

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

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Volume 34, Number 2, Spring 2006

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016023ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016023ar>

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Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

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Cite this review

Dummitt, C. (2006). Review of [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]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 34(2), 67–68. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016023ar>

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.

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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

addresses is not meaningfully explored. These books take us up to the end of the Second World War. But what happened afterwards? How has the welfare state evolved? What kinds of activities were displaced and why? When exactly did the secularization of social services occur? What were the effects on women? There was enough evidence in these essays, many of which are excellent, to daringly engage with these debates. A conclusion, if not a bolder introduction, would have helped.

Although not as ambitious as it might, and arguably should, have been, this collection will nonetheless be a useful resource for historians of urban Canada, gender, the welfare state, and the postwar years.

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**Baskerville, Peter A. *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. vi, 296. Maps, illustrations. \$46.95 paper.**

Finding a good textbook that adequately covers both the pre- and post-Confederation periods has long been a disappointing task for those teaching a survey course on the history of Ontario. *Sites of Power* is well suited to meet this need, as it skilfully incorporates a range of available scholarship on the history of the province into a coherent synthesis accessible to undergraduates. Over ten chapters, Baskerville manages to examine a wide sweep of social, economic, and political history, starting with pre-contact relations among Ontario's First Nations after 9000 BC, and ending with the premiership of Mike Harris and the Walkerton tragedy of 2000. Although the book often hurries through time—the final chapter, “Modern Ontario,” discusses the period from the 1940s to the present in less than forty pages—from a teaching perspective, *Sites of Power* is clearly organized and ideally structured to serve as a text for a one-semester introductory course.

Baskerville has written a historical overview of the region known as Ontario, yet he warns us in his introduction that this region is essentially a fluid construction of identities, “a moving target” rather than a fixed geographical reality, and one in which the central determinant of power shaped the varied experiences of its peoples. Describing the easily romanticized pioneering era in Upper Canada, for example, Baskerville is careful to point out that our understanding of progress must be tempered by the recognition that the colony's development affected its inhabitants in profoundly different ways; that the physical process of settlement meant the displacement of Native people and the despoilment of the environment. “To a large extent,” he writes, “birthplace, ethnicity, gender, colour, wealth, and class determined individual expectations, behaviours, and rewards” (53). Similarly, Baskerville reminds us that the physical dangers of urban life, such as infectious diseases, fire, or impure water, were far greater for the poor than for the well-off residents of Ontario's growing cities. In *Sites of Power*, any nostalgia for a

simpler past is challenged by Baskerville's portrayal of a harsh, inequitable society, deeply divided by race, class, and gender.

Central to this line of argument is the significance that Baskerville gives to the role of Upper Canada's regionally focused business elite. Even though the great majority of the colony's people continued to live in rural areas throughout the nineteenth century, those who aspired to power quickly gravitated to emerging urban centres like Hamilton, Toronto, and Kingston, bestowing a degree of political and economic importance on the new cities that was entirely out of proportion to their size. Baskerville writes, “While most Upper Canadians farmed, their political leaders were more representative of an urban-centred, business-minded, capitalist society” (103). It was the members of the business elite at the regional level—the investors, entrepreneurs, and bankers—who increasingly dominated the Legislative Assembly, who lobbied for a stable political structure, and who benefited most from the granting of responsible government. The new political leaders all had vested interests in the commercial development of the colony, and the political alliances of the 1850s resulted from the recognition of business-oriented, urban politicians that their economic concerns should outweigh their religious or cultural differences. These same men, Baskerville argues, became the moving force behind Confederation and permanently shaped the political culture of the powerful new province.

*Sites of Power* is a revised version of Baskerville's earlier publication, *Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power*, published in 2002 as part of Oxford University Press's illustrated history of Canada series, and by including a variety of maps and arresting images, the new book keeps some of the visual strength of the original. While the content of the two versions remains fundamentally the same, *Sites of Power* has been designed for use in the classroom. It possesses the physical apparatus of an undergraduate textbook, integrating sidebars, subheadings within chapters, and helpful appendices with historical information on Ontario's population, governments, and economy. The sidebars, in particular, effectively enhance the text and provide opportunities for class discussion by highlighting specific historiographical issues, primary documents, or recent research. Baskerville's *Sites of Power* offers students a thought-provoking interpretation of the history of Ontario, prompting readers to explore the complex and often artificial representations of the province's regional identity, and to assess the disparate impact of economic growth both on those it empowered and those it marginalized.

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**Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004.**

When I began graduate school in 1990, black power in American historical scholarship was a chimera: largely dismissed as a chaotically anarchic, pathologically violent, and/or superficial