

stitutional histories and a relatively few biographies. Welton's book is a helpful summoning up of the "social movement" tradition and is a further step in dealing with the "invisibility of adult educational thought and practice" of which he complains.

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**J. Robert Wegs. *Growing Up Working Class: Continuity and Change Among Viennese Youth, 1890-1938*. University Park, Pennsylvania and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989. U.S. \$12.95.**

This examination of the young of working-class Vienna is premised on recognition of the internal stratification of the proletariat. Wegs demands that historians recognize the divide separating out what he calls the upper, middle, and lower strata of labour. These divisions were lived out in highly differentiated incomes, work experiences, housing conditions, and outlooks. The privileged aristocracy of skilled manual workers was highly organized and active in the Social Democratic Party; wives remained in the home and children normally attended trade schools; unemployment seldom stalked the doors of this labouring layer and respectability was its aim, both as a social practice and an ideological ideal. In Wegs' middle strata was the bulk of the Viennese working class; less secure in their skill and their jobs than those perched above them, these workers nevertheless had steadier work, more stable

residence in the working-class quarter, and smaller families than those truly impoverished unskilled, often newly-arrived, workers locked into the casual labour market. Both parents of this middle strata were forced to work for wages, however, leaving the children of this group to fend for themselves far more than the offspring of the respectable skilled. Their quest for respectability, rather than its attainment, marked them in a myriad of ways, leaving them little time for politics or cultural pursuits. Resembling what Wegs refers to as "that much-disparaged 'lumpenproletariat' described by Marxists," was the lowest stratum, a marginalized contingent of ill-housed, poorly-paid, incompletely acculturated first-generation labourers forced to rent their beds to fellow ethnics to make ends meet in a world dominated by economic insecurity and the hostility of their superiors and working-class neighbours.

The kinds of distinctions Wegs makes much of were no doubt present in the historical experience, but for them to be reconstructed on the pages of a text requires a research programme both innovative and prodigious. Wegs brings neither feature to this book. Instead, he relies on 120 interviews, only 70 of which were conducted by himself, and on a wealth of printed sources, primarily those written by other historians but also including published surveys and government documents from the period studied. Of the 70 interviews Wegs undertook, 31 of the informants are identified as upper stratum, 21 as middle, and 17 as lower (one appears to have "gone missing" if the Appen-

dix is to be trusted). The major source of this study thus pushes interpretation in the direction of the respectable, understates the quantitative dominance of the middle layer, and skews the chronological focus of analysis, much of the book targeting the interwar period when most of those interviewed would have lived.

This problem is compounded by the use of the interviews themselves, as Wegs quotes liberally from them to establish the predictable, but seldom interrogates his informants or attempts to draw out meanings beyond what seem routinized answers to questions begging the obvious. If he cites the odd treatise on oral history, Wegs seems remarkably unconcerned with methodological and/or theoretical questions. This qualitative matter is paralleled by a problematic quantitative issue. In actuality, Wegs focuses not on Vienna, but on one working-class district, Favoriten. When one considers that in this district alone in 1900 almost 65,000 individuals were denoted as gainfully employed, and Vienna had a population of over 1,700,000, it is apparent that Wegs' evidence from his 70 informants is remarkably thin: his Weberian ideal typologies, however enticing, are not likely to convince anyone who enters into them under the shadow of sceptical doubt. His own interviews give one cause to pause, indicating considerable occupational (albeit not the sole element constructing Wegs's mix of class/status) mobility between the upper and middle layers of the Viennese labouring population. Status within the working class was clearly in motion generationally, and in ways

that defy mechanical, simplistic categorization. It is odd that Wegs makes so little of this process in a book devoted to the study of working-class youth.

The general argument of this book sits atop the proverbial fence, proclaiming that labouring life was a complex mix of continuity and change. Traditionalism and modernization are held out as unproblematic forces of contention, battling against one another in a kind of *quid pro quo* that left working-class youth, according to Wegs, able to survive, adapt, and carve out a space insulated from the ravages of despair and want. This message is hammered home in a series of chapters that explore housing, standards of life, work, and sex and marriage. Of most interest to historians of education is the specific chapter devoted to schooling.

The chapter on youth and education is in many respects typical of the book as a whole. It establishes the obvious, adorns it with quotes from interviews, bombards the reader with statistics drawn from printed sources and qualitative commentary from earlier surveys, and skirts resolutely any interpretive confrontation with analytic issues that, notwithstanding Wegs' refusal to address them, float repeatedly and unambiguously across the page. Viennese workers avoided schools, but valued learning. Socialist leaders and government officials attempted to promote their own institutions and definitions of "education" as a counter to the street milieu, but to no avail. Economic necessity and the tyranny of familialist collectivism subordinated children's lives to routines more dominated by work and

petty wages than lessons and literature. Youth themselves found classrooms boring and regimented, at times violently so; yet they mounted little conscious opposition, adapting with stoic resignation, truancy, or the more final act of dropping out. None of this will surprise anyone with an elementary acquaintance with the ways in which education and class come together in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If the interwar period saw some enhanced possibilities of advancement for working-class families and their children, this was more a consequence of declining fertility and the resulting increase in family income. Wegs concludes his study of schooling with the statement that, "while youth had greater job and educational possibilities in theory, they were still constrained by traditional family considerations and, more important, the poor economic conditions of the interwar period."

What scars this study from beginning to end is the refusal to venture beyond this kind of reductionism, in which analysis is unquestioningly collapsed into a particular lowest common denominator. Wegs raises—always implicitly—countless questions of importance: hegemony's construction and contestation; the conjuncture of the structures of private and public life, exposed in the ambivalent histories of family, state, and the institutions of civil society; the politics of conformity and dissent, how they converge, and what they mean in general terms (class consciousness) and in a specific locale (Red Vienna). Little of this is scrutinized; none of it is addressed with any theoretical

sophistication. Indeed, from Wegs' introduction, where he speaks of his effort as the first "full-scale attempt to describe the life of Viennese working-class youth from 'the bottom up'," alluding repeatedly and unreflectively to his concern with "real" experience (by which Wegs understands, I suppose, an experience as it was *perceived* by his informants), these matters and an appropriate way of handling them interpretively are shunted aside in a refusal to recognize the two-sided nature of *both* youth and class. For these lives of subordination, in which so much was determined by those above, be they fathers and mothers, older siblings, employers, or state officials, can hardly be understood "from below" alone.

Growing up working class was no doubt filled with resiliencies and adaptations, as Wegs shows, and as many of his informants remember. But to grow up working class was also to be contained and constrained by power. Physical and ideological, economic and cultural, that power was considerable, pervasive, and political. It determined the possibilities of experience "from below," just as it was itself pressured "from below." Wegs celebrates the survival of the Viennese working class, stressing the creativity of the class in the face of adversity and scarcity. Perhaps in the 1980s, in academia, this is enough. It certainly would not have been judged sufficient, ironically, in the Red Vienna of the immediate post-World War I years. There, the Austrian working class was regarded as pivotal in the Soviet reconstruction of Europe, Austrian youth as rightful inheritors of world

revolution. We live in a more modest age: our social histories, as Wegs' book indicates, unfortunately reflect this "reality."

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**Suzanne Zeller. *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987. vii, 356, illus., \$35.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.**

The developing Canadian interest in intellectual history has had a number of striking consequences, not the least of which has been the way it has transformed understanding of old and familiar subjects in the nation's nineteenth-century past. This is most obvious in the way comprehension of areas not traditionally considered in terms of their foundation in thought has been affected—Doug Owsram's *Promise of Eden* (Toronto, 1980) considerably enlarged our view of the Confederation movement—but it can also be seen in relation to fields defined from the beginning by the fact that they concerned (at least in principle) the operations of the mind. Study of the history of science—to take the most obvious example—has thus moved away from the institutional focus evident in the work edited by H.M. Tory, W.S. Wallace, and G.F.G. Stanley and towards the sort of preoccupation with argument, controversy, and idea to be seen in Carl Berger's *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto, 1983). Increasingly

aware of the role that the ideological environment can play in shaping action, behaviour, and belief, historians have quite simply been moving—and with a notable vigour—to give that environment its very substantial due.

Suzanne Zeller's richly-researched book fits squarely into this steadily strengthening movement: taking ideas to be a fundamentally important constitutive element in the historical process, it attempts a new reading of events, sequences, and combinations of circumstance the meaning and character of which have long been taken to be clear. This, moreover, is done in relation not just to one but to two such sets of sequences—the two, as it happens, mentioned above—with even greater interest being added to the study by the fact that what it claims to be novel about the way each of those sequences should be viewed is seen as a function of its relationship to the other.

Central to this complex and imaginative undertaking is a close, detailed, and useful examination of what Zeller calls the "inventory sciences." Regarding geology, terrestrial magnetism, meteorology, and botany as having formed the core of scientific activity in nineteenth-century British North America, she looks at their entry onto the provincial stage, their sojourn there, and the quite considerable results which flowed from it. These matters are not, however, considered in isolation, for—this is the heart of the book's argument—Zeller believes this scientific work to have had a critically important relationship to major political developments simultaneously in train. Part of that relationship, she