emerging unions approached employers, and later the apartheid state, cautiously at first by winning recognition for their embryonic organizations at plant level before gradually establishing nationwide industrial unions. This strategy led to the reform of the industrial relations system in 1979, allowing for the formal recognition of trade unions for black workers and their right to join the established collective-bargaining system.

If the 1973 strikes led to the reconfiguration of the system of industrial relations and the emergence of an independent workers' movement for the first time in South Africa, it was the massacre of thirty-four striking mineworkers on 16 August 2012 at Marikana that called into question the sustainability of the new post-apartheid order.

The Marikana massacre had an immediate impact on political life. The launch of the left-wing populist Economic Freedom Front (EFF) in 2013, and its ability to win over 1 million voters in the April 2014 general election, and over 2 million in the August 2016 local government elections, has had a dramatic impact on parliament. There, they have put the ANC – and President Zuma in particular – on the defensive and have also overshadowed the official opposition. The decision in December 2013

by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), not to provide organizational support to the ANC in the general elections, NUMSA's expulsion from COSATU in November 2014, and the formation of a new trade union federation, the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), in April 2017 have significantly changed South Africa's labour landscape.

Luke Sinwell and Siphwe Mbatha, with their well-documented 'actor-oriented approach', convincingly demonstrate that the strikes at Marikana were not led by a union but were the product of the self-activity of labour. It was the agency of workers, and more specifically the independent workers' committee, that explains the waves of strikes of 2012 and 2014 among the Rustenburg Platinum Mines of the North West Province of South Africa. Challenging the dominant perception that the strikes were 'spontaneous uprisings which involved employees who used primarily violent techniques and intimidation to maintain solidarity' (p. 8), the authors uncover the leadership practices of a few key intellectuals among the workers who drew on informal social networks and went on to play significant roles in the origins and development of the strikes. 'Without their efforts to engage within (and where necessary create) informal networks for the mobilisation of the strikers,' they write, 'it is not unreasonable to conclude that events would not have occurred at the moment and in the manner in which they did' (p. 9).

The Spirit of Marikana traces the origins of the worker committees, and their demand for a living wage of R12,500 a month, to two individuals in the two main platinum mines of Amplats and Lonmin. These individuals proposed to a small number of workers that they should take action to achieve their demands. In doing so they sparked a series of events that led to the strike at Lonmin and strike action at Amplats, and then in the entire Rustenburg region and beyond.

The book documents the ways in which the rank-and-file leaders of the strikes were drawn into the competing union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which began as a rebellion against the dominant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and emerged triumphant in the platinum mines. 'In a sense,' the authors observe, 'AMCU and the union president Mathunjwa's rise to prominence in the platinum belt has been drawn out of the blood of the 34 mineworkers killed during the Marikana massacre' (p. 11). But AMCU turned out to be no more militant than the NUM, and although the authors see it as a form of insurgent unionism, AMCU's role was to tame and institutionalize the 'great strike of 2014'.

By documenting the crucial role of ordinary workers in the events of Marikana, the book has made visible what is often hidden from the media, analysts and academics. Unlike the mass strikes of 1973, the key actors in the strikes of 2012 and 2014 at the platinum mines are not hidden behind the bland concept of spontaneity. Instead, Sinwell and Mbatha have given us a unique insight into these historic events, and, by quoting directly from the strikers, they have given the miners a voice in history.

Whether the events triggered by Marikana will lead to a full-scale realignment of political parties in South Africa remains to be seen, but what is clear is that political forces outside the dominant ANC-led alliance are presenting a direct challenge to their hegemony for the first time in post-apartheid South Africa. When the history of this period is written, the events that took place at Marikana between 2012 and 2014 will be seen as a turning point.

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