

time, he argues that the regulations which governed the teacher's use of corporal punishment were deliberately vague as to the degree of force acceptable. He cites numerous examples of local conflicts over excessive violence employed by teachers and analyses how local magistrates increasingly sought instruction from the Central Office as to what was allowed. The practical effect of this process was to allow Ryerson to treat cases of "excessive" violence as the failure of individual teachers while strengthening the right of teachers to use corporal punishment in principle. Good teachers did not need to resort to excessive violence and schooling could be pleasurable for the students if parents consented to act in concert with the school in the subordination of their offspring, and the students themselves consented to become "schoolchildren" who accepted the teacher's authority.

It is difficult in a review of this length to capture the subtlety of Curtis' argument. However, as I suggested in the introduction, *Building the Educational State* provides a provocative analysis of the development of state school systems which will interest all scholars of nineteenth-century schooling in western societies. My major criticism of Curtis is that he fails to provide an adequate account of patriarchal relations in the period. This is not to say that he is insensitive to the reconstruction of gender relations but to suggest that his theoretical framework privileges class conflicts in a way which masks the often contradictory tensions between

capitalist and patriarchal power relations. However, I have no doubt that Curtis' argument will help revivify the debate about the origins of mass schooling. Moreover, it seems certain that Canadian historians of education will be at the forefront of the debates as the recently published and long-awaited *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, by Prentice and Houston, traverses the same territory.

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**Veronica Strong-Boag.** *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939.* Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988.

Here is a book that will become indispensable to women's history courses. In *The New Day Recalled* Professor Strong-Boag employs a "modified" life course approach which enables her to overcome the chronological limits of the study: a form of periodization that has become a landmark of women's history. The author examines women's lives in six chapters covering the formative years to adulthood; waged employment (before, during, and after marriage or childrearing); courtship, marriage, and its alternatives; household management; childbirth, childrearing, and the influence of the "experts"; and finally, "life after forty." In turn her evidence embraces an impressive range of illustrations and discussions

which include: moppets, flappers, and the Dionne Quintuplets; voting patterns and political participation; popular culture and the social scientists; consumerism and advertising; recipes and refrigeration; magazine advice and stereotypes; birthings and abortions; women's clubs and women leaders. Indeed, here is mustered the whole armory of historical research. Little is claimed that is not verified, which makes the book a difficult one to review. How can anyone criticize a study so energetically written, so meticulously researched, and so exhaustively treated?

Two themes infuse Strong-Boag's mass of evidence. The first is that "for all its power to affect beliefs and circumstances, class stratification did not supersede sex stratification during the interwar period" (p. 3). The author effectively illustrates this in her several-pronged discussions of the differential-waged labour economy and an emergent career ghettoization on the basis of gender. The second theme is not so much an exegesis as a demonstration of the ideology of sexual exchange (the value placed on objects of desire) as a basis for patriarchal political authority. Her evidence points to the practices of courtship and marriage as a political language with magazines, experts, advertisements, and advice books the interpreters of the symbols of "ideal womanhood." Subsequently the organization of family and the management of households can be seen as a relationship between public and private experience—therefore a reflection of political power.

This book is not without its problems: the repetition in the text of the term "feminist" without clarification; the undeveloped arguments regarding "protective legislation" (which split ranks in the States and Britain but apparently did not in Canada?) and birth control advocacy (pp. 70, 88); a single paragraph on the vexing question "integration versus separation" (pp. 196-97); and even a hint (but never any more) of some empirical testing of the elusive feminist continuum which seems to be a basic assumption of women's history (p. 196).

But overall these are quibbles. In no major way do they detract from the scholarly merits of the book. Rather it is from quite another perspective that I wish to make some concluding remarks. Unwittingly *The New Day Recalled* raises some interesting methodological and theoretical questions. But let me detour momentarily in order to focus these questions.

American scholars are expressing concern about the number of women's and feminist histories which emphasize the private sphere—women's inner world, separate existence, personal experiences, fertility and sexuality—at the expense of the public sphere including their political participation and involvement in the work force; and Gerder Lerner, the "mother" of women's history, has taken her American sisters to task for an *overconcentration* on the inter-war period, particularly the 1920s. On either account Professor Strong-Boag

and her colleagues are not guilty. As this book makes obvious, Canadian women's history has neither overconcentrated on the 1920s or on the private sphere. Even Strong-Boag's use of a modified life-cycle approach is evidence of a judicious reluctance to base her work on strictly socio-biological presumptions (reproduction, family, the homosocial experience) unless these are acted out in the public theatre. In this, as well as her empirical leanings, she works well within the parameters of respectable mainstream (male-defined?) history. However, sometimes uncompromising empiricism leads to a plethora of detail and information which might confine women's history so that even when challenging concepts are used (i.e., the life course) this may not advance the concept itself. It would have been helpful to understand in what ways and for what reasons Strong-Boag chose a "modified" approach (p. 4).

This book demonstrates both the strengths and the limitations of the empiricist orientation. I do not know whether women historians have eschewed the private sphere consciously or through default—preferring or compelled to use that distinctly empirical bias which seems to be both the preoccupation and soundness of Canadian history. However, what is not in dispute is the paucity of materials for women historians to do otherwise in Canada. (I assume a paucity of materials that would constitute a recreation of the private sphere because had it been available Professor Strong-Boag would have unearthed and mined it.)

This lack of an appropriate data base can be contrasted with American historiography which boasts a seeming embarrassment of riches. Indeed, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's *Disorderly Conduct* (1985) notes that she began her studies of the separate sphere because she came across an abundance of private documents, diaries, and correspondence, in the most unexpected of contexts—the pioneering west. As surprising—even if for the opposite reason—Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women* (1984), could not uncover similar sources for her British women, which compelled her to use a prosopographical approach to overcome the problem.

Therefore we might ask, why was the Canadian experience so different from that of the States and closer to the British experience in this one respect? Why did Canadian women leave behind so few personal accounts? Or if they did, why were they valued so little as to be lost or destroyed? I found myself asking these questions throughout *A New Day Recalled*, struck as I was by an empirical thrust which juxtaposed different kinds of discrete data with their logical connections, sometimes more apparent than real. *Silence*, I would suggest, might speak more eloquently of "the lives of girls and women" than all the census data in the world. Perhaps an interpretation of such silence might better reconstruct such lives and force historians to create new categories of signification.

Strong-Boag's wide ranging eclecticism draws on all kinds of evidences—secondary, archival, oral, and quantitative data—from both

traditional sources and the popular culture. Rarely are the relationships she posits explored through the tools of anthropology, sociology, or psychology, although these have become indispensable means by which social historians reconstruct the pasts of those populations and groups who have left behind little documentation. Generally women's history has greedily adopted and adapted such tools. Therefore what is unfolding is a distinctive field of study with its own methodology, assumptions, and discourse. For example, the pages on "Mothering" (pp. 145-78) were open for a bold analysis of traditional sources. While Nancy Chodorow's provocative *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) was cited I was disappointed that it was not used to examine the dynamics of mother-daughter relationships. Surely these dynamics go to the heart of the landscape that describes "the lives of girls and women."

While none of this is objectionable in a pioneering monograph such as this, one fears that Strong-Boag's efforts will be merely replicated. This book is a springboard; and while it is necessary to build on sound scholarship, that scholarship, no matter how good, must be open to revision else it becomes common wisdom. The problem with empiricism is that it is unlikely to break new ground even as it uncovers more and new data. (Facts, no matter how many, do not speak for themselves.) What is needed is a greater emphasis on theoretical formulations in Canadian women's history. These will lead to new

interpretations of existing data, create new categories of significance, and allow for the transformation and radicalization of women's history so it will become a field distinct from androcentric methodological paradigms and confidently stand apart from its traditional "forefathers."

Despite these objections this book is an important one and will, hopefully, lead to further explorations in Canadian women's history.

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**John Roach.** *A History of Secondary Education in England, 1800-1870.* London and New York: Longman, 1986.

The author of this work has undertaken the formidable task of tracing the dialectic of tradition and change in English secondary schools during a vital stage of their development. He has conducted his inquiry at the grass-roots level by depicting the operation in practice of a wide variety of local schools, endowed and private, dispersed throughout the country. The primary evidence on the functioning of the highly decentralized system of secondary education lies in the massive series of governmental inquiries by royal commissions extending from the initial Report of the Charity Commissioners in 1819 to the Taunton Report of 1868. County record offices and schools have also yielded valuable first-hand material. On the broad basis of these primary sources the author has surveyed the