

and Kurdish nationalism, the editors of the collection argue for renewed attention to relationships of property (class and the mode of production) and of propriety (the moral and sexual regulation of women).

The introduction is a tendentious critique of post-colonial histories and of Subaltern Studies, arguing that these approaches erase social relations in favour of a purely linguistic analysis (6). Where the Subaltern Studies collective argue for a critical reading of European notions of enlightenment, modernity, and rationality, Bannerji, Mojab, and Whitehead insist that these are in fact the only real bases for a critique of traditional hierarchies and patriarchal structures. In their own articles, all three of the editors develop these themes in different ways. Himani Bannerji's "Pygmalion Nation," for example, is an extended criticism of Partha Chatterjee, a leading member of Subaltern Studies. According to Bannerji, Chatterjee's work is not merely descriptive, but prescriptive; operating from the assumption that one must be either for or against "enlightenment" and "modernity" Bannerji reads (wrongly, in my view) Chatterjee's critique of these notions as an endorsement of the "patriarchal and upper class/caste imaginary of the hindu revivalists" (39; 69).

Other articles in the collection present a rather different picture. Dana Hearne, for example, analyzes the partial and ambivalent investments in nationalist ideology within the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL), whose leaders saw themselves as feminists, socialists, pacifists, and nationalists (97). While Hearne notes that the IWFL was ultimately "marginalized by the nationalist struggle," she does see its perspective as one "which had the power to remove the straitjackets of the multiple patriarchies of unionism, Protestantism, nationalism, and Catholicism" (110). Uma Chakravarti's study of wifedom and widowhood in eighteenth-century Maharashtra explores relationships between the state and Brahman elites and reveals elite women's complicity in the maintenance of gender and caste hierarchies (239).

Kaarina Kailo's article on the *Kalevala*, a collection of folk-tales first published in the nineteenth century, is quite sympathetic to post-colonial approaches. According to Kailo, the *Kalevala* has been used to narrate and organize unequal relationships between Finnish people and

the Sami, the indigenous people of northern Europe. Invoking Gayatri Spivak's idea of "strategic essentialism" Kailo traces the way in which Sami women writers have challenged mainstream depictions of their "ways of living and knowing" in order "to deconstruct the most dysfunctional, misogynist, ethnocentric, and anti-ecological dimensions of the dominant philosophies and practices" (197; 206).

*Of Property and Propriety* provides a valuable overview of a range of possible approaches to the role of gender and class in imperialism and nationalism. Even more valuable would have been an effort to confront directly the substantial differences in approach in the various articles, raising questions which, when worked through the context of these case studies, could produce new and more productive ways of thinking about these relationships.

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***Couture & Commerce: The Transatlantic Fashion Trade in the 1950s.*** Alexandra Palmer. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press 2001; illustrations; viii + 352 pages; ISBN0-7748-0826-8; \$65.00 (cloth).

In her book Palmer imposes order on the *haute couture* industry in the Canadian city of Toronto during the 1950s. She outlines the industry's connection to the broader fashion culture in Europe and introduces us to the major designers and leaders of Toronto's fashion industry. We also learn who the women are that made up Toronto's fashionable elite. These were the women who wore the suits, dresses and hand-embroidered gowns created by the most prestigious designers of the time: Pierre Balmain, Christian Dior and one of the few women designers, Coco Chanel. The author's background as curator of historical clothing allowed her to confront questions regarding the fashion industry that inspired her to undertake this project. For example, she became curious about such things as why the industry was important during the 1950s, a period which she refers to as the "the golden years of haute couture" (3). The author was not just interested in fashion from a commercial perspective or from a cultural

one. Rather she writes about the way in which those two areas intersected.

As fascinating as I found this book both in terms of the author's research and the information she provides, I was somewhat uncomfortable with some of the discussion. It is clear that in 1950s Toronto *haute couture* was associated with good taste. Does this suggest that those who wore *haute couture* had good taste? In fact, what the Toronto socialite wore in the 1950s was "regulated and filtered by professionals - Paris *vendeuses*, store buyers and sales assistants - who exerted a considerable influence on what fashions were ultimately seen, purchased, and worn" (282). As I read the book I had to question what this said about the decisions made by women regarding what they would or would not wear. Then again, what does it say, and what was said, about those women who would not or could not "buy into" the *haute couture* culture of 1950s Toronto?

I realize that this is not a traditional account of women's history and was probably not intended to be viewed as such, but it is women's history; it was women who wore *haute couture*. Women were also the so-called "fashion police" who decided whether a certain fashion was right or wrong (92). It was women, by and large, who ran the retail outlets that catered to a certain female clientele and it was women who worked as sales clerks in those stores. What is somewhat problematic for me is what Palmer has left out as much as what she has included. Nothing is said about the women who actually made the dresses, the wages they earned or the conditions under which they worked. Certainly no one book can do everything. Palmer's book is an excellent contribution to the study of the *haute couture* industry in Canada and deserving of the awards it has received.

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***Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy.***

Annis May Timpson. Vancouver: UBC Press 2001; 318 pages; ISBN 0-7748-0820-9; \$85.00 (cloth).

The lack of available, quality child care has always interfered with women's right to achieve

equality in the workplace. The state has at various times manipulated available child care resources to serve their purpose, most notably during the years of the Second World War. Access to higher education, advances in domestic technology, improved wages, and the creation of jobs have all allowed women to play a greater role in paid employment since the 1950s. However, the tension between women's need for child care and their need to earn a living remains unaddressed. Most feminists, regardless of their ideological position, agree that the factors contributing to women's work inequality are not located only in the workplace but are also found in the domestic sphere. The home, and particularly women's role as caregiver, play a significant role in confining women to jobs with limited advancement opportunities, that are increasingly part time and low paid and in general underutilize women's skills as workers.

In her book Timpson traces the fortunes of child care policies through the Canadian federal governments of Prime Ministers Trudeau, Mulroney and Chretien. All three regimes paid lip service to what Trudeau had dubbed the just society. While they claimed to recognize women's right to equality in the workplace, neither the federal Liberals nor the Conservatives were willing to tackle the thorny issue that women face in the private sphere, specifically the question of who will care for the children. Timpson looks at their efforts to address women's inequality through two royal commissions. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women which began in 1967 and the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment of 1983 allowed Canadian women to discuss issues regarding workplace inequalities and to make recommendations to the state as to how such inequalities could be redressed. Canadian women did not shrink from the task of raising the issue of child care that was so much on their minds, both in the 1970s and during the 1980s when these commissions were active. In each case, however, the state refused to cross the boundary that divides the public from the private spheres even though both royal commissions had recommended that they do so. Timpson argues that while the recommendations of the commissions regarding child care policies went unrealized, royal commissions have proved to be a useful tool to empower women and to have their issues heard. She argues that royal commissions can act as a vehicle to