

objectivity. This process created a professional/amateur divide, with men in the academy and women outside, as their sentimentality and lack of rigour made them unsuitable for the pursuit of new scientific historical studies.

Of the ten essays, six take the form of biography. The individual essays are divided into four themes. The first deals with "Community Building" and explores Agnes Maule Machar (1837-1927), Sarah Anne Curzon (1833-1898), and the Tweedsmuir series of community histories created by the Ontario Women's Institute in the twentieth century. The second theme explores "Transitions," examining historical tradition in Catholic religious women's communities, and in the lives of Constance Lindsay Skinner (1877-1939) and Isabel Skelton (1877-1956). The third section brings us into the world of the university. Here, essays deal individually with historians Esther Clark Wright (1895-1990) and Kathleen Wood-Legh (1901-1981), followed by a fascinating overview by Alison Prentice of women in history departments at Dalhousie, McGill, Queen's, Toronto, Saskatchewan and the University of British Columbia before 1950. The final essay (a section unto itself!) examines the beginning of women's history as a distinct area of study. It is especially interesting, as Deborah Gorham is not only a fine historian of its evolution but was herself one of the first to offer a women's history course in Canada.

Overall, the collection is fascinating reading, but important questions remain. The argument tracing the exclusion of women from professional history is persuasive but there is no recognition that non-academic forms of history, where women were most likely to be found, were probably more influential in shaping popular understandings of the past. This was particularly true of Canadian history which, as the authors note, was marginalized in the university. While secure academic men may have attempted to rid the Canadian narrative of such myths as Laura Secord, the unscientific forms of history remained powerful at the level of popular knowledge.

Further, it would have been interesting had the editors questioned directly whether women created a different kind of history from men. There are glimpses of this, for example, in the account of an Ontario Women's Institute branch which traced changing bridal fashions in its community history, as well as in the editors' suggestion that women were unable to reconcile their own experiences with the content of professional History. But I was struck in particular that there was no mention of genealogy or family history in this volume; writing family history and biography was surely one of the most common ways in which women acted as historians of their world.

The two books are welcome contributions to women's history although they will find very different audiences. The Strong-Boag and Fellman book will update undergraduate courses or those trying to gauge the current pulse of Canadian women's history. *Creating Historical Memory*, which deals with a much narrower subject, should also have a wide readership and I recommend it to anyone interested in understanding the culture of history.

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Changing Lives: Women in Northern Ontario. Margaret Kechnie and Marge Reitsma-Street, eds. Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1996; 368 pages; illustrated; ISBN 1550022393; \$24.99 (paper).

A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980. Joy Parr, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995; ISBN 080207695; \$21.95 (paper).

In recent years the contours of women's lives in the post-World War Two period have become of significant interest to Canadian scholars and social activists. The changes in Canadian society between the 1940s and the 1980s have been immense, and as the essays in the two anthologies reviewed here attest, the women of Ontario have

been active participants in the process. Both of these texts take as their central themes the diversity of women's experiences and the ways in which women influence, and are influenced by, shifts in the social, political and economic fabric of their society. Using a variety of approaches, from scholarly analyses to deeply personal narratives, and examining a wide range of topics - from appliance shopping to unionization, and from the struggles of First Nations women reclaiming their cultural traditions to the formation of university women's centres - these two books together provide a broad overview of life for Ontario women in the second half of this century. Moreover, both make a substantial contribution to the wider feminist discourse, for while they focus primarily on Ontario women, the insights they offer extend well beyond the range of geographical boundaries or provincial borders.

Geography has, however, had a definite impact on the day-to-day circumstances of women's lives, as the first anthology demonstrates well. In their introduction the editors tell us that *Changing Lives: Women in Northern Ontario* began with a symposium organized by the Institute of Northern Ontario Research and Development (INORD) at Laurentian University in 1995. It must have been an extraordinary conference. Troubled by the paucity of written material which specifically concentrated on women in Northern Ontario, INORD invited a remarkable mix of feminist artists, activists, and academics - women (and a handful of men) from a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and experiences - to present their research and reflections on various groups of northern women. The result is a broad and multi-faceted collection of writings aimed at promoting a better understanding of "how women cared for their families, earned money, and survived the pressures of life in the north; they also seek to understand how women, both young and old, influenced the development of the north" (11).

The contributors examine these questions from many different perspectives. Part One, "Understanding Diversity," begins with a poet's interpretation of northern women's experiences of life in the north, then shifts to a study of the

historical demography of northern women. The rest of this section includes discussions of the experiences of aboriginal women, immigrant women from European, African-Caribbean and Latin American backgrounds, and lesbian women, especially in their efforts to preserve culture and community, family relationships, and a sense of personal identity. Part Two, "The Worlds of Work," examines women's experiences of work in the north, both paid and unpaid, traditional and non-traditional, professional and "blue" or "pink" collar. Part Three, "Daily Stresses," looks at the challenges faced by northern women whose partners work in hazardous occupations (in this instance hard-rock mining), at women's struggles with poverty, isolation and abuse, at their health concerns and at the levels of health care available to them. The final section, "Sources for Change," considers the activist work women have engaged in to introduce positive changes in northern women's lives. This includes discussions of northern Women's Institutes, conferences, centres, cooperatives, and educational initiatives.

Though most of the studies in this collection consciously employ feminist research methods, or at least interpret their data within an implicitly feminist framework, many chapters in this volume are more descriptive than expressly theoretical, and several are somewhat lacking in the depth of their analysis. Nevertheless, in its interweaving of historical accounts with contemporary studies, qualitative with quantitative research, and the work of scholars with that of activists, *Changing Lives* introduces a new dimension to our understanding of women's experiences of diversity and social change.

Its central themes are the same, but *A Diversity of Women: Ontario - 1945-1980* approaches women's diversity and their experiences of social change very differently. Not intended, as the editor notes, to be a comprehensive history of Ontario women in the post-war era, the articles in this collection nevertheless attempt to mark "the social settings, identities, and organizations which most characteristically gave meaning to their lives as women" (15). The introduction provides a concise (and very useful) synopsis of the major

social and economic changes taking place in post-war Ontario, as well as the disjunctions between the dominant images of women and the realities of their disparate lives, and sets the context for the essays which follow. The overall purpose of the book, as the introduction explains, is "to understand how the beliefs about women were formed in these years, both what others expected of them and how women came to understand their own predicaments; how the distinctive circumstances in which they found themselves framed their experiences; and how they, in interpreting these experiences, made sense of their lives" (9). These questions guide the development of each of the eleven chapters, thereby providing a strong sense of continuity and cohesion to the volume as a whole.

The collection offers sophisticated, finely nuanced analyses of subjects ranging from the gender politics of shopping for major home appliances to the anatomy of a strike in a female-dominated factory, and from the practical difficulties and social tensions faced by women farmers in southwestern Ontario to the complex challenges which confronted foreign-born immigrant women, Franco-Ontarian women, and First Nations women, as well as working mothers, suburban housewives, teenaged girls and feminists active in the initial decades of the second wave. Taken together, these studies offer important insights into how, and why, women's differences of race, ethnicity, class and culture were obscured in the public discourse of the post-war era, and how women's conformity to the "common" values of consumerism and familialism came to be perceived as fundamental to Western democracy. Compelling explorations of social history, the articles in this collection also provide an important framework for considering the challenges that contemporary feminist scholars and activists face as they continue to work toward making gender equity a reality in Canadian society.

Together, these two books provide an excellent introduction to Ontario women's history in the years following the end of World War Two. They approach the issues of diversity and social change from very different perspectives, but in this

they can be considered to complement rather than challenge each other. Overall, they explore new and exciting areas of research, and should be of immense interest to feminist activists and to graduate students and researchers in many fields, particularly those in women's studies, labour studies, and Canadian women's history.

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Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940.

Mercedes Steedman. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1997; 333 pages; ISBN 0-19-541308-3; \$19.95 (paper).

Women garment workers have always figured prominently in Canadian labour history, for they represent one of the earliest industrial sectors with large numbers of women to be unionized, and these women often had a reputation for militancy in strike situations. Yet there was a contradiction at the heart of this picture of militancy: women garment workers remained trapped in less "skilled" jobs in the industry, were paid less than men, and made up a minority of the union leadership.

Mercedes Steedman's *Angels of the Workplace* explores this contradiction, examining labour relations in the Toronto and Montreal garment industry from the late nineteenth century to the eve of World War II. Her book is a detailed and well-researched study which weaves together the intricacies of class, gender and ethnicity that together shaped productive and social relations in the garment industry. Although her introduction pays brief homage to post-structuralist attempts to "deconstruct" the naturalness of gender categories, in fact the book's strength lies in its careful examination of both the material and social framework shaping garment making, and the attempts of workers and unions to secure what they defined as a fair livelihood for their work.