

l'invisibilité des historiennes et la dévalorisation, par la communauté scientifique, du roman historique et de la biographie, deux styles privilégiés par ces dernières dans le passé. Enfin, Helga Grubitzch procède à une analyse minutieuse de l'étude de Jules Michelet sur *Les femmes de la Révolution* afin de mettre au jour l'androcentrisme présent dans des ouvrages que des historiens tel Michelet ont consacrés principalement à l'histoire des femmes.

Les autres contributions couvrent des thèmes importants, dont la sorcellerie, la sexualité, la situation des femmes dans les domaines de l'économie, de la science et de l'éducation, le féminisme et le pacifisme et les représentations des femmes dans les œuvres littéraires. Soucieuses de dépasser la problématique de l'oppression, plusieurs auteures s'attachent à démontrer les occasions offertes aux femmes au sein d'institutions patriarcales ainsi que le pouvoir qu'elles ont pu y exercer. D'autres collaboratrices nous éclairent sur les significations diverses données aux concepts de genre et de féminité selon les époques, les cultures et les classes sociales. Par ailleurs, l'étude de Païvi Setälä sur les femmes d'affaires de la Rome impériale et les rapports qu'établit le texte d'Anna Clark entre la pratique du commérage et la réputation des Londoniennes des années 1770-1825 montrent comment il est possible de repérer la présence et la voix des femmes dans des sources aussi inusitées que des timbres en brique et des dépositions recueillies lors de causes de diffamation.

Comme plusieurs autres publications réunissant des actes de colloque ou de congrès, *Current Issues in Women's History* contient des textes de force inégale et on n'y décèle pas de fil conducteur facilement identifiable. De plus, il existe un décalage de trois ans entre la tenue du Congrès d'Amsterdam et la parution de l'ouvrage, fait important à signaler lorsqu'on considère la rapidité avec laquelle évolue le domaine de l'histoire des femmes. Toutefois, la diversité des sujets qui sont abordés permet aux lectrices et lecteurs de se familiariser avec des problématiques, des méthodes et des pistes de recherche stimulantes. Sans être représentatif de l'ensemble de la recherche récente en histoire des femmes, l'ouvrage est, à ce titre, révélateur de la multitude et de la richesse des questionnements dans ce domaine, que ce soit sur le plan épistémologique, théorique ou méthodologique.

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Steve Babson — *Building the Union. Skilled Workers and Anglo-Gaelic Immigrants in the Rise of the UAW*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 298.

Historians of American labor in the 1930s have focused increasing attention on the dynamics of workers' militancy. Instead of finding unanimous participation and desire for action, labor historians have found that small numbers of activist workers often prompted organizational and political activities. Ronald W. Schatz's *The Electrical Workers* (1983) and Bruce Nelson's *Workers on the Waterfront* (1988) are prominent examples of this emphasis. Steve Babson's *Building the Union* is an important addition to this literature. The book vividly traces the United Auto Workers' (UAW) activist core to skilled tool and die workers, largely of Anglo-Gaelic origin.

In doing so, Babson provides readers with a history rich in political, ethnic, social, and comparative analysis.

*Building the Union* describes how an activist minority emerged from one of the ironies of scientific management in the auto industry: managers replaced their craft workers with smaller numbers of skilled workers who made the specialized tools and fixtures needed to mass produce cars. In the 1920s, these tool and die workers were the “best-paid worker[s] in the world’s richest industry” (52). Largely because the auto industry, with the exception of Ford, did not develop its own system for training tool and die workers, employers looked to Europe. Thus, the 1920s also saw the rapid influx of foreign-born workers into the skilled ranks of auto workers.

Most of these foreign-born came from England, Scotland, and Ireland. In a chapter entitled “Labor Routes,” Babson skilfully encapsulates the world of these workers, their reasons for immigrating to the United States, and their cultural experiences in Detroit. This is social history at its best. Babson has creatively gleaned information from immigration records, oral histories, and city directories to provide a detailed depiction of the “Anglo-Gaelic presence in Detroit” (94). While providing crucial support for his argument, Babson’s chapter on the origins and culture of the Anglo-Gaelic skilled workers also demonstrates the importance of “old” (i.e. northern and western European) immigrant streams to America in the 1920s. Babson’s findings in this respect may challenge scholars to modify their generalizations about American immigration history.

With the onset of the Great Depression, these skilled and well-paid workers were hit hardest by reductions in wages. Although significant in itself, this fact does not fully explain why the Anglo-Gaelic, tool and die workers took the lead in unionizing the auto industry in the 1930s. Babson explains this connection by exploring the British origins of their political outlooks. In particular, he focuses on the life of Bill McKie, a Scottish radical who assumed a leading role in Britain’s Communist party before leaving for America. McKie and workers like him brought craft consciousness, class consciousness, organizational know-how, and personal commitment to their new jobs. Combined with the economic impact of the Great Depression, these traits led them to organize the Mechanics Educational Society of America (MESA), a group which would also contribute substantially to the founding of the UAW. Babson especially stresses the importance of the Anglo-Gaelic, tool and die workers’ organizational know-how. He contrasts their organizing confidence and ability with the limited experience of other skilled workers in the industry.

Babson concludes the book with two chapters on the contribution of Anglo-Gaelic, tool and die makers to the auto industry’s 1930s union organizing efforts. He focuses on four events to demonstrate this: the 1933 MESA riot, the 1936 sit-down strike at Midland Steel, the 1937 Dodge Main sit-down strike (where tool and die makers did not take the lead), and the crucial June 1939 ‘strategy strike’ among GM’s tool and die workers, in which the UAW rebuilt itself after two years of internal factionalism. Because of their frustration with Britain’s Labour party in the 1910s-1920s, Babson believes the Anglo-Gaelic organizers learned to prefer direct action to parliamentary action. Like others who have focused on militant union activists in the 1930s, perhaps Bruce Nelson’s *Workers on the Waterfront* most prominently, Babson sees a strong tenet of syndicalism among these unionists.

The Anglo-Gaelic, tool and die makers had much less effect on political affairs than they did on workplace organization. Babson attributes this failure not to lack of

will but on native-born American workers' more prominent role in local politics and the greater difficulty of implementing independent political action in America compared to Britain.

Two significant problems mar Babson's work. Much of his analysis of the Anglo-Gaelic, skilled workers' contribution rests on implicit and explicit comparisons to other groups of workers in the industry, especially native-born Americans and eastern European immigrants. Babson's characterizations of these other workers' union efforts, however, are too slim to be convincing. Of course, part of this problem can be attributed to Babson's analytical emphasis. Still, his argument would have benefited from a greater effort to provide details about the reluctance of native-born and eastern European immigrants to take a more active union organizing role.

This problem is related to the larger issue of the ramifications of Babson's findings for historians of labor in this period. Militant activists in many other industries were not foreign-born and not always the most highly skilled. Babson does not attempt to place his findings in a larger context that explains this unevenness. One is also left wondering about what happened to the syndicalism of the 1930s. Babson explains that the Anglo-Gaelic, tool and die makers rejected participation in the New Deal's co-optive liberal welfare state for more confrontational strategies. Yet most workers, especially eastern European unionists as Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal* (1990) attests, eagerly participated in the New Deal. Babson's book resolves the disappearance of syndicalism chiefly by noting that when other groups became more prominent as leaders of the UAW, their attachments to the New Deal's liberal welfarism eclipsed the political vision of the Anglo-Gaelic unionists. This depiction is too simple. It is more likely that ideological competition among groups of activist workers characterized the union-building struggle from its beginnings as it did in other industries. Gary Gerstle expounds on this theme in his excellent *Working-Class Americanism* (1989).

Scholars should nonetheless pay close attention to Babson's findings. The book carefully and skillfully uncovers the origins and contributions of a leading group of union builders. By painstakingly examining these militant activists, Babson has also raised important questions about the political dimensions of New Deal union organizing.

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Hélène Dionne, dir. — *L'œil amérindien. Regards sur l'animal*. Québec: Musée de la civilisation and Les éditions du Septentrion, 1991. Pp. v, 118.

Keith Tester — *Animals and Society. The Humanity of Animal Rights*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. vi, 218.

Our relationship with animals continues to produce a widening literature. One of these books, to accompany a North American museum exhibit, avoids controversy while the other, aimed at philosophers, takes a stance designed to encouraging it. They seem worlds apart, and they are, culturally and philosophically, which is a pity.