Heron, Craig – *Lunch-Bucket Lives: Remaking the Workers' City*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015. Pp. 761.

With 340,000 words in the main text, a further 75,000 in the 130 pages of footnotes, more than a hundred illustrations, a 50-page bibliography, and 45 tables online, this is a *magnum opus* in every sense of the term. Ian McKay calls it a masterpiece, and I can see why. Craig Heron integrates feminist and labour historiography in a rich description of how Canada's leading industrial city was transformed in the early twentieth century. The historical argument, that there was change but little improvement for the working class, will surprise many, but it is his historiographical argument that will fuel debates for years to come. Heron argues that gender is fundamental to class formation, in a way that the social relations of production are not.

The structure illustrates well this revisionist argument. The book is divided into four parts, totalling 18 chapters. It opens conventionally enough with sketches of the city's two distinct classes as "view[ed] from the mountain": the bourgeois world of "Hobson's Hamilton" (Robert Hobson was the long-time CEO of Stelco) and the working class of "Studholme's people" (Allan Studholme served as the Independent Labour MPP for East Hamilton from 1906 until his death in 1919).

The five chapters on "keeping the wolf from the door" explore the constraints facing working class families in Hamilton. The point of departure is the "labouring for love" of the housewife. This subject receives twice the length needed to address the difficulties of "bringing home the bacon." This inversion of the presumed primacy of the male head foreshadows the main argument of the book: working-class culture is not forged in the crucible of workplace struggles. Next is how working-class children and youth were disciplined by "school bells and factory whistles." What families consumed is then surveyed in "spending the hard earned bucks." The main theme in both chapters is clear: working people's situation changes in the half century prior to the Second World War, but it does not qualitatively improve. Throughout the period, "the last resort" remains seeking help from outside the working class. Here there is an evolution from a completely private, philanthropic system to one that does recognize a circumscribed role for the state based on citizen's rights. This is not yet the welfare state, but rather, to use a simile my late father often evoked, a system that is "as cold as charity."

Two hundred pages into the work, we finally pass through a factory gate with three chapters on "punching the clock." This is the only section to be partially organized chronologically, because it is where Heron argues there was the greatest change over time. "Hold the fort" critically reviews the last two decades of effective craft unionism in the city. Although craft unionism was losing ground by 1906, the fundamental weakness of strategies designed to protect the skilled are sharply revealed with "the whip hand" of the Second Industrial Revolution. Much more is at stake here than merely continuous processing guided by scientific management. Heron concludes Hamilton became an "open-shop heaven" (p. 303), as company after company followed the hard line championed by the major corporations in the severe recession of 1913-1915. Once the unions were broken, a corporate

welfare regime was built on the racist and gendered divisions of the new social relations of production. Amazingly, "standing up to the boss" continued to happen with a remarkable frequency and inventiveness given the extraordinary power of management. None of the three extended periods of militancy, 1910-1914, 1916-1921, and 1929-1936, however, succeeded in creating "long-lived organizations rooted in production to sustain and enhance a distinctive collective identity as wage-earners" (p. 303).

If not there, then where? This is the topic of 250 pages over seven chapters on "the ties that bind." Heron begins with "the family circle," whose focus is on the free time after supper and before bed, on Sundays, and eventually on Saturday afternoons. At the centre of the circle is family interaction, but Heron expands the circle to include music, radio, church, the limited recreational opportunities permitted by the Lord's Day Act, statutory holidays, beaches, parks, vaudeville, and movies: all "practices that wives and mothers worked hard to fashion" and with a "distinctly proletarian flavour" (p. 345).

Heron then moves on to paired chapters on gender roles and expectations of youth, viewed through the lens of life-cycle analysis. Being "one of the girls" assesses what was perhaps the most widely remarked upon change of the period: how working "girls" in their late teens and early twenties refashioned social life. This chapter is not a nostalgic celebration of flappers; Heron is careful to frame these new cultural practices with an assessment of how people became girls. Going from the failure of Girl Guides to the success of roller-skating, smoking, drinking and dancing, to rag-time and jazz, sports, and the attraction of dime novels, Heron chronicles the development of a new working-class femininity. Attempts at control, largely religious, were not as successful as the constraints of political economy. Chronically low wages and patriarchal culture combined to ensure a future as home-maker and mother for most, but here too something had changed, as the 20,000 married women attending Bingo halls weekly by the 1930s attested. In "boys will be boys," Heron stresses the importance of teenage gangs to working-class masculinity, which he suggests often constituted the cutting edge of "aggressively, transgressive challenges to public order" (p. 388). Earlier than the girls, these boys would join the paid workforce, often through part-time, but fully-gendered, employment. The culture of young men built on that of the street and was carried into the army during the Great War, with its "fusion of the hegemonic ideologies of imperial masculinity and plebeian comradeship" (p. 401). The extent of homosocial activities, around sports and alcohol, made the transition to married life difficult. It reflected the larger contradiction at the core of working-class masculinity between "self-indulgent irresponsibility and deeply ingrained commitments to collective solidarity owed to family and workmates" (p. 409).

Having established the class basis of family life and the gendered nature of working-class identities, Heron uses three linked chapters to address how the working class interacted with the larger society. He starts with "true blue" that looks at the political shift from a lib-lab alliance to wide-spread support for the Tories in Hamilton. Here a nuanced deference twins with a belief in protective tariffs, empire, and its closely related racist assumptions to provide the basis for

a remarkable political machine, that was far more successful than anything the left was able to create. The limited successes of a working class for itself are then analysed in two chronologically distinct chapters. "The classes and the masses" explores labourism up to the revolt of 1919, while "unassailable rights" discusses the qualitatively different politics at the heart of working-class alternative visions of post-war reconstruction and socialism in the 1920s and 1930s. In his concluding chapter, Heron offers a chronology to these "lunch bucket politics." If the world of the first industrial revolution continued to shape the working class in the early years of his study, by 1920 a new qualitatively different class in itself created a different and more sharply gendered class for itself, which shaped the remaking of their city.

The great strength of this book is its scope. It offers a complex and compelling account that makes sense of working-class life in North America from 1890 to 1940. In so doing it shows how far social history has progressed since the pioneering work of the 1960s to 1980s. This would be a wonderful textbook for undergraduate courses in social, labour or gender history, and that combination is a truly remarkable achievement. Heron describes a world that no longer exists, and he is particularly adept at describing its nuances and novelties. These aspects will capture the imagination of many an undergraduate, while providing plenty of material for substantive classroom discussions. Furthermore, the extensive footnotes provide students with an excellent introduction to the relevant secondary literature for their term papers.

The great weakness of this book is its scope. To make sense of their world for us, Craig Heron has understandably laid stress on the constraints people faced. He has also done a remarkable job of integrating feminist scholarship and sensibilities into what has for far too long been an unnecessarily masculinist labour historiography. The result is a coherent meta-narrative, but people do not live in meta-narratives, and the exploitation and oppression of working people ensure that their lives are anything but coherent. Personally, I think we need a qualitatively different historical theory and method than the one Craig Heron has so clearly mastered, but that debate is for another day. Read this book; you will be richly rewarded.

Robert C. H. Sweeny
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Hunt, Nancy Rose – *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016. Pp. 353, xviii.

A Nervous State is certainly one of the most elegant books I have seen over the last years and an impressive attempt at entangling, and at discussing entangled, narratives. It follows the continuities of coerced labour and the fact of segregation through the Belgian colonial state in the Congo after the classical (and all too real)