present (and most recent past). The reader wonders if there is an unstated conclusion that little or nothing changed in the coeducational public schools from the 1920s to the late 1960s. While this may be true, it is not demonstrated; instead, it seems simply to be assumed in this volume. The labour market dislocations of World War II and the educational boom touched off in its aftermath seem to be one area that might have had consequences for gender issues in the public schools, even if they did not alter the coeducational configuration in those schools.

The only cross-national foray made in the book is in the conclusion when the authors allude to the spread of coeducation through many parts of the world in the post-World War II years. They discuss Japan and Britain specifically as nations that have moved in the direction of coeducation in the period. Though Canada is not mentioned, Canadian readers might use this book as a springboard to an examination of their own experience with coeducation. If that examination uncovers trends that differ significantly from those in the USA, authors who are as supple and undogmatic in describing their own nation's experience as Tyack and Hansot should have left their readers prepared to search for an explanation of those differences that casts light on the situation in both nations.

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Paul Axelrod. ***Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties.*** **Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. Pp. 269. $34.95.**

Building on his study of Dalhousie student life in the 1930s, which appeared in *Acadiensis* in 1985, Paul Axelrod has expanded his decadal snapshot of university culture, in this concise, readable account, to sample evidence from a representative selection of English-speaking campuses across Canada. The book also incorporates his essay on student politics published in 1989 in *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*. The focus on the 1930s is rather artificial since most developments of that decade require explanations which centre on the early twentieth century as a whole. Nonetheless, he is interested in gauging the impact which the first large-scale economic crisis imposed upon university life and fledgling careers, as well as assessing the student response to the prospects for a new social order for which the interwar years provide a unique laboratory. Axelrod chooses four subjects for scrutiny: the composition of the student body, the traditional and professional curricula, extracurricular activities, including student activism, and the career paths of 1930s graduates. The interpretation centres on students as products of the middle class (in a schema which postulates a three-class society), whose short-term prospects were interrupted by the depression but who benefited in the long term from the institutional em-

phasis on character-building and the emergent primacy of credentialism.

Except for some data analysis relating to the origins and destinies of students, and a self-justifying discussion of his definition of the middle class in an appendix, Axelrod's approach is basically descriptive. We learn that in the 1930s universities continued to enrol a very small percentage of Canadian high school graduates but even allowing for an overrepresentation of the well-to-do, a cross-section of the population could be found on most campuses. Where restrictions on enrolment were thought to be necessary, it was Jewish students, above all, who suffered from double-standard admissions policies. This overt and widespread, though by no means universal, discrimination helps to situate Canada firmly in the mainstream of 1930s anti-Semitism. Since quotas applied also to women in many professional programmes, sex discrimination joined racism as a prevalent feature of the decade. Women not only found themselves blocked in their academic ambitions, they also had to endure treatment as child-students on residential campuses and to be satisfied with far fewer resources than men for their sports and other activities.

Although Axelrod does not explore the potentially challenging relationship of professors and students, he does try to characterize the professoriate on the assumption that what went on in the classroom had some relevance to the university experience. He leaves the impression that professors despaired of the quality of their students and visited their contemporary anxieties on them, both of which they have been doing ever since. What he overlooks is that they also chaperoned the dances, led Bible classes, advised the student societies, acted as residence dons, and socialized with the students in their homes. According to his admittedly selective discussion of the curriculum, choice of the academic subjects open to students was confined to humanities, languages, social sciences, and professional training in medicine, law, engineering, and the like. Where the students studying the basic sciences during this decade could be found and what they were up to is not even acknowledged, let alone addressed. Nor is there any suggestion that research degrees at the graduate level were pursued during the thirties, a time when some students, including women, chose graduate work in the absence of suitable jobs.

Axelrod's main interest clearly lies with students' activities outside the classroom and here he discusses two topics, social life and political involvement. He finds a good deal more of the former than the latter, lots of "school spirit" but no commitment among Canada's privileged sons and daughters to changing the social order. In his description of the contours of campus life, he alludes all too briefly to gender implications. His political focus is on the national student organizations, mostly dating from the 1920s, and he concludes that, with the exception of the concern over the prospect of another war, the "campus culture of conformity" insulated most students from both the left-wing and right-wing politics of the thirties. In

these circumstances it is impossible to identify an active student movement.

On graduation, the university generation of the 1930s swelled the ranks of the middle class of professionals and businessmen either directly or indirectly through female reproductive labour. Since a significant proportion eventually ended up as members of central Canada's corporate elite, the contribution of university education to upward mobility and regional disparity must be acknowledged, though Axelrod concludes it was still less important than inherited family membership in the upper class.

As a starting point this study has some merit but the gaping holes in content and analysis seem to suggest that the author wearied of his subject long before he could bring it to fruition. Without a sustained argument or a very clear focus—sometimes it is the student, sometimes the professor, sometimes segments of society beyond the university gates—the book lacks a sense of purpose. The general level at which Axelrod operates precludes a discussion of individual experiences except obliquely, and suggests that studies centred on one university or several closely related ones, which provide scope for more detail and analysis, are still very much needed if we are to understand more fully educational trends, youth in crisis, and higher education's contribution to class formation.

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Lawrence A. Cremin. *Popular Education and Its Discontents*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Historical *writing* is bound by the historian's repertoire of story forms; historical *reading* is bound by the audience's repertoire of narrative resources and sophistication about the kinds of stories historians tell. Historical *writing* is an act done by an historian for some particular audience, some particular community of discourse; historical *reading*, in Hans Robert Jauss's evocative terms, is determined by that audience's "horizon of expectations" or "horizon of understanding." From this perspective, misreadings of histories occur when there is a lack of fit or a bad fit between the historian-writer's text and the "horizon of expectations" or "horizon of understanding" of his/her audience. Such lack of fit occurred between the late Lawrence Cremin's *American Education* and its audience, that is to say, its audience of historian-reviewers.

Cremin was a passionate defender of American public education. Reading Cremin's oeuvre, one is struck by his faith in and commitment to public education, formal and informal, and to the idea of progress and the inevitable triumph of democracy through public education and the public's education. Few historians of education today are so optimistic: Cremin's version of the history of American education is criticized as "celebratory," "too optimistic," and as a "story of consensus rather than conflict."