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*Transnational Radicalism and the Connected Lives of Tom Mann  
and Robert Samuel Ross* by Neville Kirk (review)

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understanding the First International, charting out promising, new research trajectories for the next decades.

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**Neville Kirk, *Transnational Radicalism and the Connected Lives of Tom Mann and Robert Samuel Ross* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2017)**

ANOTHER BOOK ON transnational labour history? Another book by Neville Kirk on transnational labour history? Yes, as Kirk makes clear, he has had an enduring interest in transnational and cross-national comparative labour history. He was trained as a transnational labour historian: first as one of a group of talented MA students at Warwick University's newly-founded Centre of the Study of Social History in 1968 and 1969 who were taught by lifelong friends, David Montgomery and Edward Thompson who specialized in US and British labour history respectively. Montgomery in particular explored "labour migration, connections, networks, exchanges and mutual influences" (57) between the two nations (and beyond) and Kirk followed him back to Pittsburgh to do his doctorate. Montgomery, a Communist Party activist in a pre-academic working life, became the Farman Professor of History at Yale University, leading labour historian and editor of the journal, *International Labor and Working-Class History*. In turn, Kirk taught British and US history at Manchester Metropolitan University for many years. His corpus of labour history publications includes two volumes comparing British and US work and workers from 1780 to 1939, *Labour and Society* (1994), comparative USA, UK and Australia labour history from 1880s to 1914, *Comrades and Cousins* (2003)

and Britain and Australia from 1900, *Labour and the Politics of the Empire* (2011). This instalment is the most recent a series of work, then, around the issues and debates over transnational labour history by a historian long experienced in this field. Indeed, the first chapter on the "strengths, weaknesses, promise and pitfalls" (36) of the turn to transnational history, and concomitant comparative and global worlds is a strength of this book and will be essential reading for historians working in the area.

The book is formally divided into three parts: the transnational context; socialism; and women, whiteness, and war. The title is more indicative of its bifurcation: the nature and implications of Mann's and Ross's connected activism on the one hand and the wider contexts of their transnational radical world on the other. I think that Kirk's major contribution is in regard to the latter aspect than to the former, which might be surprising given the work concentrates on an investigation of the connected lives of British-born global-hopping Tom Mann (1856–1941) and Australian-born Robert Samuel "Bob" Ross (1873–1931), who also spent time in New Zealand. Kirk focuses on the particular period between September 1901 when Mann arrived in Melbourne from New Zealand, and Ross' return from New Zealand in April 1913. When Kirk was considering radical transnational figures in Australasia to study, Stuart Macintyre suggested Mann and Ross would "make a good pair of connected socialists" (vii) and so it has proven. These two radical socialists have attracted much study individually but they have rarely been considered together. They were friends who shared socialist beliefs. They worked together in Australasia between 1902 and 1913. After that, and most importantly, they stayed in touch, corresponded, and wrote for each other's publications. As with all

his work, Kirk sets out to place their experience within the broadest economic and political contexts, using this example of paired connected socialists to develop a "network approach to transnationalism," considering their shared cultural field as well as the "relevant wider and more impersonal processes and structures." (51) He is able to do this because of the richness of the archives which he has researched meticulously. The records sustains a consideration of their socialism rather than their interiority; that is their transnational radical views in regard to politics generally and specifically on three issues: womanhood, whiteness, and war. Mann and Ross shared unwavering hopes for gender equality, albeit emphasizing differing particular reformist policies at the same time as being male breadwinners in their own marriages. Similarly Kirk challenges the "globally monolithic, unchanging and consensual" racism of whiteness that "abounds in the historiography" (201) to argue that they and others held complex views on White Australia which developed and changed over time. Finally while Ross was consistent over militarism Mann stepped back from anti-war agitation for the duration.

More generally Mann and Ross were loyal to their historical materialist beliefs, adopting the same political strategies up to 1909, but their politics diverged thereafter. This allows Kirk to posit wider points about the range of transnational consciousness and contingent views within the radical transnational Anglophone world. For instance, he argues Mann's and Ross' socialism defies the notion of a fixed and dichotomous relationship between reform and revolution. The two were linked as Mann and Ross sought to transform labour's limited, sectional, and reformist consciousness into revolutionary social ideas and practice. Voluntarism was central to their activism: they set about creating a

socialist subaltern counterpublic culture at the same time as they sought political revolution. Similarly it was never a simple choice between industrial militancy or political action as some accounts suggests: they prioritized direct action over politics but both were on the agenda. Kirk examines radicalism in a transnational context in which socialists were loyal to socialist principles but whose politics was not fixed or permanent; it could and did vary according to their changing geographical and historical context. Here he cites Eric Hobsbawm: "If it is wrong to assume that workers have no country, it is equally misleading to assume that they have only one" and that their identification is "eternal and unchanging." (Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984], 49)

Always Mann and Ross are forefronted: Kirk argues that they played an important role in the development of labour and socialism in Australasia, especially in regard to the Victorian Socialist Party, and Mann upon New Zealand that historians have neglected. Secondly these two friends allow Kirk to consider the wider radical transnational world which he argues historians have neglected too. Of course others have made the same points that Kirk has made about the role of radical socialism in Australasia between the 1890s and World War I: indeed he notes at one point that "to argue in these ways is to endorse the somewhat unfashionable view of Verity Burgmann, Lloyd Churchward and others that the influence of Marxist and syndicalist ideas on Australian socialism has been underestimated by labour historians of this period." (117) Similarly, Erik Olssen's *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908–1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) does likewise for New Zealand. Good points bear repeating using new evidence.

Above all, Kirk's book is a clarion call for more research. While Mann's and Ross' positions are elucidated in detail they could bear with more contextualization within their radical transnational fellow travellers. Kirk himself suggests that Elsie Mann "fully and urgently merits a biography in her own right." (12) But more specifically his work suggesting the potential of challenging the national by adopting the network approach to transnationalism should be applied. Further research for Australia and New Zealand might include best friends, Josiah Cocking (1867–1960) and Harry Holland (1868–1933). They were both "Salvationist Socialists" or militant revolutionary socialists who corresponded when Holland left Newcastle where they worked together, later for New Zealand. Cocking had been the mainstay contributor to the *International Socialist Review for Australasia* from 1907 to 1912, which Holland edited. Cocking kept diaries and common books, which the University of Newcastle has digitized. Wider transnational networks might also help to address the argument only really implicit in this book: Kirk does not accept the conventional wisdom that "socialism in the Antipodes derived much, but not all, of its character from the movement in the 'mother country.'" (114) More work beyond the 1901 to 1913 period and beyond Mann's and Ross' Australasian circle, adopting Kirk's network approach to transnationalism, might establish how the Anglophone world and beyond derived ideas from the socialism developing in the Antipodes.

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**Bridget Kenny, *Retail Worker Politics, Race and Consumption in South Africa: Shelved in the Service Economy* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 2018)**

WHY HAVE RETAIL worker labour politics endured, how have they changed, and to what effect? Bridget Kenny examines these important questions in the context of retail work in greater Johannesburg, pre- and post-apartheid, from the 1930s to 2013. Kenny's impressive historical ethnography is the result of 20 years of fieldwork research that included focus groups and interviews with retail workers, industry experts, retail managers, and retail union officials and shop stewards. Weaving together rich accounts of retail worker experiences, Kenny analyzes the labour relationship of retailing as a site of political terrain that constitutes the political subject of "workers" – *abasebenzi*. The book details how retail worker politics have been shaped by three connected dynamics: retail as a space that constructs the nation and belonging; labour law and its part in creating the subject of the "employee" and constructing the boundaries within which workers resist; and the ways in which *abasebenzi* goes beyond being solely a worker identity and reflects a complex articulation of race, class, and gender relations.

The story begins by examining women's retail labour in Johannesburg from the 1930s to the 1970s. In Chapter 2, Kenny illuminates how white, working-class female shop assistants participated in complex retail relations that simultaneously challenged and re-constituted gender, race, and class relations. Working for pay at a time when white women were discouraged from doing so, the shop assistants serviced other white customers and contributed to the development of a city which symbolized modernity, belonging, and racial exclusivity through a developing consumer culture. Represented by the