

much like its predecessor, combined a fractured legislature with a weak executive; or in the United States, which opposed a powerful and often fractured legislative branch with an executive whose authority swelled in times of war (or quasi-war such as the Cold War) but seemed to shrink in peacetime.

Another and related comment concerns time frames. Eley, to recall, identified post-wars as moments of unique possibility. This appears to be the case for Britain: the wartime experience provided the necessary conditions not only for Labour's decisive electoral victory in 1945, but also for the Labour government's far-reaching programme. But Eley's argument applies less well to the French and American cases. Woloch mentions as an intriguing possibility an SFIO-PCF coalition in 1945, though it is questionable whether the two parties could have agreed on a more ambitious reform agenda than the one that emerged from *tripartisme*. But this counter-factual aside, the dynamics of post-war French politics, like those of American politics, placed very real limits on change. Once again, this points to the importance of political regimes. Ironically, the experience of defeat and occupation did not fundamentally alter France's parliamentary democracy: in its functioning, the Fourth Republic resembled the Third Republic and the latter, as the political scientists Stanley Hoffmann famously remarked, possessed better brakes than it did an engine. To be sure, Britain's political regime also remained unchanged but the Westminster model could become, as already mentioned, a remarkably effective instrument for reform.

A final comment on time frames: if the nature of political regimes is as important a factor as post-war periods in explaining change, there is something to be said for a longer-term view. Here, there are at least two perspectives. One is the decisive effects of failure. If there was a historical moment for the introduction of universal healthcare in the United States, it was during the Truman administration. Afterwards, the opposing forces were too strong during the twentieth century. But another perspective is to approach reform as an ongoing project and not the product of one particular moment. In the French case, the healthcare system that emerged after the war was organized along professional lines, with different professions possessing their own insurance accounts (*caisses*), an arrangement that undermined the principle of universality. Yet, in subsequent decades, the French system would undergo further and extensive reform in a universalist direction as the configuration of interests altered. However significant they may be, post-war periods are not the only moments when far-reaching change is possible.

Talbot Imlay

Département des sciences historiques, Université Laval
Pavillon Charles-De Koninck, 1030, avenue des Sciences humaines, Bureau 3237
Québec G1V 0A6, Canada
E-mail: Talbot.Imlay@hst.ulaval.ca
doi:10.1017/S0020859019000634

HIGBIE, TOBIAS. *Labor's Mind. A History of Working-Class Intellectual Life.* University of Illinois Press, Urbana (IL) 2019. 208 pp. \$99.00. (Paper: \$25.00.)

Tobias Higbie's new social history of the working-class mind opens with an evocative anecdote that illustrates both the productive insights and important challenges of his project.

A young Ralph Ellison, canvassing in Harlem, overhears a debate that runs in the face of popular assumptions about the vacuous character of the labor mind. Hearing a southern accent, he presumed the voices were those of two unschooled African American migrants, but to his utter amazement, the men were heatedly debating “which of two celebrated Metropolitan Opera divas was the better soprano!”. Higbie proceeds to use the anecdote as a starting point to detail untutored “working-class intellectual life”.

Ellison’s Harlem experience may have been atypical, but it had a resonant familiarity for me. Among the memorabilia I had of my working-class father was a large 1928 volume, *Stories of the Great Opera*, whose provenance always puzzled me. The book, a gift from his sister and brother-in-law, had an inscription on its inside cover, “May 11, 1936. Revolutionary greetings on your 21st birthday”. The radicalism I recognized. My father came from a family of Jewish communist garment workers in Paterson, NJ, and as early as 1926 had spoken at the Passaic strike as the head of the Young Pioneers. My father left school in tenth grade to organize unions and how he learned of, much less loved, opera, I knew nothing. What Higbie’s book reminds us, however, is that formal education was one of many ways working people developed an intellectual life. My father’s temperament was that of an intellectual, and he was raised in a family culture of Yiddishkeit – of Jewish theater, poetry, song, newspapers, books, and endless political debates. Learning from the School of the Streets and Family, he was not uneducated; indeed, he was admitted to college later in life with two years of credit.

Issues of both typicality and class identity are not simple though, matters Higbie does raise, if not always settle. My father, for instance, became a petit bourgeois shopkeeper after the war and was *in* the lower middle class, but, in the way Edward Thompson spoke of class as social relationship, he remained a man *of* the working class. But how typical was the experience of my father or the Harlem coal heavers Ellison heard? How did ethnic subcultures – for instance, African American culture, or, in the case of my father, Jewish culture – distinctively (or not) nourish and characterize intellectual life? And how did inflections of race and gender inform the labor mind? Workers, like other groups, are not of one mind, a fact that the singular usage in the book’s title obscures. The racialized and gendered inflections of working-class life that historians have well documented characterized the many and diverse forms that “the mind” took.

For answers, the book’s subtitle, “A History of Working-Class Intellectual Life”, provides both a misleading and informative starting point. Ellison’s anecdote and my father’s experience are, tellingly, of one historical moment – the interwar era of radical mass working-class mobilization. But how historically contingent is Higbie’s account? In this regard, the shadow of the 2016 election hovers over the book, even if it only appears fleetingly in the occasional paragraph and in the Conclusion. Trump assumed the mantle of the working-class champion, claiming to understand workers and speak their language. Political pundits subsequently attribute his electoral triumph to his victory in Midwest blue-collar states where workers join anti-immigrant cheers to “Build the Wall”. Higbie hints at how these political formations relate to the story of labor’s interwar mind, but privileges worker progressive interventions in the new millennium, such as those on behalf of Bernie Sanders and at Zucotti Park.

There is a broader lesson from his interwar account, though – and I think it is his major contribution: he makes clear how workers in all their political movements must be engaged as thinking citizens in their own terms. At its heart, then, Higbie’s book frontally addresses the too-popular prejudice that the working class has limited intellectual capacity, that workers and thinkers are different animals. Higbie traces these attitudes back to managers such as

Frederick Winslow Turner, who lauded as “appropriate and kind” the employment of men of the “mentally sluggish type”, such as his paradigmatic Schmidt the Pig Iron Handler. Against this abiding prejudice, Higbie documents workers’ considerable intellectual capacity. Then and now, he finds workers to be neither mindless automatons, nor brutish unthinking beasts.

For his evidence, Higbie draws upon labor journals, newspapers, memoirs, and records of labor colleges from the 1920s and 1930s. The first of his five chapters describes the world of working-class autodidacts, “exceptional individuals” schooled, like my father, in socialist clubs such as the Arbeter Ring (or, in his case, the Communist’s International Workers’ Order), reading groups, newspaper cultures, and so forth. Self-educated, these men and women learned from books and experiences honed on the street and in the workplace. Moreover, at these sites, they came together to forge a political culture in which they functioned as public intellectuals in and for the growing labor movement.

The second chapter documents the public sphere in which these public intellectuals came together in solidarity and struggle. This chapter is one place where Higbie takes the story beyond World War II. The chapter focuses on discussion and lecture forums in places as diverse as union halls, settlement houses, taverns, and music halls. More social than educational, he finds these sites functioned on the edges of a bohemian subculture at the fringes of working-class life. Yet, he describes other sites – street-corner speechifying, associational life in masonic clubs, YWCAs, and trade union and ethnic clubs – that informed a broader working-class public sphere. Moving beyond the interwar era, the chapter concludes with an ambiguous post-war history: the built environment of the modern city combined with forces such as McCarthyism, suburbanization, television, and the entry of large numbers of workers into higher education to undermine many of the forums for working-class free speech and organization. Acknowledging but not dwelling on more conservative post-war attitudes, Higbie recuperates a useable left-wing past evident in political reformations at Occupy Wall Street in 2011 and at the Women’s March in 2017.

A third chapter examines the relatively familiar story of labor education at places such as Brookwood Labor College, Bryn Mawr School for Women Workers, and State and University labor studies programs. Higbie acknowledges (again) that the schools trained a limited number of workers and graduates often comprised a radical leadership cadre for the left-wing trade-union movement of the 1930s. The schools elaborated a labor pedagogy that reflected some important widespread worker attitudes that characterized the labor mind: lived experiences were privileged over book learning; classrooms were spaces for engaged dialog about race (and to some extent, gender) relations; labor history and the experiences of working people became core subjects. While the thrust of the chapter (and of the book) is the emergence of a labor mind defined by a radical cadre educated at the labor colleges, the chapter adds another post-war coda. Labor education becomes more formal and structured and new industrial relations programs with more conservative faculty displace the history of labor struggle with a history more focused on mediation and bargaining.

The second part of the book, “Imagining Critical Consciousness”, examines through autobiography and popular representations in plays and cartoons how workers became visible. In the first of two chapters, Higbie recounts half a dozen prominent autobiographies from *Labor Herald* as “a window into the politics of social movement storytelling” (p. 94). These life stories, he shows, reflect the modernist impulse of the era that gives an increasing role for experience in consciousness. The second chapter focuses on progressive social movement iconography in Karel Čapek’s 1920 play, “R.U.R.” and with the visual

culture in magazine and newspaper cartoons. Higbie's analysis, which documents the depiction of masculinity in images and the gendered character of consciousness, is both innovative and compelling.

Images speak, but how they are received has long been a challenge for scholars of media and representation. The problem no less troubles Higbie's project. The "labor's mind" he describes is that of a class fraction of left activists. The typicality of these activists and the resonance of their position remains unclear, especially as one moves into the post-war era. Activists may have claimed "a collective subjectivity" (p. 114), but such an assertion feels less viable in a post-war era marked by events, such as the 1970 Hard Hat Riot. Still, Higbie productively tackles the ambiguity of class position. He references the post-war muddiness of class when an increasingly large percentage of working people begin to attend college and reminds readers often of the liminal position of the writer-scholar-educator as working-class cultural worker. Higbie notes, however, at the end of his third chapter, how post-war industrial labor relations countered ideas about the murkiness of class or the notion of class fractions with the notion that there were, in fact, many working classes (p. 82). One need not embrace the idea of many working classes to acknowledge workers divide into many diverse groups. In that respect, both post-war ideological pluralism and the evidence of class fractions with a solitary class both speak to limitations implicit in the notion of a single labor mind. Labor is of many minds, and with Higbie's helpful start, scholars must now move on to examine the character of the labor mind in its diverse and changing formations.

Daniel J. Walkowitz

Department of History and
Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, New York University
53 Washington Square South Floor 4E New York, NY 10012, United States
E-mail: djw1@nyu.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020859019000646

COLE, PETER. *Dockworker Power. Race and Activism in Durban and the San Francisco Bay Area.* [The Working Class in American History.] University of Illinois Press, Urbana (IL) 2018. xiii, 286 pp. \$99.00. (Paper: \$35.00.)

The first three words of this book read: "Dockworkers have power" (p. 1). They capture the essence of this fascinating and closely researched work by Peter Cole, Professor of History at the Western Illinois University. Cole considers how, in Durban and in San Francisco, dockworkers used this power, for example, to fight for racial equality, thus revealing how the history of labour unions is also about idealism and solidarity. In contrast to the view of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, of unions as introverted organizations of wage earners set up to bargain and protect their own interests and the interests of their members, this book concentrates on the outward aspect of labour organizations. The history of how dockworkers from one continent solidarized with workers in another continent uncovers this oft-forgotten aspect of unionism. This is a book on how workers' struggles have often been conducted in the name of universal values, such as equality among mankind. Cole, the author of *Wobblies*