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Linda Cullum. *Narratives at Work: Women, Men, Unionization, and the Fashioning of Identities.*

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Wreckhousers seem infatuated with her while the others are repulsed by her parallels the love-it-or-hate-it reaction to Proulx's novel and subsequent film.

Though he does little to redeem these tourists and culture vultures, Barry is sure to place the blame on the shoulders of the smiling and servile locals. The last and most enduring image of the play is of "The Wild Child" — an abandoned Newfoundland soul — "dancing itself to death" (104) as it tries to keep up with the ever-increasing tempo of a traditional jig. The message within this image is obvious — as it is throughout the play — that Newfoundlanders are "tolerating the inevitable" (2), "sittin' here jokin' around and letting ourselves be murdered" (99). Celebrating their quirky and quaint past, Newfoundlanders are forsaking their future — fiddling and folking their way out of existence. With any luck this play will be performed again in the future — perhaps at a festival celebrating yet another milestone in our rugged and romantic history.

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Linda Cullum. *Narratives at Work: Women, Men, Unionization, and the Fashioning of Identities*. St. John's: ISER Books, 2003, ISBN 0-91966654X

THIS IS AN AMBITIOUS and skillful qualitative investigation into a relatively obscure part of Canadian history: the mid-century work and union experiences of urban, female workers in St. John's, Newfoundland. The contribution of the book is twofold. First, it is a rewriting of St. John's urban and industrial history that takes account of the experiences of women workers in the fish and blueberry packing industry. Second, it is a particularly well-written and detailed exemplar of effective triangulation of qualitative interviewing and data analysis with archival research. In fact, it is as a methodological treatise that I believe this work gains its greatest import. Cullum's thoughts on how to fruitfully merge qualitative data analysis with social theory, in this case, post-structuralist feminist theory, are richly detailed and insightful. In addition, Cullum's use of secondary sources as a way to cross-check and flesh out the stories told by her various informants greatly contributes to the overall plausibility and empirical richness of the story told in this work.

This empirical richness is particularly evident in the way that the author details the various structural backdrops to the work experiences of the people that narrate her account of St. John's industrial history. Of note here are the chapters outlining the social geography of St. John's, the historical role of the fish and blueberry packing industry and of the Job Brothers fish plant in particular, within both this social geography and within Newfoundland's larger economic relationship with external markets. Cullum lets her narrators describe in detail how work in the Job Brothers plant was organized, and links these descriptions with broader accounts of how

paid and unpaid work in Newfoundland was historically gendered, classed, and racialized. Thus we end up with a clear sense of how work in the fish and frozen-food packing industry reproduced gender and class inequality in work conditions and wages.

Cullum's central theoretical purpose is to explore how lived experiences of work generated gendered identities and subjectivities. To this end, the author has the narrators of her story, the women (and a few men) who worked for the Job Brothers plant in the late 1940s, tell the story themselves. It is through their recounting, and in their own words, that we learn about conditions of work, and about workplace camaraderie and social life, as well as life after work — courtships and marriages, raising children, and balancing family life and work. We also hear, again from the women themselves, what it was like to establish a union (the Ladies' Cold Storage Workers Union), and in particular, what unionization meant to them.

The feat of this work is that a relatively complicated and abstract idea — that our gendered subjectivities are produced/reproduced in our daily practices (for instance, in how we handle the knife when cutting the fish, or our speed on the line, etc.) — is expressed using the everyday language, words and memories of the narrators. If at times the author's voice intrudes too much on the stories told by her narrators, this tendency is compensated for by the general methodological rigour of the work. Significant here is the use of primary sources, including union records, company files, census data, and newspaper reports, that not only help to verify the accuracy of her informants' recollections, but also allow the author to disentangle the various ways in which gendered scripts and experiences have shaped the way that workers remember their own lives.

I have a few concerns. First, I was not entirely convinced that this work manages to comprehensively capture the way that identities are produced from historically specific places. The author tells us a lot about the production/reproduction of identities through texts, discourse, and informal work practice. I would have liked to see more effort spent on linking these primarily discursively situated practices to the structural level: the moral orders of race, class, and gender, and the socio-economic realities that constitute them.

My second concern has to with specifying the contribution of this work to the broader feminist scholarship on labour history. Certainly, the central empirical findings of this book — that work is gendered, that this gendering happens informally and formally, through and within practice as well as the textual organization of work, and that workers themselves, again informally and formally through unions, collude in this gendering of work — are both interesting, plausible, and significant. This is not a markedly different history of work, however, than that told by of a number of very well-known feminist labour historians, such as Mary Blewett, Ruth Milkman, Carol Smith Rosenberg, and Thomas Dublin, none of whom, incidentally, are cited in the bibliography. In fact, the links between this work and what are approaching 'standard' writings of women's labour history are generally not

explored adequately, and this does constitute a weakness. The most important empirical contribution of this work is not in improving on our understanding of *what* gender means to work, but in helping us see *how* gender comes to mean what it does to the organization of work. A greater accounting of where and how this work intersects with and complements current feminist scholarship on women, work, and labour history, would thus have greatly strengthened the book.

Nonetheless, this work is a highly enjoyable read and an exceptionally well-executed qualitative investigation into an important and interesting subject. It should be placed on reading lists for upper-level and graduate courses on the sociology of work, as well as for courses on gender and work. In addition, students of qualitative methods would greatly benefit from reading about Cullum's experience in merging qualitative interview data with archival and historical research.

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Wayne Bartlett. *Louder Than the Sea*. Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant Books, 2001, ISBN 1-896951-28-7

NOT SINCE the Stone family in Percy Janes's *House of Hate* has there been a crowd like this. Wayne Bartlett has aptly titled his story of the Bellman family *Louder Than the Sea*, for the only thing louder than the ocean, literally outside their door, is the sound of their petty but volatile arguments. Bartlett captures (perhaps a little too well) every aspect of the lives of this family, resettled on Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula. A way of life is preserved in this text — but so too is a claustrophobic madness, an anxiety and a tension that grows in an isolated community where everyone lives in close proximity to everyone else.

Violence is never too far away in this text — punches are thrown freely, and hands readily wrap around offending throats. Early in the book, the youngest son, Martin, assaults his grandmother as the family looks on:

> The old woman flicked her teeth back in her mouth. Coffee stained her apron. The boy grabbed her by the throat. Her glasses fell down her nose and she let out a loud cry of anguish. Her teeth slipped and blocked her mouth as she tried to scream again.... [S]he began to turn pale. Her eyes rolled back in their sockets and thick, warm saliva dripped off her chin onto Martin's hand. (54-5)

Martin's mother and father sit idly by, hurling abuse at Martin as he throttles his grandmother, "affectionately" called "Aunt Kizzie," although no one ever shows her affection. Without the buffer of 120s and the other card games that enabled embittered and embattled family members to inflict sly psychological wounds on each