

## Book Reviews

***Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada.*** Joan Sangster. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002; vii + 213 pages; ISBN 1-896357-58-X; \$24.95 (paper).

In *Girl Trouble* Joan Sangster sets out to redress the scant attention that has been paid to gender in English Canadian studies of delinquency. To accomplish this end, she poses three key questions: 1) how was delinquency defined and how was that definition gendered?; 2) what were the prescribed legal and social cures for girls' wrongdoings and how successful were they?, and 3) how did girls and their families react to being designated "delinquent" and how did they experience the courts, probation, and training schools? (3). In finding her answers, Sangster is careful to avoid historiographic dichotomies. As she explains, setting up debates that "vaunt the good motives of reformers trying to save children and neo-Marxist analyses that blame a class or corporate conspiracy for changes in delinquency regimes is far too simplistic," (179). While those contrasting views make for rousing seminar discussions as students of social welfare debate the motives of key players, they ignore the experiences and the agency of others, namely the children and families who were caught up in the system.

Yet *Girl Trouble* is more than just an attempt to "add the girls" to the story. In fact, this work is largely influenced by "more recent theoretical trends, utilizing post-structuralist theory" (13). Sangster begins with the premise that "delinquency is a social construct, a form of labelling, rather than a firm, scientific, or morally absolute measurement of good or evil, right or wrong, moral or immoral" (13). And that, she admits, is nothing new. The book's real contribution comes as Sangster analyzes the "underlying rationales" behind the actions of those in authority, and exposes the ways in which their ideas were social constructs about, and influenced by, gender, class and/or race.

The complexity that Sangster brings to her treatment of this subject is, no doubt, informed by her own involvement with the Elizabeth Fry

Society. She acknowledges, for example, the difficult "contradictions of providing band-aid support for women in conflict with the law while trying not to lose sight of a more utopian desire to change the workings of the law entirely" (vii). If those contradictions exist now, we have no reason to doubt that they existed in the past as well. The author considers the case of the Ontario Training School for Girls in Galt (later renamed Grandview) between 1933 and 1976 (chapter 5) and that of the criminalization of First Nations girls (chapter 6), providing two fine examples of her analysis at work. In both chapters, she tackles the questions of how delinquency was defined ("boys broke the law, and girls violated gender and sexual conventions" [69]); the prescribed cures and relative "success" of training school incarceration; and the reactions of girls and their families to their experiences.

*Girl Trouble* deserves a wide readership. The first two chapters will be very useful in the classroom. They provide an accessible discussion about the theoretical trends concerning delinquency, and an overview to guide readers' understanding of the chronology and the concepts that have shaped policies on delinquency from the introduction of the *Juvenile Delinquency Act* in 1908 to serious criticisms of it in the 1960s. The general reader trying to make sense of alarmist headlines about girls and delinquency will find Joan Sangster's sensitive treatment of this subject both informative and thought provoking.

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***L'architecture au féminin: une profession à redéfinir.*** Annmarie Adams et Peta Tancred. Montréal: les éditions de remue-ménage, 2002; illustrations; 218 pages; ISBN 2-890910198-5; \$26.96 (paper).

Le titre définit bien ce livre. Le sujet principal est vraiment la profession (l'architecture) et les redéfinitions, les frontières mouvantes, les