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Miguellez, Alain. *A Theatre Near You: 150 Years of Going to the Show in Ottawa-Gatineau*. Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2004. Pp. 370. Illustrations, maps, notes, and bibliography. \$45.00 hardback.

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one could argue that this book shows how even the concept of the “local” came to be commodified, homogenized, and turned into a sales feature by stores large and small all across America.

David Monod
Wilfrid Laurier University

Miguelez, Alain. *A Theatre Near You: 150 Years of Going to the Show in Ottawa-Gatineau*. Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2004. Pp. 370. Illustrations, maps, notes, and bibliography. \$45.00 hardback.

In Giuseppe Tornatore's 1989 masterpiece *Cinema Paradiso* a young boy is introduced to the wonderful world of cinema through his friendship with the projectionist in his village's only cinema. It is a place where children grow up, lovers embrace, and friends gather, a place to experience life and a place to dream. The old movie theatre becomes a character itself, and it is ironic that many of us who saw the film did so in a modern multi-screen cinema, which undoubtedly intensified our sense of nostalgia and loss. Readers will leave Alain Miguelez's *A Theatre Near You* with similar feelings.

Miguelez sets out to recapture the history of Ottawa-Gatineau's many cinemas, and he offers an interesting account of each, arranged chronologically from the earliest stage and vaudeville theatres, nickelodeons, and the first true cinemas and picture palaces, through the new talking-picture theatres of the 1930s and 1940s, the cinemas that graced shopping malls and office complexes between the 1960s and 1990s, to the end of the century turn to the megaplex. The reader is left with no doubt where the author's heart lies. Early theatres such as the Imperial—known at the time as Canada's most beautiful—are described in loving detail, and although each new megaplex is treated judiciously, Miguelez is certain that their branded architecture and big-box location fail to satisfy. His preferences are revealed in a telling caption to a photograph of the Phoenix on Bank Street, once the famous Rialto known popularly as the Rat Hole: “The Phoenix did not fit into the multi-screen plans of its owner, Cineplex-Odeon. But just to make sure it would not fit into anyone else's plans, the wreckers were called in. Seventy-seven years of movies were crushed to the ground in 1991” (141).

The Imperial at least survived. It began its days at the start of the First World War. Its magnificent facade boasted two lion's heads, arches, pilasters, lead-glass windows, and walnut doors (made by the same firm that made the doors of the Château Laurier). The sumptuous interior contained friezes and paneling set off by bas-reliefs, not to mention the walnut and leather seats and its famous organ built at the princely cost of \$20,000. The Imperial thrived under various owners until 1955, when it closed its doors as a cinema. It later served simultaneously as a furniture store, television warehouse, and smaller theatre, and as a nightclub and burlesque house until it finally morphed into Barrymores, still one of Ottawa's principal live music venues.

Only two neighbourhood cinemas survive in Ottawa to this day, the Bytowne and the Mayfair, and the author offers poignant accounts of the more recent closings of the Elgin and Somerset theatres.

Miguelez traces each history meticulously through archival sources, newspaper reports, and anecdotal comments from individuals. He employs an impressive range of photographs, all of which are produced beautifully here—Penumbra Press is to be very much congratulated on the very high quality of this book. The photographs provide ample demonstration of the range of styles and designs adopted for the theatres, from the neo-classical to the Spanish villa-mission, and of the many distinctive interiors enjoyed by patrons. Each is accompanied by carefully written captions sometimes offering astute observations, as when the author notes that the box office area of a new megaplex cinema resembles an airline check-in counter. Other illustrations provide glimpses into the social history of the cinema, from advertisements and posters to promotional devices such as a late 1940s photograph of ushers dressed up as characters from *L'il Abner* or a photograph of the dishes moviegoers could collect by visiting the Glebe's Avalon Theatre in the 1930s and 1940s. The author draws on local knowledge to offer glimpses into popular culture, such as the antics of children who caused chaos in Theatre Française by shouting “des rats” as they rolled marbles down the aisles or the “iconic” role played by the Bytowne Cinema's program for fans of “alternative” cinema. Some broader social issues are referenced, such as the way in which the location of the Rialto in the less salubrious part of Bank Street made it particularly attractive for truant school children, the importance of Theatre Française in servicing the francophone community on both sides of the Ottawa River, and the clash between community and corporate interests in the campaign to save the Elgin. What emerges, then, is not simply an impressively detailed account of each of the capital region's theatres, past and present, but a social history that goes some way to realizing the author's aim of offering a picture of the nation's capital beyond Parliament Hill.

The book is not without its flaws, of course. Drive-in theatres are surprisingly absent, and the maps are a little ungenerous in scale. More importantly, the book ends rather abruptly with a discussion of American Multi-Cinema's latest megaplex in Kanata. A final chapter pulling together some of the social and spatial issues found in many of the particular discussions and located these changes within the broader literature on landscape, space, and urban environments would have made this book more valuable. There are some tantalizing issues raised in the introduction that deserve more focused and extended discussion, particularly the author's suggestion that there were four distinct phases of theatre closings in response to the popularity of television, his argument that the growth of the suburbs has played a major role in reshaping the cultural landscape and his observation that the two largest theatre chains have seen fit to develop megaplexes in the downtown cores of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, but not in Ottawa. Nevertheless this

labour of love is a very welcome addition to Canadian social and local history. One can only hope that it will inspire readers to support any neighbourhood theatres that do survive or even, like Matt and Jean in *The Smallest Show on Earth*, to rescue a derelict theatre from destruction and restore it to its former glory. As Miguelez insists, our communities will be better for it.

David Dean
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Fingard, Judith, and Janet Guildford, eds. *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp. xii, 318. \$35.00 paper.

The last time you sat at your desk trying to puzzle through what exactly happened in Canada during the 1950s and 1960s, you might not have thought that the key lay with the history of Nova Scotia's St. John Ambulance Home Nursing Program. You also might not have considered Halifax's Children's Aid Society, maternity homes, or black domestic servants from Preston. But you should have.

The contributors to *Mothers of the Municipality* offer important insights into the way social services and women's lives were transformed in the few decades after the Second World War. That these insights are focused on one city that is rarely at the centre of historical discussion in Canada is an added bonus from which future historians of the city will benefit greatly. Contributors include the two editors (two essays each), Shirley Tillotson, Suzanne Morton (two essays), Jeanne Fay, Wanda Thomas Bernard, Frances Gregor, and Frances Early. The collection arose out of a Strategic Grant from SSHRC, and there is a strong emphasis on the community, local activism, and specific individuals who played a prominent role in women's social work and activism in Halifax. In other words, although I cannot imagine that the contributors would agree with much else in the Donald Creighton oeuvre, their essays emphasize the primary role of "character and circumstance."

In introducing the collection, the editors note four major themes that unite the papers: the continuities of women's activism from the 1940s to the 1970s; the impact of the expanding role of the state on women's lives; the particular effects of secularization on women and women's groups; and the role of the Cold War and Halifax's military industry in both spurring on and limiting women's activism. The essays explore a random but well-rounded group of social welfare groups, women's groups, and social programs that help to widen our knowledge of women's lives and women's activism for a period in which these topics have received little study. Although the concept of maternalism—and mothers in particular—is important here, the contributors also move outside the home and explore the wider horizons of women's history in these years. Several essays take us through women's groups of the postwar years, noting the connections between the decades of the 1950s and 1960s and

also pointing out the changes. Here Fingard's comment on the transformation of women from citizen-apprentices to citizen-activists nicely captures a significant change. Other essays explore social welfare policy and organizations, pointing out the important changes that took place in the 1950s, and the continuing force of moral regulation, especially in policies towards single women. And Fingard and Thomas Bernard's essay on black women workers adds a different dimension, focused as it is on individual women's daily lives and not on organizational dynamics.

It is unfortunate that the editors only briefly note the book's four themes. The themes are treated in just that way, noted, and then it is up to the reader to follow them through the essays and come to his or her own conclusions. Democratic maybe, but satisfying it is not. Reading edited collections is often a frustrating process if you expect something out of the book as a whole. Rare is the collection like Joanne Meyerowitz's *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960*, which collectively changes the way we think of a historical period. This is usually the work of monographs and the single scholar. Yet it need not always be the case. With both a little more effort and a lot more ambition, a number of collections—including this one—could offer more than just a number of very good essays: they could also offer a provocative hypothesis that challenges conventional historiography.

In my reading of the essays there are two divergent yet overlapping narratives at work (no doubt there are more, but these two are significant and worth following through). On the one hand there is a narrative that, in some though not all of its features, we are familiar with. This is an account of the expanding welfare state, the provision of more and more services, and the opening up of services to new categories of individuals previously excluded, such as single women. Here the switch is from moral and individual-focused social services to those focused much more on the economic and social environmental and that talk about their clients through the prism of citizenship and community rights. The transformation was not smooth, and the conflicts it generated created new kinds of organizations, and indeed more radical organizations in the 1960s and 1970s. The second narrative thread in the collection is not about expansion but rather about restriction and decline. Essays here explore the consequences of a greater reliance on government funding and programs, the decline of voluntarism and the rise of professionalism, the effect of government cutbacks, and the continuance of forms of moral regulation in new guises. The connections and especially tensions between these two historical forces (or two aspects of the same historical force?) are exciting and important and yet, for the most part, go unexamined in this book.

I was surprised, for example, not to see a more direct reference to Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau's *Full-Orbed Christianity*, a book that has spurred on one of the most vibrant debates in Canadian history about gender, secularization, and professionalization in the welfare state. Christie's *Engendering the State* is cited in a footnote, but the important issue it