

has to say serves to complicate further any residual, crude notions of a “world system” in which diffusion of capital, entrepreneurship, technology and the like followed a simple route from “core” to “periphery”. Likewise, it is a major stepping-stone toward a rethinking of the concept of “periphery” *per se*.

For the reader who is relatively unfamiliar with Cuba and its sugar industry, it should be pointed out that Curry-Machado’s presentation is exemplary, and that its opening “scene-setting” chapter is model of its kind. In all, it is a handsomely produced volume, richly documented from its author’s lengthy researches in Cuba, Spain, and the UK. A pity, though, that the publishers could not have brought themselves to include illustrations of mills and people that would have further enlivened its pages – and provided important visual cues to what was going on.

G. Roger Knight

SANGSTER, JOAN. *Transforming Labour. Women and Work in Post-war Canada*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto [etc.] 2010. x, 414 pp. Ill. £55.00; \$85.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859012000302

Joan Sangster’s book makes an important contribution to a body of research about a period about which not much is written. Assembling an impressively large amount of material, she looks at women’s work in Canada in the post-World-War-II period, a period when supposedly workers did well, and women for the most part returned to being housewives after their engagement in the war effort, where many workers in unionized jobs earned enough money to support a division of labour with a male breadwinner. But Sangster points out that women’s involvement in the labour force actually steadily increased during this period, although women workers did not necessarily benefit from the advances that many male workers made. In order to illustrate her argument, Sangster chooses examples in sectors where the Fordist accord helped or didn’t help improve women’s situation. The Fordist accord refers to the tacit deal where workers obtained union recognition and some legal protection in exchange for a system that provided stability to employers but also dampened the militancy of the 1930s. She frames these issues within a climate of rabid anti-communism that presented challenges to the status quo in any form as smacking of treasonous subversion.

Sangster argues a number of positions throughout the book. The first is to disabuse people of the notion that feminism arrived neatly in “waves”. Women of Sangster’s generation (and mine – although I’m more a product of the 1950s) have a tendency to take credit for inventing women’s activism in the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s in what is commonly characterized as second-wave feminism. Much of Sangster’s other work describes earlier forms of women’s activism in Canada, particularly on the left. Militant women were present in the 1920s, the 1930s, and are to be found in the supposedly quiescent period of the 1950s.

Sangster acknowledges the power of a dominant postwar ideology locating women’s place in the home. This thinking reflected and is influenced by the work of Talcott Parsons, a sociologist whose theories, called structural functionalism, dominated the field of sociology. He described a division of responsibilities where women were viewed as the expressive ones, while the men were in charge of “instrumental actions”, adding up to the

perfect US society that never needed to change. The conservatism of this ideology reminded me of an article published in *The Nation* in 1989, documenting Parsons's 1948 attempt to facilitate the smuggling of Nazi collaborators into the US, one more suggestion of a link between political conservatism and limitations for women. This construction of the naturalness of these gender roles was in contrast to how so many women actually lived.

Finally, Sangster explains that while intersectionality is a useful tool, ontologically equating gender, class, and race conceptually is flawed indeed. Using postmodern insights on the need to use "lived experience" critically, one must, as she puts it, "constantly engage in a conversation between human agency and subjectivity with feminist historical materialism" (p. 12). My crude paraphrase might be to remind us of the power of class that is gendered and raced in its construction. The uses of postmodernism as exemplified in Donna Haraway's article, "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in 'Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'", *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988), pp. 575–599, cautions us not to reject the goal of objectivity, but to recognize the limitations of our embodied vision. In Sangster's words, "experience need not [...] become idealized and reified as an incontrovertible truth; it can be interpreted in feminist and materialist veins, as a dialectical process that is both live and constructed" (p. 267).

Transformed Labour begins with an overview of representations of women's work in the media and the contrast between union-sponsored beauty contests, debates focusing on whether women's waged labour is harming their families, and the growing participation of women in the labour force in this period. Despite the idealization of the dominance of a nuclear, hetero-normative, male-breadwinner family, more married women remained in paid work in a highly sex-segregated labour market. But not everyone had access to decent wages and unions. The "Dionne girls" were Polish Catholic immigrant girls imported from a displaced persons' camp to work in a Quebec textile factory owned by Dionne. Sangster explores their situation in some detail to illustrate how Canada's immigration policies intersected with the limitations of the "Fordist" accord. Were they "rescued" from the evils of communism as the supporters of Dionne claimed, or victims snatched from their families to work in slave-like conditions, housed in a Catholic convent, with their documents held by Dionne, the factory owner, as charged by the Polish? Whatever one chooses to believe, these young women were very limited in their ability to participate in the unionization drive in their textile plant and thus fell outside the benefits of the "Fordist" accord.

An important contribution of this book, and indeed of much of Sangster's previous research, is to look at the gender militancy that tended to be supported by left politics. She delves into the effect on women of the Cold War sweeping Canada and the United States in the post-World-War-II period. The official "kick-off" to the Cold War in Canada was in 1945 with Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet cipher clerk working in the Ottawa embassy who defected with sensational stories of Canadian spy rings. (The dates for the alleged spying were actually during World War II, when Canada and the USSR were war allies.) One of the effects of the Cold War in Canada was to unleash a powerful weapon to stifle dissent for many years afterwards. Sangster comments that it is now generally understood among labour historians that the anti-communist crusade sacrificed "truth and justice" with negative effects for the entire labour movement. Women's interests in particular suffered.

In a discussion of one arena for the purges that occurred in this period, Sangster examines the left-wing United Electrical Workers' (UE) unions's efforts on behalf of its women workers as opposed to the rival union, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE). Unlike other unions, the UE explicitly supported women's rights to waged work, whether married or single. The "claim" to women's equality, although not fully realized by the UE,

was unusual as was its support of female union militancy, separate organizing through women's conference, and equity – a far cry from the positions taken by the IUE. The mainstream union movement vigorously sought to marginalize pro-communist militants who seemed impossible to organize. In the process of saving Canadians from treason and subversion, unions cleansing themselves of “Reds” marginalized all equity issues – race as well as gender. Sangster comments that though these ostracized and purged unions' approach to the “women question” may have been limited – “they at least thought there was one” (p. 105). One response was to organize Canadian unions that were not tied to the head offices in the United States. The CTCU, the Canadian Textile and Chemical Workers' Union, disparaged as a “communist front”, was in the forefront of supporting women's rights as well as rank-and-file democratic unionism not known to the Internationals.

Sangster turns to a rare success story in organizing retail workers; those who were predominantly store-based did manage to unionize in 1952, a sign of changes in the political and social climate of postwar Quebec. The detailed description of how management portrayed its department store and the particular difficulties involved in service work provide a nuanced description of this growing sector. Depression, fatigue, exhaustion, and bad knees were common, as well as the stress of dealing with customers with smiling enthusiasm. Despite having what was originally a paternalistic union, the strike gave women the right to have rights – through the Rand formula securing union participation, a grievance procedure, and job security. Women used the grievance procedure to push for notions of fair play, even when the grievances fell outside collective bargaining contract language.

A chapter is devoted to aboriginal women on the prairies. The changes in the economy deprived them of traditional rights while not providing them access to new ones. The Indian Affairs Department's response to the problems faced by aboriginal women was noticeable for its paternalism and insensitivity. The integration of native economies into the growing wage system disadvantaged native women in particular. Their difficulties were dressed up and dismissed as cultural difference, but actually provided a racial argument. It took until sometime in the 1960s until criticism of paternalism in the Indian Act and the policies of cultural assimilation were articulated.

Finally, Sangster analyses the famous 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Although there were many progressive proposals, essentially it was limited by those who sat on the commission – white middle-class women. They operated within a liberal framework emphasizing equality of opportunity rather than equality. Organized labour was not part of the committee, an omission that underlined its flaws.

To conclude, this is a book well worth reading. The richness of the detail and its theoretical sophistication made it tough to provide a fair sense of the scope of what it covers in a short review. Highly recommended!

Ester Reiter

SUBRAMANIAN, DILIP. *Telecommunications Industry in India. State, Business and Labour in a Global Economy*. Social Science, New Delhi 2011. xiii, 685 pp. Rs 895.00; £50.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859012000314

The public sector in India – which includes large corporations, serving especially the infrastructure sector, owned and managed by the state – has been one of the distinctive