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John B. Jentz, Richard Schneirov. *Chicago in the Age of Capital: Class, Politics, and Democracy during the Civil War and Reconstruction.* Working Class in American History Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xii + 310 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03683-5.

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In *Chicago in the Age of Capital*, John B. Jentz and Richard Schneirov explore how Chicago transformed from a commercial city based on westward trade and small production to America's "shock city" and the symbol of urban industrial America (p. 16). Focusing on Eric Hobsbawm's "Age of Capital," Jentz and Schneirov strive to illuminate the often-neglected history of Reconstruction in the North. They claim that many histories, even Eric Foner's magisterial tome, have a southern focus that overlook the North's, especially Chicago's, evolution during and after the Civil War. In response to this void, Jentz and Schneirov examine the wage labor question as an issue of the working classes, burgeoning middle class, and upper class of Chicago from the 1830s to Mayor Carter Harrison's tenure after the Great Strike of 1877. Emphasizing the rise of capitalism and class consciousness, Jentz and Schneirov demonstrate how war demands and capitalism transformed Chicago into one of America's foremost industrial cities.

Jentz and Schneirov's argument hinges on several events: Emancipation, the eight-hour workday strike, the Great Fire of 1871, the depression of 1873-4, and the Great Strike of 1877. Additionally, they base their argument around two theoretical frameworks: Jurgen Habermas's idea of the public sphere and Antonio Gramsci's understanding of hegemony. Working within these frameworks, Jentz and Schneirov detail the explosive nature of Chicago's party politics and the various classes' struggles to survive and prosper in the growing industrial city. First, they assert that in Chicago (and other northern cities), the Civil War brought about political changes that not only opened up the public sphere to the issues of wage workers, but also allowed the immigrant working classes, specifically the German and Irish, to find common ground and constitute themselves as legitimate voices in the public sphere. In turn, Jentz and Schneirov contend that Chicago's socioeconomic system greatly transformed between the 1830s and 1870s, which compelled the working classes to construct their own class consciousness, to utilize their newfound group cohesiveness, and to organize politically in the public sphere. More simply, capitalism-induced class consciousness unified workers by superseding national, ethnic, and religious divisions.

Jentz and Schneirov do not limit their analysis to the working classes. Another of their key arguments is that the working classes' mobilization during the various strikes frightened the burgeoning middle class into developing their own class consciousness and a perceived need for hegemony through consent and coercion. For instance, by allowing the immigrants to participate in the public sphere by voting and through controlled strikes, but also by not hesitating to crush them with violence if the former became too mobilized, the middle and upper classes maintained control of the city's workers. This transformation, according to Jentz and Schneirov, resulted in the city being more democratic (or at least perceived to be) than ever following 1877.

While some exhaustive studies can overwhelm the reader, the authors are careful not to overload the text with mundane details. Rather, they effortlessly incorporate their use of newspaper excerpts, pamphlets, committee notes, laws, strike reports, meeting minutes, and speeches into the text. This approach leaves the reader comfortably aware of the various political parties and reform leaders without needing an appendix for reference. Also, by employing a chronological approach, Jentz and Schneirov show the gradual development of class consciousness.

Another strength of *Chicago in the Age of Capital* is the incorporation of statistics into the analysis. While statistics can easily be overwhelming, Jentz and Schneirov present their research in a clear and organized fashion. By confining their statistical analysis to the captions, the authors allow the readers to review this dense

information at their own pace without interrupting the flow of the text. The inclusion of figures illuminates the transformation of industry, class, and labor unions as the book progresses.

While the authors should be praised for not overwhelming the reader with details and presenting an interesting overall argument, there is fault in the authors' homogenization of some groups. In spite of their attention to political parties and their factions, many immigrant groups, such as the German and Irish, appear homogenous. Although it is clear that their leaders and their aims changed over time, the generalizations made about ethnic groups leave the reader to query if every German had the same goals? How unified were these groups?- These questions left unanswered risk leading to assumptions that the authors surely do not intend. Nevertheless, this is a well-written and much-needed labor history of Chicago during Civil War and Reconstruction. Labor historians of the Civil War era and/or nineteenth-century America will welcome this book into the historical conversation.

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