

## *Working Lives: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History* by Craig Heron

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into Liverant's excellent account of these developments. Similarly, the lively chapter on advice and expectations for postwar consumers, which features excellent material from *Chatelaine* magazine, will be welcomed by a broad range of Canadian historians.

Liverant's gaze remains focused on intellectuals and experts whether they be politicians, government bureaucrats, social scientists, or magazine columnists. Indeed, the "consumer consciousness" examined here is probably better understood as a consciousness of consumers—a growing awareness of their influence—rather than a detailed examination of consumers' thoughts and identities. Moreover, the case studies on offer focus primarily on shifting intellectual attitudes towards the consumption of goods rather than services. Incorporating the Canadian (and international) literature on tourism and con-

sumption, for example, might well have reinforced some of the author's conclusions while challenging others.

Overall, *Buying Happiness* offers readers a welcome opportunity to reflect on the development of a consumer society in English Canada. It will appeal not just to historians of consumerism but to a wide range of scholars including those interested in intellectual history, political history, gender history, and, of course, the study of the Depression and the Second World War. More broadly, amidst ongoing debates about carbon taxes, the Ontario Basic Income Pilot, and school commercialism, Liverant's study offers a timely historical perspective that traces the development of a concept that pervades our daily lives—the idea that we are all, at our core, consumers.

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## *Working Lives*

### *Essays in Canadian Working-Class History*

By Craig Heron

Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2018. 640 pages. \$49.95 softcover and ebook. ISBN 978-1-4875-2251-3 (utorontopress.com).

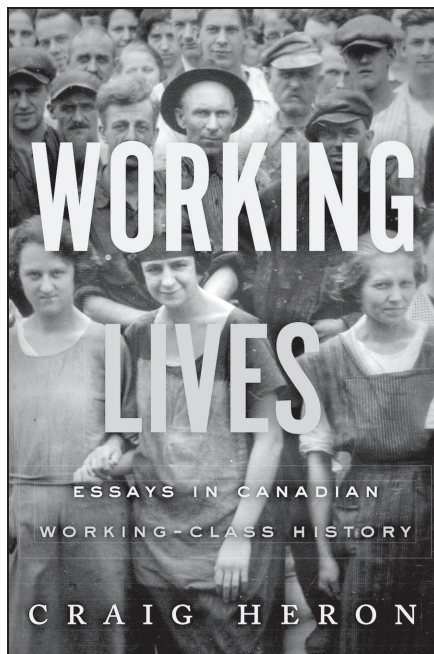
As more and more Canadian practitioners of the 'new' labour history reach retirement age, it is fitting that Craig Heron's *Working Lives* should appear. Heron, after all, is one of Canada's most accomplished labour historians and *Working Lives* is a hefty collection of his essays going back to the 1970s—charting his career-long explorations into the different aspects of working-class experience. But the collection functions as much as a guide to the development of labour his-

tory in Canada as a discipline as it does for Heron's personal trajectory. *Working Lives* is an exemplary book which captures both the new labour history's adaptations to more recent scholarly developments but also its core continuities. Ultimately, it is a testament to why working-class people and their struggles ought to remain central to the study of Canadian history.

As Heron recounts in the introduction, the new labour history first came to Canada during the 1970s. Young labour

historians imbued with New Left sensibilities sought to challenge the then-dominant school of labour history which had congealed into a social-democratic orthodoxy concerned almost entirely with top-down histories of 'official' bureaucratized working-class institutions and influential leaders. Instead, the upstart radicals were influenced by British Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson, Christopher Hill, and Eric Hobsbawm whose nuanced historical materialism stressed a more bottom-up approach which placed a much greater focus on class formation, workers' everyday experiences, and the radical, though often short-lived, organizations and revolts which have attempted to challenge capitalist development and threaten its hegemony at every turn. Some of these young Canadian historians, like Heron himself, had gone to Britain to study in this intellectual milieu, and returned eager to apply these frameworks to Canadian history. Alongside other stalwarts such as Gregory Kealey, Joan Sangster, and Bryan Palmer, Heron has proven to be a deft and persistent standard-bearer for this enlivened labour history.

Grouped into five sections, most of the chapters in the collection have been published elsewhere, either as journal articles or book chapters, although this is the first time that three of the chapters have appeared in print. The topics range from class formation and the evolution of the



labour process in Canadian workplaces all the way to the complex development of distinct working-class feminine and masculine cultures which often contested middle-class norms and values around gender roles and sexuality. Heron also includes essays on topics of which he has published longer books—such as the role of alcohol in working-class communities, the history of workers' street culture and labour day festivals, and class struggle

in the Hamilton steel industry—but the essays on these latter three subjects nonetheless function as effective and concise introductions to these areas for readers unfamiliar with those longer monographs.

The 'greatest hits' quality of this collection makes it hard to pick standout essays. However, historians who share Heron's continued sympathies for a Thompsonian historical materialism will no doubt appreciate his closing essay on the importance of writing histories which place working-class experience and class struggle at the forefront. Originally his outgoing Canadian Historical Association presidential address, Heron's thoughtful essay examines the lives of his parents as two working-class people whose history illuminates the complexities and contradictions of working-class life more broadly. Despite never participating in union militancy or becoming socialist partisans, Heron shows that "Harold and Marg" nonetheless "engaged in a class-based struggle for existence" in

smaller, more subtle ways, often through more informal solidarity networks based on “family and kin” (603). Heron describes these struggles as part of a pattern of ever-shifting “working-class realism,” which he defines as a “propensity among workers during the past 150 years to evaluate what is possible and realizable in any given context and act on that understanding” (603). Often, this outlook never takes workers beyond meagre day-to-day struggles to modestly improve living standards. But in certain more exceptional contexts, working people might strive for something much more ambitious and engage in broader, more militant, and transformative struggle, as Heron himself demonstrates in his chapter on post-First World War labour revolts. Such an argument is profoundly materialist, yet also takes seriously the “cultural and discursive lenses” with which working-class people interpret the world

(603).

This is not to say Heron rejects all the provocations from the more recent post-structural and so-called ‘intersectional’ theoretical perspectives which have largely displaced Marxism in the academy. Heron is quick to acknowledge that race and gender analyses, for example, were not always given their rightful due during the new labour history’s early years and Heron’s chapters on gender function as important correctives to these earlier disciplinary silences. But while many academics hang their theoretical cloaks on the wind, Heron reminds readers that a consistent and principled commitment to historical materialism need not be drab, deterministic, or exclusionary.

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## *The Creator’s Game*

### *Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood*

By Allan Downey

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018. 346 pages. \$34.95 paper. ISBN 9780774836036 \$34.95 PDF. ISBN 9780774836043. \$34.95 EPUB. ISBN 9780774836050.

Allan Downey’s study of lacrosse, *The Creator’s Game*, opens with a story shared by Hodinöshö:ni’ Faithkeeper Dao Jao Dre Delmor Jacobs in 2011. A creation story of lacrosse told from the Hodinöshö:ni’ Longhouse perspective, the narrative provides the title and structure for the book. The story, Downey explains, “sits within several interconnected histories... and demonstrates the centrality of lacrosse in Hodinöshö:ni’ culture and the Longhouse epistemology”

(3). Likewise, *The Creator’s Game* contains a series of interconnected histories linking sport, identity, and nationhood that reveals the many ways that lacrosse is important to Indigenous communities across North America (though most of the histories considered in *The Creator’s Game* take place around the Great Lakes and in the Pacific Northwest).

Downey’s own life story embodies these interconnecting and transcontinental histories. He is Dakelh, a citizen of Nak’azdli