

politics of bank workers in Canada (Patricia Baker). These pieces are firmly located within a political economy tradition and include more ethnographic description and analysis than reflexivity or experimental writing.

In the last section entitled "experiments in ethnography", there are papers on the politics of feminist ethnography (Sally Cole), an experimental 'three voices' discussion on the gendering of masks (Rae Anderson), Laval graduate students' reflections on research (Clara Benazera, Elizabeth Houde, Marie-Hélène Bérard and Renée Ménard), a discussion of voice and text in feminist anthropology (Judith Abwunza) and a reading of the discourses surrounding the Montreal Massacre (I.P. 'Trish' Wilson).

The vibrancy of the collection comes from its rich mixture of theoretical perspectives. Canadian and international research, anglophone and francophone feminist anthropology, and the "intergenerational" representation provided by the inclusion of the work of a number of graduate students. Although the papers differ in their degree of sophistication, the shared themes of feminism, work, politics and representation provide overall coherence. Introductory and concluding essays by the editors moreover provide a framework for diverse feminist anthropologies to coexist in an extremely productive way.

The book is eminently suitable for courses on feminist anthropology (it includes an introductory essay for each section, a set of discussion questions, and a useful bibliography of feminist anthropology). Several of the chapters would be ideal for additional courses in women's studies, sociology and qualitative methods. The fact that this collection has already warranted a second printing reveals the need for such a courageous and pioneering contribution.

Jane Helleiner  
Brock University

---

## Recent Explorations in the History of Canadian Working Women Women Socialists

*The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918.* Janice Newton. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1995.; illustrations; viii+257 pages; ISBN 0-7735-1262-4.; \$17.95. *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960.* Joan Sangster. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1995.; illustrations, appendices, tables; xi+333 pages; ISBN 0-8020-0518-7;. *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979.* Pamela Sugiman. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1994.; illustrations; ix+294 pages; ISBN 0-8020-2895-0; \$19.95.

The sexual division of labour is well entrenched in the organization of industrial capitalist society. Much debate among historians and feminist scholars has centred on the origins and implications of the gender division of labour for women across class lines. Until recently women's historians focused their research on identifying and describing the ways in which work was divided between women and men. In so doing they contributed greatly to our understanding of sex segregation in the labour process, political movements and reproductive work. The expansion of research in the field of women's labour history in the United States and Canada, however, has laid the groundwork for historians to begin asking *why* the gender division of labour was so prevalent in certain industries at specific historical junctures. As we learn from Janice Newton, Pamela Sugiman, and Joan Sangster the division of labour is best understood as fluid. In that regard these authors address common themes. How have women made change in politics, in the labour movement, at work and at home despite the constraints they faced? How have they articulated their views of a more equitable society; and consequently, how did they help to shape the movements within which they were participants?

In *A Feminist Challenge* Newton stresses

that before 1920 women socialists drew strength from their maternal and domestic roles to push women's issues (or equality between the sexes) onto the socialist agenda. The women autoworkers in Sugiman's *Labour's Dilemma* used their feminine work culture to make gains in the workplace and within the Canadian Auto Workers' Union (CAW). Sangster draws similar conclusions in *Earning Respect*. The shift in Peterborough's female workforce from working daughters in the interwar period to working wives and mothers after WWII, was propelled in part by a change in the choices that women perceived to be open to them. Sangster considers these women's non-waged work, their family lives, and the "dominant cultural definitions of femininity" and finds that both cohorts of women accepted an ideal of domesticity despite major societal shifts. This acceptance, she argues, contributed to the tenacity of the sexual division of labour. Interestingly, Newton, Sugiman and Sangster all draw the connection between women's resistance and what has been viewed as their consent to oppression in historical contexts even though they represent three distinct academic disciplines--political science, sociology and history. Janice Newton's book is about the relationship between feminism and socialism in early twentieth-century Canada. Her study focuses on the roles of women in the three main socialist parties of the period, the Canadian Socialist League (CSL), the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDPC), which disbanded in 1920. Newton sets out to show that women's issues formed an integral part of the organizational development of the movement before the end of WWI.

In one of her first chapters, "Reckoning with the Gentler Sex: The Left's Reception of Women in Its Ranks," Newton discusses how women's marginal position within the movement's power structure changed in accordance with the platform of the dominant party. For example, the SPC deemed certain women's issues such as prohibition and suffrage reformist, while the CSL and the SDPC supported a broader vision of change. The mid section of the study is based primarily on evidence that Newton gleaned from the socialist press. Four

chapters provide an analysis of socialist women's views on the home, waged work, sexuality and suffrage. These women voiced their arguments for a socialist transformation in a way that "reflected the realities and experiences of their lives." They relied on their maternal and domestic roles as a basis for power. These women's approach, which emphasized a transformation of the domestic sphere, should not be seen as non-radical, Newton argues. In short, socialist women "turned maternal feminism to socialist ends (171)."

Canadian women's historians agree for the most part that by the 1920s women's issues were no longer integrated into the Canadian left's agenda. Earlier publications on women and Canadian socialism by scholars such as Linda Kealey suggest that the links between socialism and feminism were weakened as the family-wage ideology developed among the ranks of male wage earners, thus limiting the appeal of these organizations to women. Newton counters this theory by downplaying the impact of the family-wage ideology on socialist women. Most of the activists to whom Newton's study refers were neither wage earners nor working class. Therefore the failure of the socialist movement to advance feminism, according to Newton, "rested partly on its ultimate rejection of the significance of the domestic realm for the socialist agenda." The women featured in these pages were primarily homemakers, middle class and had other family members involved in the socialist movement. The second explanation she advances centres on the general decline of organized feminism in the post-suffrage era. In that regard the socialism of the women featured in her study often alienated them from other socially active Canadian women.

*A Feminist Challenge* offers new insight into this period of Canadian socialism through a careful scrutiny of the socialist press. Her analysis is strongest and most convincing in the mid sections of the book where we are introduced to the views of women who had not been previously written about. But what about the less vocal socialist women? The effectiveness of the study is arguably limited by the narrow range of primary sources she uses. The new perspective on the relationship between feminism and

socialism offered by Newton, however, contributes greatly to the long-standing debate on the relationship between gender and class in socialist feminism. As in the other studies reviewed here, Newton moves away from seeing women as victims of oppression in documenting the creative ways in which they drew on their own experiences to make change.

Pamela Sugiman's *Labour's Dilemma* explores the central paradox faced by women auto workers in Canada, from the inception of the CAW in the late 1930s to the late 1970s, at which time female auto workers successfully challenged women's subordinate position within the industry to gain seniority rights. The dilemma of labour, according to Sugiman, lies in the contradiction between the democratic principles of industrial unionism, the CAW's vision of social justice and the gender and racial/ethnic segregation within the union and industry. In demonstrating how this dilemma set the framework for a number of struggles over four decades, Sugiman develops her analysis within the changing historical context of the automobile industry and of the wider society. Her approach includes an assessment of changes in patterns of women's work and shifts in their identities as wage earners.

Sugiman is attentive to historical patterns in her analysis of workers' identities which sets her approach apart from prevailing sociological explanations that adopt a static approach. Her study is well documented as she relies a variety of primary sources and oral history. Rather than relying heavily on structural questions, Sugiman's theoretical framework considers the ways in which the workers' subjective experience of gender and class and as members of families shaped their reality. As we shall see, Joan Sangster, too, uses this approach to highlight the "continuities and changes in the lives of white and blue collar wage workers (3)."

One of the dominant themes in Sugiman's book is an analysis of how women's identity as workers shifted over time. In this regard, Sugiman moves beyond the workplace towards an explanation of when, how and why certain cohorts of women auto workers challenged sex segregation. For example, the substantial number of women entering auto

manufacturing during WWII make up a cohort in this study. These women were predominantly young and inexperienced. They were also glad to get wage work, they viewed work as temporary and almost all of them entered employment out of financial necessity. However, they lacked access to the power structures of the union as well as the confidence and experience to launch a sustained challenge to the segregation they encountered. Interestingly, Sugiman documents the way that these female auto workers drew on their common experiences as women at work to form a distinct feminine work culture. Therefore, instead of channeling their discontent with specific injustices at work through the union, they relied on "conventional femininity" or more covert ways of resisting. After the war however, many of these women, especially those who were married, were dismissed. This massive lay-off made an impact on the work identities of future cohorts, according to Sugiman.

It was not until the 1950 to 1963 period, a time of relative social and economic prosperity, that female auto workers "developed a stronger self-identification as wage earners and as unionists." Even so they did not sustain a direct challenge to sexual oppression and exploitation until the restructuring of the auto industry in the 1960s threatened the jobs of female auto workers. In response women auto workers launched one of the first attacks on sex discrimination in the industry. Sugiman argues that these women took action because wage work in the auto industry lay at the centre of their existence. These women drew on the traditions of the past to create a sense of sisterhood and solidarity among their female coworkers. Their resistance drew on elements of domestic life and conventional feminine culture, but in the end they had to conform their arguments to masculine union strategies. She argues that over time, therefore, "female auto workers moved from a woman-centred cohesiveness within a context of sexual inequality-- indeed a celebration of gender difference--to a demand for equal rights with men (211)."

Sugiman has produced an important addition to the history of women and work in Canada. She fruitfully incorporates an analysis of female work culture, which is placed in the broader context of

ideologies of femininity and lived experience, into a fairly narrow institutional study. One aspect of her study, however, could have developed more fully. Sugiman alludes to the connection between feminism and unionism more than once in her study. For example, she finds that when the women's movement flourished in the 1960s, female auto workers fed off the rhetoric to make important gains with regard to the seniority rule and equal pay for equal work. The reader does not, however, learn about the connection between the CAW members and organized feminism, nor do we find out how the women's movement made an impact on their struggles.

Joan Sangster's *Earning Respect* is about the factors that shaped women's work identities as well as the tenacity of the sexual division of labour. The study is set in Peterborough, Ontario, a town which Sangster describes as ethnically homogenous and industrially diversified. Most important, Peterborough had a labour market for blue- and white-collar women from as early as 1920 to 1960 when the study ends. The study is organized around the life cycle of working class women in this small town, but at the same time Sangster traces a shift in the demographics of the dominant group of women that filled the ranks of the female workforce. She describes this as a shift from working daughter in the pre WWII period, to working wife and mother after the Second World War.

Sangster's case study has far-reaching implications for the study of women's work. To understand the complex factors that shaped the lives of wage-earning women Joan Sangster favours revisiting the Gramscian notion of hegemony and ideology over fully embracing the "linguistic turn" of some feminist scholarship. She thus relies on a material feminist analysis to explain the factors that shaped women's working lives as well as the tenacity of the sexual division of labour over the course of massive change.

One of the most compelling chapters of Sangster's book stresses the importance of family life as an integral part of working-class culture. Women learned about the sexual division of labour at an early age which in turn influenced the gendering of the labour force. Through oral history Sangster develops

an analysis of the working-class girl to argue that we must understand how girls were socialized to internalize certain expectations about gender and work. "Women's earliest understanding of wage work, adopted and mediated through family, schooling and peer culture, helped to reproduce the sexual division of labour in the workforce (25)." We cannot understand the division of work by sex through structural relations alone. The workprocess, the ideology of sex difference, and the "assimilation and utilization of that ideology at a personal, subjective level by both men and women in the workplace" influenced the character of that gender division (51).

Together, the three studies reviewed here demonstrate that whether we are talking about socialist women's activism within a male dominated political culture, the CAW women's attempt to make gains at the workplace through their common bonds within a feminine work culture, or whether we are looking at the seemingly simple question of why women work to earn a wage (or decide to leave paid employment), we need to understand the world that these women inhabited. In short, the connection between resistance and women's consent to oppression, or the balance between structure and agency is a fruitful avenue of investigation for understanding how women made change historically, and how the sexual division of labour is reproduced in complex ways.

Ingrid Botting  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

---

***Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts in the 21st Century*** Zillah Eisenstein; Routledge, 29 West 35th St., New York, New York 10001, 1996. 223 pages; ISBN 0-415-91221-0.

Those of us who were influenced by Zillah Eisenstein's landmark theoretical situating of the possibilities of liberal feminism (*The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, 1981), as well as her more recent work, will pick up *Hatreds* with eager